

Film Notes - Season 2025-26

18th September 2025

I'm Still Here

Cert 15 | 2h 17m | *Original title: Ainda Estou Aqui*

Country: Brazil, 2024

Director: Walter Salles

Stars: Fernanda Torres, Fernanda Montenegro, Selton Mello

Language: Portuguese (with English subtitles)



Synopsis

Set in 1970s Rio de Janeiro, *I'm Still Here* follows the Paiva family—led by Eunice (Fernanda Torres) and Rubens (Selton Mello)—as they navigate the creeping terror of Brazil's military dictatorship. When Rubens, a former congressman secretly aiding the opposition, is abducted by government agents, Eunice must protect her five children while searching for answers in a climate of fear and silence. Based on Marcelo Rubens Paiva's memoir *Ainda Estou Aqui*, the film dramatizes a true story of resilience, loss, and quiet defiance.

Context and Craft

Walter Salles (*Central Station*, *The Motorcycle Diaries*) returns to narrative filmmaking with a deeply personal lens—he was childhood friends with the Paiva children and a frequent guest in their home. The film's rich period detail is enhanced by Adrian Tejjido's warm 35mm cinematography and a soundtrack featuring Brazilian icons like Caetano Veloso and Gal Costa. The result evokes a vibrant family life slowly eclipsed by authoritarian violence.

Critical Reception

Critics have praised *I'm Still Here* for its emotional depth and restrained storytelling:

"Fernanda Torres delivers a "masterful" performance as Eunice, earning an Oscar nomination for her portrayal of quiet strength under pressure." *The Independent*

"The film has drawn comparisons to *Roma* (2018) for its intimate family focus and historical backdrop, though Salles opts for vivid colour and personal memory over monochrome nostalgia." *BFI*

"While some may feel the film's minimal political exposition is minimal, its choice to center the victims' experience, makes the trauma feel immediate and human." *DeepFocusReview*

Conclusion

A brave film portraying resistance, not through action, but through endurance. Parallels can be drawn between Brazil's former dictatorship and its contemporary political climate. The film's use of Super 8 footage and music shapes our emotional connection to the family and their search for the truth.

Next film

Misericordia on Thursday 9th October - France, 2024 "a superb foray into the dangers of desire"