

Brazilian Duo Teach Al Jazira How to Samba

Contributed by Isaura Daniel
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Brazilian samba has reached football stadiums in the United Arab Emirates. Musicians Edmilson Benedito da Silva, 32, and Alexandre de Jesus, 27, have just returned from the Arab country where they taught cheerleaders for Al Jazira Club, from Abu Dhabi.

They spent two months in the city and taught samba, funk, salsa and reggae to the club band. Made up of approximately 20 people, the band is in charge of leading the crowds during Al Jazira games. The team is one of the oldest football clubs in the Emirates, and plays in the first division.

Edmilson and Alexandre first travelled to Oman, the neighbouring country, to teach the band how to play. Although the club is from Abu Dhabi, the cheerleaders are from Oman.

"We also assisted with percussion during the games," stated Edmilson. During the period in which the Brazilians were in the country, Al Jazira played five games.

According to Edmilson, before incorporating samba to their repertoire, the band played to swahili. Apart from learning how to play samba, the group was also given instruments appropriate for the style, among them drums, tambourines and rattles, purchased in Brazil.

It was, incidentally, on a trip to Brazil by a representative of the Abu Dhabi royal family, to purchase musical instruments, that Edmilson and Alexandre were given the opportunity of teaching music in the Arab country. "I worked at a store called 'Contemporânea' and he met me there," stated Edmilson.

The musician worked as a salesman and he was showing a customer how to use a percussion instrument when he was invited. Edmilson could not travel at the time, but he recommended Alexandre in his place.

Alexandre spent almost two months in the Middle East, between March and April this year, he returned to the region in September, this time accompanied by Edmilson.

"I was very impressed with the country and made many friends," stated Edmilson.

They both arrived in Brazil on November 8. According to Edmilson, they should return to the Emirates to continue teaching in February next year.

In Brazil, Alexandre plays in the band Demorou and Edmilson is currently doing freelance work. He played in the band Negritude Júnior, with famous Brazilian singer Netinho de Paula.

He also played with another popular band, Katinguelê, led by singer Salgadinho. Alexandre and Edmilson met when they studied at the Free Music University, in São Paulo, currently also called Tom Jobim Music Study Center.

Al Jazira

Al Jazira Club was established in 1974 and is not only a football club. The club's stadium sits 15,000 fans and includes a hotel, television studio for championship transmission, meeting rooms, as well as a gymnasium for basketball, volleyball and handball, tennis courts, a gym and a swimming pool.

In the month of October, works for expansion of the structure, an investment of US\$ 20 million, were concluded.

The club was established by former president of the Emirates, Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, who passed away this month. Al Jazira Club won the United Arab Emirates Team Shield in 2002 and 2003.

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