

## Ragged Football

### Pelota de trapo

**Studio/Distributor:**

Sociedad Independiente  
Filmadora Argentina

**Director:**

Leopoldo Torres Ríos

**Producers:**

Armando Bó  
Jerry Gómez

**Screenwriters:**

Leopoldo Torres Ríos  
Leopoldo Torre Nilsson  
Ricardo Lorenzo  
Jerry Gómez

**Cinematographer:**

Gumer Barreiro

**Art Director:**

Ariel Severino

### Synopsis

Eduardo Díaz, aka Comeuñas, is a boy of humble origins who lives in a marginal Buenos Aires neighbourhood in the late 1930s. His dream is to become a professional footballer. He and his friends spend their time playing football on a wasteland with a rag ball. Their biggest wish is to play with a leather ball. As the children are economically dependent on adults, they raise money through a raffle to acquire the coveted leather ball. As an adult, Comeuñas fulfils his dream, becoming a highly acclaimed professional footballer. However, due to heart failure, he is advised by the club doctor to stop playing. Comeuñas refuses to follow the doctor's advice and conceals his deadly disease from his family, his girlfriend and his friends. He continues playing, and with the money he earns, he buys his mother a house and pays for his brother's college fees. After some time, Comeuñas begins to show signs of poor health. His brother, who is a medical student, realizes what is wrong with him and seeks to put an end to the footballer's professional career.

### Critique

The Perón administration (1946–55) had an arguably detrimental impact on Argentine cinema: ineffective protectionist policies, harsh censorship and the exile of actors and film-makers contributed to the decline of the film industry and the poor quality of films. Released in 1948, *Ragged Football* became a notable exception,

*Ragged Football*



**Composers:**

Pedro Rubbione  
Alberto Gnecco

**Editor:**

José Cardella

**Duration:**

114 minutes

**Cast:**

Armando Bó  
Florén Delbene  
Carmen Valdez  
Graciela Lecube

**Format:**

B&W, 35mm

**Year:**

1948

infusing the languishing national cinema with a breath of fresh air. The film features one of the earliest representations of childhood in Argentine cinema, and Torres Ríos masterfully portrays boyhood and football as two inextricable worlds in an urban working-class setting. With a cast of non-professional boys who are passionate about the sport, *Ragged Football* struck a chord with the audience of the time, becoming a box office hit. Its success assumed such large proportions that it set the course for the production of other sports films by the same production company, such as *En cuerpo y alma/In Body and Soul* (Leopoldo Torres Ríos, 1951), about basketball; and *El hijo del crack/Son of the Star* (Leopoldo Torres Ríos and Leopoldo Torre Nilsson, 1953), about football. Furthermore, the fictional Sacachispas – the boys' football team – lent its name to a football club founded a few months after the film premiere. While it never specifically makes reference to Peronism, *Ragged Football* undoubtedly resonated with the prevailing zeitgeist of the time because the story conveys that, regardless of one's social background, upward social mobility is attainable.

Divided into two perfectly delineated parts, the film charts the characters' distinct life phases: childhood and adulthood. Although the second part features several Argentine football stars led by the coach of the 1948 national football team, Guillermo Stábile, it is the child-centred first part that makes the film memorable. To portray childhood in a disadvantaged socio-economic milieu, Torres Ríos resorts to a neo-realist style. The believable performances of the pre-adolescent boys in conjunction with on location filming furnish the feature with such authenticity that it may well serve as historical documentation. *Ragged Football* chronicles a time when the lower classes were gaining importance on the national scene and sport served as a springboard for upward social mobility. Hence, the rags-to-riches story embodied by Comeuñas's rise from poverty to football stardom signifies that talent together with perseverance determines one's standing in society.

Despite focusing on Comeuñas's football trajectory and achievements, the story hinges on the fraternity and solidarity that exist amongst the boys. The film accentuates that Comeuñas's success is feasible thanks to the boys' collective efforts. This is eloquently conveyed through the raising of money in order to purchase the leather ball sold in the neighbourhood gift shop. The children combine forces to organize a raffle, sell the tickets and finally acquire the leather ball at a fair price. Their collective efforts are further underscored by the prolific use of long shots that capture the entire group at work. At the same time, the purchase of the leather ball becomes the turning point of the tale since it metaphorically symbolizes departure from childhood, a fact that is stressed by the death of one of the boys. Torres Ríos employs the death scene not only as a coda to childhood but also as a transition to adulthood.

In depicting adulthood, the director abandons the collective narrative structure of the first part in favour of an individual storyline centred on Comeuñas. As such, the film loses the spontaneity that characterizes the boys' performance and occasionally lapses into a

## Chronic Boy Alc

Crónica de u

**Studio/Distribui**

Estudios San Mi

**Director:**

Leonardo Favio

**Producers:**

Luis De Stefano  
Walter Achigar  
Isidro Miguel

**Screenwriters:**

Zuhair Jorge Jurj  
Leonardo Favio

**Cinematographer:**

Ignacio Souto

**Art Director:**

Ignacio Souto

**Composers:**

Cimarosa  
B Marcelo

**Editors:**

Antonio Ripoll  
Gerardo Rinaldi

**Duration:**

79 minutes

**Cast:**

Diego Puente  
Leonardo Favio  
Oscar Espíndola  
Tino Pascali

a breath of fresh air. The film's nostalgic evocations of childhood idyllically portrays boyhood in an urban working-class neighborhood where the boys who are passionate about football. In accord with the audience's preference for success assumed such as the production of the company, such as *En los torres Ríos*, 1951), *Chronicle of a Boy Alone* (Leopoldo Torres Ríos), about football. The boys' football team – six months after the film's reference to Peronism, and the prevailing ideology that, regardless of the film's attainability, the film charts the transition from childhood to adulthood. Although the film's football stars led by the character Guillermo Stabile, it is the character's memorable. To portray the character's milieu, Torres Ríos's performances of the character's location filming furnish the character's well serve as historical background a time when the lower social scene and sport's popularity. Hence, the character's rise from poverty to success with perseverance

trajectory and community and solidarity that character's that Comeuñas's character's creative efforts. This is the character's money in order to character's neighborhood gift shop. character's affluence, sell the tickets character's rice. Their collective character's use of long shots that character's time, the purchase character's of the tale since it character's childhood, a fact that is character's Torres Ríos employs the character's but also as a transition

character's dons the collective character's of an individual storyline character's as the spontaneity that character's occasionally lapses into a

melodramatic tone triggered by the protagonist's concealment of his poor health, which in turn provokes his estrangement from his family and friends. Thus, although Comeuñas pursues his career as a professional footballer, the story suggests that fame has a price. As the adult Comeuñas, Bó delivers a credible performance as a sportsman torn between his football career and his health. Ultimately, the strength of *Ragged Football* lies in the way the two life phases are skilfully interwoven into a single, captivating narrative.

### Mirna Vohnsen

## Chronicle of a Boy Alone

### Crónica de un niño solo

#### Studio/Distributor:

Estudios San Miguel

#### Director:

Leonardo Favio

#### Producers:

Luis De Stefano  
Walter Achigar  
Isidro Miguel

#### Screenwriters:

Zuhair Jorge Jury  
Leonardo Favio

#### Cinematographer:

Ignacio Souto

#### Art Director:

Ignacio Souto

#### Composers:

Cimarosa  
B Marcelo

#### Editors:

Antonio Ripoll  
Gerardo Rinaldi

#### Duration:

79 minutes

#### Cast:

Diego Puente  
Leonardo Favio  
Oscar Espíndola  
Tino Pascali

### Synopsis

In a state-run orphanage, boys follow a strict discipline during the day. At night, they trade cigarettes, read and challenge each other. Transgressions are harshly punished by heavy housework, isolation and physical punishment (slaps), as well as mental abuse (running with disparaging signs) at the hands of their caretakers. The boys' repetitive and boring routine illustrates their despondency and lack of attention. Polín challenges the orphanage's rules, starts fights, pretends to be sick and, more importantly, hits a caretaker back. This action further stigmatizes him when his head is shaved and he is sent to jail. Left alone, he resorts to his wits to flee. This event, as well as his stealing a wallet from a passenger, is captured in great detail. Polín seeks refuge in a slum, where he enjoys his new freedom, smoking alone and swimming in the river with other boys. The bucolic landscape allows him to be a child, but when his young friend is raped, he reacts with distress. Nonetheless, when Polín is told that he could buy a horse, his childish affections resurface. He steals it, only to be caught by a policeman who takes him to be confined again.

### Critique

Dedicated to Leopoldo Torre Nilsson, Leonardo Favio's first feature film, *Chronicle of a Boy Alone*, was made with two cans of 'loaned' film, a producer who put his vineyards up as collateral and actors working for free. The script was written by Favio in collaboration with his brother Zuhair. Favio had originally thought of making a film about an adult fleeing from jail, but when he watched Robert Bresson's *Un condamné à mort s'est échappé ou le vent souffle où il veut/A Man Escaped* (1956), he saw that his idea had already been filmed. Discussing this plight with his brother, he decided to keep the idea of escape but concentrating on a child instead of an adult.

The child who plays the role of Polín was a non-professional actor whom Favio discovered by chance. The director would not allow him to read the script; instead, he would tell him what to do in each scene. Favio also plays a small role – which was supposed to have been played by actor Walter Vidarte – as Fabián, the horse owner.

The film could be seen as autobiographical, portraying Hogar El Alba, a juvenile home in Buenos Aires where both Jury brothers –