

## Appendix A. (continued)

Approximate time on screen	Description
0:57:50	Nondiegetic brass theme
0:59:30	Nondiegetic string theme
1:01:35	Music box in Nanae's apartment, Matsunaga trying to recover
1:02:10	Nondiegetic string theme
1:04:30	Music box in Nanae's apartment
1:08:15–1:11:10	Matsunaga dream sequence, nondiegetic, both themes, "Killer's Anthem" on English horn, possible use of back masking effects
1:13:30–1:17:20	Continuous nondiegetic music, both string and brass themes
1:20:05–1:23:00	"The Cuckoo Waltz" from loudspeaker, ends while Matsunaga is in a bar
1:23:35–1:25:15	"The Cuckoo Waltz" begins again as Matsunaga leaves bar
1:25:30	Okada plays "Killer's Anthem" in Nanae's apartment
1:28:45	Nondiegetic string theme
1:30:35	Nondiegetic string theme, Matsunaga dies
1:32:15	Nondiegetic string theme, winds also play
1:35:35	Nondiegetic string theme
1:37:35	Sanada singing
1:37:30	Nondiegetic strings, leads to final credit card

## Fast and Bilingual: *Fast & Furious* and the Latinization of Racelessness

by MARY BELTRÁN

**Abstract:** This article interrogates the immense popularity of *Fast & Furious* (Justin Lin, 2009), the fourth film in the *Fast* franchise, with US Latino viewers when it was released, exploring both the film industry's targeting of Latinos in recent years and the potential of and limitations inherent to foregrounding a "bilingual aesthetic" in a franchise known for an ethos of racelessness. Comparisons to the short film *Los Bandoleros* (Vin Diesel, 2009), included with *Fast & Furious* on the commercial DVD, highlight borders that still exist when major US studios construct a seemingly multicultural narrative for global audiences.

"Cómo se dice socko?" *Variety* asked.<sup>1</sup> The bilingual headline was posed in response to a film's success that appeared to catch the industry off guard. In early April 2009, *Fast & Furious* (Justin Lin, 2009), the fourth installment of *The Fast and the Furious* film franchise, topped the domestic box office on its opening weekend, grossing more than \$71 million. (The next installment, *Fast Five* [Justin Lin, 2011], would later eclipse that figure at \$86 million).<sup>2</sup> The franchise, centered on spectacular car stunts and multicultural ensemble casts, had garnered a dwindling audience for the 2006 installment *Fast and Furious: Tokyo Drift* (Justin Lin), but the producers and Universal had high hopes that Vin Diesel and the other original stars' return would revitalize the franchise. Making the film's success even more notable, *Fast & Furious's* opening-weekend

1 This translates as "How do you say socko?" Pamela McClintock, "Hollywood Studies Latin 101," *Variety*, April 13–19, 2009, 6 (reprint of "Movie Marketing Targets Latinos," *Variety*, April 10, 2009).

2 Pamela McClintock, "'Fast Five' Scores Record Setting \$83.6 Million at Weekend Box Office," *Hollywood Reporter*, May 1, 2011, <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/fast-five-scores-record-setting-183949>; the May 4, 2011, update notes "*Fast Five* opened to \$86.2 million at the domestic box office—\$3 million more than the studio's Sunday estimate of \$83.6 million."

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audiences included a surprise 46 percent Latino viewers.<sup>3</sup> Industry trade journals and the *Los Angeles Times* made note of the news, underscoring the growing importance of the US Latina and Latino audience to Hollywood.<sup>4</sup> The film, like *Fast Five*, also went on to perform extremely well internationally, holding the number one slot for several weeks and sometimes months in Latin American countries, in Asia and Europe, and in other countries worldwide.

*Fast & Furious* reunites Paul Walker and Vin Diesel in the roles of Brian O'Conner and Dominic Toretto, vastly different protagonists (Brian is the "fast" to Dom's "furious") and former friends; Brian as an undercover cop almost had Dom, an infamous street racer who has used his skills to criminal ends, arrested years prior. In this meeting, they must work together and, more important, utilize their formidable racing skills to bring down a common foe, a Mexican heroin smuggler responsible for the death of Dom's girlfriend. As this brief description likely makes evident, *Fast* is an action-oriented genre film that aims to maximize the excitement of its car stunts more than crafting nuanced character portrayals. Just as important as the car-fueled spectacle, however, is the underlying ethos of the *Fast* franchise, that of an urban, multicultural, and presumably postracial world in which the story's heroes perform cultural border crossing with ease.<sup>5</sup> I note in analysis of this aesthetic of "racelessness" established in the 2001 *The Fast and the Furious*, however, that it does not extend on close examination beyond such aesthetic elements. From the original film, *Fast & Furious* inherited a diverse cast of light-tan hue, including Diesel (of Italian and purported African American or Afro-Dominican heritage), Jordana Brewster (of Brazilian and European American heritage), and Michelle Rodriguez (who is Dominican and Puerto Rican). Walker was the lone returning star of European American heritage. In line with conventions of the franchise, the story world is also populated with diverse, nonwhite extras; the resulting palette of light-tan and brown skin tones in the background is a defining visual element of what I have previously called the "multiculti action film."<sup>6</sup>

Gregory T. Carter also has aptly described this contemporary aesthetic, often facilitated through casting mixed-race, ethnically ambiguous actors, as "mixploitation."<sup>7</sup>

This installment of the franchise, notably, is the first that makes Latinos, and Latino culture, central-defining elements to the raceless aesthetic. The short film *Los Bandoleros* (Vin Diesel, 2009), a prequel to *Fast & Furious* and part of the DVD set that was written and directed by, and starred, Vin Diesel, and features Michelle Rodriguez and reggaetón artists Don Omar and Tego Calderón, only reinforces this emphasis. Scholars such as Mike Davis and Augustín Lao-Montés have documented the Latinization, or increasing Latino influence and related cultural hybridity, experienced in the past decades in American cities and regions; we are witnessing parallel trends in US media culture as Latinos constitute a larger portion of the audience, and as Latina and Latino actors, characters, and themes are at times occupying the center stage of films and television series.<sup>8</sup> As a case study of the Latinization of a mainstream film, *Fast & Furious* provides an instructive example of a successful effort to target Latino and Latin American audiences in addition to other audiences, as well as of the challenges and tensions inherent in such production and marketing dynamics.

As I explore in this study of the film and through interviews with its director, Justin Lin, casting, narrative, aesthetic, and marketing choices that can be described as contributing to what I call a "bilingual aesthetic" were particularly important in this regard. I attempt to illuminate in the process the construction of such an aesthetic by the film's creative producers and promoters—not a simple prospect given its slippery nature, as it involves an embracing of cultural hybridity and mainstream US culture, even while Latino cultures are invoked and at times given visibility and voice. This is particularly the case for *Fast & Furious* and other films of the *Fast* franchise, given how they combine appeals to Latino viewers with production and marketing choices interpellating a broadly multicultural and global audience and, like other films in the franchise, how they embrace an ethos of postracial multiculturalism.

Ultimately, *Fast & Furious* mobilizes notions of race in contradictory ways. It reinforces Hollywood traditions of white centrism, reinforcing notions of white male mastery while also dramatizing the figurative borders crossed daily by culturally competent global youth—both Latino and non-Latino—who fuel race-car and other commercial youth cultures. It is not surprising that a film franchise that has built one of its greatest appeals on its embodiment of cultural mingling and border crossing has expanded that vision to embrace the Latino diaspora within and outside the United States. However, despite this progressive visibility, there are tensions and limitations inherent to foregrounding *latinidad* alongside an ethos of racelessness. This study aims to illuminate the multiple overlapping and often contradictory discourses given voice in the film. The contrasts between *Fast & Furious* and *Los Bandoleros*, as I note here, underscore where the ideological borders lie with regard to the still-ambivalent status

3 The opening-weekend audience also was 28 percent Caucasian, 16 percent African American, 8 percent Asian, and 2 percent "other," according to CinemaScore. Pamela McClintock and Dave McNary, "Fuel-Injected Sequel," *Daily Variety*, April 6, 2009, news 1.

4 More recently, the large Latino audiences that came out to see the LAPD cop drama *End of Watch* (David Ayer, 2012) and 3-D children's film *Hotel Transylvania* (Genndy Tartakovsky, 2012) inspired similar discussion. See McClintock, "Hollywood Studies Latin 101"; McClintock and McNary, "Fuel-Injected Sequel"; Benjamin Svetkey, "'Fast and Furious': Inside a Surprise Smash," *Entertainment Weekly*, April 9, 2009, 1043; Reed Johnson, "'Fast and Furious' Taps Into Latino Market," *Los Angeles Times*, April 7, 2009, <http://articles.latimes.com/april07/entertainment/et-car/Latino07>; Pamela McClintock, "The Secret to a Smash Movie: Lure Latinos," *Hollywood Reporter*, October 3, 2012, <http://hollywoodreporter.com/news/latino-movies-end-of-watch-hotel-transylvania-375971>.

5 Mary Beltrán, "The New Hollywood Racelessness: When Only the Fast, Furious (and Multiracial) Will Survive," *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 2 (Winter 2005): 50–67.

6 Borrowing from popular parlance, I first applied "multiculti" in film studies in 2005 to refer to the cinematic construction of idealized multicultural communities in film and television narratives through the casting of actors of a variety of skin tones and the incorporation of nonwhite cultural referents in art design and mise-en-scène, to the neglect of incorporating multiple, culturally diverse voices and characters within these filmed narratives. Multiculti films and television aim to look multicultural but are more ambiguous and typically white centrist on deeper examination. See Beltrán, "The New Hollywood Racelessness."

7 Gregory T. Carter, "From Blaxploitation to Mixploitation: Mixed-Race, Male Leads and Changing Black Identities," in *Mixed Race Hollywood*, ed. Mary Beltrán and Camilla Fojas (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 203–220.

8 Mike Davis, *Magical Urbanism: Latin@s Reinvent the US City* (New York: Verso, 2001); Augustín Lao-Montés, "Mambo Montage: The Latinization of New York City," in *Mambo Montage: The Latinization of New York*, ed. Augustín Lao-Montés and Arlene Dávila (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 1–53.

of Latina and Latino protagonists, particularly those of a darker hue, and of Latino audiences in relation to *Fast & Furious* and similar big-budget, studio-backed films.

In this study, I explore these tensions through critical and textual analysis of the film and its extratextual and promotional materials. I also carry out an analysis of the film's critical reception with attention to how the industry responded to the knowledge that Latinos composed a large portion of the opening-weekend audience. To do so, I survey film reviews in the popular press, including both mainstream and English-language Latino-oriented news outlets, using the Lexis/Nexis database, as well as postrelease discussion of the film in industry trade journals such as *Variety*, *Hollywood Reporter*, and *Broadcasting and Cable*. Finally, I buttress this research with interviews in March 2010 and March 2012 with *Fast & Furious* director Justin Lin regarding the film and its production, its popular and industry reception, and his thoughts on the ongoing development of the *Fast* franchise.

I begin with a summary of the still-scant research and discussion in the trade press regarding US film and media producers' outreach to Latino audiences in the past few decades. Given that *Fast & Furious* mobilizes and embodies on several fronts the geographic and figurative borders that American and particularly acculturated Latino and Latina youth negotiate in their daily lives, my analysis also builds on relevant scholarship and theory regarding thematic border crossing in American media and contemporary notions of multiculturalism and US race relations. Given the growth of Latinos to 17 percent of the US audience and the projection of their continued growth in the US population, *Fast & Furious* is an important test case of the Latinization of contemporary US media. It also provides a rich site to study "postracial" trends in millennial-era film and US society, as I reflect upon in my conclusions.

**Cinematic Borderlands: Hollywood and the US Latino Audience.** The Latino audience in the United States is growing in size and, arguably, influence, given their numbers (they account for 17 percent of Americans, 20 percent of American youth, and 25 percent of children aged five and younger) and documented avid moviegoing habits.<sup>9</sup> US Latinos are also younger on average than white Americans, which makes them both more likely to be moviegoers and presumably desirable to advertisers.<sup>10</sup> However, it was not until the 1980s when a handful of feature films directed by Latino directors found national distribution and a measure of success (such as *La Bamba* [Luis Valdez, 1987] and *Stand and Deliver* [Ramón Menéndez, 1988]) that the film industry began to take the Latino audience seriously, as noted by scholars focused on US Latino film such as Charles Ramírez Berg and Henry Puente.<sup>11</sup> Other moments in which the

9 Latinos have been found to comprise 28 percent of heavy moviegoers and are more likely than other Americans to attend a film within its first weeks. See Karen Humes, Nicholas A. Jones, and Roberto R. Ramirez, "Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010," US Census Bureau (Washington, DC), 2011, <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefsc/2010br-02.pdf>.

10 The average age of Latino Americans in 2008 was 27.7, compared to 36.8 years old for white Americans. See "Census Bureau Estimates Nearly Half of Children under 5 Are Minorities," May 14, 2009, US Census Bureau (Washington, DC), 2009, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cb09-75.html>.

11 Charles Ramírez Berg, *Latino Images in Film: Stereotype, Subversion, and Resistance* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002); Henry Puente, *The Promotion and Distribution of US Latino Films* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011).

US media industries appeared to take notice of the profits to be made from Latino audiences include 1995, when beloved Mexican American singer Selena was killed and sales of her music skyrocketed, and when Latino and Latina stars such as Jennifer Lopez and Benicio del Toro headlined financially successful films in recent years. In another influential development, Latinos also surpassed African Americans as the largest nonwhite group in the United States in 2000. Latinos have grown in numbers and influence and arguably are beginning to play a decisive role as citizens, consumers, and audiences.

Response on the part of film and television producers to this growth appears to have been mixed and often lukewarm, however. Studies of Latina and Latino representation on prime-time television (equivalent longitudinal studies of films have not yet been attempted) have found in recent years that Latinos accounted for no more than 4–6 percent of all recurring prime-time TV series characters, with the most recent statistics from 2004.<sup>12</sup> More recently, a Screen Actors Guild study found that Latina and Latino actors performed in 6.4 percent of all film and television roles in 2008.<sup>13</sup> Confusion regarding whether US Latinos watch English-language media often plays a role in their continued underrepresentation in English-language film and television. In just one example of attitudes within the industry to this underrepresentation, *Broadcasting and Cable* notes that there was little attention paid at the Hispanic Television Summit in 2008 to why English-language networks "aren't more aggressive" about reaching out to Latino viewers.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, a small evolution can be discerned with respect to some producers attempting to target Latino viewers within their broader potential audience through casting and other production strategies. While not the most empirical of studies, a survey of articles on English-language television in *Hispanic* magazine in the past decade reveals shifts in Latino news-media opinion regarding representation in television programming, from the disappointed and critical in September 2003 to more cautiously optimistic by 2006 and 2008.<sup>15</sup> Likely related to this shift in response to Latino representation in English-language television, a small number of Latina and Latino characters joined some children's and prime-time series casts (even while one of the few series with a Latino lead, *The George Lopez Show* [ABC, 2006–2007], was canceled). Occasional moments of subtitled Spanish or of the inclusion of a Latino point of view also at times can be found in both children's and prime-time television in recent years.

In this manner, a Latinization of US media thus is becoming evident, in some instances, in film and television. Latinization is defined for the purposes of this study

12 Allison R. Hoffman and Chon A. Noriega, "Looking for Latino Regulars on Prime Time Television," Research Report No. 4, UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, Los Angeles, 2004.

13 *2007 and 2008 Casting Data Reports* (Los Angeles: Screen Actors Guild, 2009), <http://www.sag.org/content/studies-and-reports>.

14 "Latin Lessons," *Broadcasting and Cable*, October 26, 2008, [http://www.broadcastingcable.com/article/116031-Latin\\_Lessons.php](http://www.broadcastingcable.com/article/116031-Latin_Lessons.php).

15 Eric Deggans, "Where Are the Latinas? TV Network Executives Turn a Blind Eye to Increasing Hispanic Demographics," *Hispanic* 16, no. 9 (2003): 3839; Richard D. Hoffman, "The Next Generation of Hispanic Television Is In English," *Hispanic* 18, no. 12 (2005), reprinted at [http://news.newamericamedia.org/news/view\\_article.html?article\\_id=c80921424ff5e204fd30e81993ee22a4](http://news.newamericamedia.org/news/view_article.html?article_id=c80921424ff5e204fd30e81993ee22a4); Romina Ruiz-Goreira, "Welcome to Prime Time," *Hispanic* 21, no. 9 (2008): 42–44.

as an overt courting of Latino viewers and an increased visibility of Latina and Latino characters and culture through a variety of strategies. Examples can be seen in children's television series built around Latina protagonists, such as *Dora the Explorer* (Nickelodeon, 2000–) and *The Wizards of Waverly Place* (Disney Channel, 2007–2012), in the inclusion of Latina and Latino characters among the ensemble casts of some films and television series (to the benefit of such actors as Sofia Vergara, Adam Rodríguez, Eva Mendes, Mark Consuelos, and Sara Ramirez), and in the establishment of bilingual networks, such as SiTV (now nuvoTV) and Mun2, which aim to appeal to acculturated Latinas and Latinos.

Media producers, studios, and networks have, however, frequently appeared unsure about how to appeal to Latino viewers and in which language. Puente has documented ways in which studios more often than not miscalculated the targeting of the Latino audience while marketing US Latino films such as *La Bamba* (1987) and *My Family* (*Mi familia*; Gregory Nava, 1995) in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>16</sup> In recent years, Adam Fogelson, chair of Universal Pictures, who was head of marketing for the studio during *Fast & Furious*'s release, has noted: "[Latinos] are a great and reliable moviegoing audience, and they have a lot of power that needs to be taken seriously. Yet I think the industry is still struggling in how to reach them. But there's no reason to be struggling."<sup>17</sup> Producer Elizabeth Avellan, who produced the *Spy Kids* franchise (Robert Rodríguez, 2001–2011) and other Robert Rodríguez films, has stated also that film studios often still don't know how to "crack the code" of appealing to Latina and Latino viewers. Having a Latino director and executive producer can make a major difference in naturally imbuing a film with a Latino sensibility, she added. "It's just that they're not going around going, 'We're making Latino films'; they're saying, 'We're making awesome films that include our point of view and our flavor and our rhythms and things like that.'"<sup>18</sup>

As noted by Luis Torres-Bohl, president of Catalia Communications, which owns the Mexico-based Mexicana Network, and other experts on marketing to the Latino audience, US producers often mistakenly assume that all Latinos can be reached through one advertising message or simply through Spanish-language media and marketing.<sup>19</sup> While there is a dearth of scholarship on the media habits and interests of US Latinos and Latinas, with most of this research published just in the past decade, advertising firms in recent years are discovering in their own research that Latina and Latino youth in particular are often acculturated to the US mainstream, quick adopters of new media technology, and engaged in English-language popular culture in addition to Spanish-language media.<sup>20</sup> They are, however, arguably only beginning to be targeted by English-language media producers. Perhaps this is because such facts

contradict false assumptions about US Latino viewers that have persisted over the decades: that they consume only Spanish-language media (which Spanish-language networks presumably are loath to correct) and participate solely in a Latino-specific popular culture. In fact, it appears that the primary unifying trait of young Latino media consumers is a hybridity of interests, language, and cultural preferences in their media habits.<sup>21</sup>

The US film and television industries are slowly responding. Since the 1990s, some of the film studios have begun to act on documented knowledge that many Latinos are not as interested in Spanish-language films as in mainstream, English-language films marketed specifically to them, with both languages employed to reach Latinos of varying media consumption habits. Films that have performed well with a US Latino audience after studios' marketing teams employed these insights, as opposed to simply a Spanish-language campaign, include Universal's *The Mummy* (Stephen Sommers, 1999), Twentieth Century Fox's *Alvin and the Chipmunks* (Tim Hill, 2007), and Paramount's *Transformers* (Michael Bay, 2007). Universal in fact began such efforts in earnest a decade ago, after noting the large Latino audience garnered by films such as *The Mummy*. For instance, it successfully targeted Latina and Latino viewers with the earlier *Fast and the Furious* films, with Latinos composing 24 percent and 38 percent of the audience, respectively, thus successfully building an audience with each successive film of the franchise.<sup>22</sup>

The marketing for *Fast & Furious*, capitalizing on this knowledge and success, included a Spanish- and English-language promotional campaign to target Latino potential viewers inside and outside the United States. Among other elements of the bilingual campaign, Universal ran Spanish-language ads on Telemundo and Univisión during the World Cup and other key moments, placed previews on websites that target Latinos, and ran outdoor advertising in both Spanish and English in US neighborhoods with large Latino populations. In addition, Michelle Rodriguez and Vin Diesel took part in Spanish-language press junkets in Mexico and Miami.<sup>23</sup> Research reported by Ruth Behr and Reny Diaz after the film's release underscored that relying just on Spanish-language advertising would not have been sufficient: only 11.6 percent of moviegoers on opening weekend said that they had watched a Spanish-language trailer beforehand.<sup>24</sup>

Given the research and care that went into the marketing of the film to Latinos, it was surprising to discover upon analyzing the film's coverage in the trade press that

21 For example, in a 2007 study, only 7 percent of a sample of 766 Latina and Latino respondents between the ages of fourteen and thirty-four responded that Spanish was the language they spoke the most. See New Generation Latina/o Consortium, "New Generation Latina/o Media Habits, Internal Report," 2007, <http://ngic.biz/>. Studies by Vicki Mayer and Viviana Rojas, respectively, on the media habits of Latina and Latino youth in San Antonio and Austin had similar findings. See Vicki Mayer, *Producing Dreams, Consuming Youth: Mexican Americans and the Mass Media* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003); Viviana Rojas, "The Gender of Latinidad: Latinas Speak about Hispanic Television," *Communication Review* 7, no. 2 (2004): 125–153.

22 McClintock, "Hollywood Studies Latin 101."

23 Ibid.

24 Ruth Behr and Reny Diaz, "From Hayworth to Cansino: Turning the Tides in Latino Movie-Going Sensibilities," *Nielsen Consumer Insight*, July 2009, [http://en-us.nielsen.com/main/insights/consumer\\_insight/July\\_2009/from\\_hayworth\\_to\\_cansino](http://en-us.nielsen.com/main/insights/consumer_insight/July_2009/from_hayworth_to_cansino).

16 Puente, *Promotion and Distribution*.

17 McClintock, "Hollywood Studies Latin 101."

18 Cited in Breeanna Hare, "Studios Try to 'Crack the Code' on Hispanic Moviegoers," CNN, July 13, 2011, <http://www.cnn.com/2011/SHOWBIZ/Movies/07/13/latino.movie.audience/index.html?iref=allsearch>.

19 Luis Torres-Bohl, "Advertisers Continue to Overlook Hispanic Demos," *Television Week* 27, no. 27 (2008), [http://www.tvweek.com/news/2008/10/guest\\_commentary\\_advertisers\\_c\\_1.php](http://www.tvweek.com/news/2008/10/guest_commentary_advertisers_c_1.php).

20 See, for instance, *Brown Is the New Green: George Lopez and the American Dream*, directed by Phillip Rodriguez (Carrollton, TX: Public Broadcasting Service, 2007), DVD.

the buzz over the *Fast & Furious*'s opening-weekend Latino audience did not last long. As noted earlier, there was some initial, substantial acknowledgment in such trade journals as *Variety* and *Hollywood Reporter*. A few film executives, most from Universal, took the occasion to trumpet how well the studio had anticipated and catered to the interests of the Latino audience. Peter Adee, former head of marketing for Universal, now in charge of marketing for Overture Films, said that the studio "found a way to tap into this community authentically."<sup>25</sup> Rob Moore, cochair of Paramount at the time, commented that this entailed a culturally hybrid perspective, or what I call a "bilingual aesthetic," such that Latino audiences felt that they were included without its seeming forced.<sup>26</sup> In such marketing, I would argue, media programming and promotional messages highlight both the cultural hybridity and the cultural specificity of US Latinos.

In the English-language and bilingual Latino-oriented press, I found reviews and interviews regarding the film's success, typically with an emphasis on the film's stars. None of this coverage attempted to critique the film; all appeared to simply embrace it with respect to its targeting of Latino viewers. *Latin Heat*, a Latino-focused online industry trade journal, covered the premiere of the film and *Los Bandoleros* with video coverage that emphasized how the film foregrounded Latino cultures in various ways.<sup>27</sup> It also featured interviews with actors Vin Diesel, Don Omar, and Tego Calderón. *Latina*, a magazine focused on youth-oriented fashion and culture, marked the film's release with an interview, and cover and inside photos of Michelle Rodriguez.<sup>28</sup> Newspapers in cities with large Latino populations, such as the *Los Angeles Times*, also focused their coverage of the film's release on how it had targeted the Latino audience and had achieved its success in large part because of that audience.<sup>29</sup>

As mentioned in these Latino-centric discussions of the film, its appeal and that of the franchise to Latinos is linked in part to narrative and aesthetic elements. The narrative of the original *The Fast and the Furious* (Rob Cohen, 2001) is based in East Los Angeles and centered on a car-racing culture that is Asian American and Latino dominated in real life and a close relative to lowrider culture, pioneered by Mexican American pachucos in the 1950s. The film also featured a Latino-centric car club, although it serves primarily as background color to Brian O'Conner's and Dominic Toretto's story lines. *2 Fast 2 Furious* (John Singleton, 2003) subsequently paired Paul Walker with African American actor Tyrese Gibson but included Latinas and Latinos in the diegesis; it did so through its inclusion of Miami and California settings and characters such as undercover customs agent Monica Fuentes, played by Eva Mendes. While the Justin Lin-helmed *Fast and Furious: Tokyo Drift* shifted the focus to expatriate white, African American, Asian American, and Japanese characters in Tokyo, reggaeton music

for the first time contributes an energetic vibe, informed by Latin youth culture, to the repeated story line of a young (white American) man learning to command respect within a culturally diverse subculture. Lin's *Fast & Furious* builds on this appeal and more directly interpellates Latino and Latin American audience members through a number of cinematic and narrative choices.

These stylistic and narrative choices offer a clear payoff with contemporary American and global audiences, as can be viewed in the box-office earnings of *Fast & Furious*; it was Universal's biggest moneymaker of 2009. Adam Fogelson, head of marketing during the release of the film, was in fact not long after promoted to the position of chair of the studio. Regardless, the survey of trade journal and mainstream popular press response in the weeks following the film's release turned up a relatively small number of articles with a focus on the film's appeal to Latino viewers. Reviews, for the most part, merely focus on the film's story line, with reviewers equally divided in their assessment of its appeal, apparently on the basis of whether or not they enjoy action-driven car-racing films. Most news outlets, meanwhile, all but ignored the Latino opening-weekend audience, focusing instead on Vin Diesel as a star or on other elements of the film's success. Benjamin Svetkey noted in *Entertainment Weekly* that perhaps the film's success was due to Diesel's "one-race" appeal now having full effect in the post-Obama era, citing the fact that 39 percent of the opening-weekend audience told CinemaScore that they came to see the "actor in the lead role" and statistics demonstrating that African Americans, white Americans, and other non-Latinos came out in large numbers to see the film.<sup>30</sup> Other journalists, such as Claude Brodesser-Akner for *Advertising Age*, noted only the smart spring release of this "summer" movie on a weekend with little competition.<sup>31</sup>

The lack of notice does not negate the importance of the film in relation to the US Latino audience, however. Having explored the popular and industry trade reviews and reactions to the film, I turn now to the film itself and its interpellation, both deliberate and coincidental, of Latino viewers.

**Fast and Latino: *Latinidad* and Ambiguous Whiteness in *Fast & Furious*.** *Fast & Furious* in many ways follows the story formula established in *The Fast and the Furious* and the following two installments in the franchise. *Fast & Furious* is the first true sequel, however, reuniting protagonists Dominic Toretto and Brian O'Conner, as well as other ensemble cast members from the original film. Aside from returning to the original film's loose ends, particularly Brian's broken friendship with Dom and his ruptured romance with Dom's sister, Mia, franchise expectations demand two things: that the narrative revisit the diverse—that is, the tan, beige, brown, and white—street-racing world of *The Fast and the Furious*, and that Brian and Dom must race again. As noted earlier, this time they do so to bring down a Mexican drug kingpin. While the FBI, for which Brian now works, wants to put drug smuggler Arturo Braga (John Ortiz) behind bars, Dom and Brian also aim to find him to avenge the death of Dom's girlfriend,

25 McClintock, "Hollywood Studies Latin 101."

26 Ibid.

27 "Latin Heat Presents Red Carpet: Featuring Vin Diesel," *Latin Heat*, July 18, 2009, <http://blip.tv/latin-heat-presents/red-carpet-featuring-vin-diesel-2394104>.

28 Angie Romero, "Bad Girl Done Good," *Latina* 13, no. 7 (2009): 98–100.

29 Reed Johnson, "'Fast and Furious' Taps into Latina/o Market," *Los Angeles Times*, April 7, 2009, <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/apr/07/entertainment/et-car.Latina/o7>.

30 Svetkey, "Fast and Furious," sec. 12.

31 Claude Brodesser-Akner, "Entertainment A-List No. 1: Universal Pictures," *Advertising Age*, May 18, 2009, [http://adage.com/entertainment-a-list09/article?article\\_id=136592](http://adage.com/entertainment-a-list09/article?article_id=136592).