

IRACEMA

PRESSBOOK



Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin

2025



Festival do Rio

2024



SEMAINE
DE LA CRITIQUE
CANNES

1976



"In this 50-year span, what I observe is that nothing has changed. What was written by the military in the 1970s continues to happen now. It is a great lesson to realize that the mistakes of 1974 in Amazonia persist, only much worsened."

JORGE BODANZKY, director

Released in 1974, *Iracema* is a film of historical, artistic, and social significance, navigating the boundaries between documentary and fiction. The work by Jorge Bodanzky and Orlando Senna stands as a milestone in political cinema and a powerful denunciation of the contradictions of the "development" project imposed at the time.

The film co-produced by the German television company ZDF, garnered awards upon its release. It received the Special Prize at the Cannes Film Festival, the Reencontre Film et Jeunesse, the Prix George Sadoul (Paris), the Adolf Grimme Preis (Germany), and the Encomio Taormina (Italy). In Brazil, the film was censored by the military regime for several years before finally being screened and awarded at the Brasília Film Festival in 1980, where it won the prizes for Best Film, Best Actress (Edna de Cássia), Best Supporting Actress (Conceição Senna), and Best Editing (Eva Grundman and Jorge Bodanzky).

The narrative follows the young *Iracema* (Edna de Cássia) on her journey along the Trans-Amazonian Highway, a road that, at the time, symbolized the propagandistic optimism of the military regime. Alongside Tião Brasil Grande (Paulo César Pereio), she embarks on a journey that takes her from the streets of Belém to the depths of the Amazon rainforest. Along the way, the film starkly and directly exposes the complex dynamics of power, exploitation, and violence that pervaded the region's occupation. The Trans-Amazonian Highway touted as the "spine of progress," appears in the film as an open wound in the heart of the forest, simultaneously a symbol and consequence of a predatory economic model.

Combining fiction and documentary scenes, the film employed a distancing method that captured the spontaneity of real life. The filmmakers adopted a near-guerrilla approach, with a small team and lightweight equipment, allowing them to immerse themselves in the everyday reality of the Amazon. This strategy resulted in a work that, more than telling a story, delivers an immersive experience. The interactions between the main actors and the non-actors, many local residents, reveal raw truths about human conditions and environmental degradation.

The film addresses pressing issues that remain relevant today: deforestation, forced migration, slave labor, and the cultural destruction of Indigenous peoples. During the filming, the crew witnessed and documented scenes of violence, such as human trafficking and the forced displacement of riverine populations. The film recreated these moments with an impressive balance between fictional narrative and documentary reality, making it a timeless testimony to a critical period in Brazilian history.

The significance of *Iracema* extends beyond its historical context. Today, it remains a work of denunciation and reflection, resonating in a Brazil that continues to face challenges in preserving the Amazon and respecting human rights. *Iracema's* narrative serves as a powerful reminder of the human and ecological costs of a development model that prioritizes profit over sustainability. The construction of the Trans-Amazonian Highway, still incomplete to this day, symbolizes unfulfilled promises and the devastating impact of public policies carried out without social or environmental planning.

Iracema is not just a film, it is a visual manifesto, a powerful denouncement, and an invitation to reflect on the future of Brazil and the planet. In times of increasing environmental and social awareness, its relevance continues to grow, solidifying it as an essential work for understanding Brazil's past and present.



New Life For Iracema

By Alice de Andrade, Restoration Coordinator

It is hard to explain the happiness of restoring a film that, since its creation 50 years ago, has marked the lives of thousands of people. Bringing it back to theaters at a different time, with unprecedented richness of detail, only to rediscover it, is an unparalleled privilege. I owe this to Orlando Senna, Iracema's co-director, my mentor, friend, and lifelong partner.

My wish to see his films again on the big screen was the trigger for this adventure. I had just learned about an international preservation grant and discovered that the original negatives of the film were stored at ZDF, a German television network. This was a familiar path to me, having gone through it during the restoration of Cinema Novo, a short film made by my father, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, for ZDF. Although we didn't receive the grant, I began an almost daily interaction with Bodanzky.

These days, the filmmaker records everything on his cellphone. According to him, this creates an egalitarian relationship with those being filmed, where "no one feels exploited because it's a technology everyone has." His teachings on working with lightness and freedom, demystifying our craft, and his own role as a creator eventually led me to embrace his cinema project.

At first, I thought this would just be another job in an area I greatly enjoy and have specialized in. But I soon realized that I was putting in as much effort to restore these films as I had 20 years ago when my siblings and I restored the complete works of our father, gathering scattered materials from all over the world. For, without good source materials, there can be no quality restorations.

In order to have Iracema beautifully restored in time for the 50th anniversary of its creation, digitization and restoration had to be done in Germany. I was well-acquainted with Martin Köerber, and asked him to supervise the restoration with ZDF, which does not allow its materials to leave Europe.

By a fortunate coincidence, at the anniversary of the Das kleine Fernsehspiel program, that financed four of Bodanzky's films, Iracema was voted the best film of the 1970s, and the filmmaker was invited to present it in Berlin. There, Martin Köerber and Bodanzky were impressed by the quality of the projected sound. Thanks to Merle Kröger, the exhibition curator, we discovered the magnetic sound tapes of Iracema in ZDF's archives, along with those of the other three films. These analog masters, virtually untouched, are capable of reproducing an incredible wealth of soundtrack details previously inaudible due to the technical limitations of the time in Brazil.

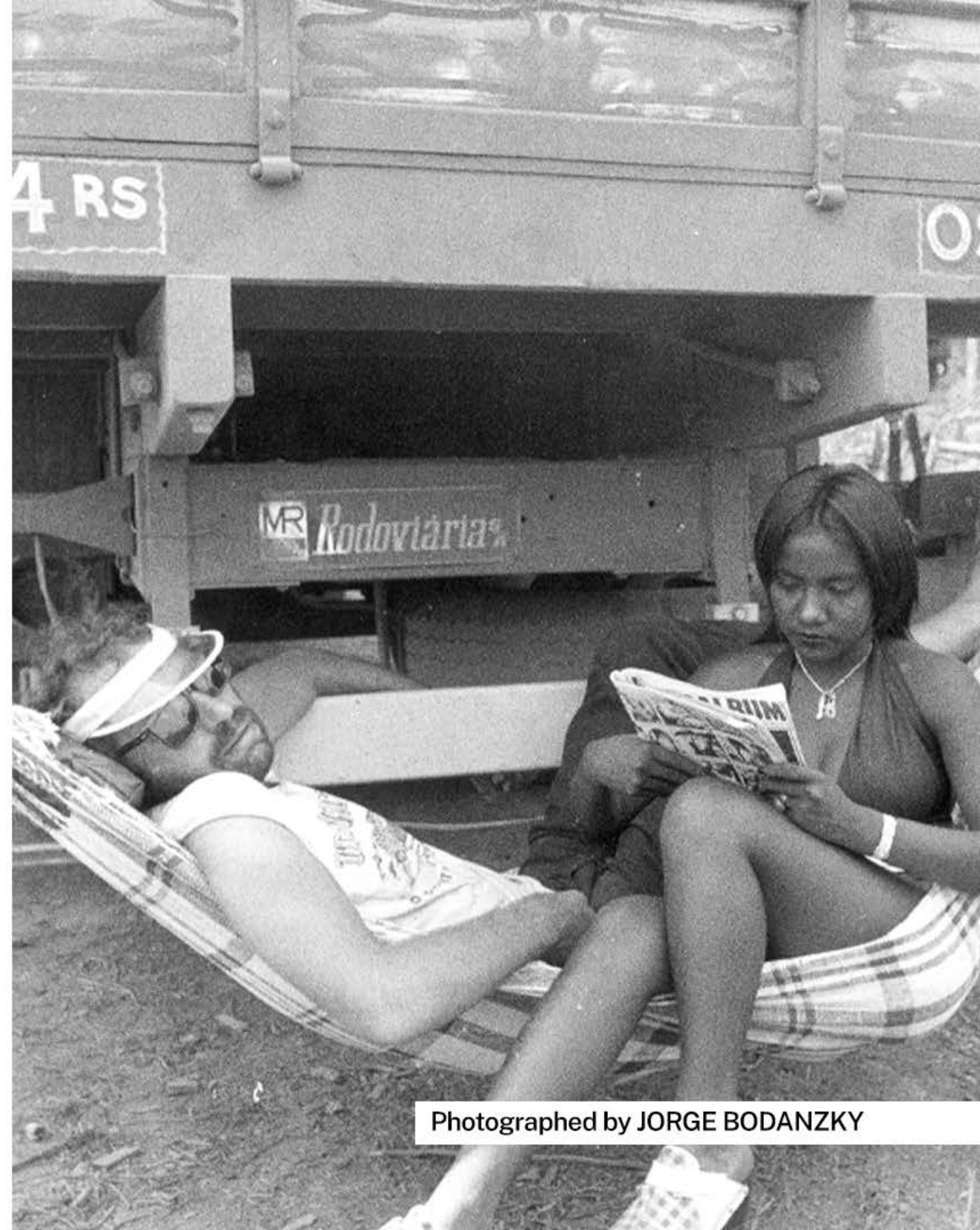
Enthusiastic admirers of Bodanzky's work donated the resources that ensured this restoration, which achieved remarkable excellence thanks to the support of IMS – the Moreira Salles Institute – and João and Walter Salles. The dedication of our team was infinite. Special thanks go to Débora Butruce, audiovisual preservationist at Mnemosine; José Luiz Sasso of JLS; Denise Miller from Link Digital; and Aarão Marins from Mapa Filmes. The Arts and Design Department of PUC-Rio facilitated the download of a massive amount of files, and, of course, we relied on the essential support of the Brazilian Cinematheque. I am deeply grateful for the help of its workers. The involvement of the IMS Cinema team throughout this process has been of utmost importance. All our gratitude to Márcia Vaz and Kleber Mendonça Filho.

Restoring the colors of the films alongside Bodanzky, listening to the stories of the filming, and understanding his method of blending fiction with reality has been a gift. It was moving to see hundreds of faces emerge during the Círio de Nazaré procession, each one with its truth amidst a dazzling profusion of votive offerings. It was equally touching to perceive the subtleties of Edna de Cássia's portrayal of the adolescent Iracema and to recognize Conceição Senna's genius, not only in her acting but also in choosing the micro-dresses that Iracema never repeats — and no one will ever know how they fit into her modest suitcase.

Besides Iracema, the project has already restored **Third Millennium** (Drittes Jahrtausend), a masterpiece of direct cinema also coproduced with ZDF, shot at the Solimões River in the state of Amazonas.

Over 50 years, Bodanzky has made 16 films in the region. His most recent, **Amazon, the New Minamata?**, which has won multiple awards, addresses mercury contamination caused by mining. At 81, Jorge Bodanzky continues to use his cinema to raise awareness among Indigenous villages, quilombos, riverine communities, as well as politicians and organized civil society.

Viewed collectively, his body of work reveals the complexity and richness of the Amazon — a region few truly know and the world so urgently needs to understand.



Photographed by JORGE BODANZKY



VA COM MIGO QUE

U VOU COM DEUS

Cinema and Guerrilla: An Incomplete Biography of the Film **Iracema**

Testimonial by Orlando Senna, co-director

In a few years, it will be a half-century since the making of **Iracema, uma transa Amazônica**, a film I made with Jorge Bodanzky and an extraordinary crew in 1974. With him, we dove into the realities and secrets of the forest to demystify the military dictatorship's "economic miracle." It was a heartrending adventure, one that changed our lives. For the spectators (who, due to censorship were only able to see it in 1980), the film was an irrefutable denunciation of the environmental crimes committed in the Amazon – the world would see the huge fires that persist and increase even today – and of crimes and cruelty toward human beings, who were expelled from their lands, culturally dismembered or killed.

I believe each member of the crew took away a different memory of the thirty days of continuous filming and of the series of revelations, artistic experiences, and exposure to obvious and hidden dangers. In my memory, very clear scenes and situations of filming coexist with gaps in memory that I can't fill. Thinking back to those days I have the impression (ever more distanced) that the fact that we survived the filming was a true miracle.

In mid-1973, Jorge Bodanzky first mentioned to me the possibility of making a documentary on the Trans-Amazonian Highway, the BR-230, which was then under construction (and still is, 47 years later) and was presented by the dictatorship as the maximum example of the "economic miracle" they claimed was taking place in Brazil. The highway was central to the regime's official propaganda. In the military's plans, it would be eight thousand kilometers long, slicing through the Northeast and the North, from Cabelado, in Paraíba,

to Lábrea, in Amazonas, and from there to Peru and Ecuador. Thousands of workers, garimpeiros (gold prospectors), merchants, squatters, wood smugglers, and prostitutes from all over, not to mention the soldiers, whose presence was evident everywhere, came to the places where it would be constructed, in particular the Amazon region.

[...]

That same year, 1973, I managed to get transferred to Rio. One day Jorge appeared at our place and announced that ZDF, a German public television station, was interested in producing a film on the Trans-Amazonian Highway, and he invited Conceição and me to participate in the adventure. Right away we started to plan, or pre-plan, the film.

[...] Continues..

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Technical Information

Iracema

Original Title: **Iracema, uma transa amazônica**
1975 | Brazil, West Germany | 99 minutes | 4K | 5.1

Director Jorge Bodanzky, Orlando Senna

Story by Jorge Bodanzky, Hermann Penna

Screenplay Orlando Senna

Production Wolf Gauer, Achim Tappen,
Malu Alencar

Cinematography Jorge Bodanzky

Editing Jorge Bodanzky, Eva Grundman

Soundtrack Jorge Bodanzky, Achim Tappen

Cast Paulo César Peréio, Edna de Cássia
Lúcio Dos Santos, Elma Martins,
Natal, Fernando Neves, Wilmar
Nunes, Sidney Piñon, Rose Rodrigues,
Conceição Senna

Production Companies Stop Film, Zweites Deutsches
Fernsehen (ZDF)



Restoration Credits

Production and Technical
Coordination Alice de Andrade

Artistic Director Jorge Bodanzky

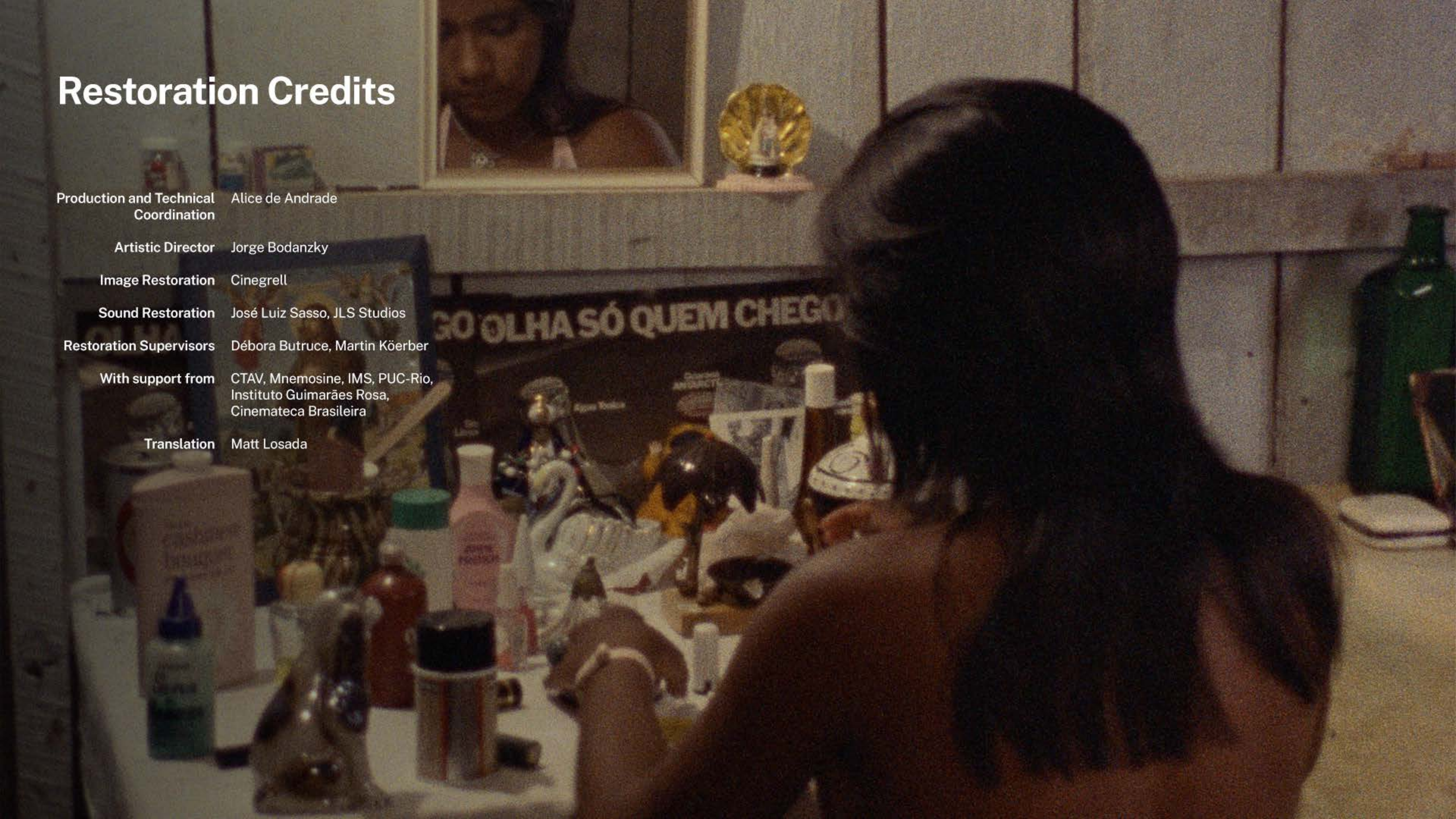
Image Restoration Cinegrell

Sound Restoration José Luiz Sasso, JLS Studios

Restoration Supervisors Débora Butruce, Martin Köerber

With support from CTAV, Mnemosine, IMS, PUC-Rio,
Instituto Guimarães Rosa,
Cinemateca Brasileira

Translation Matt Losada



Biographies

JORGE BODANZKY

The filmmaker, photographer, and reporter Jorge Bodanzky was born in São Paulo in 1942. He studied at the University of Brasília (1964-65) and the Ulm School of Design in Germany. He began his career as a photographer, encouraged by Amélia Toledo and Athos Bulcão, professors at UnB. He worked for Manchete magazine, Jornal da Tarde, and Revista Realidade, among others. He photographed many feature films between 1968 and 1974. He made his directorial debut with the short film Caminhos de Valdez (1971), co-directed with Hermano Penna. His first feature, Iracema: uma transa amazônica (1974), co-directed with Orlando Senna, was censored in Brazil until 1981. After Iracema, he directed numerous films, such as Gitirana (1975, co-directed with Orlando Senna), Jari (1979, co-directed with Wolf Gauer), and Amazônia, a nova Minamata? (2022). His collection of photographs and Super 8 films was incorporated into the Instituto Moreira Salles in 2013. He collaborates with Revista ZUM.

ORLANDO SENNA

Orlando Senna, filmmaker and theorist, directed and wrote over 30 films. Starting as a journalist, he directed documentaries, contributed to theater, led Cuba's EICTV and Mexico's CCC, and served as Brazil's Secretary of Audiovisual. He also headed EBC and the Latin American TV network TAL.



MONTANHA RUSSA

is an independent production company that produces feature films, documentary series, and projects aimed at preserving cinematic heritage. Its founder, Alice de Andrade, was the technical coordinator for the restoration and distribution project of the complete works of Joaquim Pedro de Andrade and played a central role in the preservation of the ICAIC Latin American Newsreels, 1492 Cuban newsreels, restored in high definition by INA, France National Audiovisual Institute. The company is currently working on the restoration of the films by director Jorge Bodanzky. Iracema and Terceiro Milênio (1983) were the first films completed.

GULLANE+

Gullane+ is an audiovisual distribution company and international sales, part of the Gullane group, which is internationally recognized for the quality of its productions. The catalog includes over 40 titles, ranging from films released in theaters to content broadcast on TV channels and streaming platforms in more than 70 countries. Gullane+ contributes its efforts to promoting the diversity of Brazilian content.



Photographed by JORGE BODANZKY

WORLD SALES

Gullane+

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RESTORATION PRODUCTION



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SUPPORT



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