

## Brazil's Seu Jorge Makes New York Sing Along

Contributed by Ernest Barteldes  
Wednesday, 15 June 2005

I must say that I wasn't sure of what to expect when I entered Manhattan's SOBs last Monday to check out the music of Seu Jorge, the actor/singer who portrayed good guy gone bad Mané Galinha on the film *City of God*.

He also performed the end credits song "Convite para a Vida" on the film's soundtrack and most recently provided comic relief in Wes Anderson's *The Life Aquatic With Steve Zissou* by performing weird acoustic renditions of David Bowie songs in Portuguese.

It was a total surprise to see that the club was packed - something one doesn't expect to see on a Monday night, even in Manhattan.

The crowd was made up mostly of Americans with an interest in Brazilian music, and there was also a considerable number of expat Brazilians.

Seu Jorge had a minimalist approach on stage. The band was made up of himself on acoustic guitar, with the accompaniment of a percussionist, who mostly played a tambourine, and another musician on cavaquinho (a small, four-string instrument that is commonly used in Brazilian music).

Even with such a small setup, he completely captivated the audience, who clapped enthusiastically at the end of each song. The set included songs from his latest album, "Cru"(Raw), a couple of covers and of course the songs from his latest movie.

One of the best-received tunes was his version of Serge Gainsbourg's "Chattertown", in which he comments on the untimely passing of Kurt Cobain, the suicide of Brazilian President Getúlio Vargas and the deaths of other artists who died young, a song which ends with the note that "I'm not doing that well either."

His lively but low-key cover of Jorge Ben's classic "Mas Que Nada" had everyone singing along on the chorus. He played the song as if he were inviting everyone for a jam session in his living room.

No special instrumental effects, no bossa nova guitar wizardry, just plain fun, and the fun he was having with the song came across to the audience as well.

From his role on Wes Anderson's *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*, he performed his take on David Bowie's "Rebel Rebel", which is featured on the film's soundtrack. Once again, he took a more low-key approach on the song, playing it on his own without the other musicians.

The social statement samba "Sou Favela"(I'm from the Favela") played solely with percussive instruments, drew respect from those present, when Seu Jorge stood up and, in a rare moment in English, stated that the slums of Brazil "are a social problem that needs to be looked into. The people who live in the favelas do it because they have no other choice."

He also explained that the squatter cities of Brazil are filled with "hard-working people, not the criminals you see on the paper every day."

Seu Jorge is not a great guitar player, but his lack of sophistication on the instrument does not matter at all. He can handle the samba, reggae and other beats he plays on his songs quite effectively, and his personal charm - which he seems to try to hide with his scruffy looks - is felt the moment you see him on stage.

His baritone voice - he started off his career by singing the music of the late Renato Russo - is suitable for the samba genre, and it is in sambas like Caetano Veloso's "Será, "which he played during the encore, that he sounds at his best.

The only negative thing I can say about the show is that he chose not to perform "Convite para a Vida", a song he co-wrote with Antonio Pinto and Fabio Goes, the writers of the original music from "City of God."

It is a magical tune, and would have showcased Seu Jorge's vocal samba chops even further. But maybe that will happen at a future concert.

SEU JORGE

SOBs, New York City June 13th 2005

SHORT NOTICES:

During the month of June, Brazilians honor saints John, Anthony and Peter by celebrating the people of the country - the farmers who provide the nation with food and other needs.

During the season, city folks promote parties in which they dress up as "caipiras" (a non-offensive equivalent to the English "redneck"), participate in square dances, games and consume typical country foods such as "bolinho caipira" (a croquette made of corn flour and stuffed with beef), "pé de moleque" (a moist cake made from ginger and cashew nuts) and other delicacies.

Brazilians in the US often take advantage of the warm weather of the waning days of spring to stage their own "arraiaís," as the events are called in Brazil, and New Yorkers will have a taste of that tradition on June 18th, when the Brazilian community at the Church of Our Lady of Pompeii has their fourth annual "Arraiá do Village".

The festivities will take place at the church's basement at 25 Carmine Street, on the corner of Bleecker, off 6th Avenue, starting at 5 PM and going on until midnight.

Admission is free, and all proceeds from the sale of food and beverages will be reverted to the restoration of the church's building, which is in dire need of repair. For more information, contact Mercia at 718 672-9176.

-----  
Dominican-born composer and arranger Michel Camilo appears this June 17th at the JVC Jazz Festival at New York City's Lincoln Center. on the heels of his latest release, the impressive album Solo(released January 2005 on the Telarc label)

On his new album, which features the pianist playing - as the album says - solo, without any additional accompaniment. The songs include beautiful instrumental renditions of Francis Hime's "Minha", Chico Buarque's "Atrás da Porta"(co-written by Hime) and two gems by Antonio Carlos Jobim, the classic "Corcovado" and a later composition, "Luíza."

The performance will take place at Lincoln Center's Rose Hall, which is located at the corner of Broadway and 60th Street in Manhattan. Tickets are priced between US\$ 35 and US\$ 65. For more information, call 212-721-6500 or visit <http://www.jalc.org>

Ernest Barteldes is an ESL and Portuguese teacher. In addition to that, he is a freelance writer whose work has been published by The Greenwich Village Gazette, The Staten Island Advance, The Staten Island Register, The SI Muse,

Brazzil magazine, The Villager, GLSSite, Entertainment Today and other publications. He lives in Staten Island, NY. He can be reached at [ebarteldes@yahoo.com](mailto:ebarteldes@yahoo.com).