

El Mercurio Journal

Santiago - June 6, 2000

“Chi, Chi, le, le, le ”: A Talent Strike

The documentary gives the spectator a dramatic, emotive and honest point of view about Martin Vargas and his environment. This coming July 1st will be shown by the first time on Sky TV.

Real facts and characters are shown with a personal point of view and with a narrative progression typical of a fiction movie. It is not too little to ask from a good documentary. “Chichichi, Lelele Martin Vargas de Chile” that will debut the 1st of July on Sky and waits for the next month to be programmed at the Lo Castillo cinema, completely meets with these conditions, adding the invaluable worth of the emotions that are achieved with honesty, without cheap effects.

Made by the trio of filmmakers David Bravo, Bettina Perut and Ivan Osnovikoff, this documentary approaches the person of Martin Vargas following him to his last personal deed: his going back to the ring in 1997, after a 10 year’s retirement, at age 42, and his definite retirement in 1998.

Through the narrative of small moments – with an impeccable editing - the documentary elaborates an unpublished portrait of Martin and the characters that revolved around him during that year – managers, promoters, boxers, journalists, politicians and even TV stars, the story seems to be told by itself.

A travelling country singer, with the looks of a vagabond, makes his appearance every now and then, is the narrator, and as a Greek choir that intervenes just in the right moment, to explain how the things really are. How he and other characters assume, without intention, a similar role.

The presentation of the characters is short and effective, and the passing of the facts – the enthusiasm of the coming back fight, the suspect of the press and audience to be watching arranged fights, the unmasking of the fraud. The disillusion of Martin, his illusion of wanting to demonstrate that he can win without help and his final defeat, gives the story a dramatic progression that any fiction work would envy.

The camera allows the spectator to get close to details that determine the perception of the story. And achieves the same emotional force with physical aspects as emotional: beginning with the scars on Martin’s face to his wife, Mireya’s tic. It is exactly his family, the constant counterpoint that best explains Martin Vargas’ motivations to the eyes of the spectators. We have Mireya’s testimony, the crying of his daughter Natalia over his shoulder after a fight in which he ends up bleeding

Though not very recurrent, it is particularly illustrative the enthusiasm of his son Martin, that plans to buy a bicycle in cash, while his father struggles to fight once more. He is the same one that after the final defeat gets up on the ring to hit his father’s hangman, and in whose marriage his family smiles together again. Perhaps the only thing that disturbs in such a round product is the incorporation of voices that do not contribute too much, like the one of Dr. Maria Luisa Cordero, criticizing Martin in his absolutist style, or the predictions of Yolanda Sultana. At the end of “Chichichi....” Martin walks on the beach and encounters his wife, it could seem tacky, but not for this movie and not for this character. Martin, like an interviewed says, has found his dignity and fortunately there was a camera there to register it.

Francisco Aravena.