



Sheriff Pat Garrett (Rick Edwards, left) and Billy the Kid (Jason Montoya) stare each other down as Bob Olinger (Tomas Sanchez, rear) stands guard in "Billy the Kid."

# Billy the Play

*Billy the Kid, el Bilito, has a history in New Mexico. Rudolfo Anaya shows onstage the Kid Hispanics loved and Anglos hated.*

By Richard Benke  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Why is Billy the Kid still sending off sparks 116 years after the 21-year-old gunfighter was shot to death by Sheriff Pat Garrett?

Why do myth and magic swirl around this one New Mexico cowboy? And why was he beloved in the Hispanic community while despised by many an Anglo?

Writer Rudolfo Anaya, who grew up in Billy the Kid country, has built a play from these musings, and La Casa Teatro is giving "Billy the Kid" its world-premiere run, directed by Cecilia Aragon. It opens today.

"As a child I heard stories about Billy the Kid," Anaya says. "The Mexicans called him el Bilito, the little Billy, Hispanicized Billy. And visiting in Puerto de Luna as a child, I heard stories which were incidents. A person would say: 'He gambled at the saloon; Billy the Kid rode through here. See that bullet hole in that post or that wall? That's Billy the Kid's.'"

"So growing up here very close to Fort Sumner, where he's buried, there was always in the back of my mind a sense of familiarity."

Anaya's play, published in 1995 by Warner Books, grew out of that familiarity plus some research. Billy, as the story goes, had a problem backing down from a fight, and that problem was compounded by government cor-

ruption that had turned the law in Lincoln County upside down.

"It's just that Billy the Kid popped out as a figure in New Mexico history who has acquired all these mythical proportions. The take on it for me was to look at it from a Nuevo Mexicano point of view," Anaya says. "Why were the incidents I heard as a child told with a kind of satisfaction? Why did they call him el Bilito, my little Billy? Why did he have this kind of aura with the Spanish-speaking community?"

Anaya says Billy was accepted by Hispanics because he spoke fluent Spanish and was "simpatico." He was a *compadre*, almost like family.

"And there's a little bit of that Robin Hood character to him," he says.

At the time, Anglo politicians in Santa Fe were grabbing up Hispanic land, he says.

"I mean, the New Mexican Spanish-speaking community was being crowded out of land grants, looking at the politicians and politicos and saying: 'Help us. How do we deal with an English-speaking world and the law and deeds and titles that are not recorded and are being taken from us, literally stolen?'"

In their view, he says: "No doubt the Anglo's a bad guy; he's in power. Along comes Billy the Kid, who is also suffering from that law, double-crossed in a sense by Lew Wallace, the governor. He is promised a pardon,

and then a price is put on his head. "So I can see how the common people, the people that are out grazing sheep and cattle and trying to ranch on the Puerto de Luna Valley, would see him as one of theirs."

Anaya's play intersperses two opposing accounts of Billy's life, one ghost-written for Garrett by territorial newspaperman Ash Upson and the other by Paco Anaya, who knew the Kid, was present at his 1881 death in Fort Sumner and wrote an account.

The two authors, played respectively by Marty Epstein and Vic Silva, engage in a running narrative debate throughout the play while the scenes they describe take shape onstage.

"I'm the Anglo," says Epstein, who plays Ash. "I'm 'The Authentic Life of Billy the Kid.' I'm basically defending Pat Garrett's story of Billy the Kid."

Veteran stage and film actor Rick Edwards plays Garrett.

"Paco Anaya represents the Hispanic side of the story, which has really never been told. It was not only an economic war; it was a cultural war," says Edwards, who has appeared in such films as "Drive" and "Wyatt Earp."

Silva, who plays Paco, says, "My family is from Lincoln County, and I do know that my great-grandmother Sanchez used to feed Billy the Kid down in San Patricio."

"I think Paco represents one of the Hispanic viewpoints of Billy, as far as what *la gente* (people) thought of him," Silva says.

Was Paco one of Rudolfo Anaya's relatives?

"I have no idea," Anaya says.

Agripina Lujan, a 15-year-old Rio Rancho High School sophomore, plays Rosa, who has the combination of fire and innocence to capture Billy's heart and give him hope.

The jealous ex-girlfriend, Josefina, a fictional schemer played by Stephanie Roybal, fits Billy's darker side.

Jason Montoya, who plays Billy, sees something of the common man in his character.

"He is transcendent to both cultures — white and Hispanic — kind of like a bridge between the two," says Montoya.

**'BILLY THE KID'**  
Written by Rudolfo Anaya.  
Performances at 8 p.m.  
Friday and Saturday, 2 p.m.  
Sunday through July 20 at  
the South Broadway Cultural  
Center, 1025 Broadway S.E.  
Tickets \$8 adults,  
\$5 students/seniors.  
Call 848-1323.



Billy the Kid (Jason Montoya) pleads for his freedom with Sheriff Pat Garrett (Rick Edwards) in "Billy the Kid," a play in which Rudolfo Anaya examines the life of the gunfighter and why the state's Hispanics embraced him.

New GRAFF merchandise just arrived.

Sale Continues on Selected Merchandise

**Camille's**  
Sportswear, Foundations & Lingerie  
1625 San Pedro 268-2770  
(& Constitution) 1-888-693-2770  
FAX: 505-265-2355

MasterCard VISA Discover American Express

AD-VISOR 823-4444

EVERY YEAR ONE FILM DARES TO BE DIFFERENT... AND THE CRITICS AGREE

SISKEL & EBERT  
"ONE OF THE YEAR'S BEST FILMS."  
-Gene Siskel

THE NEW YORK TIMES  
"ASTONISHING... 'Ulee's Gold' is beautiful and heartfelt, an oasis of humanity in a season of furious hyperbole."  
-Janet Maslin

ROLLING STONE  
"A TRIUMPH... Fonda is a revelation fusing impulsive force and tender feeling to create a classically memorable screen character."  
-Peter Travers

PETER FONDA  
**ULEE'S GOLD**

ORION PICTURES AND JONATHAN DEARME PRESENT A NINEZ-GUYAN/CINEMA ESTETICO PRODUCTION "ULEE'S GOLD" STARRING PETER FONDA PATRICIA RICHARDSON JESSICA BIEL J. KENNETH CAMPBELL CHRISTINE DUNFORD STEVEN FLYNN DEWEY WEBER TOM WOOD VANESSA ZIMA AND JUDY COURTNEY WRITER ALEX STEYERMARK DIRECTOR CHARLES CHOSTROFF PRODUCED BY PETER WINTER COSTUME DESIGNER DEBBIE DEVILLA EDITOR MARILYN WALL-ASSE MUSIC BY VIGOR ARMANDO EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS EDWARD SAXTON JOHN SLOSS VALERIE THOMAS EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS STEWART LIPPE GREG GUS HOLZER PRODUCED BY VICTOR NUNEZ WRITTEN BY PETER FONDA AND SAM GUYAN DIRECTED BY PETER FONDA

EXCLUSIVE UNITED ARTISTS High Ridge 8 11:30 2:05 4:40 7:15 9:50  
Tramway & Indian School 275-0038

**CRAB LEGS FOR 2**  
Friday Nights 5-11pm  
in the  
CLASSIC GRILLE

**2 FULL LBS. of Alaskan King Crab legs**

plus  
a 60oz. Pitcher of Bud Light  
or  
a Liter of Wine  
for only  
\$28.95

Sheraton Uptown Albuquerque HOTEL  
881-0000  
2600 LOUISIANA NE, (Corner of Menaul & Louisiana)  
NOT AVAILABLE WITH ANY OTHER PROMOTION OR DISCOUNTS

**MARGARITAS & MARGARITAS FOR TWO**  
Saturday Nights 5-11pm  
in the  
CLASSIC GRILLE

**\$14.95**

Enjoy Sizzling Fajitas for 2 (Beef or Chicken)  
Fresh Tortillas, Sour Cream, Guacamole, Cheese and Pico de Gallo  
Wash it Down with a 60oz. Pitcher of Margaritas  
All for Only \$14.95

Sheraton Uptown Albuquerque HOTEL  
881-0000

**ALASKAN SNOW CRAB**  
I FULL CRAB POUND

INCLUDES:  
IDAHO BAKED POTATO WITH SHONEY'S ALL YOU CAN EAT SOUP/SALAD/FRUIT BAR

Only \$8.99

**SHONEY'S**

2 LOCATIONS  
Louisiana & Menaul 883-0040  
Montgomery & Eubank 275-0050