

Reviewing Bossa Nova's Greatest Unreleased Disc

Contributed by Daniella Thompson
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“What disc?” I can hear you asking in indignation. True enough, there is no disc. Or rather, there is, but it’s never been released. Released or not, it’s here, and since it is, and was recorded one August 42 years ago, and has long been touted as a major landmark of bossa nova, and since August 2004 cries out for a refreshing breeze, here comes the long overdue review.

by Daniella Thompson

Imagine yourself in the summer of 1962. You have never heard most of the songs on this album, for they are receiving here their world premières.

Aloysio de Oliveira united on stage Antonio Carlos Jobim and Vinicius de Moraes, whose songwriting partnership is already at its end (Vinicius has taken up with young Baden Powell de Aquino).

This is Vinicius’ first time as a performer; until now it’s been considered unseemly for a diplomat to sing in a nightclub. Both Tom and Vinicius sit behind the piano, oversized whiskey glasses before them. This is a good start, but it needs professional voices.

The venue is the restaurant

Au Bon Gourmet on Avenida Nossa Senhora de Copacabana, in the bairro of the same name. The stage is tiny and unadorned, but Aloysio crams it full.

He brings in the vocal quartet Os Cariocas, a link between the old sambas that his own conjunto, Bando da Lua, used to sing and the new sambas that Tom and Vinicius compose. Front and center sits João Gilberto, who makes a specialty of both the old samba and the new.

The history-making show in August 1962

The elegant audience, whose ranks are filled from Rio’s chic society and artistic circles, dines on French cuisine and listens attentively, applauding and at times yelling encouragements.

Accompanied by Otávio

Bailly on bass and Milton Banana on drums, the seven men on stage unroll a string of, yes, mostly unknown songs. Os Cariocas warm up the audience with a rousing rendition of the brand new “Só Danço Samba,” which Tom augments with his voice and piano:

Já dancei o twist até demais
Mas não sei
Me
cansei
Do calipso
Ao chá-chá-chá

The message is clear: take away foreign rhythms—I’m going back to my samba roots.

“Samba de uma Nota

Só” is more familiar; João Gilberto had already recorded it in his second LP, O Amor, o Sorriso e a Flor. Tom takes it away, with Os Cariocas humming harmony:

Eis aqui este sambinha
Feito numa nota só
Outras notas vão entrar

Mas a base é uma só

The group steps in for the refrain and the second verse, changes tempi and rhythms, heaps in falsettos, and finishes off the song on an extended note.

João Gilberto now launches into “Corcovado” (also from O Amor, o Sorriso e a Flor). He is the one responsible for the first line of the lyrics being as enchanting as it is; Jobim had originally written “Um cigarro, um violão.” The interpretation is vintage João, with the added attraction of Os Cariocas crooning quietly on the repetition. The crowd laps it up.

Num cantinho um violão
Este amor, uma canção
Prá fazer feliz a quem
se ama
Muita calma prá pensar
E ter tempo prá sonhar
Da janela vê-se o
Corcovado
O Redentor, que lindo!

It's time for Vinicius to show off his new work with Baden Powell. And here is the debut recording of what will become his signature piece, “Samba da Benção.”

The movie Un Homme et une Femme is several years away yet. That long list of names to be blessed is fresh. When Vinicius pronounces “Saravá,” the audience echoes him. Os Cariocas join in the final refrain. Enthusiastic applause follows.

Porque o samba nasceu lá na Bahia
E se hoje ele é branco na poesia

Se hoje ele é branco na poesia
Ele é negro demais no coração

João Gilberto returns with “Amor em Paz,” recorded the previous year on João Gilberto. The crystalline voice is complemented by the vocal group in a short and lyrical interlude.

Foi então
Que da minha infinita tristeza aconteceu
você
Encontrei
Em você a razão de viver e de amar em paz
E não sofrer
mais
Nunca mais
Porque o amor é a coisa mais triste quando se
desfaz

Now comes a complete unknown, marked on the disc cover only as “Bossa Nova e Bossa Velha.” No author is indicated. Did Aloysio write this song? More than likely.

Os Cariocas sing:

Afinal se isso é bossa nova
O que é que é bossa velha?

Diferença é
 só no jeito de bater
 João Gilberto disse que o samba endireitou
 E que
 ninguém aqui jamais desafinou
 Melodia [?] Tom do tom a cantar
 Poesia deu
 Vinicius pra rimar
 Moças descobriram professores pra lição
 Marcando a
 bossa nova no bater do violão

An old-fashioned, bombastic voice interposes:

Mas a bossa velha protestou
 Ou, antigamente, reclamou:
 “A
 dissonância, o som nasal, o atonal” [...]

But the final conclusion is:

[...] E quando canta a bossa velha,
 Canta a bossa nova
 Todo
 humano

The audience laps it up. But there's more in store. Tom introduces a song he just completed: “Samba do Avião.” Os Cariocas alternate with him in the second round:

Este samba é só porque
 Rio, eu gosto de você
 A morena vai
 sambar
 Seu corpo todo balançar
 Rio de sol, de céu, de mar
 Prolonged applause. Cut. The piano begins playing, and a voice from the audience calls: “Tom, muito bonito, hein!” Was he referring to “Samba do Avião”? Now Vinicius shows that he can carry a melodic line and sings his new collaboration with Baden, “O Astronauta.”

Será que por acaso
 A flor sabe que é flor
 E a estrela Vênus
 Sabe
 ao menos
 Porque brilha mais bonita, amor

Os Cariocas hum behind Vinicius, providing the decisive “Pah!” after the line “Sim, você é linda porque é” and concluding with the requisite babadabada.

João Gilberto comes in with two songs from his most recent, eponymous album. First Dorival Caymmi's “Samba da Minha Terra” (1940), originally recorded by Aloysio's Bando da Lua. Here we have voice, guitar, and Tom's occasional piano:

Quem não gosta de samba
Bom sujeito não é
É ruim da cabeça
Ou
doente do pé

He follows it with "Insensatez," just voice and guitar:

A insensatez que você fez
Coração mais sem cuidado
Fez chorar de
dor
O seu amor
Um amor tão delicado
Ah, porque você foi fraco
assim
Assim tão desalmado
Ah, meu coração quem nunca amou
Não merece
ser amado

And now comes the evening's set piece: a shiny new song called "Garota de Ipanema." This isn't the first version written. That one was called "Menina Que Passa" and opened thus:

Vinha cansado de tudo
De tantos caminhos
Tão sem poesia
Tão sem
passarinhos
Com medo da vida
Com medo de amar
Quando na tarde
vazia
Tão linda no espaço
Eu vi a menina
Que vinha num passo
Cheio
de balanço
Caminho do mar

Fortunately for all of us, both songwriters found it lame. Vinicius did much better the second time around. For its public debut at the Bon Gourmet, Tom, Vinicius, and João wrote a special sung introduction.

João Gilberto (in sweet voice):
Tom e se você fizesse agora uma
canção
Que possa nos dizer
Contar o que é o amor?

Tom Jobim (in reedy voice):
Olha Joãozinho

Eu não saberia
Sem
Vinicius pra fazer a poesia

Vinicius de Moraes (in deep voice):
Para essa canção
Se
realizar
Quem dera o João
Para cantar

[audience laughter]

João:
Ah, mas quem sou eu?
Eu sou mais vocês.
Melhor se nós
cantássemos os três.

[more audience laughter and applause]

All three:
Olha que coisa mais linda
mais cheia de graça
[...]

The rest, as they say, is history. Not so quick, though. Os Cariocas break in on the same track with Haroldo Barbosa and Luiz Reis' "Devagar com a Louça," which sounds like an old song but in fact is newly minted in the year 1962. These back-to-back tunes are the perfect expression of bossa nova versus bossa velha.

We could all go home now (or play the disc again from the beginning), but not before the final medley of "Garota de Ipanema," "Só Danço Samba," and "Se Todos Fossem Iguais a Você," which sums up the six-year partnership of Tom and Vinicius between Orfeu da Conceição and this night of August 1962.

O
Encontro
(unreleased; 1962) 37:24
min.
Recorded live at Au Bon Gourmet,
Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro

01. Só Danço Samba (Antonio Carlos Jobim/Vinicius de Moraes)
Os
Cariocas
02. Samba de uma Nota Só (Antonio Carlos Jobim/Newton Mendonça)
Tom
Jobim & Os Cariocas
03. Corcovado (Antonio Carlos Jobim)
João
Gilberto & Os Cariocas

04. Samba da Benção (Baden Powell/Vinicius de Moraes)
Vinicius de Moraes
05. Amor em Paz (Antonio Carlos Jobim/Vinicius de Moraes)
João Gilberto & Os Cariocas
06. Bossa Nova e Bossa Velha
Os Cariocas
07. Samba do Avião (Antonio Carlos Jobim)
Tom Jobim & Os Cariocas
08. O Astronauta (Baden Powell/Vinicius de Moraes)

Vinicius de Moraes & Os Cariocas

09. Samba da Minha Terra (Dorival Caymmi)
João Gilberto
10. Insensatez (Antonio Carlos Jobim/Vinicius de Moraes)
João Gilberto
11. Garota de Ipanema (Antonio Carlos Jobim/Vinicius de Moraes)
João,
Tom & Vinicius
Devagar com a Louça (Haroldo Barbosa/Luiz Reis)
Os Cariocas
12. Só Danço Samba (Antonio Carlos Jobim/Vinicius de Moraes)
João Gilberto & Os Cariocas
13. Garota de Ipanema; Só Danço Samba; Se Todos Fossem Iguais a Você
(Antonio Carlos Jobim/Vinicius de Moraes)
All

João Gilberto: vocals & guitar
Tom Jobim: vocals & piano
Vinicius de Moraes: vocals
Os Cariocas: vocals & guitar
Otávio Bailly: bass
Milton Banana: drums
Directed by Aloysio de Oliveira

You can read more about Brazilian music and culture at Daniella Thompson on Brazil here: <http://daniv.blogspot.com/>