

# The macho 'Nacho': Mexico's Lucha Libre

By MERCEDES SANCHEZ

AMERICA'S pro wrestlers haven't got a thing on the masked superheroes and mega-villians of Mexico's Lucha Libre ("Free-style Fighting") league. While "Nacho Libre" offers a pretty good look at low-budget, amateur *luchadores*, here's a guide to the five greatest warriors ever to grace the Consejo Mundial — the "Worldwide Council" founded by promoter Salvador Lutteroth González in 1933. Next time you spy a match on Galavision, you'll have a scissor hold on Lucha Libre history.

## SANTO

The world's most famous luchador is "the Saint," a consummate good guy. Rodolfo Guzmán Huerta made his debut in 1942 with a victory in an eight-man rumble and originated moves like the Flying Plancha, in which he simply fell on opponents like a plank of iron. He went on to earn a mid-

dleweight title and a lucrative film career before retiring after 40 years in the ring.

## BLUE DEMON

After winning his first match in Texas, blue-masked Alexander Muñoz Moreno returned to his native Mexico and debuted as Blue Demon in 1948. His villainous persona defeated Santo in a series of 1952 matches, but years later they co-starred in films as teammates. Moreno died in 2000 at 78, and was buried wearing his mask.

## MIL MÁSCARAS

He rarely wore the same outfit twice, so Aaron Rodríguez became known as "the Man of a Thousand Masks." First fighting in 1965, he went on to become a world heavyweight champ and the first masked wrestler to compete in Madison Square Garden. His signature moves are the Diving Crossbody and the Mexican Surfboard.

## EL HIJO DEL SANTO

With a name like "Son of the Saint," this legacy luchador had to prove himself not only to fans, but also to his father, Santo. Without dad's approval, Jorge Guzmán pursued a Lucha Libre career, debuting in 1983 with signature moves like the Camel Clutch and Suicide Dive. A two-time champ in both Mexico and the U.S., he still wrestles today.

## REY MYSTERIO JR.

As the nephew of popular luchador "King Mystery," Oscar Gonzalez Gutierrez brought Lucha Libre tradition to U.S. arenas with his bright masks and fighting techniques. At 31, the California native — whose early career flourished in Mexico — is a heavyweight champ in the WWE, where he's been nicknamed "the Flying Fury."

ONE HUMP OR TWO? Hijo del Santo (in silver) tangles up a foe with the Camel Clutch.

AP



WHO IS THAT MASKED MAN? Um, it's Jack Black, dude.

Daniel Daza/Paramount Pictures

## Cheesy 'Nachos'

Corny promotional trinkets are stock in trade for big Hollywood movies, but the gewgaws handed out by "Nacho Libre" are some of the best ever. They not only look cool, but also fit right in with the film's disheveled, south-of-the-border aesthetic.

Among the choice offerings, including their prices on eBay: ■ Votive candles, to pray for

victory in the ring (\$5-\$10).

■ "Espirit Water," two drops of which will help you perform a perfect "El Cobra Strike" or "El Eagle Slam" (\$1).

■ Customized set of *lotería* cards — the Mexican version of bingo (\$10).

■ Jack Black bobblehead doll, complete with fringed *luchador* cape (\$15-20).

— Isaac Guzmán



Elizabeth Lippman

with kids in a decidedly noncheesy way. This appealed to Marjorie Cohn, executive producer of Nickelodeon's "Kids' Choice Awards," who tapped Black to host this year's event.

We had a kids' band playing the show, and he was great with them. He was complimenting their playing, and made them all feel special. He did a song based on Elton John's "Saturday Night's Alright For Fighting" — rewritten so that it was about sliming. During the show there are thousands of screaming kids around him, and he slimed a whole bunch of them and made their dreams come true.

## JULIA PISTOR

Nickelodeon — not so coincidentally — is also a producer of Black's new movie, "Nacho Libre." Producer Julia Pistor says she was initially drawn to his eyebrows, but soon learned to appreciate the man beneath.

When we first came up with

the idea, we thought of Jack in a luchador mask, because he has such good eyes and eyebrows.

Down in Oaxaca, he was completely a man of the people — hanging out on the set, going out to dinner, loving the food, the culture, speaking Spanish with the crew.

He's very insightful. He's engaged with people, you can see he studies them. I think a lot



BIG GULP: Slurping with Gwyneth Paltrow in "Shallow Hal."

Twentieth Century Fox

of comics are very insecure, and their comedy is based on that. But with Jack, he's a very secure and smart and grounded guy, so his comedy isn't antics for the sake of antics.

## DAN HARMON

In 1999, Black took a role in a sci-fi TV pilot for Fox. Directed by Ben Stiller, "Heat Vision and Jack" starred Black as Jack Austin, the world's smartest astronaut, and Owen Wilson as the voice of Jack's talking motorcycle, Heat Vision. Never picked up, the pilot lives on in cult infamy. Writers Dan Harmon and Rob Schrab, currently working on a VH1 sketch show, are in talks to revamp "Heat Vision" for film.

Ben Stiller said, "Have you ever seen this guy, Jack Black? It would be cool to do something with him." We immediately thought we wanted to see him in an action series, throwing scientists up against walls, charming women, being on the run. We



METAL MANIACS: Black and Tenacious D pal Kyle Gass.

Geddy Images

loved that he's someone who refuses to be in on his own joke. He just thinks of himself as William Shatner or James Garner, this sexy, macho guy.

We had lunch with him when we were about to start writing, and he said, "That's the worst pitch I've ever heard. But I bet it would be a really funny show."

He's the master of cheese! To the point where he makes cheese like it was in the golden age of

TV. When every show had some big thing: a talking car with a sexy driver and they're fighting a cyclops, and of course you've got to have Hasselhoff really chewing it up, like ancient Greek theater.

My personal favorite scene is when Jack is explaining the origins of Heat Vision, about his roommate Doug getting fused with the motorcycle.

And it goes to the flashback where he's running, and Ron Silver is trying to shoot him with a ray gun, and then it comes back to Jack and he says, "During the escape, Doug was shot." And he gets choked up.

That scene was so good, watching it on the monitors, I started having a little panic attack. I could never just let things be good — as soon as I saw that scene I started worrying that I had cancer or something.

sara.stewart@nypost.com