



### **Iracema: Uma Transa Amazônica**

Directed by: Jorge Bodanzky  
[Directed by] In Collaboration with: Wolf Gauer, Orlando Senna

Production Companies: Stop Film, Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen  
Conceived by: Jorge Bodanzky  
Screenplay: Orlando Senna

Photography: Jorge Bodanzky, Wolf Gauer, Orlando Senna

Editor: Eva Grundmann

Cast:

Edna de Cassia (*Iracema*)

Paulo César Pereio (*Tião*)

Conçeição Senna

West Germany-Brazil 1976

96 mins

Digital 4K (restoration)

Presented as part of London Climate Action Week

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### **Brazil on Film**

# **Iracema: Uma Transa Amazônica**

*The screening on Thursday 25 June will include a discussion presented by People's Palace Projects*

A young Indigenous woman travels a newly opened highway with a truck driver, witnessing exploitation along the route. Blending documentary and fiction, the film exposes the human cost of Amazonian 'development'. Long banned but now restored, *Iracema: Uma Transa Amazônica* remains a landmark of hybrid political cinema – urgently resonant amid contemporary debates over land and extraction.

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**Gabriel Mascaro (The Blue Trail, 2025):** *Iracema: Uma Transa Amazônica* is a fundamental work of Brazilian cinema because of the way it turns the journey along the Trans-Amazonian Highway into a devastating portrait of the country under dictatorship. Jorge Bodanzky and Orlando Senna bring fiction and documentary together with rare force, following a young Indigenous girl consumed by exploitation at the same time as the forest is destroyed in the name of progress. Alongside the truck driver Tião Brasil Grande, Iracema travels through a violent, predatory and deeply unequal Brazil. The film dismantles the triumphalist rhetoric of the 'economic miracle' and reveals, with formal and political radicalism, a national project built on the devastation of bodies, territories and futures.

**Fernando Meirelles (City of God, 2002):** I remember coming out of the cinema after watching this film and thinking, 'Maybe I'm not going to be an architect. Maybe I could be a film director, because I want to make films like that.' It's a docudrama, so you don't know if the character is a real person or a character or an actress. I think it changed my life. (*Sight and Sound*, September 2012)

**Kleber Mendonça Filho (The Secret Agent, 2025):** *Iracema* is raw and very tough. It's about this truck driver from the extreme south of Brazil, the area where they consider themselves wealthier and more developed. That explains the awful way that the truck driver – played by Paulo César Pereio, one of the great faces of Brazilian cinema – treats Iracema, a very young Indigenous woman. Edna de Cássia was 15 or 16 when the film was made, just like her character. Pereio's character Tião is an idiot. He would be a Bolsonaro supporter today.

*Iracema* was originally funded by ZDF, the German public television station, because Jorge Bodanzky would never be able to make a film like that during the dictatorship. It is a very striking piece of observation of Brazil 50 years ago. So many people say that it's a documentary, but I see it as a wonderful piece of narrative fiction, even if the content is so unflinching and, towards the end, heartbreaking. With Tião, there is no arc. He doesn't become a better person.

It's also the first film that shows you the Amazon rainforest burning. That's probably when it becomes a documentary. Although I never really see cinema as either a documentary or as fiction. I think truth in cinema can be everywhere, even in a VFX sequence.

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

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When I helped with the restoration of the film, I wondered if young audiences would accept some of the film's tone, which is not so 2026. But people got it. It's not an easy watch, but you can tell that the people behind the film, they have a good heart. I don't see it as an exploitation piece. It's incredibly respectful and a beautiful film.

At the time, the military regime was looking at the Amazon as something to be conquered. In fact, Bodanzky shows the military government's advertising. They paid major newspapers and magazines to announce their projects in the Amazon. It was all about conquering the 'green hell', taming nature, because what we need is roads and progress and technology.

*Iracema* was banned by the dictatorship. It's the logic of these regimes that a film like this should never be seen because it made Brazil look bad. It went to Critics' Week at Cannes in 1976 and then was broadcast in Germany. Bodanzky told me it was supposed to be just a very low-profile broadcast. The same evening there was an important football match, but then heavy snow cancelled the game, and it just happened that people tuned in and saw *Iracema* in Germany. Wow. For about five years, the film was not seen in Brazil. And then in 1981, it began to circulate in 16mm prints in film clubs and in unions. When I was 12 or 13, I remember seeing the ads for *Iracema* in the newspapers, but of course, it was rated 18. So, I only got to see it in the early 2000s, because like other great Brazilian films from the past, I only discovered them much later because we did not have access to them. Many didn't get a VHS release so it was only with the DVD era and at special screenings at film festivals that I got to see many of these films. I'm so happy that it's restored in 4K. It's where it should be.

As told to Isabel Stevens, *Sight and Sound*, June 2026