



CINEMA FOR ALL

Director

Walter Salles, Daniela Thomas

Cast

Sandra Corveloni, João Baldasserini, Vinícius de Oliveira, José Geraldo Rodrigues, Kaique Jesus Santos

Certificate 15

Brazil 2008, 1h48m
Portuguese with sub-titles.



The pressing problem of overcrowding and low income living has been a theme that has long captured the imagination of Brazilian filmmakers. Their country is home to cities with staggering statistics. Sao Paulo has 20 million inhabitants and 200 kilometres of traffic jams; Rio de Janeiro's population density is over 4000 persons per square kilometre and an average of thirty homicides take place each week. Underlying a country that is rich in diverse culture and heritage, are the day to day problems of violent crime, underdevelopment and unemployment. It is the intense situation within these cities that provides the setting for Walter Salles and Daniela Thomas' feature film *Linha de Passe*. The film focuses on a single mother and her four sons, each with different fathers, who share a small house in one of Sao Paulo's favelas (slums). Each son has a different escape from daily life: Dario is one of the best football players in his neighbourhood and has dreams of joining a professional team; Dinho has found god and a church community that welcomes him; Denis has his motorbike and employment as a courier; Reginaldo spends days traversing the bus routes of the city. The film explores both individual moments with the characters in intricate detail – a cigarette smoked, a job undertaken – and the greater events that shape their lives. Whilst refraining from taking a judgemental or overtly political tone, *Linha de Passe* makes it clear that there is little that is fair or just in the way that the characters have to struggle to maintain some kind of ordinary life.

It is within Brazil's *Cinema Nova* film movement that the roots for this type of social filmmaking lie. *Cinema Nova* began in the 1950s and became prominent in the 1960s when young directors such as Nelson Pereira dos Santos and Glauber Rocha used cameras to show the daily lives of the country's poor. Along with other left-leaning film movements in place across Latin America, *Cinema Novo* attempted to show social reality and critique ongoing economic problems and neo-colonialism. Glauber Rocha called for an 'aesthetic of hunger', suggesting that the underdevelopment in Brazil led to a situation of hunger which in turn led to a situation of violence. He called for the films to reflect this state of affairs through the content of the films and also their style. Drawing on filming techniques developed in Italian neo-realism, the *Cinema Nova* films utilised cheap production techniques such as filming on location and using non-professional actors. More than forty years later, these films are still highly influential and the desire to show Brazil's underclass can be seen in a number of films making it onto cinema screens each year.

Linha de Passe is part of a new generation of films that take the same social concerns as *Cinema Nova* but add a distinctly modern feel. Walter Salles' *Central Station* (1998) began this trend and other films such as *City of God* (2002) and *Elite Squad*, (2007) set in Rio Janeiro, and *Carandiru*, (2003) set in Sao Paulo, continued it. Each film uses a mixture of actors and non-actors along with location shooting within the favelas. However the new films use stylistic devices such as camera angles and lighting techniques that are faster paced and often edgy while they also use distinctly twenty-first century soundtracks. At the same time, they always allow time and space for the characters to speak with their own voice and tell their own stories.

Frequently these films interweave the individual narratives of characters caught up in Brazilian favelas. *Linha de Passe* is no different as it depicts the individual desires and struggles of each brother. However, one of the departures it makes is to also show the larger social groups that

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the characters belong to. The football field becomes a place of mass interaction – somewhere that allows large bodies of fans to come together as one entity. In the church, Denis is given access to a group of people that have the same aims as he has. Furthermore, while *City of God*, *Elite Squad* and *Carandiru*, show life very much on the edge, *Linha de Passe* reminds us of the many people in Brazilian favelas that *do* hold down jobs and take part in everyday activities. The film does not deny the fact that employment is hard to come by and that violence can be a part of everyday life, but it does offer a look at characters who try to keep life as normal as possible. It is this aspect of *Linha de Passe* which makes it a particularly mature film that deals with on-going problems that are as pertinent today as they were to Brazilian filmmakers in the last century.

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