

## Sardines, Samba, Choro, Jazz

Contributed by Daniella Thompson  
Friday, 10 September 2004

If Brazilian jazz has ever been haunted by a stigma, bossa nova is its name. Too often—especially outside Brazil—the two are assumed to be one, the former inseparable from the latter.

by Daniella Thompson

Pagode Jazz Sardinha's Club's recent disc gives the lie to this myth once again, offering jazz based on traditional samba, as well as on other hard-driving native and imported genres. Everything but bossa nova. The band's approach has always been eclectic (read about its formation). In its latest album, *Sardinhas*, this group of crack musicians blends straight-ahead and Latin jazz, funk, rap, samba, soul, *gafieira*, and choro in a format that is thoroughly contemporary yet displays strong ties to urban musical traditions of the past.

The mix is made possible by the group's versatile lineup, which includes Rodrigo Lessa on bandolim, banjo, cavaquinho & guitars; Bernardo Bosísio on guitar; Eduardo Neves on saxophones, flutes & piccolo; Roberto Marques on trombone & bombardino; Edson Menezes on bass; Xande Figueiredo on drums; and Marcos Esguleba on percussions.

As in their first, eponymous album, the repertoire here is heavily based on compositions by founding band members Lessa and Neves. The disc opens on a danceable *gafieira* note with "Chave de Cadeira," followed by funky Latin jazz in "Clube Savana." Next there's a star appearance by sambista Zeca Pagodinho in the band's signature tune, "Pagode Jazz Sardinha's Club," which is augmented with rap interventions hurled forth in that rounded, oily, black carioca inflection. The lyrics live very much in the present, enumerating the hardships of contemporary life.

The samba-choro "Samba Castiço" reties the link to the past, albeit in a thoroughly modern way. Helping keep time are Paulão 7 Cordas on seven-string guitar and Celsinho Silva on pandeiro and tamborim, while flute and trombone take turns with the melodic lines.

The next track is a surprise: flute and muted trombone introduce the preamble to Chico Buarque's "Joana Francesa." A tenor sax launches into the melody ever so tenderly, with a riposte from the trombone. Now comes a pure jazz improv on the electric guitar before the sax returns. Bandolins and flute intervene. The sax lets it all fade out. Chico has never sounded so jazzy.

From the mellow to the agitated: "José do Egito" (he of the coat of many colors) is a rousing jazz-choro with exclamatory vocal chorus and frenetic passages interspersed with spoken passages (from the Bible?). And back to the mellow, in the choro-rhythmed "O Dia em que Ela Chegou," co-authored by Roberto Marques and Eduardo Neves, who play a three-way dialog with the bandolim.

Famed percussionist Esguleba takes center stage in his brief but energetic samba "Suíngue Envolvente," complete with voice, whistles, and no fewer than fourteen percussion instruments. Equally famous percussionist Trambique joins as special guest. These two make enough noise to sound like a full-fledged *escola de samba's* bateria. This is followed by a long and jazzy ska called "Gente de

Ilha” and dedicated not to Jamaicans but to residents of Ilha do Governador in Rio de Janeiro.

The theme and improvisations are divided between alto sax and trombone, which at times come together in a counterpoint. Midway, a ripple of bateria moves across, to remind us that this is Brazilian music.

“Maxixe, Neném!!!” is the delightful title of an equally delightful maxixe—a real one, although composed by living musicians. It provides the opportunity to show off mothballed instruments like the bombardino and the banjo.

In contrast, the bouncy “Chorinho de Gafieira” is a real oldie (the only one on this disc) by trombonist and bandleader Astor Silva (1922–1968). These two sandwich “Choro Transgênico,” a hovering meditation for alto sax and trombone with strong assistance from an insistent cuíca.

The penultimate track is a medley of three well-known Zeca Pagodinho sambas, with the guest participations of Paulão, Trambique, Osvaldo Cavalo (tamborim), and a rowdy chorus. Ex-Sardinha Lula Galvão joins his former bandmates on the final number, the funky “Olhos d’Além Mar.” When the hour is over, you know you’ve been somewhere.

#### Pagode

Jazz Sardinha’s Club: Sardinhas

(Independent 109.805/Rob Digital; 2004) 62:46 min.

#### 01. Chave de Cadeia

(Rodrigo Lessa)

#### 02. Clube Savana (Eduardo Neves/Rodrigo Lessa)

#### 03. Pagode

Jazz Sardinha’s Club (Eduardo Neves/Rodrigo Lessa/Mauro Aguiar)

#### 04. Samba

Castiço (Eduardo Neves/Rodrigo Lessa)

#### 05. Joana Francesa (Chico Buarque)

#### 06. José do Egito (Eduardo Neves/Rodrigo Lessa)

#### 07. O Dia em que Ela

Chegou (Roberto Marques/Eduardo Neves)

#### 08. Suíngue Envolvente (Marcos

Esguleba)

#### 09. Gente de Ilha (Eduardo Neves/Rodrigo Lessa)

#### 10. Maxixe,

Neném!!! (Eduardo Neves/Roberto Marques/Rodrigo Lessa)

#### 11. Choro Transgênico

(Eduardo Neves/Rodrigo Lessa)

#### 12. Chorinho de Gafieira (Astor Silva)

#### 13.

Não Sou Mais Disso (Jorge Aragão/Zeca

Pagodinho)

Faixa Amarela (Jessé Pai/Luiz

Carlos/Beto Gago/Zeca Pagodinho)

O Feijão de

Dona Neném (Arlindo Cruz/Zeca Pagodinho)

#### 14. Olhos d’Além Mar (Rodrigo

Lessa/Eduardo Neves)

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