

# Keeping Argentina's film heritage alive

MOVIE cameras from the turn of the century, old posters showing the glories of Argentine cinema from Nini Marshall to Leopoldo Torre Nilsson, and mannequins dressed in various costumes from diverse films confront the visitor the moment he enters the *Museo del Cine*.

In an area better known for commerce than culture — Barrio de Once — the *Museo del Cine "Pablo Ducros Hicken"* is about to celebrate its twentieth birthday.

To honour this occasion the museum is opening a Maria Luisa Bamberg Room, named for the director of *Camila* and *Ya, la Peor de Todas*, who has donated part of the set of both movies to create a permanent exhibit at the museum.

"Apart from our educational role, our main aim is to preserve our national film heritage," said the director of the museum, Guillermo Fernandez Jurado.

Director of the museum for the last ten years, and tireless

collector of Argentine film arcana, Fernandez Jurado, standing next to the boat seen in *Su Mejor Alumno*, reviews the salient points of our film history: "We have catalogued 600 films from the silent era, of which only 15 have been saved. Many have been destroyed in Lab fires, because in the old days film often caught fire of its own accord ... and also because during the Second World War celluloid was often used to make combs and other things which could not be imported ... films were sold then by the kilo, and so we lost almost our entire national cinematographical heritage."

"The problem from the "talkies" period is different, but also difficult," he continued. "Since the first one, *Tango* (1933), 2170 talking movies have been made, of which we have lost more than 300 from the earliest period. Argentine cinema was only saved from complete disappearance by the arrival of television, which allowed producers to sell their

films to TV, and to copy them into 16mm film."

"Our aim is to restore and recover all that we can, but this is difficult because we lack the means," continued Fernandez Jurado. "Argentine producers tend to be very disorganized and four years after a screening they have completely forgotten a movie; they never save their negatives, or they don't know where they are," he lamented. (DYN)