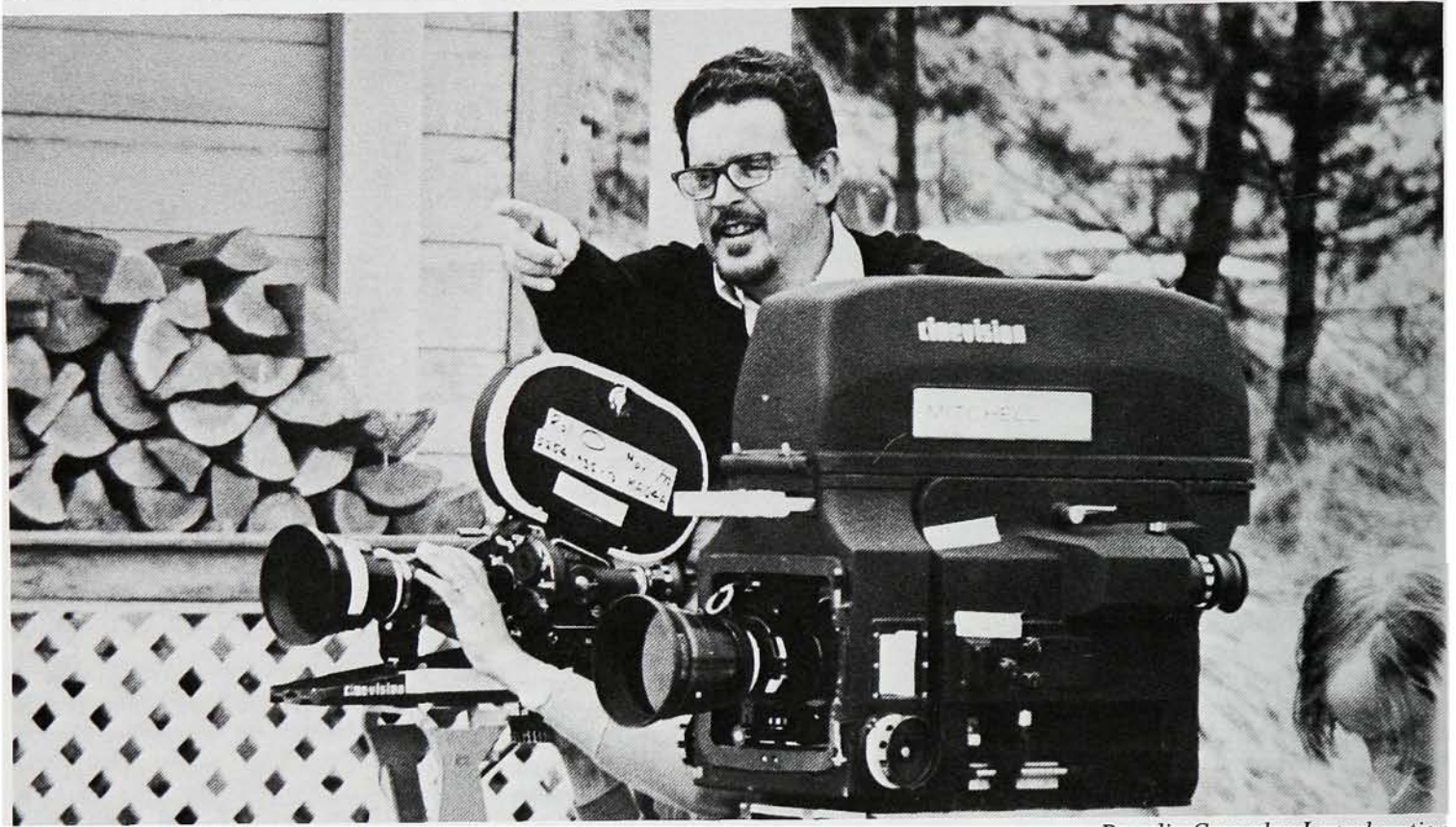


Vancouver



Rogelio Gonzalez Jr. on location

Rogelio Gonzalez Jr.

Rogelio Gonzalez Jr. is a Mexican director with more than one hundred films to his credit. He is now centering his productivity in Vancouver. The Mexican-Canadian company, Uranio Films International Ltd., owned by Jose Lorenzo Zakany will be producing several low budget features a year. (At least by American standards they would be considered low-budget, by Mexican standards the budgets are high.) Mr. Gonzalez' presence is a positive step forward for the local film industry. Unlike many producers who arrive in B.C. in order to make films, Mr. Gonzalez actually does so. He has shot three films here already and there will be more to come.

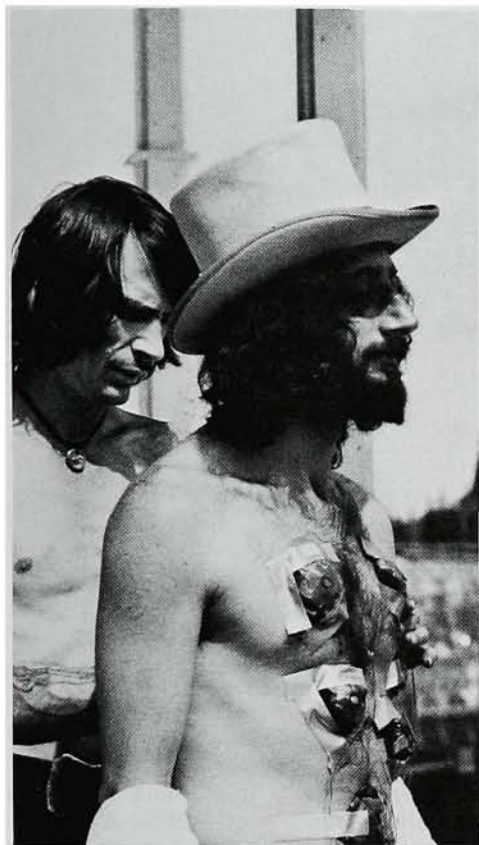
Rogelio isn't just interested in shooting films in Canada. He is an internationalist. He plans to use Vancouver as his base of operations and to shoot all over the world with a Canadian production crew. His view is that films produced in Canada or Mexico or any small country must aim for, and compete in, the international market. And this means entering in competition with the American Elephant. In Mexico there is a quota for imported films. Fifty percent of the films shown must be Mexican. However, according to Rogelio, the

ratio is not properly administered — in the large cities and the best theatres American films are shown, while Mexican films play in the small towns. Rogelio plans to shoot films in the English language, and then dub or also shoot in Spanish. The films will be distributed both in the English speaking world and in Latin America. He is a director of genre pictures, and he calls this kind of film the normal mainstream production of the world film industry. He directs several films of this kind a year, and he says exhibitors are more receptive to a constant flow of films than they are to the occasional long shot.

Gonzalez sees the constant production of the lower budget genre films (westerns, action, horror movies) as the only viable way of developing a national film industry. His arguments are supported by his success, and they are hard to dispute. He points out that the single big production that arrives on a scene (such as Vancouver) succeeds mostly in spoiling the local people. In the world view the five million dollar Hollywood epics are not the life blood of the film industry, except perhaps in Hollywood. He himself prefers to work for smaller amounts of money for each film because the financial control is more

limited. It can be seen and therefore dealt with — it is not in New York or somewhere else in the world, but usually close by. Rogelio sees the lack of low budget film production as the real problem for countries such as Mexico and Canada. He argues that given the films to work on, Canadians will be as good as anyone else in the world, and he sees here the opportunity for a new, honest industry to be created.

For the industry to develop, the attitude of the people involved must be flexible. It is ludicrous for a producer to pay large *per diems* for location shooting for low budget films. The attraction of shooting in this country is often the great locations; but if viable economic terms are not there, then the attraction will not be enough — either to bring productions into the country or for local producers to take advantage of their own country. Another necessity is the adjustment of rental facilities accordingly to the kind of production. Not every producer can equal rates paid out by a *Carnal Knowledge* or a *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*. Rogelio feels quite strongly that Canadians need an international perspective on film production rather than the Hollywood model. Elsewhere, such as in his native Mexico, a budget for a hundred and fifty thousand



Special effects man Dox Logan wiring actor Sam Moses for shoot-out



Barry Coe as "Ringo" in *The Naked Man*.

dollars per picture is considered high, and the majority of the action is in low budget action films.

The industry itself is unique because it is a place where the artist can create, but it is still an industry, and it goes on because of money. He will return twice the investment of the film to Mexico, or he will lose the right to take the money out of Mexico. He says it is more important to save a day on the budget than it is to be proclaimed a genius. The important aspect of his attitude is that it is eminently workable. He is out there making films, and he offers a hard reality rather than grandiose promises and future fantasies. He is a working filmmaker and a Canadian crew and Canadian actors are working with him, which is better than waiting for the next Hollywood big one to come down the road.

Gonzalez' current production of *The Naked Man* was filmed under difficult conditions, which he accepts as a matter of course. If you have a shooting schedule of 24 days, then the film is shot in 24 days. Every problem he encounters must be solved within the rigid framework of costs. His attitude as a director is one of extreme flexibility. If he cannot get what he wants one way he doesn't waste any time in choosing another way. If an actor doesn't show

up to play a part then the part is written out of the film. He feels that his own creativity is in editing, and he is constantly looking for that bit of material which will give him what he needs, (he knows you can't always get what you want) and because of his vast experience he knows there is always more than one way. If he has no choice he will put a member of the crew in a part, and somehow make it work. If delivery is bad he will dub in later, if the acting is bad he will find a way to shoot the scene to make it as good as possible.

The Naked Man was shot on location during May at the historical Barkerville site in the B.C. interior, with a crew from NABET 800. Some of the crew were on a feature film for the first time, but Rogelio felt that this was a handicap he is familiar with, and he dealt with it with kindness and patience. He felt that the crew had the right attitude, which was more important. The mutual respect between director and crew necessary was evident, and the morale was good, which went a long way in overcoming the problems.

As a director, Gonzalez explains that he is looking for that human moment that reveals truth. *The Naked Man* is an action packed western, with a theme of vengeance. The killers of a family are

hunted down by the surviving son. But he says he is using the conventions of the western for his own ends. He says the story sounds familiar but his approach is quite different. Violence is in the world because of the reality of men. Violence in the western is taken for granted, and he has no need to state the obvious. His film becomes not a story of why people die, but an explosion of how they die. Each one has his own death, and each death is stupid and painful. To get shot, to die, is a stupid thing absolutely, he says. And he shows death in the film with great impact and force. For some it will be difficult to watch, as he uses a whole range of effects to show agonizing moments of brutality and murder and rape.

He has also imbued the film with a bizarre Freudian quality. There is a dual Oedipal complex at work. The hero sees his own Oedipal fantasy acted out by another when he is a child — his mother is raped and his father killed. The killer dreams of his mother as a whore, whom he constantly searches out and destroys.

The film ends, naturally, with the shoot out, but when the Stranger kills the killer, Rogelio imposes one image over the other, and the Stranger might be killing himself. There is no good or evil in men, they simply are. ●