



Brazil on Film

Man Marked for Death, 20 Years Later

Man Marked for Death, 20 Years Later

Cabra marcado para morrer

Director: Eduardo Coutinho

Production Company:

Produções Cinematográficas Mapa

Sponsor: Embrafilme

Executive Producer: Zelito Viana

Producer: Eduardo Coutinho

Associate Producer: Vladimir Carvalho

Camera (1981): Edgar Moura

Camera (1964): Fernando Duarte

Assistant Camera (1981): Nonato Estrela

Editor: Eduardo Escorel

Music: Rogerio Rossini

Direct Sound: Jorge Saldanha

With:

Eduardo Coutinho

Elizabeth Teixeira

Ferreira Gullar

Joao Virginia Silva

Tite de Lemos

The Teixeira Family

The People of the village of Engenho Galilé

Brazil 1984

119 mins

Digital (restoration)

In 1962, fresh-faced Brazilian filmmaker Eduardo Coutinho stumbled upon the story of an assassinated peasant leader in the rural north-east of the country that truly inspired him. It would take him more than 20 years to complete his project, but the resulting film is often considered to be the country's finest documentary and in 2015 was voted the 4th greatest Brazilian film ever made by the Brazilian Association of Film Critics (Abraccine). Not only that, but *Man Marked for Death, 20 Years Later* is also a landmark achievement by an important voice in South American cinema that has recently been brought back to the attention of audiences with a digitally remastered Blu-ray release courtesy of the newly launched Mawu Films.

Coutinho first learned of the murder of João Pedro Teixeira via the resulting demonstrations that had been organised in the local area of Sapé. He filmed the rally as well as Teixeira's widow, Elizabeth, and their children, as they protested in demand of justice. Coutinho's initial proposal to make a film about Teixeira was quite radical in form – a 'semi-documentary' in which the real people involved in the story would play themselves in a fictionalised version of the events. Regrettably, the political turmoil in Sapé made this unworkable and they were forced to move the production to nearby Galileia. Coutinho considered the situation there to be similar enough, so locals would once again take on the roles, with Elizabeth the only person playing herself. However, the military coup of 31 March 1964 put a stop to everything: some of the crew were imprisoned, kit was confiscated and locals – including Elizabeth – went into hiding. All that remained of *Man Marked for Death* were a handful of stills that a crew member saved and some cans of film that had already been shipped to Rio for processing before the coup.

When Coutinho reverted to the project almost 20 years later, he was a different man. As Natalia Brizuela explains in the booklet essay accompanying the Blu-ray, between 1964 and 1984 Coutinho became a documentary filmmaker. In the early 70s he made his first foray into the world of journalism and in 1975 joined the TV news platform Globo Repórter. It was during his time there that he arrived back at Teixeira's story, and with him he brought his newly forged documentarian's perspective. As a result, *Man Marked for Death, 20 Years Later* is something even more complex and layered than the original hybrid work *Man Marked for Death* would have been. Coutinho returns to the places and people of the original film, seeking out their stories and recollections about the time, about their lives since, and integrating these with clips from the original preserved material.

The transition and juxtaposition between these two modes of filmmaking arguably define Coutinho's journey as a filmmaker. In his original conception, the actors were playing themselves, but they would have been speaking scripted words, even if those had a basis in reality. Coutinho would later explain that speech, the articulation of real experience, is what he found most interesting, and bemoaned cinema's inclination to ignore the power of watching a person communicate. In the metamorphosis between his 1964 and 1984 approaches, he arguably attempts to hand agency and voice back to his

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/subscribe

SIGHT AND SOUND

BFI Player

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British and independent titles, films are available to watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free to view.

See something different today on player.bfi.org.uk

Brazil on Film

We Are Also Brothers Também Somos Irmãos

Fri 1 May 18:20 (+ intro by Dr Felipe Botelho
Correa, King's College London); Sat 30 May 15:20

Boy and the World O Menino e o Mundo

Sat 2 May 12:15; Sun 24 May 12:30

Black God, White Devil

Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol
Sat 2 May 18:10; Sat 16 May 16:00;
Fri 29 May 20:35; Sat 30 May 20:30

São Paulo Incorporated

São Paulo Sociedade Anônima
Mon 4 May 18:30; Thu 14 May 20:40

The Margin A Margem

Fri 8 May 21:00; Thu 21 May 18:15

At Midnight I'll Take Your Soul

À Meia-Noite Levarei Sua Alma
Sat 9 May 13:00 (+ intro by Dr Bruna Foletto Lucas,
University of Hertfordshire); Tue 19 May 20:40

Bye Bye Brazil Bye Bye Brasil

Sat 9 May 18:15; Sat 23 May 14:30 (+ intro by
Dr Antonio da Silva, University of Essex)

City of God Cidade de Deus

Sat 9 May 20:20; Sat 23 May 17:15;
Thu 28 May 18:00

Neighbouring Sounds O Som ao Redor

Sun 10 May 14:40; Sun 17 May 18:10;
Fri 22 May 20:25

Man Marked for Death, 20 Years Later

Cabra Marcado Para Morrer
Sun 10 May 18:15; Mon 25 May 18:20

Chuck Billy and the Marvelous Guava Tree

Chico Bento e a Goiabeira Maraviósa
Sun 10 May 12:15; Sat 23 May 12:20

Manas

Mon 11 May 18:00 (+ intro by season co-curator
Renata de Almeida); Sun 31 May 18:30

Lower City Cidade Baixa

Mon 11 May 20:50 (+ intro by season co-curator
Renata de Almeida); Wed 27 May 20:55

An Introduction to Brazil on Film

Tue 12 May 18:15

Foreign Land Terra Estrangeira

Tue 12 May 20:20 (+ Q&A with co-director Daniela
Thomas); Tue 26 May 18:15

Mars One Marte Um

Fri 15 May 18:20 (+ intro by Marta Calderón
Quiñones, Cinema Mentirê); Sat 23 May 20:30

Cinema Novo

Sat 16 May 18:40; Tue 26 May 20:45

Dolores

Sun 24 May 18:20; Sun 31 May 15:20

subjects. Both in *20 Years Later* and in his other films, he offers people space to speak for themselves rather than – as in the case of the first *Man Marked for Death* – quite literally putting words into their mouths. It is striking that one of the few segments of the original material that makes it into the final film, and with audio, is a confrontation with a landowner that was improvised by the participants rather than read from the script.

One of the results of Coutinho's shift in method between the two stints of making the film is that it can unfurl in its own direction rather than being hemmed in by the filmmakers' agendas and preconceptions. For much of *20 Years Later*, the camera is trained on locals who recall the production, the coup and the aftermath. People recount the authorities demanding evidence of the communist propaganda being spread by the filmmakers – a link between the crew and Cuba was not received well by paranoid officials – or point out locations that have changed beyond recognition. The film and the viewer make inferences through their observation of the continuities or differences in people between the 60s and 80s, and there is a stark contrast between the righteous fervour of the original footage and the period of oppression that followed. However, once Coutinho is able to track down Elizabeth, the film takes on an entirely new dimension, looking directly at the impact of what happened to her and her family.

It is once this element of the film emerges – in which Coutinho speaks at length to Elizabeth, who has remained incognito since first disappearing, only having contact with two of her many children in the intervening years – that the often unexplored cost of resistance is truly felt as well as articulated. Coutinho's empathetic lens captures a wealth of emotion across the faces first of Elizabeth, and then her now adult children, who have been raised by family members during her two-decade absence.

Coutinho has spoken about a desire to depict universal – or at least national – issues through microcosmic explorations, and by its conclusion this deeply moving account of a family torn asunder by the bullets of threatened landowners in 1962 reverberates across geography and time. The film is careful not to deify anyone, not even João Pedro Teixeira, but by engendering such feeling about the repercussions of a specific struggle, it does so for any and all struggles. In the tiniest of observed moments come wide-reaching revelations. In its myriad nuances, *Man Marked for Death, 20 Years Later* is a perfect exemplar of Coutinho's belief in the power of listening and letting people speak for themselves.

Ben Nicholson, *Sight and Sound*, June 2022

Presented as part of the UK/Brazil Season of
Culture 2025-26 and supported by
Instituto Guimarães Rosa

With thanks to



WORLD CINEMA PROJECT

