



PROUDLY PRESENTING AT THE  
**35<sup>th</sup> MONTREAL WORLD FILM FESTIVAL**  
 flanders® | www.flandersimage.com |



Home | 8/15/2011 10:42 A.M. | Text size: a<sup>-</sup> A<sup>+</sup>

Log Out | [Online Subscription Help](#) | [Language Dictionary](#)

Search variety.com  **SEARCH**

[Subscribe to VARIETY at 73% off the cover price](#)

[Latest News](#) | [Latest Reviews](#) | [Features](#) | [People News](#) | [Charts](#) | [Opinions](#) | [Events](#) | [Photos](#) | [Videos](#) | [VarietyMediaCareers.com](#)

**FILM** | **TV** | **LEGIT** | **MUSIC** | **DIGITAL** | **INTERNATIONAL** | **Archives**

## TV News

Posted: Sat., Aug. 13, 2011, 4:00am PT

[Share](#) [Print](#)

### Pioneering TV host hopes success translates

**Saralegui to launch new show on Telemundo**

By ANNA MARIE DE LA FUENTE

Cuban-born TV personality Cristina Saralegui is used to fighting battles: over whether to speak English or Spanish on her talkshow, over whether Hispanic auds would embrace discussion about taboo topics and, at age 63, whether she could still drive big ratings on a new network.

Over two decades, she's proven naysayers wrong, and when she launches her latest self-titled show, "Pa'lante con Cristina" (Moving Forward With Cristina) on NBCU's Telemundo in October, she'll be embracing the new realities of a fast-growing bilingual, bicultural Latino market: The show will be subtitled in English, and the hostess known as the "Latina Oprah" will break into English or Spanglish whenever she wants.

That's an important freedom after her 21 years hosting "La Show de Cristina" (Cristina's Show) at rival Univision, where she chafed against the U.S. Hispanic net's no-English policy.

At Univision, her English-speaking guests were simultaneously dubbed, although some made the effort to learn or improve their Spanish. "Jennifer Lopez, Jimmy Smits and Edward James Olmos -- all learned to speak Spanish so that they could promote themselves better on Univision," Saralegui says. "Talent were not allowed to sing in English," she adds. "I was supposed to have complete creative control, but they tampered with my show anyway. Coming from Cuba, I call that censorship."

The debut of Telemundo's "Pa'lante con Cristina" will roughly coincide with the first anniversary of Univision's cancellation of "Cristina's Show," which had a three-point drop to an average of 23 share from 26 at the time of its being axed; rumors swirled that the network wanted new blood.

"People have been coming up to me, telling me they've missed me," she says. "And many have asked me through the years why I didn't have my show translated into English."

But with the 2010 census and other studies pointing to a fast-expanding base of bilingual youth, Univision seems to have softened its stance. The net's new prexy and CEO, Randy Falco, has said that Univision is exploring its reach to English-speaking viewers.

"We are going to experiment with what our audience will allow," he stated in June. "Over time, we will



Arnold Schwarzenegger appeared on Cristina Saralegui's earlier show, and she's hoping to persuade him to visit the new one with his former housekeeper, Mildred Baena.



Cristina Saralegui will continue to tape shows at her Blue Dolphin studio in Miami.

[Email or Share](#) | [Print](#)  
[RSS Feed](#) | [Bookmark](#)

Get Variety:

[Mobile](#) | [Digital Edition](#) | [Newsletters](#)

[Subscribe to Variety](#)

-- Advertisement --

"CHANGES THE WAY  
 DOCUMENTARIES WILL  
 BE TOLD FOREVER"

-NY POST

-- Advertisement --

assess what appetite (they have) for English."

In July, on Univision's youth awards show "Premios Juventud," rapper Pitbull sang in English, and in a recent episode of celebrity dance competish "Mira quien baila" (Look Who's Dancing), Mexican-born thesp Bianca Marroquin sang and danced to various tunes in English from the musical "Chicago."

Univision replaced the 10 p.m. Monday slot occupied by "The Cristina Show" with telenovelas and another long-running talkshow, "Don Francisco Presenta." There was talk that its Chilean-born host, Mario Kreutzberger, who also hosts the 49-year-old Saturday variety program "Sabado Gigante" on Univision, feared he'd be the next to get the boot, but that didn't happen.

The replacement programming has averaged 20% higher ratings among adults 18-49 compared with the previous year, according to Univision.

But Saralegui is moving on to a bigger paycheck, more creative freedom and a two-hour weekly talk/variety show that she will develop and executive-produce as well as host. Better yet, Telemundo is leasing the same soundstage from Saralegui's Blue Dolphin Studios where she produced "The Cristina Show." Saralegui has owned the 50,000-square-foot Miami studio since she and husband-manager Marcos Avila acquired and refurbished the facility for \$10 million more than a decade ago.

The 12-time Emmy winner is among a handful of female celebrities in U.S. entertainment history who have owned a studio; others include Mary Pickford, Lucille Ball and Oprah Winfrey.

Persuaded by former Telemundo prexy Don Browne, she signed a five-year deal with Telemundo -- three more years than she initially wanted. "I said OK, even if I have to come in on a wheelchair," says the sprightly Saralegui.

The host has come a long way from her first program, aired on April 17, 1989, which began as a conventional talkshow stripped daily on Univision. It eventually evolved into a show that tackled erstwhile taboo issues such as homosexuality, AIDS and spousal abuse.

More important, Saralegui disproved the general belief that Latinos would not reveal their innermost fears and foibles. Those who thought she would fail did not count on her ability to put people at ease and to open up to her. "Cristina's Show," stripped daily for a decade before going weekly, ranked among the highest-rated programs on Spanish-language television. Over its last five years, the show delivered a 26 average share.

In 1994, when same-sex marriage was mostly unrecognized across the U.S., Saralegui hosted two symbolic weddings for a gay and a lesbian couple on her show. These drew protests and even bomb threats, but also prompted her English-language counterparts Barbara Walters and Winfrey to follow suit with their own discussions of the topic.

"Cristina has always been ahead of the curve in so many social issues ... as she would say at the end of every show ... 'pa'lante, pa'lante, pa'tras ni pa'coger impulso,' which basically means 'Go foward, forward, don't ever go back, not even to pick up your pace,'" says Ivan de Paz, prexy of Latino talent management company DePaz Management.

Plans for the new show and names of guests are under wraps but Saralegui is hoping Arnold Schwarzenegger and Mildred Baena, the former housekeeper who secretly bore him a son 14 years ago, will agree to show up together.

She's also planning to invite George Lopez and Eva Longoria, two of many celebs she wasn't allowed to host on Univision because of that net's policy against inviting personalities with their own TV programs. (Lopez's show was cancelled by TBS on Aug. 10.)

"Pa'lante con Cristina" will also feature more segments shot on location and news-oriented pieces on trends and topics in the Spanish-speaking world.

If a special she hosted on Telemundo on May 31 is any indication, Saralegui is well on her way to luring more viewers to the network, which has always run a distant second to Univision. That show became Telemundo's highest-rated primetime entertainment special ever among total viewers and adults 18-49, according to Nielsen. The one-hour yakker, which featured Saralegui interviewing the cast of Telemundo's biggest telenovela, averaged more than 2.3 million total viewers and nearly 1.4 million adults.

Contact the Variety newsroom at [news@variety.com](mailto:news@variety.com)



**VARIETY**  
**CONFERENCES**

**3rd Annual Film Finance Forum East presented by Winston Baker in association with Variety**  
September 14-15, 2011  
Park Central Hotel in New York, NY

**LA Mobile Entertainment Summit® presented by Ortsbo**  
September 20-21, 2011  
Hollywood & Highland Center, Hollywood, CA

**3D Entertainment Summit® - Los Angeles**  
September 20-22, 2011  
Hollywood & Highland Center, Hollywood, CA

**2nd Annual Film Finance Forum @ Zürich Film Festival presented by Winston Baker in association with Variety**  
September 24, 2011  
The Dolder Grand, Zürich, Switzerland

**Film Marketing Summit**  
October 4-5, 2011  
Hilton Los Angeles, CA

**Variety's Entertainment and Technology Summit - Fall 2011**  
October 17, 2011  
The Ritz-Carlton, Marina Del Rey, CA

[View all Conferences and Events](#)



DBELZ@MIAMIDADE.GOV, HERE ARE OTHER ARTICLES RECOMMENDED FOR YOU...

[Offerman, Mullally join 'Gay Dude' cast](#)

[Sony, AMC pact for more 'Breaking Bad'](#)

[Ava Sambora livin' on Apatow pic](#)

**Read Next Article:** [Time Warner Cable buying Insight for \\$3B in cash >](#)

© Copyright 2011 **RBI**, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. Variety and the Flying V logos are trademarks of Reed Elsevier Properties Inc., used under license.

[Subscribe](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms & Conditions](#) | [About Us](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Sitemap](#) | [Help](#)

**Media:** [LA 411](#) | [New York 411](#) | [Variety](#) | [Variety Arabia](#)

**Construction:** [Reed Construction Data](#)

**Business Directory:** [HotFrog](#)