



Brasil S/A

Brazilian Dream

Marcelo Pedroso

Production Livia de Melo. **Production company** Símio Filmes (Pernambuco, Brazil). **Director** Marcelo Pedroso. **Screenplay** Marcelo Pedroso. **Director of photography** Ivo Lopes Araújo. **Production design** Juliano Dornelles. **Costume** Rita Azevedo, Maria Esther. **Make-up** Tabira Mariz. **Sound** Pablo Lamar. **Music** Mateus Alves. **Editor** Daniel Bandeira.

With Edilson Silva, Adeilton Nascimento, Giovanna Simões, Wilma Gomes, Marivalda Maria Dos Santos, Maracatu Estrela Brilhante.

DCP, colour. 64 min. Without dialogue.

Premiere 18 September 2014, Festival de Brasília do Cinema Brasileiro. **World sales** ANTIPODE Sales & Distribution

Brazilian sugar-cane harvesters which transform themselves into astronauts to save their nation. Monumental excavators that dance ballet to opulent orchestral music. The national flag of Brazil triumphantly hoisted high on a gigantic building crane in the heavens above the skyscrapers... *Brasil S/A* – Brazil Inc. – is an Eldorado for the eyes and ears: bodies, machines and landscapes in heroic movement. Choreographies of a brave new world in which the sun always shines. Instead of individual plot threads, director Marcelo Pedroso creates thrilling images of a country of superlatives unwaveringly committed to a belief in progress and success. Individual images whose impressive assembly suddenly makes them seem not only cheerful and lovely but also chillingly monstrous – turning the thrill into a hangover. Pedroso's editing room is a rugged assembly hall in the factory complex of Brazil Inc., where the images themselves are turned into powerful tools in tandem with Pablo Lamar's brilliantly wrought soundtrack. A film without dialogue but with a powerful voice nonetheless, satirically calling into question the promises of progress.

Ansgar Vogt

Eternally the country of the future

Brasil S/A is the fruit of a reflection on Brazil today. We Brazilians are used to seeing the country as peripheral, subaltern, poor and third-world. But in recent years Brazil has experienced rampant transformation that has reconfigured its archaic social structure. Yet this difficult and paradoxical modernisation runs up against problems that seem to be historically determined. In *Brasil S/A* we ask: what images can capture this new country? And we chance a few answers, starting with the delirious fable-spinning of a nation drunk on its own progress. These are images and sounds that echo and, at the same time, collide with the grand founding narratives of the national mind-set. Through these images, we enter into conflict with the messianic vocation of a Brazil eternally pre-destined to be the country of the future. Bodies, machines and landscapes move and shudder. Until the final eclipse.

Marcelo Pedroso

"The colonial bases are still very present"

Brasil S/A seems to be a film that was largely scripted in the editing room. Would that be true?

Marcelo Pedroso: The film didn't really have a script, as such. It evolved out of images: a flag hoisted on a construction-site crane, as if commemorating the conquest of some urban peak; circular land-art made in the cane-fields by harvesters; workmen who become astronauts in order to save the nation... So the editing suggested juxtaposing these images, pitting them against each other, finding nexuses, fusions and collisions between them. I think the film's unity, if there is any, comes from the rigour of the scenes, the music and the historical conjuncture in which it was made and which underpins the narrative, determining possible states for the elements in a scene.

The film offers up a number of agendas against a former slave society that is sexist, classist and ecclesiastical, vertical and 'auto-cratic', in the sense of it being dominated by the automobile industry. Was it your intention to posit these as inseparable elements?

As Brazil modernises, I feel it has to grapple more intensely with the ghosts in its archaic structure. The colonial bases are still very present and they set a certain patriarchal tone that contaminates social relations as a whole: in the family, at work, in the occupation of public and private spaces. I believe there is continuity between these everyday spheres, though we tend to see its manifestations as isolated incidents.

In what way does the urban environment affect your work?

Urban space in itself is not a subject that is particularly dear to me. I think I'm more engaged in the debate on political configurations and how they reflect on social arrangements. In the case of *Brasil S/A*, what I wanted was to understand the country in terms of the messianic vocation I think has accompanied it since its foundation. Brazil grew out of a notion of Eldorado. From the very beginning, the nation and its people seem to have been striving for that glorious moment when they would become that Eldorado.

Do you think Brasil S/A is a film that could only have been made by a filmmaker who had experienced the recent transformations that have occurred in the Brazilian northeast, a region that was historically the poorest part of the country?

When I started sketching the film in my mind, one of the first images that came to me was of the flag flying from a crane. For quite a while I wasn't sure whether it should be the flag of Pernambuco (a peripheral north-eastern state) or of Brazil. The Northeast is used to this peripheral condition. Historically, Brazilian films that speak about the Northeast present the region as poor, a point of exodus, drought-ridden, and rife with hunger and unemployment. Recognising the socioeconomic transformations in the region was important insofar as it showed me that the film could actually redress that: it wasn't Brazil talking about the Northeast, it was a Northeast finally capable of talking about Brazil.

To what extent was the opulent soundtrack already present in the original treatment for the film, and how did that change the course of the editing and post-production?

The grandiloquence of the soundtrack is connected with the very genesis of the film: the idea of a rising economic powerhouse. The music had to be imposing in order to dialogue with the major structures set in motion during the scenes. Among the references for *Brasil S/A* were films that choreograph collective spaces and bodies, such as *Man With A Movie Camera* and *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*. So we had to achieve this major symbiosis between the rhythm and intensity of the images and sounds. The editing helped us keep all these elements in step.

With so many jib sweeps, tracking shots and scenes filmed from helicopters, the film acquires an exuberant feel. Is this aesthetic of clean, precise movements also a criticism of the idea of a mechanised society?

Yes, and maybe also a tilt towards the fascism of the image. This ideal of the perfect, symmetrical image, with balanced composition and pitch-perfect lighting brings us back to our everyday visual experience, screen-drunk as we are on ideal lifestyles that impose their standards on our bodies and desires. Again, the idea resides in replicating this effect in order to cause shifts. At the same time, this apparatus suggests a certain enchantment with movement. There's dialogue with the ideology of the Soviet avant-garde and its fascination with the scene in motion.

The film conveys this idea that we're living in a nation-company, where business relations set the tone for social interactions. Was the irony with which you approach this premise the way you felt most comfortable formulating this critique?

In the film, we dialogue with the idea of a certain official discourse, the kind you find in institutional promos and governmental propaganda, films that have a very clear objective: to sell a utopia, an ideal world, free of conflicts or contradictions. By adopting this aesthetic, I believe we at once duplicated and inverted this effect, fighting the spectacle with more spectacle.

Given its metaphorical nature, with scenes that function as figures of language concerning the contemporary nation, do you consider Brasil S/A an open work?

The film was initially full of theses. The images that sprang to mind were vehicles for various presuppositions that determined a certain reading of reality. Thankfully, I think these theses were diluted over the course of the filming. They were brought to bear in images that gave them new life, no longer as theses. The film became a film precisely because it knew how

to eradicate those theses. As such, I reckon it proposes an association between visual platforms that allow for a range of readings and feelings.

Carolina Almeida, November 2014



Marcelo Pedrosa was born in Recife, Brazil in 1979. He has been making films for the past ten years. *Brasil S/A* is Pedrosa's third full-length film. He is currently working towards a doctorate in film, and he gives lectures and workshops throughout Brazil.

Films

2008: *KFZ-1348* (Co-director: Gabriel Mascaro, 81 min.). 2010: *Pacific* (74 min.). 2011: *Corpo presente* (22 min.). 2012: *Câmara escura* (22 min.). 2013: *Em trânsito* (18 min.). 2014: *Brasil S/A / Brazilian Dream*.