CINCO DE MAYO

THERE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN LATINO ACTORS IN HOLLYWOOD, BUT THE CURRENT CONTINGENT IS SMASHING THE ROLE BARRIERS

by meredith brody

JIMMY SMITS

Strength: A high I.Q. smolder
Standout Performance: Gen. Tomas Arroyo in Old Gringo. As one of Pancho Villa's men, he more than holds his own opposite Jane Fonda and Gregory Peck
Key Credits: Running Scared, The Believers, TV's "L.A. Law"
Upcoming: The "John Houseman-in-The-Paper-Chase-role" in Vital Signs
Quote: "There are many wonderful Latino stories to be told, but I don't want to get pigeonholed into playing Latinos for the rest of my life."
RUBEN BLADES

Strength: Everyman charm that sneaks up on you
Standout Performance: In his first movie, Crossover Dreams, he played a salsa musician who abandons his roots when he has a crossover hit
Key Credits: Fatal Beauty, The Milagro Beanfield War, HBO’s “Dead Man Out”
Upcoming: Plays a ‘40s Jewish mobster in Jack Nicholson’s The Two Jakes
Quote: “I’m sure somebody must have said, Jack, there are a lot of Jews in Hollywood that need a job, why are you going to a Panamanian?”

EDWARD JAMES OLMOS

Strengths: A genuine presence that projects omniscience and moral authority
Standout Performance: His Oscar-nominated turn as inspirational schoolteacher Jaime Escalante in Stand and Deliver
Key Credits: Zoot Suit, Wolters, Blade Runner, The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez, TV’s “Miami Vice”
Upcoming: Triumph of the Span
Quote: “If Latin American actors are working, it’s got an
economic basis. We spend more on entertainment per capita 5 to 1 than Anglos, and we drink 2 1/2 beers to every one of theirs.”

ESAI MORALES

Strength: Sex appeal whether he's playing sexy or not
Standout Performance: Playing Ritchie Valens's troubled older brother in La Bamba, instead of the rock star part he was originally (and predictably) cast in.
Key Credit: Bad Boys
Upcoming: Naked Tango, Bloodhounds of Broadway
Quote: "I want to be an actor. Period. They don't call Robert De Niro and Al Pacino famous Italian actors."

ANDY GARCIA

Strength: Doesn't have to say a word to hold the camera
Standout Performance: Angel Maldonado, part menacingly cool, part murderously hysterical drug kingpin in 8 Million Ways to Die
Key Credits: The Mean Season, The Untouchables, Stand and Deliver, Black Rain
Upcoming: Internal Affairs, Show of Force
Quote: "I don't negate that I'm Spanish, but I'm not a Spanish actor. No one asks Dustin Hoffman, 'How do you feel representing the Jewish community in Hollywood?'"