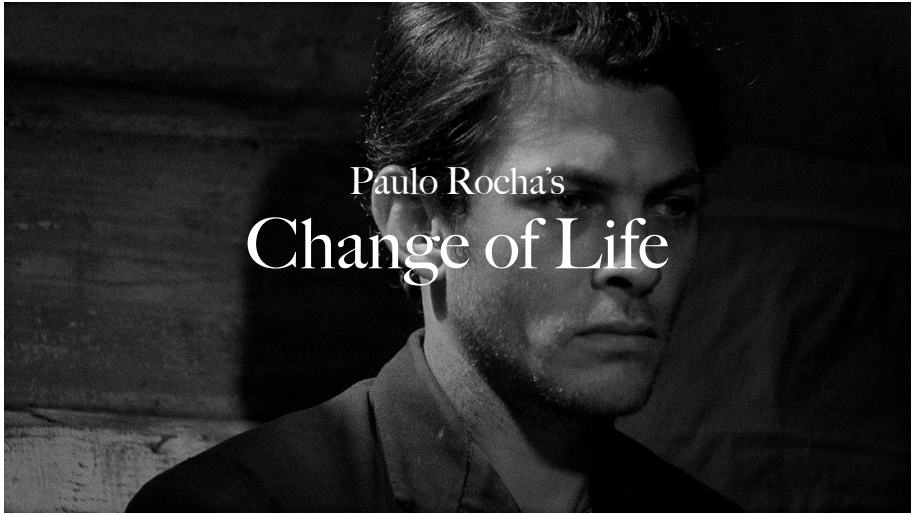


Acropolis Cinema
presents:



August 14 - 20, 2020 – Acropolis Virtual Cinema

ABOUT THE FILM

Paulo Rocha's haunting second feature, *Change of Life*, tells the beautiful and deeply felt story of a young man, a veteran from the war in Angola, who returns home to his remote fishing village to discover that his former sweetheart is now married to his brother. Inspired by his work with Manoel de Oliveira, Rocha "cast" the local villagers as themselves, interspersed with experienced actors led by the great Isabel Ruth who would go on to become an Oliveira regular and an iconic presence in Pedro Costa's *Ossos* (*Bones*). The poetry of the local vernacular is captured in the textured dialogue written by fellow Portuguese filmmaker Antonio Reis who met Rocha through Oliveira. The film was a critical and commercial success upon release, though it would effectively be the last film that Rocha would make for nearly two decades. *New restoration supervised by Pedro Costa!*

94 min. | Portugal | 1966

Change of Life by Glenn Kenny

The following article was originally published by the New York Times, August 13, 2020

The Portuguese director Paulo Rocha, who died in 2012, created a memorable body of work, with aesthetic roots both in Italian neorealism and the French New Wave. It's worth exploring in and of itself and with respect to its continuity with Portugal's cinema as a whole. He's different from greats like Manoel De Oliveira (with whom he worked as an assistant) and Pedro Costa, but he shares definite affinities with them.

Grasshopper Film released a newly restored version of his 1963 debut feature, "The Green Years," last week, and this week unveils his 1966 second feature "Change of Life." (Both restorations were overseen by Costa.)

While "Years" is a class-conscious, sometimes wistful tale of urban love, "Change" is set in a coastal Portuguese fishing village, where residents live harsh, hand-to-mouth existences. "The sea gets rougher, and the fish get scarcer," an old hand in the film comments.

Returning to this unnamed place, the long-gone Adelino (Geraldo Del Rey), back from fighting and then working in Angola, is not entirely surprised to feel like a stranger in his own home.

His former lover is married to his brother. A back ailment makes going out on the boats almost impossible. He's got to get out of this place and so, too, as it happens, does

Albertina (Isabel Ruth), a beautiful and defiant young woman he encounters while she's taking relics from a church.

The fishing milieu recalls Luchino Visconti's epic 1948 movie, "La Terra Trema," about Sicilian tuna fishers. Rocha's film is a smaller scale work of sharp observation and empathy. Shot in often startling black and white by Manuel Carlos De La Silva and Elso Roque, its cinematic beauty is deeply intertwined with the film's humane vision. ♦

Change of Life by Kevin Jagernauth

The following article was originally published by the Playlist, August 10, 2020

In Paulo Rocha's debut "The Green Years," he told the story of a young man from rural Portugal who becomes lost in the machinery of a rapidly evolving Lisbon. Pulsing with similar energy to films of the French New Wave, the style was an effective misdirect for a tale of someone unable to carve a meaningful existence in a system that has no quarter for those that can't adapt. The newly restored film is a rewarding discovery, and so too is Rocha's refreshed and rereleased followup, 1966's "Change Of Life." For his compelling sophomore feature, the filmmaker takes his exploration of his modernizing country to the coast, this time embracing a neorealist approach to weave another layered, and tragic tale of lives upended by the currents of change.

After spending four years fighting in the war in Angola, Adelino (Geraldo Del Rey) returns to the coastal fishing village of Furadouro. Expecting to resume his idyllic pre-war life and step comfortably back into the romance he left simmering, the young soldier is shocked to discover that his beloved Julia (Maria Barroso) has married and started a family with his brother Raimundo (Nunes Vidal). His masculine pride wounded, Adelino initially declares to Julia, "I'll never leave you in peace." The betrayal and anger he feels are directed solely at her, and Adelino affixes a permanent scowl to his face, playing the role of wounded victim.

However, there is little sympathy from anyone for Adelino's hurt feelings and even less interest in his wartime exploits. Day to day life in Furadouro has become increasingly difficult, the unending tides eroding the foundations of coastal homes, while the once sustainable fishing industry proves to be arduous and unpredictable. Meanwhile, Julia has been stricken with a heart condition, but keeps working, raising her daughter and caring for elderly relatives. She's matter-of-fact about the precariousness of her life, and how much it has devastated her both financially and physically. A situation that would have been far worse had not Raimundo managed to keep a roof over her head, and food on the table. While Adelino was off fighting in the war, Julia did not have the luxury to indulge in visions of a romantic reunion.

Rocha's impatience towards wounded male pride is fascinating in both "The Green

Years” and “Change Of Life.” The filmmaker refuses to give validation to his protagonists’ egos, but instead deftly delineates and explores the difficulty they face in finding their place as Portugal makes strides to the future. These measures of progress are marked in both films by strong and independent romantic interests — Ilda in “The Green Years,” and the charismatic Albertina in “Change Of Life,” both played by the expressive Isabel Ruth. Albertina is a terrific foil for Adelino, a woman who works in an expanding textile factory that has become a beacon of hope for fishermen desperately seeking a new and steady line of work, and the economic vision of the future. However, the precise physical requirements of the job stymie men like Adelino, who have long been used to labor that is primarily all muscle and no finesse. Plagued by rumors of nepotism and infidelity, Albertina schemes to get the money she needs, by any means necessary, to escape the suffocating confines her gender faces in a rural community. The irony, as Rocha spelled out for Ilda in “The Green Years,” is that Lisbon doesn’t offer much more promise in that regard.

Pensively filmed by Manuel Carlos da Silva and Elso Roque, and delicately scored by Carlos Paredes, Rocha may have pointed feelings about the cultural and sociopolitical shift in Portugal, but “Change Of Life” is hardly a polemic. The director is just as interested in capturing the rhythms of coastal life, with a handful of lengthy and immersive sequences without dialogue or music, that is focused on the everyday tasks of the community. And while much of the picture embraces realism, and largely casts non-actors, several sequences stunningly recall the melodramatic framing of silent cinema, with an emphasis on classic tableaux. “Change Of Life” is a picture clearly made not only with both a sense of cinematic and political history, but with a desire to blend cinematic storytelling techniques as well. What further stylistic explorations could have been had he worked a regular clip, we’ll never quite know — Rocha would not make his next feature until the 1980s.

“Change of Life” makes a remarkable companion to “The Green Years,” both films feeling still urgent and necessary over 40 years since their release. “Change Of Life” pulsates just as vibrantly today in a world that’s undergoing a change in how we contemplate the human cost of modern life under capitalism. ♦



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