



## The Middle of The World a film by Vicente Amorim



Brazil, 85 minutes

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## SYNOPSIS

*The Middle of the World* is a road movie on bicycles. It is freely adapted from the true story of an unemployed truck driver who, with his wife and five children, pedals from Paraíba, in the poverty-stricken Northeast of Brazil, all the way to Rio de Janeiro looking for a job. Romão (the father) feels destined to earn 1000 reais (about 300 US\$) a month – a vast sum for Brazilian standards. On four bikes, the family goes through five states, knows solidarity and indifference, aggressiveness and cordiality. A 2000-mile odyssey through the hinterlands of Brazil all the way to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's best-known postcard. *The Middle of the World* shows the quest for the dream of a decent life – a story of dreams and hope.

## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Written by David França Mendes, photography by Gustavo Hadba, score by André Abujamra, with Ravi Ramos Lacerda (*Abril Despedaçado*) and Sidney Magal. The children of the couple (Manoel Sebastião - Rodney, Felipe Newton - Clevis, Cristina Almino de Lima - Suelena, and the babies Cícero Wallyson and Cícero Wesley Ferreira - Cícero) were chosen among 1.400 candidates tested throughout a year.

Filmed in eight weeks, in Juazeiro do Norte and its outskirts, and also in Porto Seguro and in Rio de Janeiro, **THE MIDDLE OF THE WORLD** offers a different perspective of the Northeastern region of Brazil, where archaic traditions and pop culture, solidarity and hostility are intertwined throughout the extraordinary bicycle course that Romão, Rose, and their five children travel in quest of a dream.

“The Middle of the World Square, the hinterlands of the State of Paraíba.”

This is the starting point for this unique road movie based on a true story: Romão (Wagner Moura), an illiterate and unemployed truck driver, believes he is destined for a job with a monthly salary of one thousand reais – what he considers the minimum amount necessary to provide a decent life for his wife Rose (Cláudia Abreu) and five children: the teenager Antônio (Ravi Ramos Lacerda), three children - Rodney (Manoel Sebastião Alves Filho), Clévis (Felipe Newton Silva Rodrigues), Suelena (Cícera Cristina Almino de Lima) – and baby Cícero (Cícero Wallyson and Cícero Wesley A. Ferreira).

The obstinate Romão decides to hit the road in quest of his obsession, alongside his wife and children. On four bicycles, they cross five states and pedal 3.200 km.

In this odyssey throughout the Northeastern region of Brazil, the family suffers hunger and thirst, comes to know solidarity and indifference, archaic traditions and pop culture, and the aggressiveness and cordiality of the people they encounter along the way. They also deal with family crisis – caused above all by Antônio, the adolescent who in his

coming of age begins to question his father's authority and is often seduced by the attractions offered along the road.

Throughout the long and unpredictable journey, the family in constant transformation comes into contact with the Brazil that is deeply imbedded in religious pilgrimages in Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará, to the Brazil of phoney festivities created for tourists in Porto Seguro, Bahia.

Producer Lucy Barreto remembers the enthusiasm with which she first heard Vicente Amorim tell her about the couple and their six children who traveled from the State of Paraíba to Rio de Janeiro by bicycle. "The story was extraordinary. I could see that family that traveled 3.200 km by bicycle as a little Brancaleone army led by a man obsessed with the idea of finding a job that pays a thousand "real" as he says (the correct plural is "reais") to provide a decent life for his family."

Lucy Barreto was actively involved in developing the project. For three months, she interviewed the real Rose as well as the older children, who she describes as "extremely shy". Slowly, she got closer to the character of the story: "Rose was always smiling. She came from a poor, but not poverty-stricken family. She began working at the age of 12 and shared that what she most loved to do was sing and dance. She dances very well, and he very poorly. They met at a dance, fell in love, and got married. She was 14, he 15. When they arrived in Rio, they were 30 and 31".

As a producer, Lucy Barreto realized that before her lay a beautiful story to be told in pictures: "Various aspects made the plot fascinating: the journey by bicycle with six children – spanning the ages of 14 years old to an 8-month old baby (in the film there were five children), the journey as a family, for it is not uncommon for a man to travel South, leave his wife and children and with time simply allow for the family to fall apart and go their separate ways, the issue of Romão being unemployed and wanting a decent job, with a salary of "mil real". And she takes notice: "Despite being illiterate and unemployed, Romão is a person with integrity and much self-esteem, which is also uncommon in these circumstances."

Taken by the story and the characters, the producer points out other amazing aspects of this little Northeastern odyssey: Romão's devotion to his family, the love story of the couple, the fact that they made it all the way to Rio without a tragedy. The oldest son was never left behind, as was the case with Antônio, but could have, she signals.

Her adhesion to the project of producing a feature based on the experiences of the couple was based on one condition: that director Vicente Amorim and screenwriter David França Mendes retrace the journey of the family to get to really know the region they would portray onscreen. And, to a certain extent, remembers Lucy Barreto, a trip as such was what led to one of her greatest hits, *Bye-Bye, Brasil*, by Carlos Diegues. The immersion was so positive that it resulted in the autonomous film, **Too Much Brazil (2000 Nordestes)**, with various counterpoints against the stereotypes of the Northeast region and its completely miserable state: "Today's Northeast, is not merely that of *Barren Lives (Vidas Secas)* – the region has become varied and diversified as a result of different types of influences" defines the producer.

Lucy Barreto points out that the greatest challenge of the film was casting the children: "For a year we tested migrants from the Northeast living in Rio. The children chosen are from Juazeiro do Norte, and only Antônio, the oldest son, played by Ravi Ramos Lacerda, who debuted in Walter Salles' *Behind The Sun (Abril Despedaçado)*, is from Paraíba and had film experience".

The city of Juazeiro do Norte served as the base for filming in the Northeast. The family's course included Porto Seguro and Rio de Janeiro. Filming lasted eight weeks. Roberto Carlos released his songs to the film after he read the script. "He was charmed by the story", tells the producer.

Lucy Barreto shares that while she was preparing the story and image rights contract with the family, she insisted on giving Romão an advance of one thousand reais. "The first thing he bought was a pair of Raybans. After that he bought a car, and decided to go back to Paraíba. He wanted to cram the entire family into the car and hit the road. We wouldn't let him. He was an easy rider from the Northeast. He returned by car with the oldest son. The family went by bus. He would say "my destiny is the road", stresses Lucy Barreto, who concludes: **The Middle of the World** is basically a love story. A story that may be entirely characteristic of the Northeast of Brazil, but that could happen anywhere in the world. A story that presents the Northeast on the other side of the road, without clichés. A pop Northeast.

## **CREW**

### **Producer: Bruno Barreto**

**"The Middle of the World, above all else, is a film about people".**

**The Middle of the World** is Bruno Barreto's second film as a producer after *Menino do Rio*, by Antônio Calmon, in 1981.

His participation consisted in the supervision of all the stages of development, script rewrites, casting, production, editing and mixing. His close ties with Roberto Carlos – whose songs are included in most of Bruno's own films – enabled the release of the songs for the film.

### **Associate Producer: Daniel Filho**

One of the greatest renewers of Brazilian television, Daniel Filho also has an important and diversified path related to the cinema. He acted in over 30 films – in the "chanchadas" *Colégio de Brotos e Maluco por Mulher*, from the Cinema Novo, *Os Cafajestes* (Ruy Guerra), *Boca de Ouro* (Nelson Pereira dos Santos), *Os Herdeiros* (Carlos Diegues), in *Beijo no Asfalto* and *Romance da Empregada*, by Bruno Barreto. In 2002, he acted in *Querido Estranho*, by Ricardo Pinto e Silva.

He directed six features: *Pobre Príncipe Encantado* (1968), *O Impossível Acontece* (1969), *A Cama ao Alcance de Todos* (1969), *O Casal* (1975), *O Cangaceiro Trapalhão* (1983). In

2001 he went back to directing *A Partilha*, based on the play by Miguel Falabella, one of the greatest hits of the retake, with 1 million 450 thousand spectators.

As the artistic director for Globo Filmes, of which he is one of the founders, he was associate producer on the films *Orfeu* (1998), *Simão, O Fantasma Trapalhão* (1998), *Zoando na TV* (1998), *O Trapalhão e a Luz Azul* (1999), *O Auto da Compadecida* (2000), *Caramuru* (2001), *City of God* (2002) and *Carandiru* (2003). The last two were two of the greatest hits of the retake, with respectively, 3.200.000 and 4 million 3000 thousand spectators (numbers june/ 2003).

### **Director: Vicente Amorim**

**"I wanted to make a film 'in' the Northeast, not 'about' the Northeast".**

The son of a diplomat, Vicente Amorim was born in Austria, lived in England, the United States, the Netherlands, and in Brazil lived in Brasilia and Rio de Janeiro. He studied Economics for three years before choosing to follow his first and true passion: film. A cinefile since childhood, he directed his first short in Super-8 at the age of 14. At the age of 17, he began to work as an intern for Leon Hirszman on the film *Imagens do Inconsciente*. Following this experience, he made it a point to learn about all the technical stages of filmmaking: he worked as assistant camera, a sound assistant, and in post-production.

He was an assistant director on 23 feature films, which include *Moon Over Parador* (Paul Mazurksy), *Brincando nos Campos do Senhor / At Play in the Fields of the Lord* (Hector Babenco), *Veja Esta Canção / See This Song*, *Tieta* and *Orfeu* (Cacá Diegues), and *Bossa Nova* (Bruno Barreto).

He directed five shorts, two co-directions with David França Mendes - *Vaidade!* (awarded Best Direction at the Gramado Film Festival) and *Lona*, and also *Não fique pilhado / Don't Get Charged Up*, a three and a half minute 3D animated short that received various national and international awards at Anima Mundi, the festivals of Mendonza (Argentina) and Telluride (United States). The short was acquired by the Guggenheim Museum in New York. He has directed over 200 commercials and music videos. His feature-length debut was his documentary *2000 Nordestes / Too Much Brazil*, filmed while he was preparing and in preparation for *The Middle of the World*, his first narrative feature film.

### **CAST**

#### **Claúdia Abreu/Rose**

**"Rose admires her husband's determination to give his family a better life".**

One of the most consistent and versatile actresses of her generation, she started to work in theatre and television as a teenager. The telenovelas *Barriga de Aluguel*, *Que Rei Sou Eu*, the series *Pátria Minha*, the mini-series *Anos Rebeldes*, and the series *Comédia da Vida Privada* and *A Vida Como Ela É* are among her greatest successes in television. In the

theatre, the highlights are *Um Certo Hamlet* (directed by Antônio Abujamra), *Orlando e Viagem ao Centro da Terra* (Bia Lessa) and *Três Irmãs* (Enrique Diaz). In 1996, under the direction of Carlos Diegues, she debuted in the cinema with *Tieta do Agreste*, as Leonora, Tieta's protégé (Sonia Braga). In the following film, *O Que é Isso, Companheiro?*, by Bruno Barreto, she played the part of an urban "guerrilheira" against the military dictatorship in 1968. In *A Guerra de Canudos*, by Sérgio Rezende, she played the oldest daughter of Antônio Conselheiro. She was also a TV host in *Ed Mort*, by Alain Fresnot, and a baroness of the Second Kingdom in *O Xangô de Baker Street* (Miguel Faria Jr.), and a hairdresser in *O Homem do Ano*, by José Henrique Fonseca.

In **The Middle of the World** Cláudia Abreu plays the role of Rose, the wife of the obstinate Romão, who travels 3.200 km by bicycle alongside his five children to get to Rio de Janeiro in quest of a better life.

### **Ravi Ramos Lacerda / Antônio**

*"In the labs, we referred to each other by our character names and to this day I have a certain difficulty in calling my siblings in the film by their real names. The names of the characters - Rodney, Clévis, Suelena, really caught on".*

Born in João Pessoa, Ravi Ramos Lacerda always knew that he wanted to be an actor. He began to do street theatre at the age of seven, with his mother, the actress Dhyana Lacerda. At the age of 12 years old, he debuted in the cinema in *Behind The Sun / Abril Despedaçado*, by Walter Salles, and his role as the baby of the family sworn to death received much praise. It was with enthusiasm that Ravi accepted the role of Antônio, Romão and Rose's oldest son, and participated in the crazy trip to get to Rio by bicycle in **The Middle of the World**. With six brothers on his father's side with whom he does not have much contact, Ravi, who turned 15 while filming his second feature, has been gaining a new cinematographic family with each film. He was the youngest son in Walter Salles' film and the oldest son in **The Middle of the World**. And he is already considering reconciling the two careers of actor and director.

### **Sidney Magal - Panamá**

A great idol of romantic music of the 70's and 80's, singer Sidney Magal's career developed with the image of the gypsy-blooded Latin lover. In 26 years of artistic activity, he recorded 19 records, worked in telenovelas (*Ana Raio e Zé Trovão*, on Tv Manchete, *O Campeão*, on Tv Bandeirantes) and plays: *Sweet Charity*, directed by Marília Pera and André Valle, and *Roque Santeiro*, directed by Bibi Ferreira.

In 1979, he starred in the film *Amante Latino*, directed by Pedro Carlos Rovai, in which he portrayed the singer Sidney Magal threatened by a group of gypsies. Amongst the screenwriters was writer Paulo Coelho, also the author of numerous Latin songs sung by Sidney Magal in the beginning of his career.

## CAST

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| Cláudia Abreu.....                              | Rose     |
| Wagner Moura.....                               | Romão    |
| Ravi Ramos Lacerda.....                         | Antônio  |
| Manoel Sebastião Alves Filho.....               | Rodney   |
| Felipe Newton Silva Rodrigues .....             | Clevis   |
| Cícera Cristina Almino de Lima.....             | Suelena  |
| Cícero Wallyson and Cícero Wesley Ferreira..... | Cícero   |
| Cláudio Jaborandy.....                          | Gideão   |
| Sidney Magal.....                               | Panamá   |
| Francioli Luciano.....                          | Callado  |
| Carol Castro.....                               | Sereia   |
| Caco Monteiro.....                              | Severino |
| Laís Corrêa.....                                | Jurema   |
| Fábio Lago.....                                 | Neguiça  |

## CREW

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Director.....                          | Vicente Amorim   |
| Producer.....                          | Lucy & Luiz Carlos Barreto   |
| Producers.....                         | Bruno Barreto and Ângelo Gastal  |
| Co-Producers.....                      | Miravista, Globo Filmes, Riofilme, Megacolor, Quanta<br>and Lereby Produções |
| Script.....                            | David França Mendes  |
| Director of Photography.....           | Gustavo Hadba  |
| Editor.....                            | Pedro Amorim   |
| Production Designer.....               | Jean-Louis Leblanc   |
| Costumes.....                          | Cristina Kangussu  |
| Make-up.....                           | Lu de Moraes   |
| Music.....                             | André Abujamra   |
| Production Sound .....                 | Cristiano Maciel   |
| Executive in Charge of Production..... | Paula Barreto  |
| Associate Producer .....               | Daniel Filho   |
| Associate Producers.....               | Arte-e-Fato, Anne Pinheiro Guimarães and Marcelo Santiago                    |
| Line Producer.....                     | Maria da Salete  |
| Sound Design.....                      | Miriam Biderman  |
| Mix.....                               | Armando Torres Jr.   |
| Production Manager.....                | Fernanda Polastri  |
| Assistant Directors.....               | Rafael Salgado, Malu Miranda   |
| Dialogue Coach.....                    | Laís Corrêa  |
| Director of Photography 2nd Unit....   | Paulo Vainer   |
| Casting Directors.....                 | Luiz Henrique Nogueira, Bruno Murtinho, Luca de Castro                       |

## ABOUT FILM MOVEMENT

**Film Movement** is an innovative new film distribution company, created as a solution for millions of consumers across the nation whose access to outstanding film is limited by geography, lifestyle or lack of information. Film Movement has members in over 50 states and 1200 cities. Film Movement acquires award winning independent films from the world's top festivals, which they then release each month of the year to members on DVD through a subscription service, and theatrically through The Film Movement Series. Participating filmmakers are able to reach under-served film fans everywhere through Film Movement.

**The Film Movement Series** is a new theatrical film series featuring some of the best in original world cinema. Created by the team that invented the groundbreaking Shooting Gallery Film Series, Film Movement will release 6 of its 12 films per year in leading independent cinemas in major US cities to help outstanding filmmakers find the audience they deserve. All films are available to members exclusively on DVD upon theatrical release so that they may participate regardless of where they live.

Film Movement has partnered with some of the leading independent theaters in the country to exhibit the Film Movement Series. The schedule includes the following films:

- Wiebke von Carolsfeld's *Marion Bridge*
- Eric Eason's *Manito*
- Scott Hamilton Kennedy's *OT: our town*
- Donovan Leitch & Rebecca Chaiklin's *The Party's Over*
- Tjebbo Penning's *Morlang*
- Mina Shum's *Long Life, Happiness and Prosperity*
- Vicente Amorim's *The Middle of the World*
- Jacques Doillon's *Raja*
- Tony McNamra's *The Rage in Placid Lake*
- Rolf de Heer's *Alexandra's Project*