

THE FILMS OF JORGE PRELORAN

Giving voice to those who have none

"Jorge is one of the great individual filmmakers who represent a country. He stands alone in the work he has done, and it has become well-known around the world."

Margaret Mead



After graduating from UCLA's Film School in 1961, Jorge Preloran returned to his native Argentina with a sense of mission. For two decades he worked ceaselessly and in almost total anonymity, documenting the folkways and daily existence of common people in the remote Argentine countryside. Many of these people were in real danger of becoming culturally extinct.

Using an outdated Bolex camera and a non-sync Uher recorder, he lived a life of personal asceticism, backed by minuscule budgets. Out of inclination, as much as by necessity, Jorge never shot more film than

"My conviction is that people communicate better through feelings rather than through intellectual exercises, which are full of theories, discussions and debates. It is so much more rewarding to *listen* to people, to discover that they are human beings, like oneself".

— Jorge Preloran

Preloran's films are conceived as a means of communication, not as goals in themselves. He is not driven by a frantic need to premiere his films as soon as possible, preferring to allow them to evolve creatively in an organic manner. Working several films at a time, he twice took over 7 years to complete a single film.

"Film is a medium through which we can share experiences we have lived through, with an audience".

— Jorge Preloran

Although Preloran's films have often promoted constructive social change, such changes have not been as rapid or as strong he had hoped for. His films were made *for the people he documented*, those people he loves and respects, and not simply to please an audience craving for "exoticism", who prefer to examine and dissect his characters as if observing an ant colony. His peers agree that Jorge Preloran's films are priceless documents about how individuals think and feel *about themselves*, not dissertations on how we should think and feel *about them*.

Preloran has also been given the Konex, Argentina's highest award in arts and sciences, for "Lifetime Achievement in Cultural Contributions to Media". His short film *LUTHER METKE AT 94* was nominated for an Academy Award in 1980. *THE WARAO PEOPLE* took a Gold Medal at the 1975 Chicago International Film Festival. *CHUCALEZNA* was a prize winner at Hemisfilm '80. Preloran has twice been a Guggenheim Fellow. The list of recognitions continues to grow.

"My films are gentle documents of people who need help. They are not aggressive nor dogmatic ideological films.

--- Jorge Preloran

Jorge Preloran's films are remarkable for the way they record reality without an undue manipulation of events. He believes in allowing people to speak for themselves, shunning voice-over editorializing. Such distractions, Jorge feels, interrupt the natural flow of reality. Whenever narrators are used in his films, they are usually the subjects themselves who share their first-hand experiences. Preloran believes academic explanations which are scripted from a middle-class Western viewpoint serve as impersonal barriers, as walls preventing true communication between protagonists and viewers.

absolutely necessary - his shooting ratio has generally been 2 / 3 to 1. Such small ratios are almost unheard of in contemporary documentary filmmaking. In spite of his limited equipment and funds, Preloran managed to make 42 films over a 20-year period of total dedication. Many of his films are now recognized as masterpieces of style and content by both filmmakers and anthropologists.

'In 1968 I was invited to a colloquium in Los Angeles, where I was told that I made 'ethnographic films'. To this day I wonder if that term really applies to my work; but if my films serve ethnographic purposes, so be it'.

--- Jorge Preloran

One of the largest film production countries in Latin America, Argentina - like the United States - is dominated by commercial fiction films. Yet, despite this popular preference by the public and press, a 1975 Argentine's critic's poll voted Preloran's documentary *IMAGINERO* one of the 10 best films in Argentine history.

'The name of Robert Flaherty will probably be invoked when critics and audiences see (Jorge Preloran's) *IMAGINERO*, for not since *NANOOK OF THE NORTH* have I seen a film that so beautifully captures a human being, that gives us a feeling for the individual. After seeing *Nanook*, one never forgets him. I think the same will be true of Hermógenes Cayo'.

--- Howard Suber - FILM COMMENT