

García de Dueñas, Jesús. *Cine español. Una crónica visual desde 1896 hasta nuestros días*. Barcelona: Lunwerg, 2008. 342p.

How to undertake the telling of a national film history of more than 100 years? Visually, how else? *Cine español. Una crónica visual* is a trip through the evolution of Spanish film from its beginnings in 1896 to the present. Developed under the auspices of the Cervantes Institute and the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development and published by Lunwerg Editores, this luxurious volume takes the reader/viewer on a trip through the history of Spanish film with more than 120 photographs, some of which were heretofore unpublished, a couple of dozen film posters, and a DVD with clips representative of major moments in Spanish cinematography.

The volume begins with a written introduction by director José Luis Borau who asserts that Spanish cinema has invested a good portion of its long existence in the desire to achieve its own identity. Its history is the march of Spanish film towards itself.

Borau's introduction is followed by another introduction from the volume's author, Jesús García de Dueñas, which in turn is accompanied by many smaller captioned photographs which prepare readers for the photographic voyage they are about to undertake. García de Dueñas laments "la injusticia y el desconocimiento" which Spanish film has suffered not only in the minds of foreigners but in the minds of Spaniards themselves.

García de Dueñas asserts that Spanish cinema has produced a series of astonishing, and truly inventive films, even in the darkest of times. For that reason, he says that it is unfair for some Spaniards to hold on to the nonsensical personal notion that all Spanish film is bad just because they do not like one film. For him, this photographic history of Spanish cinema will open many eyes.

Following these two introductions the volume is divided into two parts, separated by an intermission and followed up by an epilogue.

The first part is historical-chronological, "The Decades." It is subdivided into subtitled sections corresponding to the decades of Spanish cinema from its "orígenes" on through to its "futuro." Each of the eleven subdivisions begins with a brief, written historical summary and is then followed by the "crónica visual" of the decade. Dozens of photographs or

movie stills from the films of each decade take the reader/viewer on a tour of the landmarks of Spain's filmic history. All photographs and stills are accompanied by captions which provide essential information about film titles, actors and their roles, film narrative, and so on.

Complementing the chronological tour of the landmarks of the history of Spanish cinema from its beginnings to present day, the second part of *Cine español. Una crónica visual* photodocuments that history from the point of view of major themes ("Los temas"). Parallel to the organization of the first part, the second part is also subdivided into eleven sections. These thematic subdivisions run the gamut from the spiritual and religious to eroticism and nudity, from bullfights to idolized actresses. The last subdivision is a kind of emotional homage paid to "three masters of the art," which, after focusing on don Antonio Pico and don José Isbert, contains a special section dedicated to that icon of Spanish film that was Fernando Fernán Gómez (1921-2007).

In a brief intermission between the two major parts of the volume, the "chronical" seeks to pay homage as well to other artists involved with Spanish film history. The "intermedio" is an art exhibition, a collection of 12 movie posters created by illustrators, some well-known, others not, who elevated their genre to the level of art. This small collection offers a selection of "carteles" from different periods.

Finally, the "crónica" is completed or complemented by an audiovisual treat, a DVD titled *Cerca y lejos. Imágenes del cine español*, which is attached to the inside back cover of the book. With some of Spanish film's most memorable scenes, the DVD adds audiovisual strength to the history already narrated in the book's introductions, photos, captions, and posters. The montage includes clips from more than 60 films that go back to the very beginning of Spanish cinema. The clips are organized and presented chronologically in three sections: 1908-1948, 1948-1968, and 1968-2008. The selection of clips offers a variety and diversity that ranges from the classical and easily recognizable in films like *Viridiana*, *Marcelino pan y vino*, *Bienvenido, Mr. Marshall*, or *El espíritu de la colmena* and faces like Sara Montiel, José Luis López Vázquez, or Fernando Fernán Gómez, to more recent, lesser-known cinema presences. The nearly one-hour's worth of clips includes enough famous scenes, surprises, music, and even experiments

(Segundo de Chomón's 1905 *El hotel eléctrico*) so as to document cinema's ability to tell history.

Through the selection of more than 120 photographs, the selection of many movie posters, and the video montage in *Una crónica visual desde 1896 hasta nuestros días* and *Cerca y lejos. Imágenes del cine español*, the reader/viewer is transported to that collective space created by the selected images in which the many faces that have inhabited that historical space are remembered, as they trace anew a chronicle filled with a collection of images which illuminate the complexity and diversity of a country as culturally rich as is Spain.

The photographic exposition ends with an epilogue, the historical-poetic musings of screen writer and director Fernando León de Aranoa. For him, Spanish cinema is not only a reflection of Spain's past. "Con vistas a la calle," Spanish film offers a view of its sociohistorical present as it marches towards the future.

Through the visual (still and motion) images of Spanish cinema, *Una crónica visual desde 1896 hasta nuestros días* and *Cerca y lejos. Imágenes del cine español* allow us to understand the importance of this medium to so many generations and to view the historical development of Spanish film at the same time we view the evolution of Spanish society therein reflected.

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