



**O ANO EM QUE MEUS PAIS SAÍRAM DE FÉRIAS (THE YEAR MY PARENTS WENT ON VACATION)** is a Third Quarter 2016 LVCA dvd donation to the Ligonier Valley Library. Below is Kino Ken's review of that subtitled Brazilian film.

**18 of a possible 20 points**

**\*\*\*\*1/2 of a possible \*\*\*\*\***

**Brazil 2007 color 103 minutes subtitled live action feature  
dramedy Gullane Films / Caos Produções / Miravista /  
City Lights Pictures / Globo Filmes Producers: Caio Gullane,  
Cao Hamburger, Faviano Gullane, Fernando Meirelles,  
Daniel Filho, Débora Ivanov, Paula Ribeiro,  
Carlos Eduardo Rodrigues, Patrick Siaretta**

**Key: \*indicates outstanding technical achievement or  
performance**

**(j) designates a juvenile performer**

**Points:**

**2 Direction: Cao Hamburger\***  
**2 Editing: Daniel Rezende\***  
**2 Cinematography: Adriano Goldman**  
**1 Lighting: Marcelo "Marcelinho" Oliveira**  
**Special Visual Effects: Marcelo Ferreira PeeJay,**  
**Fabian Gamarra,**  
**Vanessa Mariano,**  
**Rogério Marinho,**  
**Robson Sartori,**  
**Marcelo Siqueira,**  
**João Theodoro, Karina Vanes,**  
**Ricardo Imbelloni Vitor,**  
**Ariel Wollinger,**  
**Mariana Zdravca**

**1 Written by: Adriana Falcão, Claudio Galperin,**  
**Cao Hamburger, Bráulio Mantovani,**  
**Anna Muylaert**

**Music Editing: Fil Pinheiro**

**2 Music: Beto Villares\***  
**Animation: Rafael Terpins**

**2 Production Design: Cassio Amarante**  
**Set Design: Fábio Goldfarb**  
**Painting: Bia Pessoa, Ana Lucia Valentim**  
**Makeup: Anna Van Steen**

**2 Sound**  
**Sound Editing Supervision: Alessandro Laroca\***  
**Sound Effects: Roger Hands\*, Eduardo Virmond Lima\*,**  
**Fernando Lobo\*, Antonio Mac-Dowell\***

**Dialogue Editing: Débora Opolski\***

**Sound Mixing: Romeu Quinto\***

**Re-Recording Mixing: Armando Torres, Jr.\***

**Casting: Patricia Faria, Alessandra Tosi**

**2 Acting**

**2 Creativity**

**18 total points**

**Cast: Germano Haiut\* (Shlomo), Simone Spoladore (Bia Stein, Mauro's mom), Caio Blat (Italo, Daniel's student friend), Eduardo Moreira (Daniel Stein, Mauro's dad), Liliana Castro\* (Irene, Edgar's girlfriend), Rodrigo Dos Santos (Edgar, the goalie), Michel Joelsas (j)\* (Mauro Stein, Moishale to Shlomo), Daniela Piepszyk (j)\* (Hanna, Mauro's playmate / friend), Paulo Autran (Motel, Mauro's grandfather), Gabriel Eric Bursztein (j) (Bóris), Felipe Hanna Braun (j) (Caco), Haim Fridman (j) (Duda), Abrahão Farc (Anatol), Edu Guimarães (Alfredo), Gerson, Jairzinho, Rivelino, Pelé (archival footage), João Saldanha, Tostão (archival footage) (all members of Brazil's national World Cup 1970 Football team), David Kullock (Haza), Sergio Mastropasqua (Man), Hugueta Sendacz (Dona Eidel)**

**A subdued mix of comedy and drama, filled with meaningful silences and communicating much key information inferentially, O ANO EM QUE MEUS PAIS SAÍRAM DE FÉRIAS remains one of the most moving, influential, and dramatically successful of soccer-themed films. Director Cao Hamburger utilized a first-rate**

cast comprised of veterans interspersed with amateur performers, handling both types with commendable skill. Michel Joelsas, handed the lead role in his very first film, has since gone on to make a career of acting, appearing recently as Fabinho, the spoiled son in Anna Muylaert's QUE HORAS ELA VOLTA? (THE SECOND MOTHER), a film which, like the one being reviewed, was an official Brazilian submission for the Best Foreign Language Film Oscar®. WHEN MY PARENTS WENT ON VACATION earned a spot in the nine-film 2007 shortlist before being eliminated from nomination contention. This happened in spite of a fully realized, entirely credible performance from Joelsas, who never failed to give the director at least satisfactory results in each scene, often adding a perfection of restraint and timing rare among even film veterans.

The story seems to be somewhat autobiographical, at least according to information in burcintuncer's IMDB user review. This Turkish commentator reports Cao's parents were arrested by soldiers in 1970, compelling Cao and four siblings to temporarily take shelter with grandmothers, one of them being Jewish, the other Catholic. 1970 also happened to be the year of Brazil's third World Cup Football championship, a situation expertly counterpointed against government repression against dissidents. Hamburger's point was politics divided people, sports united them. Then as now.

Preadolescent Mauro, boy soccer enthusiast living in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, is prepping for the 1970 World Cup, hoping Brazil will come back from a disappointing showing in 1966, when it failed miserably to defend its world championship title.

Probably influenced by Neil Armstrong's incredible Moon Walk mere months earlier, Mauro believes Brazil, too, can do anything, particularly with a football team including both Pelé and Tostão on offense. Being more concerned with sports than politics, he's blissfully unaware of contemporary roundups and incarcerations of political dissidents. Nor does he understand his parents are both at risk for immediate arrest due to leftist activities in which they are involved. This plot setup reveals only gradually, for there's no apparent connection between Mauro's family and socialist-minded university students in the film's opening section. Only later, through introduction of a student socialist who attempts to befriend Mauro by informing the boy he's a friend of his father's, is a relationship between academic protesters and Mauro's parents clarified.

In view of what is happening in their nation, Daniel and wife Bia have reached the conclusion they must go into exile, leave the country immediately, staying a step ahead of informants and security forces. This is why they depart home abruptly, using as excuse a temporary vacation trip.

Mauro is totally confused. Why are they in such haste to drop him off with a grandfather he can't even recognize? Why not take him along? Aren't there any suitable places to visit in Brazil without exploring foreign locations? Unable to even begin to fathom their motive for dumping him in a strange city with equally unfamiliar ancestor, Mauro retreats psychologically into a less labyrinthine realm: World Cup Football.

Actually, from the youth's point of view, it's fortunate they aren't taking him abroad. Brazil is where the action is as the

**national football team gets organized and begins preparing for regional competition.**

**Mauro plays disc soccer, always taking the role of an attacker, typical for a boy his age. Defense is strictly for couch potatoes. He himself is far too volatile and kinetic to imagine himself as a stopper, fullback, or goalie. His heroes are forwards or offensive midfielders. Like Pelé, Tostão, and Rivelino. Guys who score goals rather than block them. Action figures.**

**Nothing goes according to plan for Mauro. Grandfather dies suddenly of a heart attack. So he's unable to even meet his grandson, let alone shelter him. Unaware of this, Daniel and Bia leave their son at Motel's apartment complex, speeding away to avoid recognition by police patrols.**

**With no one to greet or guide him, Mauro wanders alone through the halls, keeping company solely with soccer discs he brought from home. He finds a conservative Orthodox Jewish friend and neighbor of his grandparent's and a young Jewish girl living in a flat below Motel's especially repugnant.**

**One is too old and self-centered, the other the wrong sex for friendship. Yet those two will become anchors of refuge in a world where unforeseen and incomprehensible happenings have left him rootless and bewildered.**

**Mauro waits for a phone call from absent parents, reassurances he is not truly alone and totally disconnected from them. For many hours, this expectation goes unfulfilled. When the phone does ring, he is in the wrong place, a guest in Shlomo's apartment.**

For the elderly Orthodox Jew, discovering that a stranger camped outside Motel's door is actually the deceased barber's grandson, feels responsible for harboring the boy until parental return, which surely must be very soon. Someone will notify them Motel is dead, right?

He has no more knowledge than Mauro about why Daniel and Bia Stein have fled to an unidentifiable location, leaving their only child behind without adequate explanation. Oh, sure. Just like the younger generation. Foist the troublesome kid off on Grandpa whenever he gets a bit much to tolerate at home. Return for him when he's fed up with alternative life in a geriatric environment, more appreciative of Mom's home cooking and Dad's sports chatter.

Mauro lets Shlomo know Bia and Daniel have promised to return in time for World Cup matches. They aren't permanent truants.

Or are they?

Days become weeks, Mauro and Shlomo discover affinities and polarities. Both are loners by inclination, immersed in set routines, aversive to change. Each respects outward tokens of religion.

But Mauro has been raised as a Catholic in his mother's faith.

Shlomo is tenaciously Orthodox Jewish. So he acquaints the boy with synagogue and Kosher food, fish for breakfast, and wearing of a yarmulke, punishing Mauro's natural instinct to cross himself, while hoping to gradually collapse resistance to religiously sanctioned vittles. Being guardian only by dint of proximity to Motel's residence, he barely tolerates the lad's

**obsession with football, a sport he personally finds of only marginal interest.**

**Mauro detests cold showers, Shlomo revels in them.**

**The boy's music taste runs to pop, especially rock and roll. Shlomo favors traditional folksong and liturgical chant.**

**The man speaks Yiddish by preference, whereas the boy uses and understands only Brazilian Portuguese.**

**Yet the two draw closer over time. Shlomo reluctantly accepts his rabbi's declaration the boy is a second Moses, a gift God left for him, perhaps as a comfort in his old age.**

**Meanwhile, Mauro finds Hanna shares his passion for soccer, even if she is a Jewish female. She also has channels for obtaining rare player cards, definitely an asset worth treasuring. And, to his chagrin, Hanna is just as clever as he is. Not to mention possessing matchless talents for profiteering and obtaining passkeys to desirable places. She just may be the first close friend to topple walls protecting Mauro's insular life.**

**Will the boy's parents return for the World Cup? Can Brazil triumph over all competitors? Is Shlomo ultimately going to adopt Mauro?**

**The director wisely tantalizes audiences by postponing answers to these questions. He's more concerned with character exposition, development, and transformation.**

**Mauro will find a new hero, an unexpected friend, a dependable benefactor, and security in a land bordering on chaos. In doing so, he learns lessons about heritage, religion, friendship, and communication which soccer alone would never have been able to provide. Both game and political turmoil are**

secondary. They coincide chronologically with Mauro's education only by happenstance. The base story here is universal, not unique to Brazil.

Location and current events supply color and atmosphere, as well as triggering the displacement and change in dependency which allows Mauro to mature socially.

Beto Villares's lively music envelops viewers in Mauro's end-of-Sixties time period, when frenetic activity on dance floors and soccer pitches provided welcome outlets for youthful energy. Hummable melodies, dynamic rhythms, suggestively florid tone colors permeate the film's score, reminders of salad days when Brazilian bossa nova was catnip for North Americans too.

Sao Paulo's Jewish enclave, recreated so faithfully here, discloses the shabby poverty and separateness accepted by residents in return for freedom to walk the streets unhindered and practice cherished customary religion. These older immigrants were generally content to remain outsiders, incongruities in a culture oriented overwhelmingly towards young natives rather than old immigrants.

Sound recording magnificently renders dialogue and sounds in optimal volumes. Crack of masonry falling onto concrete courtyard below is especially memorable, though insistently ringing telephone and constrictive breathing of child voyeurs peeping into dressing rooms in Hannah's mother's shop are also not soon forgotten.

Illumination is somewhat too variable, occasionally underlighting interiors, particularly in corridor scenes. Lighting is unduly pallid in exterior live soccer matches.

**There are compensations, though, particularly perfect editorial timing of Daniel Rezende, no minor feat considering the need to merge historical footage of soccer games with current shots of spectators.**

**Cinematographer Adriano Goldman's propensity to foreground faces over setting details gives powerful assistance to performers, capturing nuances of acting that otherwise might escape attention, swallowed up amid showy costumes and spectacular camera movements.**

**Though its screenplay dodges profound philosophical musings, the film does utilize coherent dialogue appropriate to conversation with and among preteens. With communicative writing hewing frequently to Mauro's limited point of view and experience, the script focuses mainly on exposing character quirks, flaws, hypocrisies, and evasions, doing quite a fine job of incorporating those into a story of maturation and optimism about overcoming obstacles.**

**A most rewarding display of meaningful, carefully crafted cinema, THE YEAR MY PARENTS WENT ON VACATION is suitable for teens and adults, though including scenes of child voyeurism and several obscenities. It is presented in Portuguese and Yiddish with English subtitles.**

**This City Lights dvd release includes as special bonuses both international and American trailers for the film, fifteen and one-half minutes of informative interviews with cast and crew members, a ten-minute Inside the Movie featurette, two minutes of entertaining bloopers, a 1½-minute vignette, and more than three minutes of additional footage shot for the local**

**soccer match where Mauro decides his real ambition is to become a defender like Edgar, the goalie.**