



Berlinale FILM CAPSULE: Joaquim (Gomes, 2017) Brazil

Description

Posted by [Larry Gleeson](#).

Wanda Films and Writer/Director Marcelo Gomes bring forth *Joaquim*, a loosely based account of Brazilian henchman turned revolutionary, Joaquim de Silva Xavier, at the 67th Berlin International Film Festival in Competition. Set in eighteenth century Brazil, *Joaquim*, seemingly, is a dichotomy between historical realism for mise-en-scene and a North American hit job to seal its commitment to the past and to a revolutionary future. Utilizing a hand-held, point-of-view frame, Gomez adeptly draws in the viewer to this world out of time (and world out of place with its diagetic sounds) to achieve his objective.

Surprisingly, he portrays the film's protagonist, Joaquim, as weak, uninspiring and without a backbone. He positions Joaquim as a whiny, Second Lieutenant who is seen lusting after a beautiful, black, female slave, Preta, portrayed very well by Isabél Zuaa. Unable to have her for himself, he stands by while the regional Administrator fornicates with her. As the grunts and groans grow louder, Joaquim stomps off and is shown finding relief by galloping hard upon his horse.

Julio Machado, portrays Joaquim. Director of Photography, Pierre de Kerchove, illustrates the film's characters with a plethora of tightly framed shots inundating the viewer with intimate and personal details of the characters costuming and facial features. Rô Nascimento created semi-realistic costuming with an accent on the luxurious – probably not the quality of clothing adorned by slaves, low-ranking military officers and peasants. Anna Van Steen and Evelyn Barbieri are credited with Make-up.

After introducing the film's main characters and establishing its theme, Gomes moves the film's narrative into the outback. With a growing fear among the colony's corrupt Portuguese officials that gold production is declining, Joaquim is sent off to find gold having made a name for himself earlier as a hunter of gold smugglers – an unusual change of duty assignment for a military officer.

For his expedition, Joaquim picks a known prospector and another purported soldier along with a few natives to comprise a team. Off they go into the rugged territory where Joaquim believes the gold is waiting. Here, the character, Joaquim seems a little confused as he believes finding gold will give him Preta. Using Chinese-wok shaped sifters (without any sifting capacity). the men scoop stones and

dump them on nearby rocks sorting through the worthless rocks with bare hands. The men grow weary and tell Joaquim they are leaving. Joaquim watches them go with hardly an utterance.

Only after Joaquim is captured by looting, indigenous black bandits does he show emotion – seemingly because one of the bandits' members was his former black girlfriend and she thwarts his new advances. Rejected, Joaquim is shown meeting and feasting with another group of corrupt, well-to-do officials representing the religious sector under the guise of revolution as the film closes..

In my opinion, the film never quite finds its feet. Overt attempts to create an artistic portrait of Joaquim de Silva Xavier would have apparently been better served creating a figure the Brazilians could understand, emulate or identify with. Instead, Gomes and Wanda films hand them a useless tidbit full of innuendo and disparaging satire. Not recommended.

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Date Created

February 16, 2017

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