

The Secret Agent

2025 | 158mins

Director: Kleber Mendonça Filho

Starring: Tânia Maria, Wagner Moura, Enzo Nunes

Brazilian writer-director Kleber Mendonça Filho's sixth feature film, *The Secret Agent* (2025), is equal parts Hitchcockian thriller, absurdist B-horror-movie and commentary on collective memory during Brazil's 21 year-long military dictatorship. Set around Carnival in 1977, *The Secret Agent* follows university researcher Marcelo (Wagner Moura) returning to his hometown of Recife, located in northeastern Brazil, to retrieve his eight-year-old son, Fernando (Enzo Nunes), before fleeing the country.

In his final days in Recife, Marcelo is helped by ex-anarchist Dona Sebastiana (Tânia Maria), who hides him alongside other 'refugees' in her safe house. Moreover, a mysterious benefactor Elza (Maria Fernanda Cândido) provides him with work in a government identity-card-issuing office, where he hopes to find evidence of his dead mother in its archives.

Recife is also Mendonça Filho's hometown, and was the subject for his last feature film *Pictures of Ghosts* (2023), a documentary about the now-vanished movie palaces of his childhood.

Traces of *Pictures of Ghosts* run throughout *The Secret Agent*, most notably through its obsession with documentation, from newspaper clippings, to tape recordings, to identity cards, as well as its cinephile motifs. Moreover, Mendonça Filho was the same age as Fernando in 1977, which he notes was 'the first year he can actually remember' (Festival de Cannes, 2025).

This semi-autobiographical inspiration, alongside the striking period production design and nostalgic soundtrack, allows Mendonça Filho to capture the essence of life during Brazil's military dictatorship. He states that *The Secret Agent* is interested in 'the logic of the period'; how the everyday person continued to live despite the political atmosphere they lived under, and how the memory of these people remains, even if they have been forgotten by history.

'The Secret Agent reveals its plot in a puzzle-play of intrigue and information that reflects the ways in which truth is often concealed and memory contradicted under oppressive regimes'

-Toronto International Film Festival

Excellent

Fair

Poor

What did you think of the film? Please mark or tear the number.

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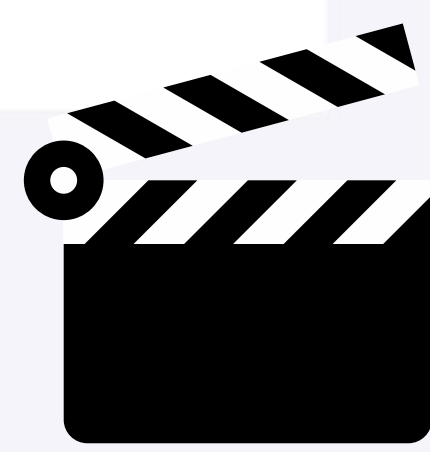
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Did You Know?

- Kleber Mendonça Filho specifically wrote the role of Marcelo for Wagner Moura and marks the actor’s first Brazilian film since 2019.
- *The Secret Agent* was shot using Panavision anamorphic lenses, which were commonly used in 1970s Hollywood films by directors such as Robert Altman and John Carpenter.

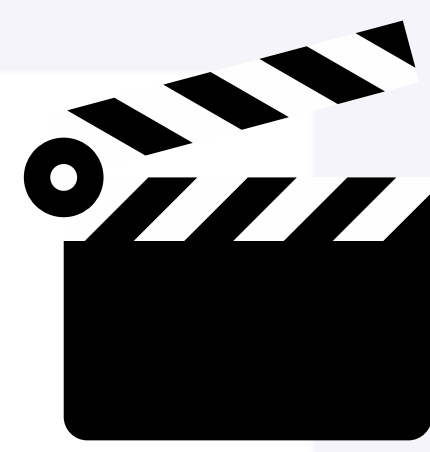
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