



Re-releases

Central Station

Central Station Central do Brasil

Director: Walter Salles

©: VideoFilmes, MACT Productions

Co-production: VideoFilmes,

MACT Productions, RioFilme

With the participation of: Canal+, Ministère Français

de la Culture, Ministère Français des Relations

Extérieures, Sogepaq

With the support of: Sundance Institute,

Nippon Hoso Kyokai

Executive Producers: Elisa Tolomelli,

Lillian Birnbaum, Don Ranvaud, Thomas Garvin

Producers: Martine de Clermont-Tonnerre,

Arthur Cohn

Associate Producers: Paulo Brito, Jack Gajos

France Production Administration: Jacques Dubecq

Production Managers: Marcelo Torres,

Afonso Coaracy

Production Co-ordinator: Beto Bruno

Location Manager: Selma Santos

Pernambuco Art Researcher: Almir de Azevêdo

1st Assistant Director: Kátia Lund

2nd Assistant Directors: Sérgio Machado,

João Emanuel Carneiro

Rio 2nd Assistant Director: Vinícius Coimbra

Northeast Script Supervisor: Adelina Pontual

Casting: Sérgio Machado

Rio Children Casting: Denise del Cueto

Northeast Casting: José Bello

Screenplay: João Emanuel Carneiro,

Marcos Bernstein

Based on the original idea by: Walter Salles

Director of Photography: Walter Carvalho

Editors: Isabelle Rathéry, Felipe Lacerda

Production Designers: Cássio Amarante,

Carla Caffé

Costumes: Cristina Camargo

Make-up: Antoine Garabedian

Titles: Arane

Colour Timer: Yvan Lucas

Laboratory: Éclair

Music: Antônio Pinto, Jacques Morelenbaum

Cello: Jacques Morelenbaum,

Marcio Eymard Malard, Jorge Kundert Ranevsky

Piano: Edu Morelenbaum, Antônio Pinto

Percussion: Marcos Suzano

Rebec: Siba

Acoustic Guitar/Viola/Mandolin/Strings: Luiz Brasil

Viola: Marie Christine S. Bessler,

Jesuína Noronha Passaroto

Violin: João Daltro De Almeida, Giancarlo Pareschi,

Bernardo Bessler, Ricardo Amado da Silva, Michel

Bessler, José Alves da Silva, Walter Hack

Double Bass: Denner de Castro Campolina

Violin, String Arrangements:

Paschoal Perrotta Cordas

Recording Studio: Discover Digital Studio

Mixing Studio: Estudio Mega Indie Records

Sound: Jean-Claude Brisson, François Groult,

Bruno Tarrière, Waldir Xavier

Additional Sound: Mark A. van der Willigen

Boom Operator: Fernando Augusto Duca

Sound Editor: Waldir Xavier

Foley Artists: François Lepeuple,

Olivier Marlangeon

Cast:

Fernanda Montenegro (*Dora*)

Marília Píra (*Irene*)

Vinicius de Oliveira (*Josué*)

Sôia Lira (*Ana*)

Othon Bastos (*César*)

Otávie Augusto (*Pedrao*)

Stela Freitas (*Yolanda*)

In 1991 the renowned director Hector Babenco declared that ‘Brazilian cinema is dead’. Argentine-born, but a naturalised Brazilian citizen, Babenco was lamenting a calamitous turn of events for his adopted country’s film industry. Brazil’s first democratically elected president after more than 20 years of military dictatorship had, somewhat ironically, withdrawn all state funding and support for culture, including films. The move decimated Brazilian cinema. An industry that had been producing 100 films a year under the dictators did not make a single film that year.

But Fernando Collor de Mello’s reign was as short as it was corrupt and, by 1992, he had been impeached. Within two years the Audiovisual Law was introduced, to help revive Brazilian filmmaking.

Between 1994-2000 nearly 200 feature-length films, fiction and documentary, were made in Brazil, in what became known as the ‘*retomada de producao*’ – literally, the resumption of production, but thought of more as a rebirth. And one of the most significant moments of the *retomada* came in 1998, when Walter Salles’s *Central Station* won the Golden Bear in Berlin, heralding the return of Brazilian cinema to the international scene.

We hear the sounds of the eponymous Rio de Janeiro train station before we see it: the announcer, the sound of trains, the bustle of commuters. Then a melancholy theme tune plays as people disembark, and a crying woman speaks in close up – into the camera – declaring her feelings to her lover. She is replaced by a smiling old man, who thanks the person who cheated him, and another woman, who declares, ‘Jesus, you’re the worst thing to happen to me.’ It’s as touching, intriguing, immediately embracing an opening as that of any film.

These declarations are being written down by Dora (Fernanda Montenegro), who is offering a novel service, writing letters for the city’s many illiterates so that they may connect with friends and loved ones. But Dora is a middle-aged cynic: instead of posting the letters, she reads them to her friend for amusement, before pocketing the postage charge. That is until events conspire to leave a young boy, Josué, in her care, along with the task of finding his father, the aforementioned Jesus. The pair leave Rio for the northern province of Pernambuco, and Brazil’s arid hinterland, the *sertão*.

Thus *Central Station* concerns a boy’s search for the father he has never known, and a woman’s rediscovery of a sense of decency she has long forgotten, buried beneath the pain of her own familial losses. It is also a director’s discovery of his own country, lost on screen during his cinema’s years in the wilderness.

There are road movies in which the locations are irrelevant, merely a backdrop to adventure, and those, infinitely more interesting ones in which the road and what is found on it are integral to the character’s interior journey. *Central Station* belongs firmly in the latter category. The road movie is Salles’ preferred form – he also made *The Motorcycle Diaries* and adapted *On the Road*. And it is the clue to his international appeal: whatever the specificity, national or continental, the road movie ‘well travelled’ will connect with anyone who has wondered about his or her place in the world.

Matheus Nachtergaele (*Isaias*)
 Caio Junqueira (*Moisés*)
 Maria Do Socorro Nobre (*1st letter, Rio*)
 Manoel Gomes (*2nd letter, Rio*)
 Roberto Andrade (*3rd letter, Rio*)
 Sheyla Kenia (*4th letter, Rio*)
 Malcon Soares (*5th letter, Rio*)
 Maria Fernandes (*6th letter, Rio*)
 Maria Marlene (*7th letter, Rio*)
 Chrisanto Camargo (*8th letter, Rio*)
 Jorsebá-Sebastião Oliveira (*9th letter, Rio*)
 Sidney Antunes (*religious man, station*)
 José Pedro Da Costa Filho (*stall owner*)
 Esperança Motta (*young prostitute, letter Rio*)
 Marcelo Carneiro (*thief*)
 Manula-Manuel José Neves (*Walkman owner*)
 Preto De Linha (*shoeshine man*)
 Mário Mendes (*João, Yolanda's husband*)
 Gildásio Leite (*man on bus*)
 Sinia Leite (*woman on bus 1*)
 Estelina Moreira Da Silva (*woman on bus 2*)
 Zezão Pereira (*bus driver*)
 Felícia De Castro (*cashier*)
 Harildo Dedá (*Bené*)
 Marcos De Lima (*Bené's son*)
 Maria Menezes (*waitress*)
 Telma Cunha (*lipstick woman*)
 José Ramos (*pilgrims' driver*)
 Dona Luzia (*pilgrim singing in truck*)
 Bertho Filho (*pilgrim 1*)
 Edivaldo Lima (*Jessé's son*)
 Antonieta Noronha (*Violeta*)
 Rita Assemany (*Maria, Jessé's wife*)
 Gideon Rosa (*Jessé*)
 Dona Severina (*pilgrim praying 1*)
 João Rodrigues (*pilgrim praying 2*)
 Nanego Lira (*preacher, northeast*)
 Antônio Marcos (*singer*)
 Iami Rebouças (*woman in photograph*)
 João Braz (*photo stall owner*)
 Antinio Dos Santos (*1st letter, northeast*)
 Patrícia Brás (*2nd letter, northeast*)
 Ingrid Trigueiro (*3rd letter, northeast*)
 Inaldo Santana (*4th letter, northeast*)
 José Pereira Da Silva (*5th letter, northeast*)
 Eliane Silva (*6th letter, northeast*)
 Cícero Santos (*7th letter, northeast*)
 Andréa Albuquerque (*8th letter, northeast*)
 Everaldo Pontes (*9th letter, northeast*)
 Diogo Lopes Filho (*cashier*)
 Fernando Fulco (*F-street man*)
 Brazil-France-Spain-Japan 1998©
 111 mins
 Digital 4K

A Curzon re-release

Become a BFI Member

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at bfi.org.uk/join

Sight and Sound

Never miss an issue with **Sight and Sound**, the BFI's internationally renowned film magazine. Subscribe from just £25*

* Price based on a 6-month print subscription (UK only). More info: sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk

SIGHT AND SOUND

In *Central Station* we see two aspects of Salles' filmmaking approach: the formal and the organic. On the one hand, meticulous care is taken over composition, particularly in the Rio scenes where the framing and shallow focus evoke the alienating effect of city life; on the other, real life is permitted to seep into the film, not least when non-actors make their way before the camera, often impromptu. When Dora and Josué encounter a pilgrimage in the *sertão*, the whirl of preachers, fortune tellers, musicians and hawkers is patently real. Of course there are moments – for example, when the boy runs through a candlelit night – when the two tendencies memorably merge.

Salles doesn't attempt to ignore the country's problems: the Rio scenes are genuinely disturbing, and the scenes in the *sertão* suggest little promise of a comfortable life. Most of the people we encounter are caught in a pincer movement of illiteracy and blind faith.

Nevertheless, the film remains essentially optimistic. And that optimism extends to the world behind the camera. After screen-testing 1,500 boys for the role of Josué, Salles found Vinícius de Oliveira by chance. 'Actually, he found me. He was a shoeshine boy. I was wearing sneakers, so he couldn't clean my shoes, so he just came up and asked me to lend him some money for a sandwich. I said, "Of course I'll buy you a sandwich, but do a film test with me". He said he couldn't, because he had never been to the movies before. But ultimately he came, he did a test, and was brilliant.'

Salles cast the boy on the condition that he return to school. More than that, de Oliveira studied cinema at university, has continued to act, and starred in Salles's *Linha de Passe* (2008).

With *Central Station*, Salles proved himself to be both a humanist and a pragmatist: caring for his characters and the world he depicts, and also having a care to the accessibility that will help a film connect with a wider audience. This pragmatism, commercial savvy if you will, informs the major Brazilian films since the *retomada* – particularly *City of God* – to have touched both local and international audiences.

The late BFI chairman Anthony Minghella said of *Central Station*: 'That small Brazilian movie touched more hearts than almost any other movie I know of. It announced a real voice in international cinema.' The film won a British Academy Award for best foreign film and was nominated for best foreign film and actress Oscars. But perhaps its greatest success was in enabling Salles to enter the ranks of viable, international directors, one who could begin to influence and support his fellow filmmakers in Brazil.

Demetrios Matheou