



CANTINFLAS: The Richest Movie Actor in the World

But when it comes to spending his money, he has an alter ego that keeps him the poor guy everybody loves

By RICHARD LYON

■ "CANTINFLAS and Mario Moreno—they are the same man, but they are opposites." The speaker is the possessor of both names, the first being his stage name, the other his baptismal one.

■ Cantinflas is known in this country primarily for his performance as David Niven's butler in "Around the World in 80 Days," and Mario Moreno is scarcely known at all, although he is probably the richest actor in the world. Chances are that after U.S. movie-goers see him in "Pepe," Cantinflas will be as widely known here as he has been for years in Latin America and Europe.

■ In the past 18 years, Cantinflas has made 20 Mexican films, all of which are still being shown in Latin countries.

His royalties alone are estimated at more than \$100,000 a month. But the royalties go to the man named Mario Moreno, who is somewhat different from the character he always plays—the lovable "little guy" of the streets with baggy pants, ragged coat, and battered hat.

Moreno is willing to talk about Cantinflas, but an innate shyness keeps him from saying much about Moreno. It is well known, however, that Moreno donates to charity the complete proceeds from the six or eight performances Cantinflas gives each year in Mexico City's bull ring, the largest in the world. Whenever one of these appearances is announced, 50,000 customers grab up every ticket the moment they are on sale.

■ Despite his huge contributions to the poor, Moreno still has ample means to live well. In addition to maintaining five residences (including a farm for breeding bulls) and a huge wardrobe, he owns a large plane, employs two pilots (though he is a licensed pilot himself), and travels extensively in the most lavish style.

■ At the same time, Moreno never forgets his humble beginnings nor that he is Cantinflas, the little man of the masses; privately he lives at the most costly level but he avoids any public display that might impair the screen image of Cantinflas.

■ A nice point that illustrates this dual personality occurred when he spent a week in New York doing publicity for "Pepe." Arrangements had been made to have a Rolls-Royce at his disposal during his stay; the Rolls had no sooner deposited him at his hotel than he telephoned to request "a simple Cadillac just like all the other film stars use when they are in town." The superelegant Rolls, Moreno believed, was much too ostentatious for Cantinflas.

■ Millions of movie-goers hope Moreno is successful in "not spoiling" their Cantinflas. They like him just as he is, broke but beguiling.



A true son of Mexico, Cantinflas becomes a Mexican jumping bean in his clowning act. Whether costumed in a cowboy suit, matador's outfit, or in street clothes, Cantinflas' favorite position is with his feet firmly planted in mid-air. These antics have helped him earn more than one million dollars a year; yet much of his income he gives away to the "little" people who love him.

