

*Programming and
spectators in pre-war time
in Buenos Aires,
Argentina*

1936-1938

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History of cinema publics in Buenos Aires 1933-1955

Dir. Clara Kriger - Instituto de Artes del Espectáculo - Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2020-2022

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Explore and systematize the history of cinema going during the period of “classical cinema” in Buenos Aires, between 1933 and 1955

Methodology:

1. Reconstruction of movie billboards through journal archives
2. Oral history: interviews with people born before 1945
3. Analysis of written sources (letters, memories, autobiographies)



La Nación
Movie Listings
1936/01/03

PROGRAMA DE LOS ESPECTACULOS CINEMATOGRÁFICOS

ESTRENO TEATRO OPERA.—Corrientes 288. 10.30-12.30. Una representación especial de "EL REY LEON". Con elenco de los más famosos artistas del teatro musical. Entradas: 1.000. 1.500. 2.000. 2.500. 3.000. 3.500. 4.000. 4.500. 5.000. 5.500. 6.000. 7.000. 8.000. 9.000. 10.000. 11.000. 12.000. 13.000. 14.000. 15.000. 16.000. 17.000. 18.000. 19.000. 20.000. 21.000. 22.000. 23.000. 24.000. 25.000. 26.000. 27.000. 28.000. 29.000. 30.000. 31.000. 32.000. 33.000. 34.000. 35.000. 36.000. 37.000. 38.000. 39.000. 40.000. 41.000. 42.000. 43.000. 44.000. 45.000. 46.000. 47.000. 48.000. 49.000. 50.000. 51.000. 52.000. 53.000. 54.000. 55.000. 56.000. 57.000. 58.000. 59.000. 60.000. 61.000. 62.000. 63.000. 64.000. 65.000. 66.000. 67.000. 68.000. 69.000. 70.000. 71.000. 72.000. 73.000. 74.000. 75.000. 76.000. 77.000. 78.000. 79.000. 80.000. 81.000. 82.000. 83.000. 84.000. 85.000. 86.000. 87.000. 88.000. 89.000. 90.000. 91.000. 92.000. 93.000. 94.000. 95.000. 96.000. 97.000. 98.000. 99.000. 100.000. 101.000. 102.000. 103.000. 104.000. 105.000. 106.000. 107.000. 108.000. 109.000. 110.000. 111.000. 112.000. 113.000. 114.000. 115.000. 116.000. 117.000. 118.000. 119.000. 120.000. 121.000. 122.000. 123.000. 124.000. 125.000. 126.000. 127.000. 128.000. 129.000. 130.000. 131.000. 132.000. 133.000. 134.000. 135.000. 136.000. 137.000. 138.000. 139.000. 140.000. 141.000. 142.000. 143.000. 144.000. 145.000. 146.000. 147.000. 148.000. 149.000. 150.000. 151.000. 152.000. 153.000. 154.000. 155.000. 156.000. 157.000. 158.000. 159.000. 160.000. 161.000. 162.000. 163.000. 164.000. 165.000. 166.000. 167.000. 168.000. 169.000. 170.000. 171.000. 172.000. 173.000. 174.000. 175.000. 176.000. 177.000. 178.000. 179.000. 180.000. 181.000. 182.000. 183.000. 184.000. 185.000. 186.000. 187.000. 188.000. 189.000. 190.000. 191.000. 192.000. 193.000. 194.000. 195.000. 196.000. 197.000. 198.000. 199.000. 200.000. 201.000. 202.000. 203.000. 204.000. 205.000. 206.000. 207.000. 208.000. 209.000. 210.000. 211.000. 212.000. 213.000. 214.000. 215.000. 216.000. 217.000. 218.000. 219.000. 220.000. 221.000. 222.000. 223.000. 224.000. 225.000. 226.000. 227.000. 228.000. 229.000. 230.000. 231.000. 232.000. 233.000. 234.000. 235.000. 236.000. 237.000. 238.000. 239.000. 240.000. 241.000. 242.000. 243.000. 244.000. 245.000. 246.000. 247.000. 248.000. 249.000. 250.000. 251.000. 252.000. 253.000. 254.000. 255.000. 256.000. 257.000. 258.000. 259.000. 260.000. 261.000. 262.000. 263.000. 264.000. 265.000. 266.000. 267.000. 268.000. 269.000. 270.000. 271.000. 272.000. 273.000. 274.000. 275.000. 276.000. 277.000. 278.000. 279.000. 280.000. 281.000. 282.000. 283.000. 284.000. 285.000. 286.000. 287.000. 288.000. 289.000. 290.000. 291.000. 292.000. 293.000. 294.000. 295.000. 296.000. 297.000. 298.000. 299.000. 300.000. 301.000. 302.000. 303.000. 304.000. 305.000. 306.000. 307.000. 308.000. 309.000. 310.000. 311.000. 312.000. 313.000. 314.000. 315.000. 316.000. 317.000. 318.000. 319.000. 320.000. 321.000. 322.000. 323.000. 324.000. 325.000. 326.000. 327.000. 328.000. 329.000. 330.000. 331.000. 332.000. 333.000. 334.000. 335.000. 336.000. 337.000. 338.000. 339.000. 340.000. 341.000. 342.000. 343.000. 344.000. 345.000. 346.000. 347.000. 348.000. 349.000. 350.000. 351.000. 352.000. 353.000. 354.000. 355.000. 356.000. 357.000. 358.000. 359.000. 360.000. 361.000. 362.000. 363.000. 364.000. 365.000. 366.000. 367.000. 368.000. 369.000. 370.000. 371.000. 372.000. 373.000. 374.000. 375.000. 376.000. 377.000. 378.000. 379.000. 380.000. 381.000. 382.000. 383.000. 384.000. 385.000. 386.000. 387.000. 388.000. 389.000. 390.000. 391.000. 392.000. 393.000. 394.000. 395.000. 396.000. 397.000. 398.000. 399.000. 400.000. 401.000. 402.000. 403.000. 404.000. 405.000. 406.000. 407.000. 408.000. 409.000. 410.000. 411.000. 412.000. 413.000. 414.000. 415.000. 416.000. 417.000. 418.000. 419.000. 420.000. 421.000. 422.000. 423.000. 424.000. 425.000. 426.000. 427.000. 428.000. 429.000. 430.000. 431.000. 432.000. 433.000. 434.000. 435.000. 436.000. 437.000. 438.000. 439.000. 440.000. 441.000. 442.000. 443.000. 444.000. 445.000. 446.000. 447.000. 448.000. 449.000. 450.000. 451.000. 452.000. 453.000. 454.000. 455.000. 456.000. 457.000. 458.000. 459.000. 460.000. 461.000. 462.000. 463.000. 464.000. 465.000. 466.000. 467.000. 468.000. 469.000. 470.000. 471.000. 472.000. 473.000. 474.000. 475.000. 476.000. 477.000. 478.000. 479.000. 480.000. 481.000. 482.000. 483.000. 484.000. 485.000. 486.000. 487.000. 488.000. 489.000. 490.000. 491.000. 492.000. 493.000. 494.000. 495.000. 496.000. 497.000. 498.000. 499.000. 500.000.

Fecha	Barrio	Sala	Título definitivo	País de origen	Observaciones	Cantidad de funciones
03/01/1936	Almagro	Almagro	El desquite	EEUU		
03/01/1936	Almagro	Almagro	Matar o morir	EEUU	p. Jean Parker	
03/01/1936	Almagro	Almagro	Una fiesta en Hollywood	EEUU		
03/01/1936	Almagro	Hollywood	*Cómicas	#N/D		
03/01/1936	Almagro	Roca	Crimen sin pasión	EEUU		
03/01/1936	Almagro	Roca	Desfile de primavera	Alemania ; Austria ; Hungría	F. Gaal	
03/01/1936	Almagro	Roca	Una aventura en la noche	EEUU	Clark Gable, Constance Bennett	
03/01/1936	Belgrano	Aesca	El proceso de Mary Dugan	EEUU		
03/01/1936	Belgrano	Aesca	Hijos del desierto	EEUU		
03/01/1936	Belgrano	Aesca	Tempestad al amanecer	EEUU		
03/01/1936	Belgrano	Belgrano	El barco sin puerto	EEUU	p. Gene Raymond y Nancy Carroll	
03/01/1936	Belgrano	Belgrano	El hombre de dos rostros	EEUU	por Edward Robinson	
03/01/1936	Belgrano	Mignon	Alas en la noche	EEUU		2
03/01/1936	Belgrano	Mignon	Biografía de una soltera	EEUU		2
03/01/1936	Belgrano	Mignon	La muchacha más rica del mundo	EEUU		2
03/01/1936	Belgrano	Mignon	No es pecado	EEUU		1
03/01/1936	Belgrano	Príncipe	El caballo del pueblo	Argentina	O. Bozán	
03/01/1936	Belgrano	Príncipe	Los tres berretines	Argentina	L. Sandrini	
03/01/1936	Belgrano	Príncipe	Noches de Buenos Aires	Argentina	T. Merello	
03/01/1936	Belgrano	Ritz	*Variedades	EEUU		2
03/01/1936	Belgrano	Ritz	La sombra de la duda	EEUU	p. Ricardo Cortez y V. Bruce	

Titles Dataset

ÓRDEN	CÓDIGO IMDB	TÍTULO DEFINITIVO	PAÍS DE ORIGEN	LINK IMDB	PRODUCCIÓN	DISTRIBUCIÓN
1	SIN CÓDIGO	Día de limpieza	EEUU	SIN DATOS		Paramount
2	0151480	El amigo del hombre	EEUU	https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0151480/		Fox
3	SIN CÓDIGO	Eviendo impuestos	EEUU	SIN DATOS		20th Century-Fox
4	SIN CÓDIGO	La conquista de Abisinia	Italia	SIN DATOS	Luce de Roma	Bonomo Film
5	SIN CÓDIGO	La nueva abisinia	Italia	SIN DATOS		Bonomo Films
6	SIN CÓDIGO	Mujeres de la noche	EEUU	SIN DATOS		Columbia
7	0029665	Que se casa papá	EEUU	https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0029665/	Leo-Film	Columbia
8	SIN CÓDIGO	Revista de las revistas	EEUU	SIN DATOS		Warner Bros.
9	SIN CÓDIGO	Te presento la demanda	EEUU	SIN DATOS	Educational Films Corporation of America	20th Century Fox
10	SIN CÓDIGO	Un príncipe encantador	EEUU	SIN DATOS		Warner Bros.
11	0003740	Cabiria	Italia	https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0003740/		
12	0004670	En el music-hall	EEUU	https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0004670/		
13	0005074	Campeón canario	EEUU	https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0005074/		
14	0005077	Parodia de Carmen	EEUU	https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0005077/		
15	0005078	La marca de fuego	EEUU	https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0005078/		
16	SIN CÓDIGO	Garrotazo y tentetieso	EEUU	SIN DATOS		
17	0005812	Carlitos en Music-Hall	EEUU	https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0005812/		
18	0006032	Carlitos marinero	EEUU	https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0006032/		
19	0006177	El atorrante	EEUU	https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0006177/		
20	0006313	Carlitos empapelador	EEUU	https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0006313/		
21	0006414	Carlitos entre bastidores	EEUU	https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0006414/		
22	0006548	El Conde	EEUU	https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0006548/	Lone Star Co.	Radiolux
23	0006684	Carlitos bombero	EEUU	https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0006684/		
24	0006689	Jefe de dependientes	EEUU	https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0006689/		
25	0007145	A la una de la madrugada	EEUU	https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0007145/		

Movie Theatres Dataset

Barrio Oficial	Barrio Cartelera	Sala	Dirección	Empresario	Capacidad	Sonido	Proyector	Linterna	Calef/Refrig	Escenario
Villa Urquiza	Villa Urquiza	25 de Mayo	Triunvirato 4340	Ismael Fernández	1028	Aristofón	Kalee	Suprex		X
Villa Urquiza	Villa Urquiza	9 de Julio	Bauness 2523	Cia. Exhibidora Argentina	1000	RCA			C	X
Saavedra	Belgrano	Aesca	Avenida del Tejar 3865-99	Manocchio y Saliva	900	Aristofón	Ernemann	Ernemann	C	X
Mataderos		Alberdi	Juan Bautista Alberdi 6169	Jacobo Maceira	900	Escobedo			C	X
Boedo		Alegria	Boedo 877	Viuda de Tellé	500	RCA	Ernemann			X
Almagro	Almagro	Almagro	Rivadavia 3876	Eugenio Magnaggi	547	Aristofón	Gaumont	Gaumont		
Balvanera		Alteza	Independencia 2155	Juan Dasso	900	Escobedo			C	X
Colegiales	Colegiales	Álvarez Thomas	Álvarez Thomas 841	Juan Almirall	900	Escobedo	Kalee	Cyclex	C	X
San Nicolas	Centro	Alvear	Esmeralda 320	Chiesa y Cia.	534	Aristofón			C	
San Nicolas	Centro	Ambassador	Lavalle 777	Lautaret y Cavallo	1400	RCA			CR	X
Villa Pueyrredón		America	Avenida América 2462	Pablo Carreto	691	Ritco				X
Recoleta	Centro; Norte	American	Córdoba 1785	Francisco Reich	574	Western Electric		Cyclex		
Palermo		Argentino (Cine)	Santa Fe 4830	Enrique L Godoy	531	Aristofón				X
Colegiales	Colegiales	Argos	Federico Lacroze 3455	C Lococo S.A.F.	992	Escobedo		Suprex		X
Balvanera		Armonia N° 2	Rivadavia 2650	Alvarez y Lupo	487	Fraile y Monteverde				
Parque Chacabuco	Caballito	Asamblea	Asamblea 821	Mariano Blaya	1010	Aristofón	Kalee	Cyclex		X
San Nicolas	Centro	Astor	Corrientes 746	Carmelo Sessa	649	Philips				X
San Nicolas	Centro	Astoria	Suipacha 482	Sr. Garabatos	678	RCA				
San Nicolas	Centro	Astral	Corrientes 1641	Gallo Raineri	1266					
Monserrat	Centro	Ateneo	Piedras 646	Dositeo Fernández	386	RCA				
Monserrat	Centro	Atlantic	Belgrano 1260	Dositeo Fernández	1120	Escobedo		Suprex		X
Floresta	Flores	Avellaneda	Avellaneda 3667	Delfino y Cia.	697	Escobedo				

Pre-war: German vs US movies in the thirties

1936-1938 data on programming for most of the cinemas in Buenos Aires (approximately 140 out of 230 existing cinemas)

Ticket prices were generally affordable, with variations according to the hierarchy of the theater

First-run cinemas were mostly downtown

Second-run cinemas were mostly in neighborhoods

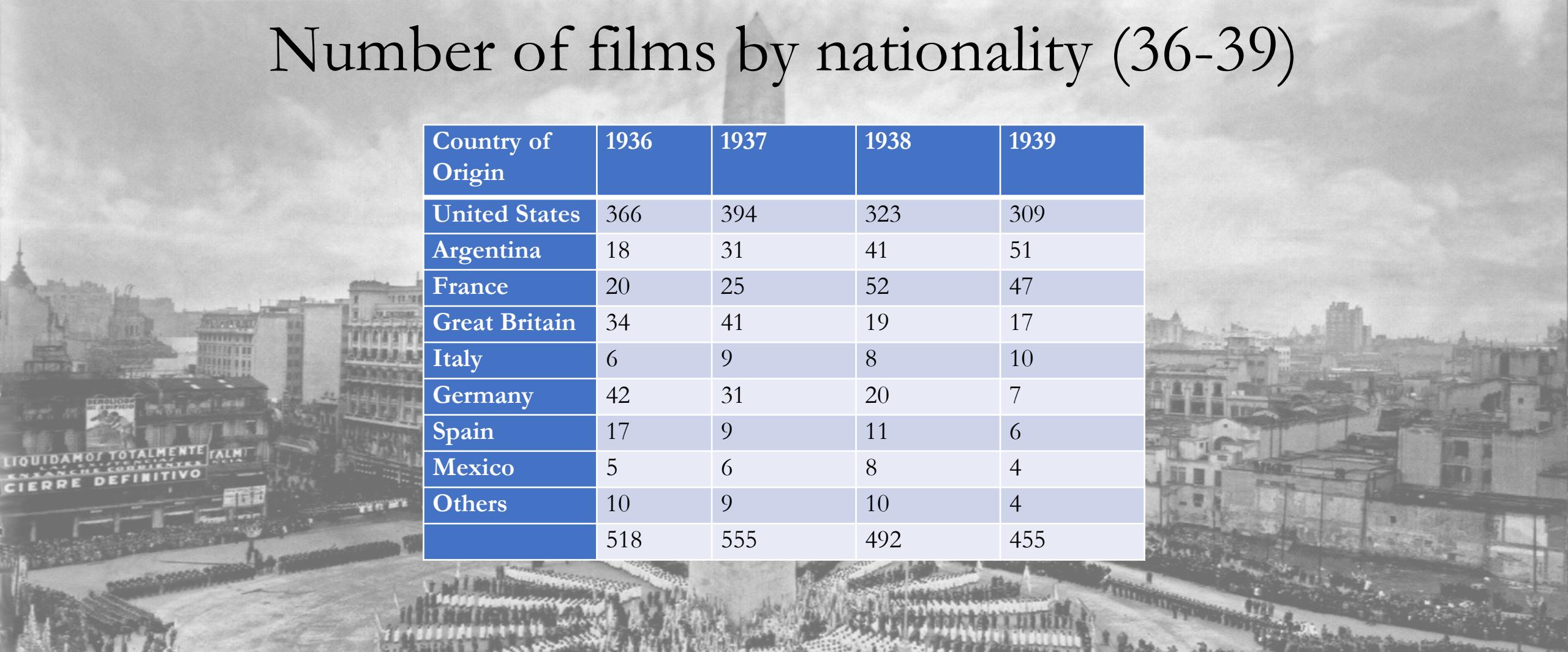
Movie-going was routine for middle class families: at least once a week

"There are approximately 1,200 motion picture theaters in the Republic, which take practically the entire output of the American film industry, in addition to European and domestic productions. This superabundance of pictures makes Argentina a decided "buyer's market", and largely accounts for the fact that most houses offer programs three and four hours in length, comprising two features and many shorts. Usually an inferior picture is teamed with a superior one. Many movie-goers stay for one feature only, and perhaps this partly explains why movie attendance has been declining in past years."

Motion Pictures Abroad, June 15, 1936

Number of films by nationality (36-39)

Country of Origin	1936	1937	1938	1939
United States	366	394	323	309
Argentina	18	31	41	51
France	20	25	52	47
Great Britain	34	41	19	17
Italy	6	9	8	10
Germany	42	31	20	7
Spain	17	9	11	6
Mexico	5	6	8	4
Others	10	9	10	4
	518	555	492	455

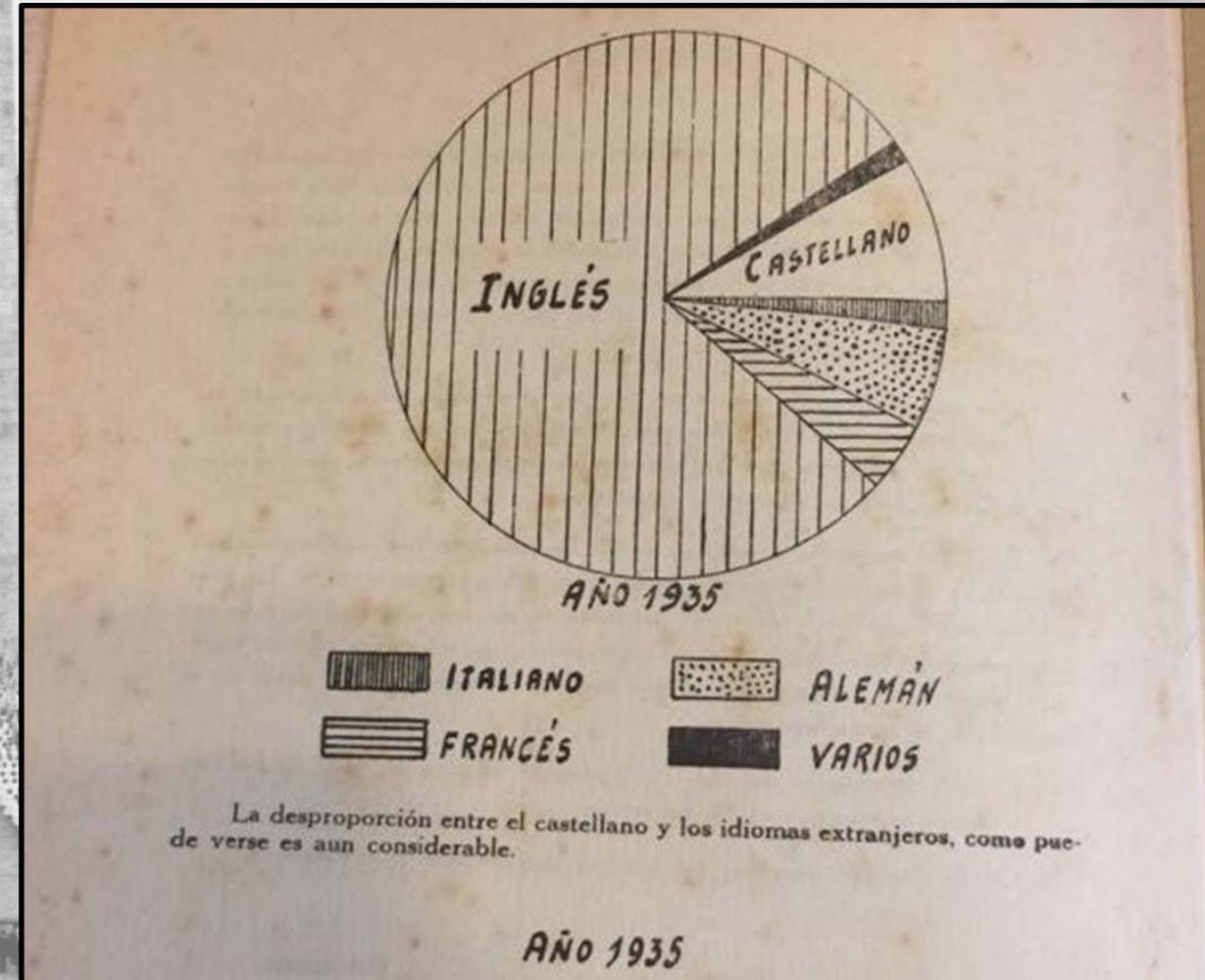


From the standpoint of each country's actual participation in Argentine film market, the above figures are not completely accurate, and must be considered in the light of the following additional factors.

- 1) The number of copies of each film varies considerably. For instance, the average number of copies for an American feature is about 5, but this average is higher for Argentine films and lower for European films.
- 2) The Buenos Aires releases shown in the above table include only the pictures originally shown in first-run houses. Omitted from the above figures are some 60 or 70 films of minor importance, including a number of "cow-boy" thrillers, which are not reviewed by the trade papers. These additional pictures are mostly American.
- 3) Newsreels and shorts, also mostly American, are likewise not included in the table of Buenos Aires releases.

Popular films according to country of origin, Buenos Aires, 1936-1938

Country	Total seats
USA	19.321.249
Argentina	2.530.635
United Kingdom	1.545.251
France	1.023.891
Germany	752.127
Spain	396.119
Mexico	143.663
Argentina-USA	136.850
Italy	115.420
Germany-France	107.257
Austria	103.876



El Exhibidor, 1936

Top10 films per year and country of origin

1936

Title	Seats	Country
Puerto Nuevo	53193	Arg.
Modern Times	48949	US
Nobleza baturra	43500	Spain
The Story of Louis Pasteur	41714	US
Loco lindo	39302	Arg.
Captain Blood	39186	US
La muchachada de a bordo	35020	Arg.
The Littlest Rebel	33637	US
I Found Stella Parrish	33584	US
Top hat	32341	US

1937

Title	Seats	Country
El pobre Pérez	93798	Arg.
Cadetes de San Martín	53166	Arg.
The Garden of Allah	51012	US
Melgarejo	47298	Arg.
Lo que le pasó a Reynoso	39922	Arg.
The Gay Desperado	39597	US
The Plainsman	37860	US
History Is Made at Night	35901	US
Ramona	35611	US
Los muchachos de antes no usaban gomina	34826	Arg.

1938

Title	Seats	Country
Maestro Levita	77265	Arg.
Villa Discordia	61272	Arg.
El canillita y la dama	55150	Arg.
Madreselva	52634	Arg.
Con las alas rotas	52031	Arg.
The Prisoner of Zenda	50049	US
El último encuentro	49519	Arg.
La ley que olvidaron	47794	Arg.
The Hurricane	45722	US
Stage Door	40569	US

Top 20 1936, without US nor Argentina

Title	POPSTAT Total	Country
Nobleza baturra	43500	Spain
Casta diva	30740	Italy
Mayerling	30693	France
The 39 Steps	28892	United Kingdom
Michel Strogoff	26941	France
Morena clara	26309	Spain
Vergiss mein nicht	24294	Germany
The Dictator	21253	United Kingdom
La verbena de la paloma	20415	Spain
King of the Damned	19282	United Kingdom
The Beloved Vagabond	18977	United Kingdom
The Tunnel	18592	United Kingdom
Mazurka	18431	Germany
Au nom de la loi	18080	France
The Guv'nor	17866	United Kingdom
Veille d'armes	17695	France
Königsmark	16849	France-United Kingdom
<i>La vida y la pasión de Jesucristo</i>	16056	France
The Amateur Gentleman	16016	United Kingdom
The Clairvoyant	15681	United Kingdom

Top 20 1937, without US nor Argentina

Title	POPSTAT Total	Country
Avec le sourire	33366	France
Club de femmes	32310	France
Knight without Armour	30278	United Kingdom
Port Arthur	28204	Germany-Czechoslovakia-France
La kermesse héroïque	26519	Germany-France
Fire Over England	25676	United Kingdom
Men Are Not Gods	25409	United Kingdom
Accused	25089	United Kingdom
Wings of the Morning	24439	United Kingdom
Rembrandt	23954	United Kingdom
Elephant Boy	21989	United Kingdom
Das Mädchen Irene	20902	Germany
Sabotage	20640	United Kingdom
Le roi	20325	France
Thunder in the City	19791	United Kingdom
Mayerling	19307	France
The Great Barrier	19230	United Kingdom
Les perles de la couronne	17947	France
Nitchevo	17521	France
Wo die Lerche singt	16672	Germany-Hungary-Switzerland

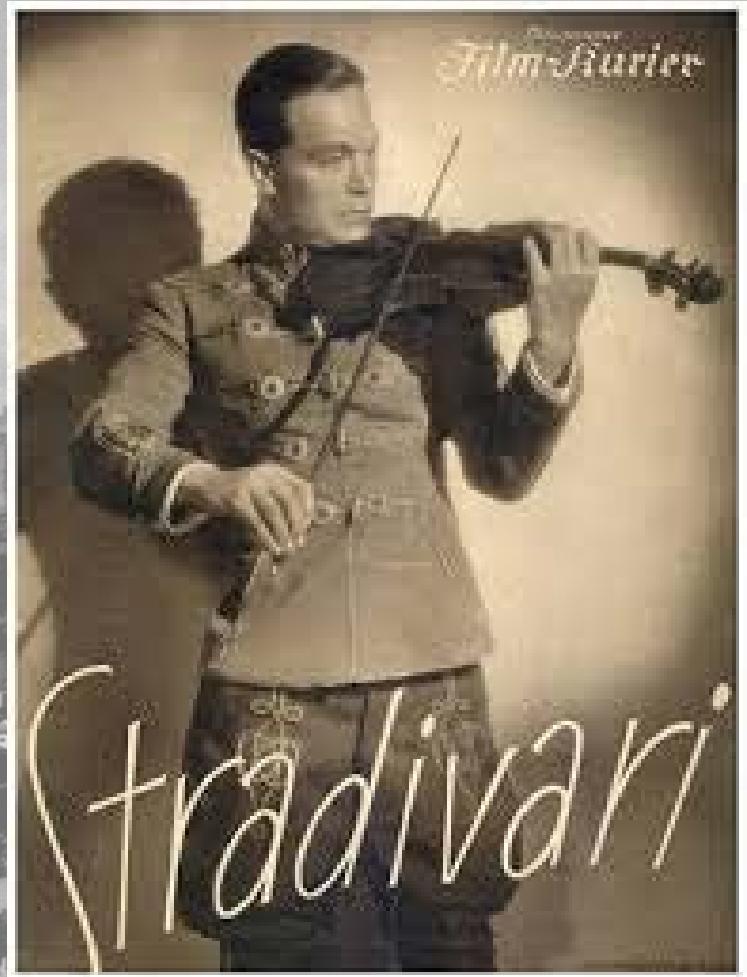
Top 20 1938, without US nor Argentina

Title	POPSTAT Total	Country
Abus de confiance	35762	France
La chaste Suzanne	31324	United Kingdom
Victoria the Great	29765	United Kingdom
Orage	29120	France
Zauber der Boheme	27443	Austria
Allá en el Rancho Grande	25971	México
Amapola del camino	25031	México
The Return of the Scarlet Pimpernel	20202	United Kingdom
¡Centinela, alerta!	19536	Spain
La hija de Juan Simón	19316	Spain
A Yank at Oxford	18880	United Kingdom
Dinner at the Ritz	17223	United Kingdom
Les deux gosses	17121	France
Corazones sin rumbo	16615	Germany-Spain
Un mauvais garçon	16533	France
Carmen, la de Triana	15572	Germany-Spain
Mademoiselle ma mère	15535	France
Le mensonge de Nina Petrovna	15070	France
La citadelle du silence	14655	France
Morena clara	14546	Spain

Top 20 German films exhibited during 1936



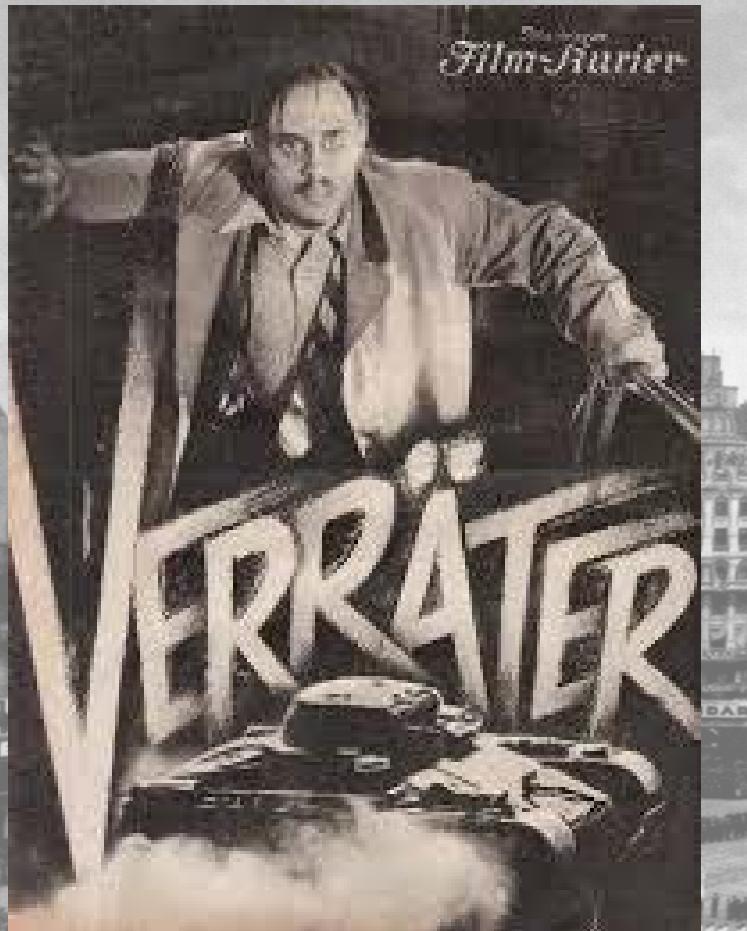
Title	Sum of seats
Vergiss mein nicht	24294
Mazurka	18431
J'aime toutes les femmes	15157
Schwarze Rosen	13770
Traumulus	9985
Der Student von Prag	9960
Ihr größter Erfolg	9005
Liselotte von der Pfalz	8514
Stjenka Rasin	8502
Die englische Heirat	8409
Die Freundin eines großen Mannes	7645
Die blonde Carmen	7616
Herbstmanöver	7550
Heißes Blut	7375
Turandot, princesse de Chine	7064
Stradivari	6733
Der Zarewitsch	6538
Gern hab' ich die Frau'n geküßt	6341
Die Czardasfürstin	5783
Ich sehne mich nach dir	5555



Top 20 German films exhibited during 1937



Title	Sum of seats
Das Mädchen Irene	20902
Das Schloß in Flandern	13704
Weiße Sklaven	13650
Schlußakkord	11549
Mädchenjahre einer Königin	11374
Stadt Anatol	10475
J'aime toutes les femmes	9232
Das Hofkonzert	8976
Die unmögliche Frau	7640
Der Kaiser von Kalifornien	7559
Eine Nacht an der Donau	7541
Verräter	7519
Boccaccio	7493
Der Bettelstudent	6416
Mazurka	6176
Regine	6125
Vergiss mein nicht	5716
Klein Dorrit	5209
Alarm in Peking	5171
Du bist mein Glück	5157



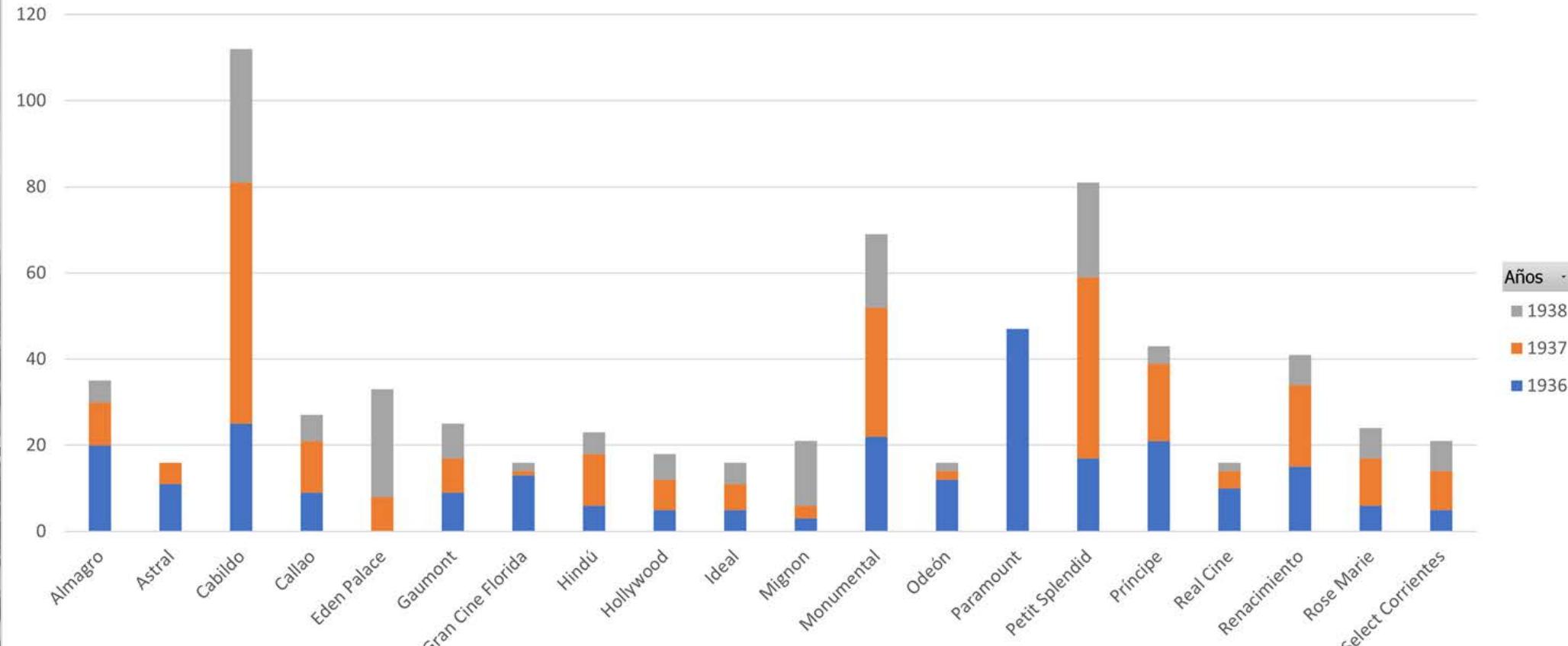
Top 20 German films exhibited during 1938



Title	Sum of seats
Corazones sin rumbo	16615
Carmen, la de Triana	15572
Das Schloß in Flandern	13059
Das Mädchen Irene	11455
El barbero de Sevilla	10798
Ma soeur de lait	10797
Condottieri	10171
Les gais lurons	9507
Der Bettelstudent	9356
Le domino vert	8722
Vergiss mein nicht	8378
Mein Herz ruft nach dir	7924
Sieben Ohrfeigen	6747
Eine Frau, die weiß, was sie will	6664
Wo die Lerche singt	6368
Les gens du voyage	6165
Ritt in die Freiheit	5746
Es war einmal ein Walzer	4780
Le diable en bouteille	4604
Die Nacht mit dem Kaiser	4366

Pais de origen 

Cuenta de Título definitivo



Sala 

Cinemas that more often programmed German films are: Cabildo, Petit Splendid, Monumental, Renacimiento, Príncipe, Almagro, Hindu.

Many of these theaters used to exhibit also other European films. Later some of these become target of US vigilance.

Preliminary Conclusions

- As expected, American and Argentine films represent the majority of movies show in Buenos Aires movie theatres' in these years.
- However, European cinema has also a strong showing, and Germany disputes the second position with France.
- Germany's presence decreases throughout these years.
- German movies often had graphic advertising in newspapers and good critic reception.
- There was a specific cluster of theaters that had contracts with European film distributors and programmed German films.
- Later on, some of those theaters became target of US vigilance; apparently some of them were bought by or had contracts with the German Embassy.