

# A Festival Latino

By Ed Morales

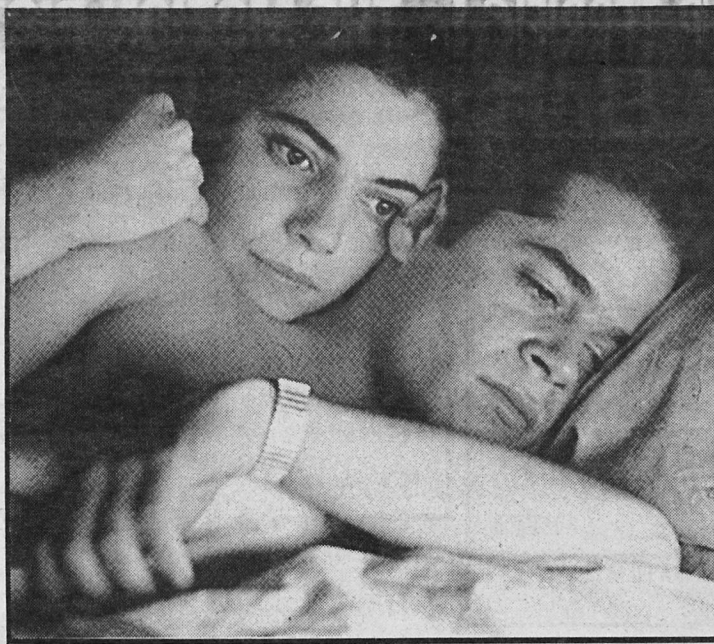
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A particularly surreal adaptation of the Don Juan legend (loosely taken from Molière's model), *Infiernos* was the creation of the wizened Gonzalo Suárez, a novelist/director/screenwriter who got his start as a sports journalist. "Unfortunately we're still savages that adopt hypocrisies that function as civilized behavior," said Suárez as we discussed the film's philosophy. Don Juan, played by Fernando Guillén (the soap opera star whom Carmen Maura was obsessed with in *Women on the*

*Verge*), is the cynical usurper of the ridiculous moral codes of King Felipe II, who could make laughter a crime punishable by death. Suárez, a Spaniard who's excited that great artists, like Picasso or Buñuel, no longer have to leave Spain to get recognition, sported a head of gray hair and a beard that made him look a little like Hemingway.

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Verdu, an irrepressible 21-year-old whose early role model was Jaclyn Smith of *Charlie's Angels*, and who broke into Spanish film at age 13, landing a role playing Abril's younger sister, was for a few days queen of the festival, even trying her hand at singing at the opening-night party. As Trini in *Amantes*, Verdu undergoes a remarkable transition from innocent maid to willing, if awkwardly so, sex machine as she tries to keep her lover from Abril's clutches. She's politely confused as I try to make this into a metaphor for Spain's liberation from Franco's repressive moral codes, preferring instead to rail on about the local police refusing to let her go topless at nearby Luquillo Beach.

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