

## **Butterfly Circus: A great short film**

How much can a movie (or a short film) influence real life? Do we really have the ability as writers of a script to be able to convey a message to the life of the audience? These questions are answered positively when we have examples such as the short film presented, in which, regardless of the length, the story is so precisely and perfectly crafted that one does not leave as one entered.

*The Butterfly Circus* is a short film produced in 2009 by the director Joshua Weiegel and to this day continues to convey a message of hope and overcoming for those who suffer from any physical problem. It has a total running time of twenty-two minutes in which we are presented with the story of a character who lacks limbs and goes through a process of self-esteem improvement thanks to the help of co-workers who encourage him to see beyond his tragedies and overcome himself. It is interesting how throughout this short film we can see a very developed story in a very short time, thanks to the fact that the outline of the film was handled very well, being sectioned into the three well-known acts that a screenplay should have: the setup, confrontation and resolution (with the appearance of the climax in the middle of the last two acts), developing each of these in great detail so that it does not feel that something is happening. In the setup we have the introduction to the context of the short film and we are also introduced to the main characters and what characteristics are behind them, for example we see a very negative Will while on the other hand we have a Mendez with a kind and positive profile, from that moment we can see that the story will tell us how this negativity becomes positivity over the minutes; when we reach the second act we are already located in the place where the confrontation and eventually

the climax will occur, in this case Will is already living in the circus but not being part of them because he still has this problem with himself and his low self-esteem, seeing himself as someone who does not fit in and does not deserve to be there, something that we can see reflected from the first moment when they discover him pretending to be a suitcase hidden in the car; the climax, is presented to us very clearly at the moment of the hard conversation between Will and Mendez, this would come to be the scene that leads us as an audience to feel more suspense and drama, because it shows us a necessary but hard confrontation that ends with the perfect message that will be the key to start the last act, that is to say, the resolution, where we already have the perfect message that will be the key to start the last act, that is, the denouement, where we already have a character that has hit rock bottom and is willing to take a step that will show us his growth, and an act that will generate many emotions to us, that within the same film the message was also transmitted and we see it embodied with the disabled child hugging Will in the last scene. Each act lasts different lengths of time, but each one generates a constant intensity that allows the audience to not consider that they are only twenty minutes in total, giving us the clear example that you can have a very short running time, but you can still tell a great story in a perfect way.

One of the greatest strengths within this short film was how they developed catharsis, which according to Aristotle is the result of the purgation of the affections caused by compassion and fear towards an event or tragedy<sup>1</sup> and there is an idea that to this day human beings sometimes seek or enjoy, to a certain level the situations of danger or pain and that is what the process of catharsis provides, this is because if they see other people's pain, they feel empowered to overcome their own pain, and cinema is really a great medium to provide this to people because films are made up of many elements, one of them is the climax where catharsis can be used as a means of

engagement with the audience and the film. In *The Butterfly Circus* we can find this balance between emotion and awareness during two parts, the first is when Will and Mendez have their conversation and we see how Mendez yells at Will telling him that it is no use, clearly using reverse psychology as Will did not expect him to say that to him, knowing that he is always positive and good to everyone, and we see how this character is a bit broken by the situation, as it is a tense scene, it might even seem like a plot twist because Mendez is the character you would least expect that from, but it finally ends in a scenic relief when finally Mendez expresses what was behind that talk, the message; and the other scene is the one where a handicapped child hugs and thanks Will because thanks to him he now has hope. Both cases can make the audience cry because of the strong emotion felt, and this is part of a physiological catharsis<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, although I think this is a great short film, I feel it was missing a scene where there was more narrative with the new version of Will and the message of the short ingrained in him, for example a post credits scene of him with the disabled child talking and being able to use impressions with revelations of experiences they both had, this would potentially have been a narrative that would not only attract and keep our attention<sup>3</sup>, but also allow us to conclude knowing that the audience understood the message very well.

As for the production of the short, it gives me great pleasure to say that everything is very well organized and coordinated, from the smallest details in the scenery such as the circus stalls that were full of their respective games and prizes, as well as the very well made costumes that take us on a journey of time to ancient years without having to be something ostentatious, because you can clearly see how simple they are but despite that it keeps the harmony of antiquity that allows you to enjoy it, not only that, the use of warm historical color temperature that goes

beyond aesthetics, as it tries to give a sense of closeness and at the same time of sadness that changes slightly in the end, we also have a very well-produced sound and the instrumental soundtrack is made to come out in very precise moments that help with the plot of the story, having a range of volume neither so strong nor so low that allow concentration; all this exemplified in two moments, the first one before Will was discovered in the trunk when everyone was enjoying their free time, dancing, enjoying and eating, here you can see the scenery and many props, such as the sound horn, the smoke coming out of the grill, the tents where they slept that in fact looked very much like the giant circus tent that give you a very complete panorama of the place where they were, and the second scene is the final one where the handicapped boy approaches him because there is not only a great use of sound effects, of the footsteps approaching and birds sounding in the environment, but we also have the entrance of the perfect musical instrument to start the end.

*The Butterfly Circus* is a great example that we can greatly influence through a film and that we are able to write a script to convey a message regardless of the length of it, the important thing is how each act is developed trying to give each one the necessary intensity and information.

## WORKS CITED

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