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Film: 'Gouveia,' Brazil Folklore

By JANET MASLIN

PERHAPS because most of Ger-
aldo Sarno's previous direc-
torial experience has been
with documentary film mak-
ing, the narrative of his "Colonel Del-
miro Gouveia" is sometimes obscure.
The story, of a turn-of-the-century in-
dustrialist, has apparently become
part of Brazilian folklore. And so Mr.
Sarno has divided his film's point of
view among several characters, as if a
group of different ballads about the
man had merged into one.

This approach is intriguing, but Mr.
Sarno employs it confusingly, taking it
for granted that his audience is fully
conversant with the tale. Colonel
Gouveia's role in Brazilian history
seems to have been provocatively am-
biguous, because he can be seen as ei-
ther a shameless capitalist or a patriot
who developed the country's natural
resources while fending off foreign
business interests.

The film establishes this but doesn't
make much inventive use of it. And the

Ambiguous Industrialist

COLONEL DELMIRO GOUVEIA, directed by Ger-
aldo Sarno; screenplay (Portuguese with English
subtitles) by Orlando Senna and Mr. Sarno; photog-
raphy, Lauro Escorel Filho; music, J. Lins;
produced by Mr. Sarno. At the New Directors/New
Films series, Museum of Modern Art, 53d Street west
of Fifth Avenue. Running time: 90 minutes.

fine points of Gouveia's nature are
also, for the most part, out of reach.
The most interesting figures on view
are peripheral ones — townspeople, sol-
diers, field workers and the laborers in
Gouveia's cotton mill. There is a brief,
lovely montage on the manufacturing
of thread.

"Colonel Delmiro Gouveia," which is
part of the Museum of Modern Art's
New Directors/New Films series, at
times presents lively glimpses of a cul-
ture on the brink of overwhelming
change. More often, though, it rambles
considerably and lacks dramatic or
technical spark. It is by no means in a
class with "Limite," the other Brazil-
ian film in the museum's series, a work
of authentic and enduring beauty.