

What is a *luchador*?

The modern tradition of the masked luchador was begun in Mexico by El Santo - the Man in the Silver Mask.

He was a wrestler who resurrected the ancient Aztec tradition of the mask and assumed a new identity.

"El Santo" was not a fictional character he played - it was his new real-life identity.



Santo, Blue Demon, and Mil Mascaras are regarded as *The Big 3* of the tradition



Blue Demon



Mil Mascaras

"When a luchador chooses to give up his own identity and adopt a mask he will begin see how much of his previous life was driven by selfish interests [such as] trying to earn the respect of others instead of just doing what's right."

- Mil Mascaras



El Santo

Santo became a legend. When he died in 1984, tens of thousands of people filled the streets to mourn his passing.



Santo was buried in his silver mask and cape and statues were erected in his honor.

His son now wears the silver mask as Hijo del Santo.

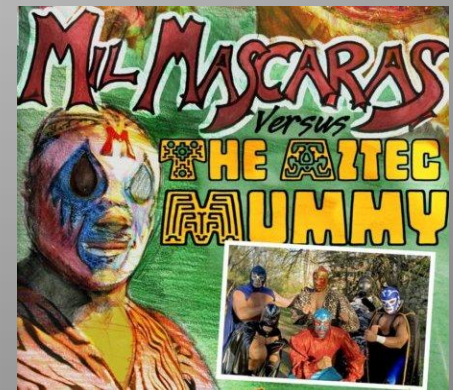
When Blue Demon died in 2000, he was honored with his picture on the Twenty Pesos note.

Like Santo, Blue Demon's iconic mask was passed to his son, Blue Demon Jr.



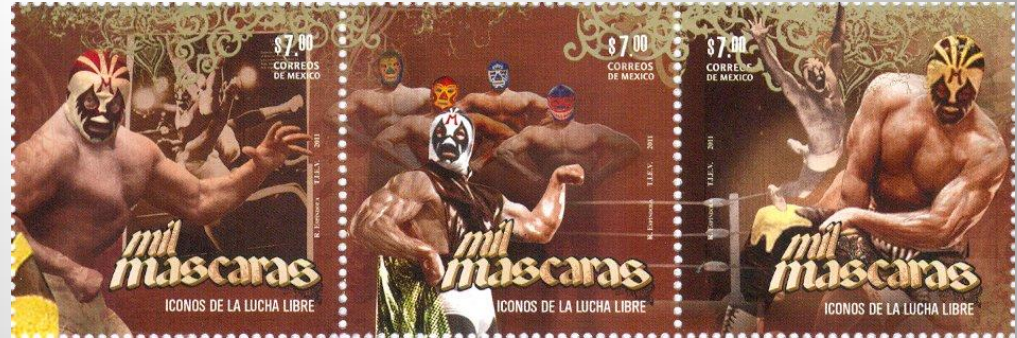
(The photo to the left shows Blue Demon Jr at a state function.)

The sons of Santo and Blue Demon appeared with Mil Mascaras in the film "Mil Mascaras vs. the Aztec Mummy" in 2007.



Blue Demon Jr arrives at the National Assembly Hall for President Calderon's State of the Nation address in Mexico City.
(Wall Street Journal / Associated Press)

Mexico recently honored Mil Mascaras with three postage stamps bearing images from his legendary career.



No living person has ever received such an honor.

It is important to understand that luchadores such as Santo, Mil Mascaras, and Blue Demon always wear their masks.

Their masks represent their true identities.



"[*On Mexican culture*] ...the most fascinating is the enduring role of the mask. Masks were part of Mexican life for centuries before the arrival of the first European. Any good correspondent must try to understand the role played in the Mexican imagination by such characters as El Santo and Mil Mascaras."

From the keynote address by famed journalist Pete Hamill at the *Images of Mexico in the US Media Symposium*, Feb. 2000.

Lucha Films

Santo, Mil Mascaras, and Blue Demon starred together or separately in over 80 films.



These films acquired a huge international cult following because of their surreal sensibilities.

Lucha Films

The appeal of the lucha film is that it stars super-hero characters *who actually exist*.

The typical plot of a lucha film may seem absurd by conventional standards, but it is produced as serious cinema.

The lucha genre is unique.



Lucha Films

Kids in Mexico develop great affection for lucha films because they grow up watching them. As they get older, however, they sometimes come to believe that the genre is second-rate because it is ignored by Hollywood.



Outside of Mexico, film aficionados often regard lucha films as being more interesting and entertaining than Hollywood superhero films.

Who is Mil Mascaras?

Mil Mascaras - *the Man of a Thousand Masks* - is the last of the Big 3.

He is a scholar, wrestler, and accomplished artist.



Mil Mascaras revolutionized the tradition with his many mask designs.

He is an international star and has served as Mexico's most famous cultural ambassador.



Mil Mascaras - Cultural Icon

Mil Mascaras was a red-carpet special guest at the 2007 Imagen Awards (analogous to the NAACP image awards) ceremony at the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, CA.



Although he comes from Mexico, his iconic status is not limited to the Hispanic community and Spanish-speaking countries. Santo, Mil Mascaras, and other luchadores have set an example that is respected around the world.