

SAMUEL BRONSTON, HOLLYWOOD IN MADRID

If there is one name that stands out in the technical development of cinema filmed in Spain, and of Spanish cinema itself, it is undoubtedly Samuel Bronston, the mega producer who built an unforgettable film empire in the Region of Madrid, with colossal shootings and the arrival of top-level Hollywood stars and directors. Sophia Loren, Rita Hayworth, John Wayne, Charlton Heston, Bette Davis, Robert Ryan, Claudia Cardinale, Alec Guinness, Omar Shariff, Christopher Plummer, James Manson, Mel Ferrer, David Niven and Ava Gardner shone in films directed by Nicholas Ray, Anthony Mann, Henry Hathaway and John Farrow.

Despite the huge foreign filming that had already taken place in Spain, the moment that really marked the beginning of Spain becoming a kind of Hollywood was the arrival of the Russian-born producer Samuel Bronston in 1957, who set up his base of operations in Madrid.

Bronston's productions immortalised Madrid's landscapes in some of cinema's most memorable epics such as *Captain Jones*, *King of Kings*, *El Cid*, *55 Days at Peking*, *The Fall of the Roman Empire* and *Circus World*. The Plaza de Chinchón, La Pedriza in Manzanares el Real, the Alberche beach in Aldea del Fresno, the mountains of Navacerrada or La Cabrera, the Ermita de los Remedios in Colmenar Viejo, the Royal Palace in Aranjuez, or sites in the capital city itself, such as El Retiro or the Royal Palace, became the scenes of duels, battles and passionate love affairs.



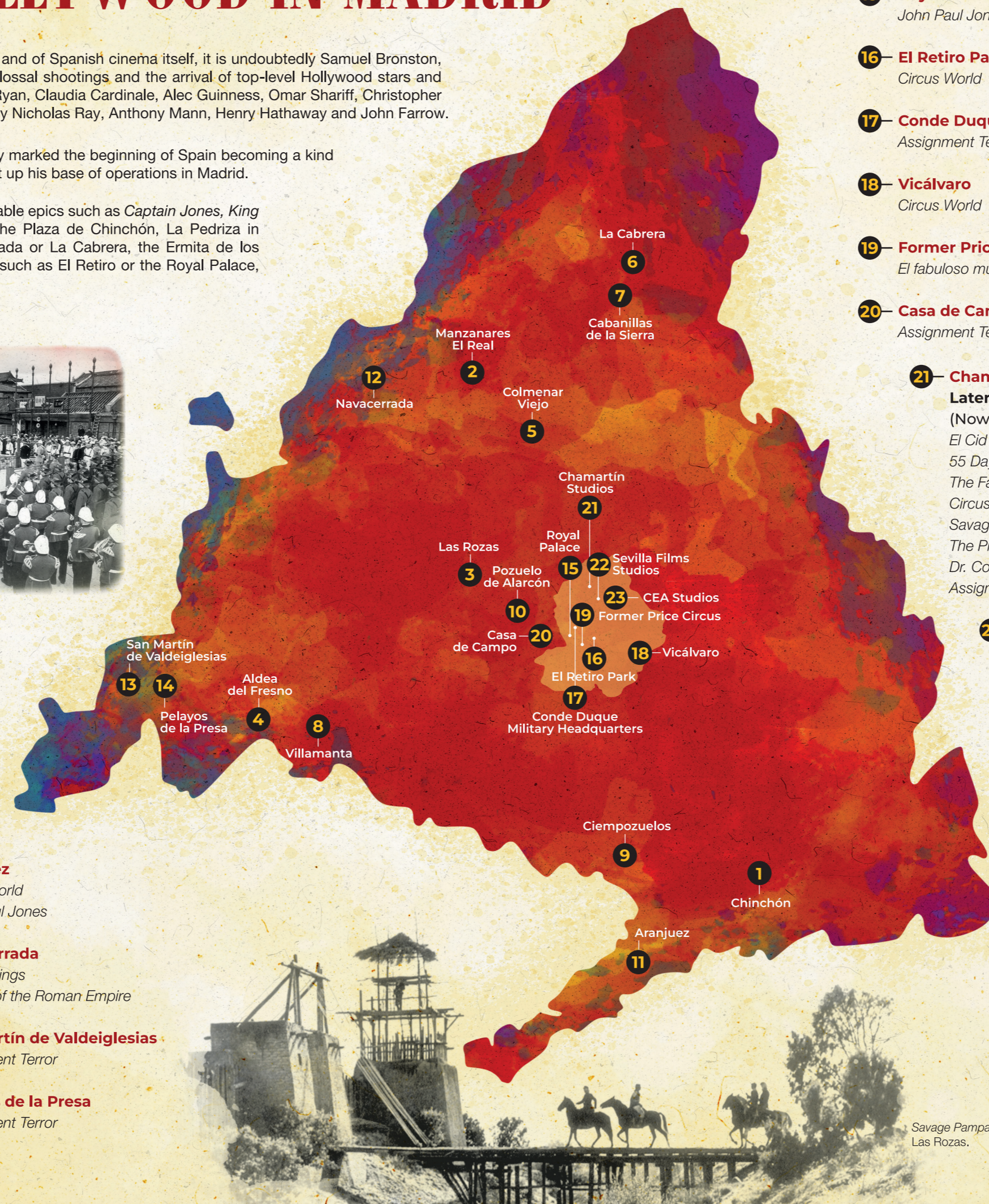
Circus World. El Retiro Park.



55 Days at Peking. Las Rozas.

REGION OF MADRID

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>1 Chinchón
<i>King of Kings</i>
<i>Circus World</i></p> <p>2 Manzanares El Real
<i>King of Kings</i>
<i>El Cid</i>
<i>The Fall of the Roman Empire</i></p> <p>3 Las Rozas
<i>55 Days at Peking</i>
<i>The Fall of the Roman Empire</i>
<i>Savage Pampas</i></p> <p>4 Aldea del Fresno
<i>King of Kings</i>
<i>Savage Pampas</i></p> | <p>5 Colmenar Viejo
<i>El Cid</i></p> <p>6 La Cabrera
<i>El Cid</i></p> <p>7 Cabanillas de la Sierra
<i>El Cid</i></p> <p>8 Villamanta
<i>Savage Pampas</i></p> <p>9 Ciempozuelos
<i>King of Kings</i></p> <p>10 Pozuelo de Alarcón
<i>Savage Pampas</i></p> | <p>11 Aranjuez
<i>Circus World</i>
<i>John Paul Jones</i></p> <p>12 Navacerrada
<i>King of Kings</i>
<i>The Fall of the Roman Empire</i></p> <p>13 San Martín de Valdeiglesias
<i>Assignment Terror</i></p> <p>14 Pelayos de la Presa
<i>Assignment Terror</i></p> |
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MADRID CITY

- 15** **Royal Palace**
John Paul Jones
- 16** **El Retiro Park**
Circus World
- 17** **Conde Duque Military Headquarters**
Assignment Terror
- 18** **Vicálvaro**
Circus World
- 19** **Former Price Circus**
El fabuloso mundo del circo
- 20** **Casa de Campo**
Assignment Terror
- 21** **Chamartín Studios**
Later called Bronston Studios.
(Now extinct)
El Cid
55 Days at Peking
The Fall of the Roman Empire
Circus World
Savage Pampas
The Pied Piper of Hamelin
Dr. Coppelius
Assignment Terror
- 22** **Sevilla Films Studios** (Now extinct)
El capitán Jones
Rey de Reyes
El Cid
- 23** **CEA Studios** (Now extinct)
El Cid

The largest film studios in Madrid in the late fifties and early sixties, Sevilla Films, CEA and Chamartín, later known as Bronston, were lavishly decorated with castles and palaces. And in the shadow of that film empire, its resources were used for other productions, such as *Savage Pampas* or *Dr. Coppelius*, which counted with the participation of other important names such as Robert Taylor, Walter Slezak, Paul Naschy or Michael Rennie, filmed in Boadilla del Monte, Villamanta or San Martín de Valdeiglesias.



The Fall of the Roman Empire. Las Rozas.



El Cid. Manzanares el Real.

Crowds of Madrid residents, hired as extras and crew, built the fiction of imperial Rome and Peking, on outdoor sets erected on land in Las Rozas, which managed to appear in the Guinness Book of Records for their length. And the development and training of Spanish technicians, who later participated in other prestigious Hollywood productions, as is the case of the winner of two Oscars, Gil Parrondo. Or a blockbuster opportunity afforded to Spanish actors such as Carmen Sevilla, Conrado San Martín, José Nieto, José María Caffarel or Antonio Mayans.

This guide suggests a route to follow in the footsteps of Bronston's locations in the Region of Madrid. It includes both his canonical films and those productions in which Jaime Prades, his associate producer intervened (whose collaboration has been confirmed, although he was not credited). This is a necessary tribute to one of the most important names in the history of cinema. A filmmaker with close ties to this region, whose wish, after his death in the United States, was for his remains to be laid to rest in the Madrid municipality of Las Rozas. His daughter Andrea placed the urn with his ashes under a plaque bearing a phrase from Shakespeare's Hamlet: "He was a man, take him for all in all, I shall not look upon his like again."

Savage Pampas.
Las Rozas.

