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FILM REVIEW: Mucho, Mucho Amor â?? fascinating and mesmerizing look at astrologer Walter Mercado

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

One of the most bodacious aspects of attending the Sundance Film Festival is the opportunity to mingle with other cinephiles. Undoubtedly, the question most often surfacing is, â??What have you seen?â?• I asked and the response was *Mucho, Mucho Amor,* one of the most anticipated documentaries of 2020. Using inserted Tarot cards as title screens, black and white 1930â??s photographic stills and television archival footage, as well as newsreels, present-day interviews and coverage of a defining moment of one of the worldâ??s greatest entertainment personalities, co-directors, Cristina Costantini and Kareem Tabsch, offer a glimpse into the soul of Walter Mercado, an extravagant, flamboyant Puerto Rican astrologer, psychic, and gender nonconforming legend.

Mucho, Mucho Amor was preceded by an animated short, *Shawl*, a colorful film commentary on a Stevie Nicks concert where two long-lost boyfriends reconnect in a surreal and magical moment. With a sense of the possible in the ether, an opening with non-diegetic classical music and an androgynous figure in a white cape participating in a present-day interview set the tone for this sensational, narrative documentary, *Mucho, Mucho Amor*.



Born in 1932, Mercado had a rather unusual experience of finding a dead bird and breathing life into it. From this moment forward, Mercado knew he had the grace of God for healing. In 1950, Mercado wound up at the University of Puerto Rico. While taking television acting classes, his psychic and astrological repertoire began to flourish as he learned the importance of looking the part.

Over the following 30 years, Mercado would become a celebrated part of daily life in Latin American life and branch out to mesmerize audiences in over 120 countries with television and radio shows utilizing improvised monologues for his trademark astrology gig, *The Stars and You*. Often considered the prophet of the New Age, Mercado kept his messaging positive and energetic to instill hope and the sense that a more fulfilling life was a distinct possibility.

The beloved Mercado rising above homophobia and the heteronormative beliefs of Latin society with a message of love and hope would soon fall prey to the auspices of a business manager who nearly drained Mercadoâ??s soulful and healing essence from the spiritual and metaphysical universe. And just like that, Mercado vanished after his October 3rd, 2006, show leaving millions of followers to speculate on the whereabouts of their spiritual seeker and harbinger of hope.

During his post-fame seclusion, Mercado had been engaging in a lengthy court case battle and suffered a heart attack as he sought to take back his spiritual essence. Fortunately, Directors Costantini and Tabsch had unprecedented access to Mercadoâ??s home and interior life capturing his final two years when the pioneering icon grappled with aging and his legacy. While physically unable to fully return to his very public vocation, an ornate celebration was undertaken in May of 2019 allowing Mercadoâ??s fans to meet their hero at HistoryMiami Museum. Mercado passed three months later surrounded by his closest friends and family and continues to be an icon of positivity and self-expression to the gender-fluid youth of today. *Mucho, Mucho Amor* is a fascinating look at the founder of the global phenomenon, The Psychic Network, and is slated for a summer 2020 Netflix release. Very, very warmly recommended!



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Date Created
April 9, 2020
Author
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