

“Diz Que é Verdade” (Say It's True)

By Barbara Albuquerque

There are not many moments when there is a possibility to escape the monotony of everyday life. When the opportunity presents itself, it becomes an occasion not only awaited but treasured. It is this waiting for a break with the ordinary that guides the documentary “Diz Que é Verdade” (Say It's True) (2019), directed by Pedro Estrada and Claryssa Almeida.

The short documentary follows Alexandre and Suelen, two strangers who go about their daily lives waiting for that moment of freedom, in their case, a trip to a karaoke. Right in the opening sequence, from shots in which the two are already dressed up and doing vocal warm-ups, the film presents the expectation in relation to what is about to happen. However, the trip to the venue itself only becomes effective at the end of the documentary, with the focus shifting to events that emphasize the constant presence and importance of music in daily life. The filmmakers rank a set of stagings of Alexandre and Suelen's routine, both in their work and in their homes, focusing on moments that show their affection towards memories that are connected with the presence of music in everyday life.

One of the main attractions of the film is the way in which it makes the viewer feel part of the process of preparing people for the final moment of going to the karaoke. One of the strategies that contributes to this is the breaking of the fourth wall, used only in two shots, in which Alexandre and Suelen, while singing during their working hours, look towards the camera. Only in these two shots and in the final sequence, in which both of them sing, do we really hear their voices. Perhaps it is this minimal presence of voices throughout the documentary that makes the viewer eager to really hear them, a desire that, in the end, is satisfied.

One can't help but notice that little information is shared about the lives of Alexandre and Suelen. Their names are not even mentioned throughout the documentary. This ends up contributing to the idea of “anonymity” that permeates the film, making the final event the only thing to be highlighted. This portrait is built with extreme caution by Estrada and Almeida, who show scenes of conviviality between family, friends and even pets, without attributing a negative judgment to the idea of the usual, but showing it as something essential. The filmmakers seem to agree that a moment of freedom is something that adds to life, but it is not the only source of joy and comfort. It doesn't fill a void, but it allows us to discharge our energy.

The portrait presented by Pedro Estrada and Claryssa Almeida shows the karaoke as an environment free of inhibitions, where Alexandre and Suelen can connect with other people and with themselves.