



The Main Feature

Season 45 – Issue 15 – Screening 23rd April 2026

I'm Still Here (Ainda Estou Aqui)

Brazil 2024
137 minutes Certificate 15

Director Walter Salles
Screenplay Murilo Hauser and Heitor Lorega (memoir by Marcelo Rubens Paiva)
Cinematography Adrian Teijido
Production Design Carlos Conti
Editor Affonso Gonçalves
Music Warren Ellis

Fernanda Torres Eunice Paiva
Fernanda Montenegro Eunice in 2014
Selton Mello Rubens Paiva

Children (1970)

Valentina Herszage Veroca
Bárbara Luz Nalu
Luiza Kosovski Eliana
Guilherme Silveira Marcelo (the boy)
Cora Mora Babiu

Thelmo Fernandes Lino (lawyer)
Pri Helena Maria José/Zezé (maid)



Our presentation this evening is a much-garlanded, immersive film telling the true story of one family's experiences under the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964-1985). It features a tour-de-force performance from Fernanda Torres, and was acclaimed by The Times as "one of the great movies about motherhood."

It's just before Christmas 1970. The Paivas are a lively, gregarious, upper middle-class family living beside (and on) the Rio beachfront. Their house is tastefully furnished, chock full of photographs and music. The matriarch (Eunice) keeps a knowing eye on her 5 vivacious children (4 girls, 1 boy), her warm-hearted architect husband Rubens (a former leftist Congressman) and a busy maid. The eldest daughter (Veroca) departs with family friends to London, sending back letters and Super-8 tapes to her siblings' delight. There may be signs of increasing political instability - helicopters in the sky, occasional kidnappings of foreign dignitaries, sudden brusque roadblocks to weed out terrorists – but life is good. And then there is a knock at the door. Rubens is asked by the authorities for a "deposition." He waves a fond goodbye, saying he'll be back for his wife's famous soufflé. The next day, Eunice and her 15-year-old daughter Eliana

are driven away at speed, hooded en route to an unknown destination. Eunice is released after 12 days of repetitive questioning and solitary captivity, constantly overhearing sounds of torture. She is relieved to come home to find Eliana was let go after just 1 day. It gradually emerges that Ruben has been helping political exiles (without his wife's knowledge). The film records how his arrest changes the family's finances and dynamics, focusing on Eunice's subsequent new career as a lawyer and her struggle to find out the truth about her husband. The film flashes forward to scenes set in 1996 and 2014. End titles provide an update to the present day.

The film is based on a memoir written by Marcelo Paiva (Eunice's son) in 2015. You'll note his character is shown in a wheelchair in the latter stages of the film. Unfortunately, he suffered a diving accident in 1979 and ended up paraplegic. The director Walter Selles had an inside track as he had been friends with the Paiva family from 1969, when he was 13. He made the unusual decision to shoot his film in scene order, to help the young cast bond like a real family and to build the sense of fear felt by the characters as events unfold. Selles' earlier film "Central Station" (Central do Brasil) was shown by the Club in 1999. It still has the highest reaction score of any film the Club has ever shown.

Critical acclaim was universal. The Telegraph praised a "pensive, poignant, richly realised" film with a "mesmerisingly controlled lead performance" from Torres. Variety commended "a heartbreaking story [told] with beauty and dignity, through the eyes of the wife and children who lived through it" and The Hollywood Reporter dubbed it "deeply moving." Despite a campaign of denigration from those loyal to the ex-junta, it was a massive box office hit in Brazil with receipts of \$25m and played to large, appreciative audiences in Portugal and across the rest of Latin America.

IMDb lists 81 awards won at various festivals including a Golden Globe (Best Actress) for Torres; best screenplay (at the Venice Film Festival) and the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language film. It was also nominated for the Best Film Oscar (rare for a film not in English), with Torres up for Best Actress.

The film works because the set-up is so convincing; you recognise the vivid warmth of the large family, then feel the heart-breaking consequences of their changed situation, and finally admire Eunice's heroism and subtle self-control.

As Variety rather poetically summarised

"The people you try to oppress will live to see you reviled and rejected by history, while those who resist will have songs and stories written about them. They will inspire music and art in celebration of their lives and will have movies as heartsore and beautiful as 'I'm Still Here' made in their honour."

Enjoy the film. Aproveite o filme

Eugene Smith



We thank Red Eye for subsidising the cost of printing these notes. Red Eye Print, Unit 2D, Lansbury Estate, 102 Lower, GU21 2EP Tel: 01483 772111

Club website: www.wncc.org.uk. Prefer to leave your comments on the film and your score online rather than on paper? Email to reactions@wncc.org.uk by close Tuesday 28th April
Discs of most of our previous shows are available to hire for a modest fee.

Interview with Fernanda Torres (extract from Entertainment Weekly, Feb 2025)

Her work earned her a Golden Globe Award in January, an achievement made all the more personal by the fact that her mother, celebrated actress Fernanda Montenegro [*who played the Eunice character in the 2014 scene*] was a Golden Globe and Oscar nominee 25 years ago for Walter Salles' *Central Station*.

How familiar were you with Eunice and her family?

We knew what had happened with this family, but we didn't know the details. Then in the '80s, the youngest son became a very famous writer because he lost the movements of his body in a very silly accident. And what was amazing was that this beautiful boy lost his movements and he wrote this book about his recovery that was so alive, so incredible — there was no self-pity, nothing close to that. The great heroine of the family was his mother. She went back to university at the age of 46 and she became this great human rights lawyer, and she participated in the Constitution of Brazil, the new one that brought democracy back to Brazil. She defended indigenous rights. So, it's the story of a family, but it's also the story of a country, and it's also the story of the world because I think they were victims not of a dictatorship that happened in Brazil but of the Cold War. The Cold War sponsored all the dictatorships in South America. So, it's also the story of all of us.

Were you thrilled at the chance to play her or intimidated?

I felt the responsibility to do a movie and to do work that would be faithful to her because, you see, she's a woman that refused to be portrayed as a victim. So, me and Walter, we talked with each other about not making a melodrama out of this story. It's a tragic story, but it's not sad. She was able to raise those five children, and they endured. Sometimes I think that even the book and the film now, with this great success and recognition, is still a job of Eunice even after death. [She's a] very civilized woman in a very uncivilized moment of history who pursued justice knowing that even if it would take four decades, she would win at the end. So, the film, I think, is part of this resistance because this is very important in her — she was never a victim in the public square. She used her smile and her civility as a weapon. She's a great guide for nowadays.

The Cold War was a very dystopic time, and a time of fear. I remember I was afraid of the Red Button; as a child, I thought the world was going to come to an end. And again, now, for other reasons we are afraid. And when you are afraid, you look for populist governments because they give you the impression that we have simple solutions to heavy, complicated problems. And what she teaches us, I think, is that it's going to take a long time that you have to fight with civility for justice, for education, but you have to have joy in life. And I think that's what she teaches her son. Now, after doing her, I finally understood why Marcelo, even paralyzed from the neck down, was able to still be him. She is a very powerful woman.

Eunice and her daughter are taken to jail, Eunice keeps track of the days by etching on the wall. She doesn't know if her daughter is alive. What was top of mind as you were going through those two weeks of imprisonment?

First of all, we shot chronologically. So that helped us to really dive in parallel with the character. The key thing in the prison scene is the interrogation, and Walter did something wonderful because normally you can portray the dictator police as dumb, as stupid, as brutal or violent. No, he has chosen a very, very intelligent actor. And that actor, he was a lawyer, so he had a law background and he was terrifying. I was having the great opportunity to play a scene with depth, feeling anguish, feeling terrified, dirty place. But that's like the heart of the film and the heart of the change in the film because it's when she just gave up her utopian life, the life she had before — she understands that there is no way back. Move on, don't go back. And by doing it, it's when she becomes herself, which is another great thing of this character — the tragic thing that she faces is when she becomes herself.

Full Interview (includes spoilers!) is at

<https://ew.com/fernanda-torres-oscar-nominee-im-still-here-the-awardist-8789138>

Comments and reactions to: **The Penguin Lessons** - shown on April 9th 2026
 No of reaction slips received = 34 Average score = 7.88

Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number	0	0	0	0	1	3	8	11	9	2

Position	Film	Score	Reactions
1	Mr. Burton	8.41	29
2	Touch (Snerting)	8.20	30
3	Conclave	8.15	34
4	Frantz	7.91	32
5	The Penguin Lessons	7.88	34
6	The Dressmaker	7.73	26
7	Perfect Days	7.34	29
8	How to Make Millions...Grandma	7.12	26
9	Thelma	6.92	24
10	Chevalier	6.80	25
11	Girls Will be Girls	6.29	34
12	Maria	6.16	25
13	Jimi - All is By My Side	4.77	26
14	A Christmas Tale/Conte de Noel	3.72	25

Very enjoyable film – but with a serious undertone Interesting film
I think the political background was needed to give it depth
 Nice to have a film with some good comedy. The penguin was particularly good. An interesting true story Uncomfortable blend of comedy and drama
The penguin was an excellent character – he made a positive difference to those around him.
Effective ending – great speech by Steve Coogan's character. This week's homemade cakes were very nice
 A thoughtful and humourous approach to the realisation that if we don't "help" our neighbour and fight for freedom when we are the many then we will become the few – and become enslaved
Excellent, well-acted film. I much enjoyed watching it for the second time
 Well-done film about the true history of the Argentina war
Fun, fun, fun but a sad, sad reflection of what happened in Germany in the 1930s. How lucky we are Loved this film. Steve Coogan was fabulous in it. Really though provoking story
 An absolute joy to watch. The penguin stole the show Really enjoyed the film. Made me cry too
A wonderful tale told with humour, against a dark background Most enjoyable, quite deep
 Wonderful uplifting film. Very entertaining Thoroughly enjoyable. Best film I've seen this season
Humourous but with a serious scenario. A good, enjoyable film

Our Next Film – 14th May – Still Life



I was unprepared for the transcendent final moments, which left me suddenly and unexpectedly in tears – The Observer (Mark Kermode)

Sombre and understated to a fault, but it also contains several quietly affecting moments, most of which are complemented by a beautiful score by Rachel Portman – Radio Times

This is a film that demands patience from a sympathetic audience, but the rewards are considerable – The Australian