



I'm Still Here.

135 min

Monday, September 15, 2025

Within the assured wooden confines of a church, a frightful Eunice Paiva (Fernanda Torres), the wife of former congressman Ruben Paiva (Selton Mello), arrives hoping for answers. But not from God. She is confronting her children's former schoolteacher, who after being arrested, detained and possibly tortured by Brazil's military dictatorship, is now trying to keep a low profile in a space that offers people spiritual protection. "My husband's in danger," says an exasperated Eunice. "We're all in danger," retorts the teacher. That pervading risk, the terror felt by a life suspended or ended, took over Brazil during the violent military dictatorship that gripped the South American country from 1964 to 1985. It's also the tragedy, as felt in Torres' incredible performance, at the heart of, Walter Salles' engrossing period drama *I'm Still Here*. Salles' adaptation of Marcelo Rubens Paiva's same-title memoir (the author is the son of Eunice and Rubens) isn't built on big speeches or sudden moments of eureka. It is immersive and unhurried, and quietly devastating, taking viewers into the origin of a void left in a wife and a mother. In 1970 Rio de Janeiro, Eunice and Rubens live with their five children by Leblon Beach. A former congressman, Rubens has only recently returned to the country after a six-year self-exile due to the 1964 coup d'état. For the family, however, the dictatorship is never far from the foreground. Military helicopters fly over the beach, and trucks carrying additional troops occupy the streets. Rubens also takes secret phone calls in his office, coordinating pickups and drop-offs of packages. The younger children, Marcelo, Maria and Nalu barely notice these incursions in their seemingly serene lives. the second oldest, is initially less involved, too. Only the oldest, Vera, who is politically awakening to the point Rubens has decided to send her to London with friends, possesses some idea of the grave danger they're in. For a time, Salles, is content with absorbing the family's ephemeral domestic dynamic. Their house is a bustling, lively space filled with brightness, music, art, and books. By taking time to live inside the family's secure bubble, Salles makes the eventual puncturing even more agonizing. The collapse occurs when Rubens is taken for questioning by plain-clothed army officials, a catastrophe that takes the film to darker places and engenders many unanswerable questions. And while it's not a spoiler to say Eunice and her children will never see Rubens again, those hopeless queries aren't necessarily what the movie is about. Rather, this poignant film concerns the response to having neither a definitive answer nor final closure. Eunice will pick up the pieces and dig, becoming politically active in the process. We will follow her struggle through the decades—her career as a professor and supporter of Indigenous rights—leaping to São Paulo in 1996 before settling in 2014. While these autobiographical facts certainly matter to Salles, they, once again, are not the story. He's far more interested in the psychological turmoil that occurs from not knowing. Torres' intricate performance underscores that curiosity by keenly deploying her character's internal angst into her slender frame. Through her formidable presence, the deliberate *I'm Still Here*, is a film that locates further meaning in the face of Brazil's present Far-Right wave, remains in the heart long after the picture fades.

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