

Radiolandia, Fan Magazines, and Stardom in 1930s and 1940s Argentina

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On Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays at 10:00 p.m. in mid-1940, nighttime radio listeners throughout Argentina were presented with actor Floren Delbene, *el cotizado galán de la pantalla* (the sought-after prince of the screen), in his latest program for Radio Belgrano, *El último estreno* (*The Latest Première*). Delbene, a star who had appeared in more than a dozen films in the late 1930s, including hits such as *Amalia* (dir. Luis Moglia Barth, 1936) and *Ayúdame a vivir* (*Help Me to Live*, dir. José A. Ferreyra, 1936), was a frequent presence on airwaves from Buenos Aires to well into the country's interior. Distinguishing him from other film stars such as Hugo del Carril and Libertad Lamarque, Delbene was one of the few dramatic crossover artists who was not a musician. Rather, in his programs, Delbene hosted and/or acted in *radioteatros* (radio dramas).

With scripts written by the Chileans Tito Davison and José Manteola, *El último estreno* also featured a constellation of actresses, some of whose lights burned brighter than others.¹ Among those performing in the program, Herminia Franco, Fanny Navarro, Mecha Ortiz, and Malisa Zini became stars whose afterimages persist to this day. Also on the program were Aída Alberti, Irma Córdoba, Elsa O'Connor, Alita Román, and Pepita Serrador, actresses perhaps less likely to be remembered today but who nevertheless enjoyed long careers on stage and set, as well as in broadcasting and, eventually, television studios. Never quite arriving to those levels were Rosita Contreras and Angelina Pagano. Nevertheless, a print advertisement for the program proclaimed, "Never has a radio program managed to gather so many stellar figures from our theater and cinema. All prestigious names, captivated by intense and lucid work!"² Sponsored by Phillips' Milk of Magnesia, *El último estreno* not only sold the globally marketed antacid and laxative but also promoted sectors of the local entertainment industry through mass media. What little

RADIO BELGRANO PRESENTA A
FLOREN DELBENE
EL COTIZADO GALAN DE LA PANTALLA EN

Macha Ortiz
 Pepita Serrador
 Elsa O'Connor
 Floren Delbene
 Irma Córdoba
 Angelina Pagano
 Hermine Franco

y con él las más destacadas figuras del cine y teatro

sobre libretos de
JOSE MANTEOLA
y
TITO DAVISON

EL ULTIMO ESTRENO

Aida Román
 Rosita Contreras
 Aida Alberti
 Malisa Zini
 Fanny Navarro
 José Edmonson

Jamás un programa radial ha conseguido reunir a tantas figuras estelares de nuestro teatro y cine. Nombres todos ellos de prestigio conquistado a través de una intensa y lucida labor.

FLOREN DELBENE — figura central de estas audiciones — presentará a cada artista animando escenas ya cómicas, ya sentimentales o de hondo contenido dramático.

Cabe a **LECHE DE MAGNESIA DE PHILLIPS** la satisfacción de brindar a los oyentes — por intermedio de nuestra onda — un programa de tal calidad y que será trasmitido los días

Miércoles, Jueves y Domingos a las 22 horas

y la Primera Cadena Argentina de Broadcastings

FIGURE 15.1. Advertisement for Floren Delbene's radio program in *Radiolandia*, April 6, 1940, 47.

we now know of *El último estreno*, which broadcast well-known figures of the movies and theater live on the radio, is found within the pages of the printed press (some of which have been digitized). In the pages of newspapers, trade publications, and fan magazines, the lives and labors of a wide range of entertainers were discussed and examined. As in other places, shining most intensely were movie stars. These stars allow us to better understand a wide range of issues, from media industry strategies to the aspirations of fans (which is to say everyday people), something especially important in places such as Argentina, which Beatriz Sarlo described as experiencing a culture of mixture, a peripheral modernity, thus receiving relatively little scholarly attention in comparison to the United States and Europe.³

By 1940, a national film industry had finally emerged in Argentina. Despite its vibrant local film culture, among the most active in the world in the 1920s and early 1930s, Argentina's film production had been unable to compete with imports from Hollywood and Europe until innovations in sound film technologies opened up domestic and, almost immediately, foreign markets. According to film historian Claudio España, "The industrial growth of Argentine cinema accompanied the process of widespread industrialization that happened in the country."⁴ What was once unsustainable became an industrial practice as film production moved from the producer/director model of the silent era toward what España calls an "institutional model," a more studio-based production in the mold of Hollywood (and, to a lesser extent, European cinemas). Consequently, national film production saw its annual output grow from five movies in 1930 to nearly fifty by the end of the decade. As I have documented elsewhere, "Majors Argentina Sono Film and Lumiton were joined by new studios such as SIDE (Sociedad Impresora de Discos Electrofónicos), EFA (Establecimientos Filmadores Argentinos), and Estudios San Miguel, as well as fleeting independents such as Baires Film and Cinematografía Terra."⁵ Ranging from new facilities to multipicture deals with in-demand stars, studios invested with the hope of hitting it big with audiences at home and abroad.

Stars such as Floren Delbene also found their way into the lives of everyday people in Buenos Aires and beyond through the radio. Throughout the 1920s and '30s, radio sets became more and more popular as experiments in broadcasting became increasingly professional. Unlike the public service model of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and other European broadcasters, Argentina saw radio follow the United States' commercial model. By the late 1930s, the radio had firmly cemented its place in Argentine culture, as well over a million sets had made their way into homes and other spaces, allowing listeners to enjoy varied regular programming on established stations such as LR1 Radio El Mundo (AM 1070). Christine Ehrick notes, "Newspapers tended to see radio as competition, and thus were [not] wont to give radio much press coverage (with exception of stations owned by or affiliated with a given newspaper). Thus, radio relied on separate radio and entertainment-themed publications to distribute programming schedules and to promote programs, celebrities, and radio listening generally." Like the cinema, which often appealed to the radio's popularity through what Ana M. López calls the "radiophonic imaginary," the radio was inextricably enmeshed with other media industries.⁶

Alongside the emergence of its national film industry and the consolidation of radio's place in society, a constellation of new popular magazines appeared in kiosks across Argentina. Joining an already active press, new fan magazines such as *Radiolandia* (*Radioland*), *Sintonía* (*In Tune*), *Cine Argentino* (*Argentine Cinema*), and *Astros* (*Stars*) set themselves apart by focusing on stars. In his foundational 1957 work *The Stars*, Edgar Morin argues that "their cult primarily subsists on specialized publications. Although there are no theater magazines, dance magazines, or even music magazines devoted entirely to actors, dancers, or singers, movie magazines are devoted essentially to the stars."⁷ Even though this is certainly not the case today in Argentina (and was not wholly so even in the first half of the twentieth century), Morin's broader point resonates: at the time, Argentine fan magazines' interest in the stars was devout. In their pages, material written by correspondents abroad on Hollywood's stars, including those of its *colonia hispana*, increasingly lost column space to local stars. Such publications did more than diffuse information about the on- and off-screen trials and tribulations of local stars such as Libertad Lamarque and Luis Sandrini; these new fan magazines came to be the leading promoters of a national star system. As Mary Desjardins reminds us, "Fan magazines occasionally reported on actor labor issues and often referred to specific aspects of stars' contracts, but they most frequently focused on, and contributed to, the 'ideological work' of stars, or their status as figures constructed as both ordinary and extraordinary. Specifically, the fan magazine of the 1930s articulated a relation between the glamorous female star and the ordinary female fan." Extending Desjardins's work on Hollywood stars, I contend that periodicals such as *Cine Argentino* and *Sintonía* reflect and participate in the ideological work of Argentine stars.⁸ In this essay, I trace how local stars came into sight in these magazines over the course of the 1930s. Stardom, if it could be defined as such, was much less systematic in Argentina than in other places, as it was more diffused among various media industries. Despite this, as Carolina González Centeno has pointed out, "following stars is, in turn, a way to accompany and promote the growth and consolidation of different local media: at first, radio, then cinema, and, finally, television."⁹ Focusing my attention on *Radiolandia*, and more specifically on its coverage of Floren Delbene, an actor oscillating between the cinema and radio in 1940, I gesture toward some ways in which these magazines contributed to the formation of a local Argentine star system.

STARS IN THE PAGES OF RADIOLANDIA

With its energetic film culture centered in Buenos Aires, Latin America's largest city in 1940, it is of little surprise that Argentina had a rich history of film publications. Broadly of three types (newspapers, trade journals, and fan magazines), these publications were heavily influenced by foreign magazines, especially those from the United States, but they nonetheless catered to local readers whose interests and tastes differed from those in other places.¹⁰ Earlier fan magazines such as *Cinema Chat*, *Cine Universal*, *Imparcial Film*, and *Magazine Cinematográfico*

as well as fleeting, lesser-known ones like *Astros y Estrellas* (*Stars and Stars*) and *Sideral* (*Stellar*), focused largely on heavenly bodies from northern skies, but also directed some attention to local stars.¹¹ The emergence of a national film industry in the 1930s, as well as the increasing availability and popularity of the radio, also saw shifts in how Argentine magazines covered local entertainment culture. Some of the most notable transformations could be read within the pages of *Radiolandia*, which began its five-decade run as *La Canción Moderna* (*The Modern Song*). Lila Caimari notes: “With populist and anarchist resonances, *La Canción Moderna* was born in 1928 under the direction of Dante A. Linyera, partnered with the young Julio Korn, a future mass media magnate. The project briefly brought together the Jewish immigrant interested in cultural industries with the son of Italian immigrants determined to preserve a ‘pure’ and spontaneous popular culture.”¹² Linyera, a tango composer, lyricist, and poet, had previously collaborated on the launch of the children’s magazine *El Purrete* (*The Kid*) and the soccer magazine *La Cancha* (*The Pitch*), and, according to Matthew B. Karush, his decisions did not necessarily last: “Following Dante Linyera’s brief term as editor, Korn would steer the magazine in a more mainstream direction.”¹³ Under Korn’s direction, *La Canción Moderna* was a “precursor of a form of entertainment and escapist journalism [as it] compiled lyrics of fashionable songs, mixing them with stories of their authors and singers.”¹⁴ Centered on tango culture and music, the magazine also touched upon local entertainment culture from soccer to cinema, and it included diverse lyrics from American fox-trots, Mexican rancheras, and Peruvian waltzes. It would eventually broaden its interests to appeal to a larger readership.

Emerging out of the pages of *La Canción Moderna* as a supplement at the beginning of 1936, *Radiolandia* eventually displaced Korn’s first entertainment publication and shifted its focus from radio to cinema.¹⁵ Signaling its eventual transition away from a mere special section, the magazine used both titles in several issues. An important editorial was published in the first, which appeared on May 25, 1936, a national holiday in Argentina commemorating the May Revolution and the creation of the Primera Junta in 1810. In *Radiolandia*, the magazine claimed that both titles mark the same project: “*Radiolandia* is the materialization, in a name, of the current nature of LA CANCIÓN MODERNA. ‘The world of the radio in a magazine,’ our subtitle reads, and no one could deny that within our pages the outstanding current events of what radiotelephony does inside and outside our country are condensed.”¹⁶ Rebranding the magazine allowed Korn to adapt to new circumstances not only in the publishing world, but also in the media environment. In 1935, he launched his second title, the women’s magazine *Vosotras* (the feminine second person plural subject pronoun in Spanish, equivalent to plural “you,” “you all,” or “y’all” in English). Soon, he would be among the major players in Argentine publishing.¹⁷ “If there is one description that could define *Radiolandia*, as well as the rest of these publications, it would be popular. And popular, for Korn, [was] always synonymous with mass entertainment.

Both premises are thoroughly fulfilled in *Radiolandia*, which centers its focus on the entertainment world and its main protagonists.¹⁸ *Radiolandia*'s rebranding also allowed Korn to more directly compete with two other important fan magazines: *Antena*, launched in 1931 by Jaime Yankelevich "in order to give Radio Belgrano an outlet for free publicity," and *Sintonía*, established in 1933 by Editorial Haynes (the publishing company that owned the station Radio El Mundo).¹⁹ Like *Radiolandia*, *Antena* and *Sintonía* directed their attention to the entertainment world—usually, but not exclusively, to local activity. With the passage of time, information on the radio gave way to news on the cinema, but these magazines kept tabs on the characters, figures, stars, and workers of different entertainment sectors. Of the three, *Radiolandia* came to be the most successful. So successful was Korn's enterprise that it bought *Antena* in 1937 "with the intention of competing against itself" and it pushed *Sintonía* out of the market in 1941 (though it would later return).²⁰

Like many other fan magazines, *Radiolandia* hooked readers with weekly updates about their favorite stars. From notes on the luxurious premiere of the latest local superproduction to information on the quotidian comings and goings of actors, the magazine brought attention to both marginal and major figures. Stars in the pages of *Radiolandia* were paradoxically at once ordinary and extraordinary, something Richard Dyer (among others) has noted as one of central contradictions of stardom.²¹ *Radiolandia* offered its readers some of the few available glimpses into the lives of Argentine stars. Morin may have overlooked the importance of the radio in mediating the relationship between the stars and their public in *The Stars*, but, as the groundbreaking Argentine film historian Domingo Di Núbila (somewhat exaggeratingly) argues:

Outside of the movies, they could only be seen in photographs in newspapers and magazines, and occasionally in fleeting newsreel snapshots. And they were only heard in rare radio interviews because portable recorders had not yet been invented. Journalism contributed to surrounding them with a mythical aura. The specialized magazine with the largest circulation, "Radiolandia" . . . never published anything that showed them as anything less than perfect beings. No slipups, no resignations, no sins, not even venial ones. Indiscreet gossip was confined to "telephone dialogues" and other benevolent columns. Changes in couples flaunted the rhetoric of fashionable novels.²²

Similar to a newspaper like *La Nación* or a trade journal such as *Heraldo del Cinematografista*, *Radiolandia* provided a promotional feedback loop by regularly reporting on all stages of film production. Unlike those other kinds of film periodicals, which directed readers' attention to other niche aspects of the film industry, *Radiolandia*'s feedback loop primarily sold stars and the protagonists of local celebrity culture. Whether introducing readers to someone who is sure to make it, but almost certainly will not, in a regular column such as "Screen: News Broadcast of National Cinema" or reminding them of their favorite performances in an

article such as “Does the Love They Feign On-Screen Leave Traces in the Hearts of Actors?,” *Radiolandia* narrated a compelling version of the (working) lives of the characters of the Argentine entertainment industry.²³

Among the stars about which *Radiolandia* kept readers up-to-date in 1940 were Charlo, Hugo del Carril, Delia Garcés, Libertad Lamarque, Amanda Ledesma, Nini Marshall, Luis Sandrini, Mercedes Simone, and Juan Carlos Thorry. Featured in anything from a brief note to the front cover, these stars were kept in the lime-light by *Radiolandia*. The magazine’s narrative about Floren Delbene, the host of *El último estreno*, is typical in its apparent contradictions: he lived an extraordinary life of which readers could only dream, but he was ordinary in that he was one of many working in the entertainment industry. For similar reasons, Delbene provides an intriguing case study to examine intermediality and stardom at a key moment in Argentine media history. Somewhat paradoxically, he is at once representative and unique. Today, Delbene is most often remembered, critically at least, in reference to a trilogy of films directed by José Agustín Ferreyra, produced by SIDE, and starring Lamarque; Delbene appeared as the male opposite her in two of the three films, *Ayúdame a vivir* and *Besos brujos* (*Bewitching Kisses*, 1937).²⁴ Delbene’s career never reached the heights of other leading men such as Luis Sandrini, Hugo del Carril, and José Gola, but he played an important role in popularizing national cinema as a *galán* in the early sound period.²⁵

Unlike most of his counterparts in the 1930s, however, Delbene’s career started in silent cinema, as he appeared in a handful of films including *Muchachita de Chiclana* (*Chiclana Girl*, dir. Ferreyra, 1926) and *La quena de la muerte* (*The Quena of Death*, dir. Nelo Cosimi, 1928).²⁶ He then starred in the first Argentine film to use sound-on-disc, Ferreyra’s 1931 *Muñequitas porteñas* (*Porteño Dolls*).²⁷ It took him some time to break into talkies, but he was extremely busy from 1936 to 1939.²⁸ With his film career slowing down significantly, especially after Mario Soffici’s *Cita en la frontera* (*Date on the Border*, 1940), starring Lamarque, Delbene took refuge in other sectors of the entertainment industry, especially radio (where he had appeared for some time).²⁹ Unlike comics and musicians who (relatively easily) crossed over from radio to cinema and vice versa, Delbene hosted programs and/or acted in *radioteatros*. He also remained a constant presence in the press, especially fan magazines. As Richard deCordova reminds us, “Journalism provided the institutional setting for much, if not most, discourse on stars. The trade press, fan magazines, and newspapers all constituted specific positions from which to speak the star.”³⁰ Consequently, as Janine Basinger succinctly argues, “You can trace a star’s progress by tracking his or her plants, interviews, and photographs through these fan magazines.”³¹ (Increasingly, digital tools such as Lantern, the Media History Digital Library’s search platform, allow us to trace these trajectories, although results are limited to their holdings.) Throughout this period, readers who loved, hated, or were indifferent toward Delbene could follow his place

within the constellation of stars whose lights emanated from Argentina's various media industries.

FLOREN DELBENE IN CLOSE-UP

Even though he was not mentioned in *Radiolandia*'s "¿Quiénes son los astros 1940?" (Who Are the Stars 1940?), Floren Delbene appeared in the magazine regularly throughout the year.³² Coverage on the star varied from reports on his latest professional activities to notes on his cultural impact to profiles to different kinds of gossip. Lamented in the gossip column "Como me lo contaron" (As They Told It to Me), Delbene was suffering a dry spell in the movies.³³ Beyond occasional news regarding *Cita en la frontera* that recalled Lamarque's and Delbene's popularity after *Ayúdame a vivir* and *Besos brujos* in Venezuela, Colombia, and other countries, reports were published about projects with two fleeting production companies (Platense Film and Artefilm) that never materialized.³⁴ Similarly, possible films with previous collaborators Leopoldo Torres Ríos, Lamarque, and Luis Moglia Barth failed to be produced.³⁵ If his work in the cinema stayed stagnant throughout the year, Delbene's participation on the radio picked up. Given a run-up similar to what he would have received during the promotion of a film, news of Delbene's work in radio drama began in preproduction. In a casting note that refers to his transnational popularity as a film star, "Floren Delbene a Radio Belgrano" (Floren Delbene to Radio Belgrano), *Radiolandia* notes, "The voice, well, of one of the actors who most relies on it among the best attributes of his success will be in contact with his female admirers starting next month."³⁶ More details are later given in "Comenzó una gran audición en LR3" (A Great Show Started on LR3).³⁷ *El último estreno*, of course, figured regularly among the pages of the "Programa radiotelefónico semanal" (Weekly Radio Program). Unlike its competitor *Sintonía*, which reviewed the program twice, *Radiolandia* did little to question the program's success.³⁸ Keeping in contact with his fans, Delbene continued to work in radio after *El último estreno* concluded. At the end of the year, *Radiolandia* commented that "Floren Delbene, the film star, is acting on Radio Belgrano" in the series *Sendero de dolor* (*Path of Pain*).³⁹ The photogenic Delbene was accompanied by fellow cast members perhaps better suited to the radio than the screen.

In addition to his professional existence in between media industries, *Radiolandia*'s readers were also treated to glimpses into Delbene's personal life. Figuring as one of many stars, his experiences in the limelight were related in columns such as "Dialoguitos telefónicos" (Telephone Chats) and stories such as "El cargo que se hace a nuestros galanes: ¿saben o no besar?" (The Charge Given to Our Leading Men: Do They Know How to Kiss?), "Sus momentos más felices" (Their Happiest Moments), and "¿Cuál ha sido el secreto de su éxito?" (What Has Been the Secret of Their Success?).⁴⁰ Delbene also featured in profiles highlighting professional



FIGURE 15.2 A short note in *Radiolandia*, December 14, 1940, 17.

and personals success. In “El triple triunfo de Floren Delbene” (Floren Delbene’s Triple Success), *Radiolandia* congratulated the *galán* for his success in a contest held by a Venezuelan newspaper, in which Delbene figured in first, second, and third places in the category “most popular couple” with Libertad Lamarque, Herminia Franco, and Amanda Ledesma, respectively.⁴¹ And “Floren Delbene es un viajero incansable” (Floren Delbene Is a Non-Stop Traveler) catches up with the star as he travels to Mar del Plata, a resort city not far from Buenos Aires.⁴² The profile gives rare insight into Delbene’s thoughts on his professional and private life. Beginning with an anecdote in which the handsome star flirts with a fellow traveler, it explains that Delbene’s “great determination is to seek the unprecedented, not only in love, but everything.” Delbene claims to not yet know love, but the profile argues that his wanderlust mirrors his professional experience. Delbene tells *Radiolandia*, “If I were to repeat myself when acting on screen, I do not think it would be me, but a copy of the character that I had just played in the previous production.” The profile gives Delbene a measure of control of his career that he may or may not have possessed, as well as direct insight into the “philosophy of a star,” according to a section heading. Ultimately, however, much of what readers learned of the star in *Radiolandia* was provided indirectly.

Delbene is also often the subject of inquiry of readers’ letters. In the same issue in which a portrait of Delbene takes up an entire page, a not uncommon occurrence in the pages of Argentine fan magazines at the time, the actor is referenced in replies to readers’ letters in “Chas de Cruz contesta” (Chas de Cruz Answers). The important film critic and editor of *Heraldo del Cinematografista* includes quick answers to three queries concerning Delbene (two regarding his roles opposite Libertad Lamarque and one about pipe smoking).⁴³ More biographical information regarding Delbene was often shared in the column “Preguntas y respuestas” (Questions and Answers). Two examples: “His name is Florentino Delbene. His relatives are well-known industrialists. But Floren has nothing to do with those establishments. He gave them up to act in the cinema,”⁴⁴ and “BLOND AND DARK-SKINNED [the letter writer’s pseudonym].—Delbene is Argentine. Soulful more than romantic in all acts of life. He hardly frequents A-list parties. He

runs away from everything that has to do with popularity.”⁴⁵ Readers were interested not only in Delbene’s origins but also in his current private life. Of special interest, unsurprisingly, was his love life. These issues and indiscretions, however, were generally divulged in gossip columns such as “Será cierto?” (Could It Be True?). Gossip was often threaded throughout the pages of *Radiolandia* to create a sustained narrative that readers could follow. In 1940, Delbene was reported to be involved with two actresses. In one issue, it is claimed “that nights ago the actress Herminia Franco, surprised to find Floren Delbene in the company of a beautiful blonde, could not help but shed some tears.”⁴⁶ (Curiously, or perhaps not, featuring on the front cover of that issue of *Radiolandia* was Amanda Ledesma, a beautiful blonde with whom Delbene was connected.) *Radiolandia* also noted other comings and goings, such as hinting at the possibility that “the disagreements between a beautiful film actress and Floren Delbene arose because he twice lost his entire fortune on roulette?”⁴⁷ In sharing gossip of various kinds with its readers, *Radiolandia* demonstrates restraint and censorship. Although perhaps not to the extent intimated earlier by Di Núbila, *Radiolandia* sought to show glimpses into the real lives of the stars without bringing upon them undue pressure from advertisers, lobbying groups (e.g., direct or loose affiliates of the Catholic Church), and politicians. Like other fan magazines, *Radiolandia* not only wanted to steer clear of criticism, but its editors also did not want to lose the access that allowed them to mediate fans’ relationships with the stars.

RADIOLANDIA AND (INTERMEDIAL) STARDOM

Within its pages, *Radiolandia* kept readers up-to-date week by week with the stars of Argentina’s increasingly developed and enmeshed media industries. Following figures such as Floren Delbene, who by no means was enjoying his prime in 1940, *Radiolandia* contributed to the growth and consolidation of the film industry and the radio by its focus on a local, intermedial star system. Much work is left to be done to better understand celebrity culture and stardom at this time in Argentina—significantly less systematic in the 1940s than in Hollywood, but nonetheless important socially—but it is clear it was expressed between media industries, including in different kinds of film publications such as the fan magazine *Radiolandia*. As Carolina González Centeno succinctly contends: “Singular coordination between the spectacular and the everyday, the special and the ordinary, the star promotes devotion and identification, fantasy. The magazine is aware of this power.”⁴⁸ Captivating readers’ attention, these stars were means through which readers became consumers. Not only did they consume the movies of the emerging national film industry as well as the radio (Di Núbila reminds us: “In sum, Argentine cinema sold. And the media of the time sold Argentine cinema”), but the ideological work of stars also sold *Radiolandia*’s readers on a wide range of values, products, and ideas, similar to the way in which *El último estreno* used Delbene’s cinematic glamour to move an antacid/laxative into the homes of ordinary fans.⁴⁹

As Jesús Martín Barbero argues, “The new mass culture began not only as a culture directed to the popular classes but a culture in which the masses found synthesized in the music and in the narratives of radio and film some of the basic forms of their own way of perceiving, experiencing and expressing their world.”⁵⁰ Through the consumption of different media industry products, often selling a singular star image, *Radiolandia*’s (primarily female) readership was allowed to see and be seen through consumption. Recalling these times, Aurora Alonso de Rocha writes in her work *Mujeres cotidianas* (*Everyday Women*) that the fan magazine “was so important for many women that I knew two girls whose given names were *Radiolandia*.”⁵¹

NOTES

1. Similar to the performers, Davison’s and Manteola’s careers differed vastly. Even though he would have to wait some time, Davison eventually directed more than eighty feature films, largely in Mexico. Unlike his compatriot, little is known today of José Manteola. His illustrator brother Raúl, however, would gain renown for his Peronist propaganda.

2. “Jamás un programa radial conseguido reunir a tantas figuras estelares de nuestro teatro y cine. Nombres todos ellos de prestigio conquistado a través de una intensa y lucida labor.” Advertisement for *El último estreno*, *Radiolandia*, April 6, 1940, 47.

3. Beatriz Sarlo, *Una modernidad periférica: Buenos Aires 1920 y 1930* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión, 1988).

4. “El crecimiento industrial del cine argentino acompañó al proceso de industrialización generalizada que se produjo en el país.” Claudio España, “El modelo institucional,” in *Cine argentino industria y clasicismo, 1933–1956*, vol. 1, ed. Claudio España (Buenos Aires: Fondo Nacional de las Artes, 2000), 34.

5. Nicolas Poppe, *Alton’s Paradox: Foreign Film Workers and the Emergence of Industrial Cinema in Latin America* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2021), 170.

6. Ana M. López, “Film and Radio Intermedialities in Early Latin American Sound Cinema,” in *The Routledge Companion to Latin American Cinema*, ed. Marvin D’Lugo, Ana M. López, and Laura Podalsky (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2018), 316–28. López also developed the idea in conference papers.

7. Edgar Morin, *The Stars* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005 [1957]), 57.

8. See Mary Desjardins, “Not of Hollywood: Ruth Chatterton, Ann Harding, Constance Bennett, Kay Francis, and Nancy Carroll,” in *Glamour in a Golden Age: Movie Stars of the 1930s*, ed. Adrienne L. McLean (London: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 24.

9. “El seguimiento de las estrellas es, a su vez, el camino para acompañar y promover el crecimiento y consolidación de los distintos medios locales: en un principio la radio, luego el cine y por último la televisión.” Carolina González Centeno, “*Radiolandia*,” in *Páginas de cine*, ed. Clara Kriger (Buenos Aires: Archivo General de la Nación, 2003), 149.

10. Published a few years later, a special Pan-American issue of *Revista del exhibidor* (October 1945) visually expresses these divisions through pastiches of the titles of newspapers (“Prensa argentina,” 17), trade journals (“Prensa gremial,” 21), and fan magazines (“Revistas porteñas,” 22).

11. For more on these fan magazines, see Kriger, *Páginas de cine*.

12. “De resonancias populistas y anarquistas, *La Canción Moderna* nació en 1928 bajo la dirección de Dante A. Linyera, asociado al joven Julio Korn, futuro mangante de los medios masivos. El proyecto reunió, por poco tiempo, al inmigrante judío interesado en las industrias culturales al hijo de inmigrantes italianos decidido a preservar una cultura popular ‘pura’ y espontánea.” Lila Caimari, “Mezclas puras: Lunfardo y cultura urbana en Buenos Aires,” in *Ciudades sudamericanas como arenas culturales*, ed. Adrián Gorelik and Fernanda Arêas de Peixoto (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2016), 169.

13. Matthew B. Karush, *Culture of Class: Radio and Cinema in the Making of a Divided Argentina* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 138. Karush rightly notes its editorial shift but errs in dating *La Canción Moderna*'s transition to *Radiolandia*.

14. "Precursora de una forma del periodismo de entretenimiento y evasión, *La Canción Moderna* recopilaba las letras de las canciones de moda, las mezclaba con historias de sus autores y cantantes." Carlos Ulanovsky, *Paren las rotativas* (Buenos Aires: Espasa, 1997), 38.

15. *Radiolandia* first appeared as a supplement on January 4, 1936.

16. "Radiolandia es la materialización, en un nombre, del carácter actual de LA CANCIÓN MODERNA. 'El mundo de la radio en una revista,' reza nuestro subtítulo, y nadie podría negar que en nuestras páginas, se compendia la actualidad sobresaliente de cuanto hace la radiotelefonía dentro y fuera de nuestro país." "Radiolandia," *Radiolandia*, May 23, 1936.

17. Korn's publications would eventually include *Radiolandia*, *Antena*, *Goles*, *Vosotras*, *TV Guía* (a collaboration with Editorial Abril), and *Anteojito* (*Specs*, a children's magazine). In 1965, the publishing company would have a circulation of seven million copies per month. Ulanovsky, *Paren las rotativas*, 168. At some point, Korn would also merge with Editorial Abril. Korn would sell the majority of his company in 1972 to Fabril Financiera and Celulosa Argentina. (By this time, the company also published *Labores* and *Chabela*.) Korn died on April 18, 1983.

18. "Si hay algún calificativo que pueda definir a *Radiolandia* así como al resto de estas publicaciones es el de popular. Y lo popular, para Korn, es siempre sinónimo de entretenimiento masivo. Ambas premisas se cumplen ampliamente en *Radiolandia*, que centra su enfoque en el mundo del espectáculo y sus principales protagonistas." González Centeno, "Radiolandia," 148–49.

19. Karush, *Culture of Class*, 138. Perhaps the most important figure in Argentine radio of the 1930s, Yankelovich's Radio Belgrano "dominated the market, charging the highest advertising rates and signing the biggest stars" (Karush, 64).

20. "Con el propósito de hacerse la competencia a sí mismo." Ulanovsky, *Paren las rotativas*, 51.

21. Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: British Film Institute, 1998), 43.

22. "Fuera de las películas sólo podía verlas en fotos de diarios y revistas, y ocasionalmente en fugaces pantallazos de noticieros. Y sólo las escuchaba en escasas entrevistas radiofónicas porque aún no se habían inventado los grabadores portátiles. El periodismo contribuía a rodearlas de una aureola mítica. La revista especializada de mayor circulación, 'Radiolandia'—editada por Julio Korn, dirigida por Enzo Ardigó y con gente como Manzi, [Hugo] MacDougall [pseud. Hugo Mascías] y Floreal Fernández Raja en su redacción—jamás publicaba nada que las mostrara como algo menos que seres perfectos. Ningún desliz, ningún renuncio, ningún pecado, ni siquiera venial. Los chimentos indiscretos estaban confinados en 'dialoguitos telefónicos' y otras benévolas columnas. Los cambios de pareja ostentaban retórica de novelas de moda," quoted in Domingo Di Núbila, *La época de oro. Historia del cine argentino I* (Buenos Aires: Jilguero, 1998), 282–83.

23. "Pantalla: Noticiario del cine criollo"; "¿El amor que fingen en la pantalla deja huellas en el corazón de los artistas?, *Radiolandia*, November 2, 1940, 2–3.

24. Delbene did not appear in the trilogy's final film, *La ley que olvidaron* (*The Forgotten Law*, 1938).

25. Literally meaning "prince," *galán* is used to describe a leading man in Latin American cinema. A 1937 *Radiolandia* profile was entitled "Floren Delbene. First Argentine Film Leading Man. His Life—His Views—His Concerns—His Popularity." See "Floren Delbene. Primer galán cinematográfico argentino. Su vida—sus conceptos—sus inquietudes—su popularidad," March 6, 1937, 32–33. Sandrini, a comic star, did not fit neatly into the category of *galán*, even though his bumbling characters often had love interests. Not unlike Carlos Gardel, whom he played in the biopic *La vida de Carlos Gardel* (*The Life of Carlos Gardel*, dir. Alberto de Zavalia, 1939), Hugo del Carril was a tango singer whose musical performances were often used in relation to his role as protagonist and love interest. José Gola was never able to fully realize his potential to become the most important *galán* in Argentine cinema; he died suddenly in 1939 at the age of thirty-five.

26. In both films, he was credited under his full name, Florentino Delbene.

27. More specifically, *Muñequitas porteñas* used Vitaphone's system. The adjective "porteñas" and its related inflections refer to someone from the city of Buenos Aires.

28. In these years, he featured in *Amalia* (1936), *Ayúdame a vivir* (1936), *Santos Vega* (dir. Luis José Moglia Barth, 1936), *Lo que le pasó a Reynoso* (*What Happened to Reynoso*, dir. Leopoldo Torres Ríos, 1937), *Muchachos de la ciudad* (*City Boys*, dir. Ferreyra, 1937), *Besos brujos* (1937), *Sol de primavera* (*Spring Sun*, dir. Ferreyra, 1937), *Adiós Buenos Aires* (*Goodbye Buenos Aires*, dir. Torres Ríos, 1938), *El último encuentro* (*The Last Encounter*, dir. Luis Moglia Barth, 1938), *Senderos de fe* (*The Road of Faith*, dir. Moglia Barth, 1938), *Ambición* (*Ambition*, dir. Adelqui Millar, 1939), *Chimbela* (dir. Ferreyra, 1939), and *Cita en la frontera* (*Date on the Border*, dir. Soffici, 1940).

29. After an almost two-year period of inactivity, Delbene worked on six films for lesser-known production companies (1942–43). Gregorio Anchou suggested that “Floren Delbene’s pilgrimage through this type of production forms the color palette of his first sunset” (“El peregrinaje de Floren Delbene por este tipo de producciones compone la paleta cromática de su primer ocaso”). “Veinticinco años de producción independiente. Las fronteras ignoradas,” in *Cine argentino: industria y clasicismo, 1933–1956*, vol. 1, ed. Claudio España (Buenos Aires: Fondo Nacional de las Artes, 2000), 575. Subsequently, he spent another three-year period away from the silver screen. He would, however, return to more regular appearances on the screen from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s.

30. Richard deCordova, *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 12.

31. Janine Basinger, *The Star Machine* (New York: Vintage, 2009), 58.

32. “¿Quiénes son los astros 1940?,” *Radiolandia*, January 20, 1940, 30–31.

33. Elsa Pito Sordo, “Como me lo contaron,” *Radiolandia*, June 22, 1940, 50. An aside reads:

“Would you like me to point out unjust fact?”

‘Come out with it.’

‘Floren Delbene has just completed a year of movie inactivity. A high-earning, extremely popular *galán* that enjoys general affection goes for a year doing nothing in the cinema. What greater injustice is there?’

‘Impossible. It must be assumed that our producers are a little blind . . . or one-eyed, at least.’”

—“Quiere que le señale un hecho injusto?”

—Venga de ahí.

—Acaba de cumplir un año de inactividad cinematográfica a Floren Delbene. Galán cotizado, popularísimo, que goza de simpatías generales, va para un año que no hace nada en cine. ¿Quiere mayor injusticia?

—Imposible. Hay que suponer que nuestros productores están un poco ciegos . . . o tuertos por lo menos.”

34. “Floren Delbene vuelve a la actividad,” *Radiolandia*, April 13, 1940, 48. The note announces a project to be produced by Platense Film and directed by Juan Saracini. After the failure of *Yo hablo . . .* (*I Speak*, dir. Gándara, 1940), Platense vanished. “Floren Delbene en una nueva película,” *Radiolandia*, February 3, 1940, n.p. *Heroes nuestros* (*Our Heroes*) was to be produced by Artefilm, a company that ended before it began.

35. “Floren Delbene actuará con Leopoldo Torres Ríos,” *Radiolandia*, January 27, 1940, 45. Another film that failed to be produced was *Hogar, dulce hogar* (*Home Sweet Home*). Initially noted in “¿Floren Delbene con L. Lamarque?,” *Radiolandia*, July 6, 1940, 49, the Argentina Sono Film project in development was to be directed by Moglia Barth. “Floren Delbene vuelve al ‘set,’” *Radiolandia*, November 9, 1940, 49.

36. “La voz, pues, de uno de los actores que cuenta en ella con uno de los mejores atributos de su éxito, estará en contacto con sus admiradoras, a partir del mes próximo.” “Floren Delbene a Radio Belgrano,” *Radiolandia*, March 23, 1940, 19.

37. “Comenzó una gran audición en LR3,” *Radiolandia*, June 8, 1940, 8.

38. “Sintonizando audiciones,” *Sintonía*, April 10, 1940, 27. “Sintonizando audiciones,” *Sintonía*, April 17, 1940, 23. Initially rating Delbene’s show as a 36 percent, *Sintonía* improved its evaluation to a

curious 68.4 percent a week later. In both, *El último estreno* is notably referred to as “LR3—Audición ‘Leche de Magnesia Phillips.’”

39. “Floren Delbene, el astro cinematográfico, está actuando en Radio Belgrano.” “Un astro en radio,” *Radiolandia*, December 14, 1940, 17.

40. Delbene appears in several “Dialoguitos telefónicos.” One example with love interest Herminia Franco: *Radiolandia*, September 21, 1940, 11. “El cargo que se hace a nuestros galanes: ¿saben o no besar?,” *Radiolandia*, June 1, 1940, 2–3. “Sus momentos más felices,” *Radiolandia*, June 8, 1940, 32–33; “¿Cuál ha sido el secreto de su éxito?,” *Radiolandia*, September 28, 1940, 2–3.

41. “El triple triunfo de Floren Delbene,” *Radiolandia*, February 24, 1940, 50.

42. “Floren Delbene es un viajero incansable,” *Radiolandia*, June 22, 1940, 9–11.

43. Portrait of Floren Delbene, *Radiolandia*, October 12, 1940, 23; Chas de Cruz, “Chas de Cruz contesta,” *Radiolandia*, October 12, 1940, 50.

44. “Se llama Florentino Delbene, Sus familiares son industriales muy conocidos. Pero Floren no tiene nada que ver con esos establecimientos. Renunció a ellos para actuar en cine.” “Preguntas y respuestas,” *Radiolandia*, September 28, 1940, 43.

45. “RUBIA Y MORENA.—Delenbe es argentino. Sentimental, más que romántico, en todos los actos de su vida. No frecuenta casi las fiestas del ambiente. Huye de todo lo que sea popularidad.” “Preguntas y respuestas,” *Radiolandia*, July 27, 1940, 39.

46. “[Q]ue noches pasadas la actriz Herminia Franco al sorprender a Floren Delbene en compañía de una hermosa rubia no pudo evitar que se le escaparan algunas lágrimas.” “Será cierto?,” *Radiolandia*, August 17, 1940, 24.

47. “[Q]ue las desavenencias entre una bella actriz de cine y Floren Delbene surgieron porque éste en dos oportunidades perdió toda su fortuna en la ruleta?” “Será cierto?,” *Radiolandia*, May 4, 1940, 24.

48. “Singular articulación entre lo espectacular y lo cotidiano, lo especial y lo ordinario, la estrella promueve la devoción e identificación, la fantasía. La revista es consciente de este poder.” González Centeno, “*Radiolandia*,” 149.

49. “En suma, el cine argentino vendía. Y los medios de la época vendían al cine argentino,” quoted in Di Núbila, *La época de oro*, 283.

50. “La nueva cultura, la cultura de masa, empezó siendo una cultura no sólo dirigida a las masas, sino en la que las masas encontraron reasumidas, de la música a los relatos en la radio y el cine, algunas de sus formas básicas de ver el mundo, de sentirlo y de expresarlo.” Jesús Martín Barbero, *De los medios a las mediaciones. Comunicación, cultura y hegemonía* (Mexico City: Ediciones G. Gili, 1991), 173. *Communication, Culture, and Hegemony: From the Media to Mediations*, trans. Elizabeth Fox and Robert A. White (London: SAGE, 1993), 159.

51. “[E]ra tan importante para muchas mujeres, que conocí a dos chicas que llevaban *Radiolandia* por nombre de pila.” Aurora Alonso de Rocha, *Mujeres cotidianas* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1992), 200.

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Cinema Chat (Movie Chat)

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Goles (Goals)

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La Cancha (*The Pitch*)
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La Nación (*The Nation*)
Labores (*Labors*)
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