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Viagem ao princípio do mundo

Voyage **Journey to the Beginning of the World**

Manoel de Oliveira

PORTUGAL/FRANCE, 1997

95 minutes ■ Colour/35mm
Production Company: **Gemini
Films/Madragoa Filmes**
Producer: **Paulo Branco**
Screenplay: **Manoel de Oliveira**
Cinematographer: **Renato Berta**
Editor: **Valérie Loiseleux**
Production Designer: **Zé Branco**
Sound: **Jean-Paul Mugel,
Jean-François Auger**
Music: **Emmanuel Nunes**
Principal Cast: **Marcello Mastroianni,
Jean-Yves Gautier, Leonor Silveira,
Diogo Dória, Isabel de Castro**

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In his most direct and emotionally powerful work in years, the great Portuguese director Manoel de Oliveira's latest film, *Journey to the Beginning of the World*, is simple, affecting and moving. It is made all the more poignant by the fact that we are watching the magnificent Marcello Mastroianni's last screen performance. The film, indeed, is tinged with nostalgia.

Mastroianni plays an aging film director who accompanies one of his actors back to find his roots. Afonso is French, but his father was Portuguese, and he wants to meet an aunt he has never seen. So the director (appropriately named Manoel) sets out in a car with his French colleague and two other actors.

The film is a road movie, and it follows many of those conventions. Along the way, Manoel stops the car to visit places that are full of memory for him – his school, a hotel where he watched his brother fall in love, a statue beside the road where he often stopped with his father. In between these stops, the foursome discuss a variety of subjects as the car speeds through the Portuguese landscape: their pasts, their memories about their own upbringings. Each one of them brings a unique set of associations to their memories, and a unique personality as well. As Manoel flirts with the beautiful Judite and laments his age, Afonso retells the story of his father's departure from Portugal in the thirties: he ended up in the Spanish Civil War before making his way

across the border to France, where he married and settled. And then finally, they reach the house of Afonso's aunt and a reunion he has visualized for years.

Oliveira travels through so much territory in this film that no synopsis can do it justice. As he looks back on the past and reconnects with his memories, he reflects not just on the personal, but also on the collective memory of his country. This is a film of great wisdom and immense cumulative power, set against the shimmering summer landscape of the beautiful Portuguese countryside.

■ Piers Handling



Manoel de Oliveira was born in Porto, Portugal, in 1908. His short film, *Duoro, River Work* (31), caused a political furor for its portrayal of poverty. After making his first feature in 1942, he directed nothing but documentaries and short films for the next 30 years. During the seventies, he became recognized by critics as one of Europe's most important directors. Selected filmography: *Aniki-Bobó* (42), *Past and Present* (72), *Virgin and Mother* (75), *Hopeless Love* (78), *Francisca* (81), *The Satin Slipper* (85), *My Case* (86), *The Cannibals* (88), *Glory of Command* (89), *The Divine Comedy* (91), *The Day of Despair* (92), *Valley of Abraham* (93), *Blind Man's Bluff* (94), *The Convent* (95), *Party* (96), *Journey to the Beginning of the World* (97).

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