

A FILM BY JASON KOHN

MANDA BALA (SEND A BULLET)

Production Notes
85 minutes

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Opens New York City, The Angelika, August 17th
Opens Los Angeles, Laemmle's Royal and Laemmle's Playhouse 7, Pasadena, CA, August 31st
Opens Other Select Cities During August

PROLOGUE

Brazil is known for its beautiful beaches, lush rain forests, and vibrant culture. However, in recent years, the country has developed more of a reputation for corrupt politicians, kidnapping, and plastic surgery.

MANDA BALA (Send a Bullet) artfully connects these seemingly disparate elements and conducts a dazzling, yet harrowing, examination of the tragic domino effect that has reshaped the face of the country and created an entire industry built on corruption.

From its unlikely opening on a money-laundering frog farm, MANDA BALA displays a strikingly distinctive tone. Featuring a stylish score and articulate interviews with kidnapppers, kidnap victims, and the people who profit from them, as well as the paranoid people whose lives they impact, it looks and sounds more like a stylized fiction film than a heavy political documentary.

However, it is never glib or trivial, and always inventive and haunting. It documents Brazilian reality without falling into patronizing clichés and reveals that corruption and kidnapping represent two sides of the same violent crime: the rich steal from the poor, while the poor steal the rich.

MANDA BALA (Send a Bullet)

SYNOPSIS

MANDA BALA explores the cycles of violence that plague Brazil's upper and lower economic classes in fits of rampant corruption and violent kidnappings. The film chronicles these cycles by utilizing highly personalized stories that reflect the growing truth about Brazil's huge economic disparities – differences that cause violence on both sides of the spectrum.

A frog farm connected to a corrupt politician and one of the most powerful men in Brazil; a kidnapping victim who had both her ears cut off before she was released to her parents; a wealthy plastic surgeon who pioneered the procedure used to reconstruct the ears of kidnapping victims; and a kidnapper who has watched many like him escape the poorest parts of Brazil for the wealthier Sao Paolo, where they terrorize the upper class with kidnappings, theft and murder. **MANDA BALA** explores the various cottage industries cropping up in response to the violence and links these stories to weave a compelling narrative about what happens in a country where the rich and powerful steal from the poor, and in turn some of the poor terrorize the rich.

MANDA BALA is directed by newcomer Jason Kohn.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Producing and directing **MANDA BALA** was an experiment testing two hypotheses: First, that there is a literal connection between large-scale political corruption and street violence in Brazil; and second, that a non-fiction film can be made using the same visual language as a fictional one. I would like to think that after five years of very hard work, that experiment is a success.

Political corruption and violence are two major ways by which the concentration of wealth disables societies. The social and political impact of economic inequality is felt by billions of people every day, but it was paramount to me that this story be told in a manner that reaches more than moviegoers who go to see films about poor, disenfranchised peoples. Rather, **MANDA BALA** is a film about wealth, decadence and corruption told in a cinematic tradition accessible to people regardless of their political predispositions.

Shooting a documentary in film, with a full crew and elaborate lighting scenarios while still attempting to capture real-time events was exceptionally difficult. The importance of telling this story visually, though, was the difference between simply capturing facts in a verité style, and actually exposing a truth. Brazil is a country of extraordinary beauty and contrast where frog farms coexist with bullet-proof car factories and plastic surgeons in a web of crime and commerce. These stories constitute the fabric of cinema, and the goal of **MANDA BALA** was to exploit the tools and techniques of the craft to create a layered and meaningful film.

-- Jason Kohn

BACKGROUND

In Brazil, where magazines featuring the latest in plastic surgery are displayed at every newsstand and new procedures are flaunted on television talk shows, Dr. Juarez Avelar is a minor celebrity. However, Dr. Avelar is not only known as an expert plastic surgeon in a culture that demands physical perfection, but as doctor to a newer affliction of the Brazilian elite. Over twenty years ago, Dr. Avelar revolutionized a procedure for reconstructing ears.

When she was 21, Patricia was kidnapped outside of a Sao Paulo bar. She had just watched the Brazilian national soccer team beat the United States with a group of friends. On Father's Day only days later, her family received her ear in the mail – it was a warning from her kidnappers. The ransom was paid sixteen days later, but not before Patricia had lost the other ear as well. When Patricia sought out Dr. Avelar, she became part of a small but quickly growing group of kidnap victims to have their ears restored. Avelar's procedure involves removing cartilage from the patient's rib to excavate a new ear; to literally carve it from the cartilage. Patricia will never let her future husband touch her ears, they are stiff, cosmetic replacements. They are just for show.

MANDA BALA is about wealth and technology, violence and corruption. Instead of focusing solely on the poverty that afflicts well over half the Brazilian population, the film attempts to expose the paranoia of the wealthy minority. The challenge was to make a film that documents Brazilian reality without falling into the patronizing clichés of typical “third-world” documentaries. For too long, films about the problems of the developing world have been dominated by images of the slum, of poverty, and of violence, all the while excluding the culpable parties. **MANDA BALA** exposes a new perspective on this problem.

At a population of 20 million Sao Paulo is not only the largest city in the Southern Hemisphere, but its state concentrates more financial capital than the rest of South America combined. As a city, it is home to more privately owned helicopters and bulletproof cars than any country in the world. The paranoia which feeds this “security industrial complex” also feeds the economy. Advances in security technology are encouraged and supported financially. Cunha Lima, a Brazilian politician, recently invested in Advanced Digital Solutions, a company that is developing a sub-dermal “global positioning” microchip to locate victims of kidnapping. The current model of GPS technology available at ADS involves a Verichip implant (laden with information such as medical records) and a corresponding wristwatch with global positioning capabilities.

Furthermore, the process of bulletproofing a car – a surgery-like procedure where a new automobile is completely dismantled and reconstructed with 2 inch thick glass, sheets of Kevlar, ballistic steel and bullet-proof tires – has become virtually a necessity for Brazilians wealthy enough to protect themselves from everyday street violence.

These processes all share ideas of dissection and transformation. They also speak to the kinds of technology that until now had been reserved for science-fiction films. The businessman leaving his bulletproof car, flying through the city in a helicopter while being continually tracked

through a GPS satellite connected to a microchip resting somewhere underneath his skin is the new reality in Brazil.

Brazil does not have the highest rate of kidnapping in the world (Bogotá and Mexico City are both marginally higher), but the nation's uniqueness lies in its unparalleled wealth. In looking for causes for violent crime in Sao Paulo, the usual symptoms of developing nations were all apparent: poverty, lack of education and a lack of public security. Even more disturbing, though, was the idea that there are politicians profiting by perpetuating these civil maladies.

For the Brazilian politician, issues of personal security are second only to those of job security. The second section of Manda Bala concerns the former president of the Brazilian senate and current Congressman for the state of Para, Jader Barbalho. For Jader, job security means staying in any government office, affording him immunity from prosecution and prison. He was in charge of SUDAM, a multi-billion-dollar fund intended for public works projects to stimulate the economy in the poorest regions of Brazil's interior. Through corrupt business dealings, Jader laundered billions from the fund. Warrants are out for his arrest, but Jader avoids prison by buying votes, exploiting the poor local electorate and holding on to public office year after year.

Mario Avelar is the crusading attorney general that has been prosecuting Jader for the past seven years. Avelar describes corruption as an industry in Brazil, where a culture of impunity dating back to the original Portuguese settlers is not only demeaning, but dangerous. Although the lawyer lives in the country's interior where violent crime is not endemic, the threats to his life from various unnamed powerful politicians have forced him to live in a constant state of paranoia and police protection.

Avelar is prosecuting Jader for multiple counts of embezzlement and corruption with some individual cases exceeding \$900 million in stolen public money. Among the most notorious of Jader's phony public works projects, though, was a \$9 million frog farm. Because frog farming is a relatively new industry and still obscure, when two Brazilian journalists broke the frog farm scandal, the media attention prompted further investigations into Jader's illicit dealings. The frog farm was the tip of a \$2 billion iceberg.

Frogs are not only eaten for their legs in Brazil. Most commonly, the frog is deep fried and served whole. With four extended limbs and torso, no other cooked food resembles the human form so much as a whole frog. Likewise, the system of rearing a city of frogs in tiny favela-like shacks cannot be disassociated with the thousands of victims of political tyranny.

While frog farming and ear reconstruction are two seemingly unrelated industries, the people and stories surrounding them are hardly disjointed. In a movie about cutting edge technologies and revolutionary new processes in Brazil, Dr. Avelar and Mr. Dennis both securely lie at the forefront of innovation and progress. Their work is exported to the rest of the world, while at home they both thrive as byproducts of intense criminality. Their respective fields are certainly unusual, but perhaps the best examples of the ways millions of dollars are being stolen back and forth between the richest and poorest Brazilians everyday.

As Brazil is undergoing a long, slow process of democratization, the current violence represents a dangerous period of economic instability. As in Errol Morris's "Fast, Cheap and Out of Control", the climax of **MANDA BALA** is the point at which divergent stories contextualize. Industries supported by kidnapping and corruption represent two sides of a class conflict plaguing Brazil. The casualties and the money exchanged are to be understood as components of this class conflict. The final realization is that in this new kind of war, the participants hardly know that they are fighting at all.

FILMMAKER BIOS

JASON KOHN – Director/ Producer

Jason Kohn is a first-time director from New York. At twenty-three he left Errol Morris's office to make the feature documentary **MANDA BALA**, a film about kidnapping and corruption in Brazil. In the course of producing this film he received the Sundance Documentary Fund grant and a Mortimer-Hayes Fellowship.

Although seemingly a New York Jew, Jason is actually of South American decent and is a proud supporter of the evolutionary sciences. Jason's life is dedicated to the appreciation and production of cinema and fighting the corrosive cultural powers of god, greed and corruption.

Jason made **MANDA BALA** with close college friends Joey Frank and Jared Goldman. He spent the past five years solely producing and directing **MANDA BALA**.

JARED IAN GOLDMAN – Producer

Jared Ian Goldman began his career in film interning in the Acquisitions Dept. at Miramax Films in New York in 1998. Upon graduating from the University of Pennsylvania with a degree in English and Economics in 2001, he worked briefly at Miramax quickly moving on to GreeneStreet Films where he worked as the Manager of the Production Department on such films as "In The Bedroom", "Swimfan", "Uptown Girls", "Romance & Cigarettes" and "A Prairie Home Companion".

Since leaving GreeneStreet in late 2005, Jared has worked on several feature films. He worked as a Production Associate on Michael Black's "The Pleasure of Your Company" for GreeneStreet; a Production Manager on Henry Bean's "Noise", starring Tim Robbins and William Hurt, for 7 Arts/ThinkFilm; and as a Production Manager for Tom McCarthy's "The Visitor", for Participant Productions/Groundswell Films.

JOEY FRANK – Producer/ Assistant Director

For the last four years, Joey Frank has spent considerable time and energy on making **MANDA BALA**, both in Brazil and in the United States. During that time, he also received his B.A. from Brown University in the study of Art: Semiotics.

He met Director Jason Kohn in 2000 while in the film studies program at Brandeis University. Since last fall, Joey has been producing and directing "Piecemeal", a cooking program for Plum TV. The show presents ingredients in a philosophical framework and incorporates both animation and documentary footage with cooking demonstrations from top chefs in NYC and beyond.

Hailing from Washington D.C, Joey was at one time an enthusiastic painter but is currently interested in stereoscopic photography and sculptural rapid prototyping.

HELOISA PASSOS – Cinematographer

Heloisa Passos was a teenager when she started photographing friends, holiday events and the theater. In 1986, she gave up studying Agronomy looked into film schools, attending her first film workshop in 1988 in Curitiba, Brazil.

Heloisa opened Maquina Productions and directed her first video in 1989. A year later she moved to São Paulo and began working in the film industry as a camera assistant. In 1996, Heloisa began working as a director of photography. Her work includes more than 20 short and feature films including “Brazil Women” by Malu de Martino, “Teen Mothers” by Sandra Werneck, “KFZ-1348” by Gabriel Mascaro and Marcelo Pedroso, “Carranca de Acrilico Azul Piscina” by Karim Aïnouz and Marcelo Gomes, and now **MANDA BALA**.

Heloisa has been a member of the Cinematographic Brazilian Association since 1999. Her work has been honored with various prizes in festivals both in Brazil and in the United States.

ANDY GRIEVE – Co-Editor

Andy Grieve grew up north of Chicago, half way to Kenosha. He left the Midwest to study film at New York University, graduating in 1999.

For the next few years he continued to learn the craft, absorbing the twisted wisdom of editor/mentor Hank Corwin. Notable credits include Michel Gonrdy's “The Hardest Button to Button” video for The White Stripes and JT Petty's documentary “S&Man.” Andy lives in Fort Greene, Brooklyn.

SUBJECT BIOS

DENIZ --

Deniz is the owner of a frog farm, a relatively new industry in Brazil that sells frogs within the country but also exports them to other parts of the world. Frog farming has been linked as a source of corrupt business dealings, and Deniz and his farm have ties to politician Jader Barbalho, who laundered 9 million dollars using a frog farm.

MR. M --

Mr. M is a wealthy entrepreneur who lives his life in constant fear of being robbed or even worse, being a victim of San Paolo’s frequent kidnappings by members of the lower class that make a living by holding members of the upper class for ransom. Mr. M will do just about anything to protect himself including driving in a bullet proof car, taking lessons on how to escape an attempted kidnapping, using helicopters as transportation, and having micro-chips with GPS technology planted underneath his skin.

JADAR BARBALHO --

Jader Barbalho is one of the most powerful men in Brazil and has held every political position possible, except for presidency. He was in charge of SUDAM, a multi-billion dollar program aimed to help the economy in the poorest regions of Brazil. Through corrupt business dealings, Jader laundered billions of dollars from the fund. After enough evidence was brought against

him, he resigned from office to avoid impeachment but his corruption within the government allowed him to avoid jail twice and continue to be re-elected for office.

CLAUDIO FONTELES --

Claudio Fonteles is the Attorney General of Brazil.

HELBIO DIAS --

Helbio Dias is the Federal Police Marshal and head of the SUDAM Investigation.

PATRICIA --

Camila was kidnapped, held hostage for 16 days and horrifyingly had both of her ears cut off and sent to her family, demanding they pay the ransom.

JAMIL --

In a city of 20 million, with a police force that is not big enough to provide protection for all citizens, Jamil is one of 80 detectives in the anti-kidnapping division of the San Paolo Police force.

DR. JUAREZ AVELAR --

In a culture obsessed with physical perfection, Dr. Avelar is a minor celebrity. Not only known as an expert plastic surgeon, over 20 years ago he revolutionized a procedure for reconstructing ears.

PAULO LAMARAO --

Paulo Lamarao is a civil attorney who has been after Jader Barbalho for 7 years, and the only person to ever successfully bring charges against him.

MARIO LUCIO --

Mario Lucio Avelar is Assistant Attorney General.

MAGRINHO --

Growing up in the slums of San Paolo, Magrinho started to steal from the local market when he was 9 years old. As he got older he started trafficking drugs and robbing banks. When he realized that he could make more money in one kidnapping than robbing 30 banks, he organized a team and began planning and carrying out kidnappings.

MANDA BALA (Send A Bullet)

Credits

Directed and Produced by.....	Jason Kohn
Produced by.....	Jason Kohn Jared Ian Goldman Joey Frank
Edited by.....	Andy Grieve Doug Abel Jenny Golden
Executive Produced by.....	Julio DePietro Mario Kohn
Cinematography by.....	Heloisa Passos
Sound by.....	Coll Anderson

Music Credits

QUEM COCHICHA A RABO ESPICA

Performed by Jorge Ben

CANTO DE OSSANHA

Performed by Baden Powell

EMERE

Performed by Tom Ze

SALVADOR

Performed by Egberto Gismonti

NOBODY CAN LIVE FOREVER

Performed by Tim Maia

EU SOU COMO VOCE E

Performed by Lô Borges

QUERO VOLTAR PRA BAHIA

Performed by Paulo Diniz

MA

Performed by Tom Ze

NAGO

Performed by Trio Mocoto

CANUDOS

Performed by Tom Ze

CHOVE CHUVA

Performed by Jorge Ben

EL JUSTICIERO

Performed by Os Mutantes

FANTASMA DA OPERA

Performed by A Barco Do Sol

ESTRELA DO NOITE

Performed by Jorge Mautner

QUER QUEIRA, QUER NAO QUEIRA

Performed by Tim Maia

DOR E DOR

Performed by Tom Ze

SAO JORGE DOS ILHEUS

Performed by Alceu Valença

BABY

Performed by Gal Costa & Caetano Veloso

TOC

Performed by Tom Ze

BERIMBAU

Performed by Simone/Roberto Ribeiro/Joao de Aquino

YOU DON'T KNOW ME

Performed by Caetano Veloso

PROCISSO O DOS MORTOS

Performed by Papete

DE UM ROLE

Performed by Novos Bianos