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Culture

The Cisco Kid: American Hero, Hispanic Roots
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With both amigos laughing riotously "Oh Pancho!" "Oh Cisco!" were the enduring closing lines of each *The Cisco Kid* television show from 1950 to 1956. Starring Duncan Renaldo and Leo Carrillo they were the Don Quixote and Sancha Panza of juvenile Westerns. Children grinned and parents smiled.

Francis M. Nevins professor emeritus at St. Louis University School of Law and author of *The Films of the Cisco Kid* and Gary D. Keller Regent's Professor at Arizona State University's Hispanic Research Center and author of *Hispanics and United States Film* present a close look at the Cisco cult accented in this new book. The creation came from the pen of O. Henry (William Sydney Porter; 1862-1910). O. Henry was one of the most popular American short story writers of the time penning more than 300 stories including "The Gift of the Magi." In 1907 he introduced the Cisco Kid but this Cisco was not the character that was the basis for twenty-three theatrical films 156 television episodes comic strips and a radio series ("Here's adventure! Here's romance! Here's the famous Robin Hood of the Old West"). O. Henry's hallmark was the "twist ending" and in "The Caballero's Way" a tale from his collection *Heart of the West* ranger Sandridge with his Winchester "pumped in the bullets" into his girlfriend thinking it was Cisco due to a ruse of mistaken identity.

The authors present a study of the Kid to include dimensions "that speak to the bilingual-bicultural person who is knowledgeable about Hispanic culture" starting with the 1929 sound film *In Old Arizona* where the fictional character was endowed with a Latino persona. One discussion is of Pancho's term "lezwent" and its meaning among Spanish bilinguals; linguists call it a "calque" a "semantic transfer from Spanish to English of the Mexican regionalism 'fuímonus.'"

Many directors and actors were interviewed thus numerous anecdotes. The authors

include background information on stars e.g. Renaldo was an illegal immigrant during the movies and the first year of the television series. Other interesting notes include examples of "Panchoisms" humorous malaprops by Pancho; some fistfights were filmed in slow motion and then speeded up and guns by the ears of the gal-loping horses were only minimally loaded otherwise the horses would be startled.

The 8 x 11 book includes many colorful photographs of movie posters. In *South of the Rio-Grande* (1945) Renaldo as Cisco is mustachioed wearing a blue outfit while serenading a señorita (Armida Vendrell) in peasant-styled white dress with gold trim. Other posters show different Cisco Kids such as Warren Baxter Martin Garralaga and César Romero. Not all posters and discussions are of Cisco; there are for example Pancho Villa and Zorro.

This is a book for students of Hispanic ethnicity and Ciscophiles.

Alex Moore