

VareseNews

The Tre Valli, with an eastern touch, makes a fortune at the cinema

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What are **shots of Varese's Tre Valli cycling race** doing on the screens of thousands of cinemas in **Hong Kong and China**? And why have the local audiences "warmed" to scenes of the most beloved and historical cycling race in this province?

The story that intertwines Luino and the Tre Valli with oriental cinema is a **curious but also intriguing one**. The **premise is well-known**, and was revealed two years ago by the Binda Cycling Club, which organises the classic race every year; the directors announced that there would be a film crew at the race, which starts in Luino and ends in Varese, who intended to film some scenes for a **their production**.

A few months ago, the work of editing came to an end, and the film *To the fore*, by the director **Dante Lam**, caused a sensation in the cinemas of China and Hong Kong.

"Here, Dante Lam is a name known only to the keenest of fans, but over there, it's a bit like Steven Spielberg to us," **Massimo Lazzaroni**, a film buff (among other things, he edits **the specialised blog Cinequanon**), a fan of anything to do with the Far East, and a great supporter of cycling, **explained**. "Also thanks to the Tre Valli, Lam told the story of a cyclist from the East who was able to get *to the fore*, and be **taken on by a professional team** in the West."

A frame from the film, with Roberto Maroni, Renzo Oldani, and Vincenzo Nibali's Astana team, in Luino

The team was Italian, the **Lampre-Merida**, and the film dwelled, in particular, on the **Portuguese rider Rui Costa, the world champion in 2013** and holder of the championship jersey in 2014, the year in which Lam and his assistants filmed the competition scenes. Lazzaroni explained, “The Tre Valli is the race in which **the protagonist managed to make his debut**, among the professionals, so the film dedicates quite a lot of space to the race and includes double exposures. There’s the presentation of the teams, the aerial views of Luino, shots of Rui Costa, the inflatable AVIS banner.” And then, he can be seen in the photogallery, where well-known faces, such as **Bobo Maroni, Renzo Oldani**, the commentator **Sandro Brambilla**, as well as many riders (including **Vincenzo Nibali**) can also be seen, all involved that day in the Tre Valli, in their respective roles.

In his domestic market, **Dante Lam hit the mark**; according to the data available online, *To the Fore* has made no less than **\$23 million (!!!)**, which, at an average ticket price of \$5.30, in China and Hong Kong (here too, the numbers have come from specialised websites) means **about 4.3 million people**, all intent on supporting the cyclist **Ming** (played by **Eddie Peng**) and his adventure in top level cycling.

Photo: the actual finish of the Tre Valli in 2014, with Albasini's victory

The person who remembers the visit by the Hong Kong filmmaker well is **Renzo Oldani**, the chairman of the Binda Cycling Club and organiser of the Tre Valli. “That year, this crew contacted us and asked us **if they could take part and film the stages of the race**, including the preliminary operations. On the days before the race, **we took them to see** a number of interesting locations in the area, then we gave them a few “front row seats”, **at the start in Luino and at the finish in Varese**, so that they could film under the best conditions. I remember that representatives of the Federation turned their noses up a bit, but it all went off well; they were happy with the shots and the reception, and **thrilled about the lake and the local area**. They also came to the three trials of the Trittico Lombardo road race (in the frames we have included, there is a shot of the Agostini Cup, *ed.*), but they particularly liked the Tre Valli, with its **start on the side of Lake Maggiore**.”

So now, all there is left to do is contact Dante Lam again, and suggest **he make a sequel** to *To the Fore*; as the **Tre Valli is hoping to become part of the World Tour**, from 2017, the market, the fans and Chinese cinema could give the “Binda” race a boost.

Redazione VareseNews
redazione@varesenews.it