

## Brasileirinho: US Gets a Whiff of Brazilian Choro

Contributed by Jean-Christophe Chamboredon  
Wednesday, 20 December 2006

"The Sound of Rio," a 90-minute musical documentary film on choro, the first genuinely Brazilian urban music that has evolved over the past 130 years into a fascinating form of modern tropical sound, is being released as a DVD on January 23, in the US.

The movie whose whole name is "The Sound of Rio: Brasileirinho," is by Finnish director Mika Kaurismäki, the same guy who brought us "Moro no Brasil" (I Live in Brazil). The DVD and its accompanying soundtrack will be released for the first time in the US on January 23, 2007.

Choro was created back in the late 19th century in Rio de Janeiro when Brazilian musicians started to blend European melodies, Afro-Brazilian rhythms and the melancholic interpretation of the Brazilian Indians' music.

Mostly instrumental, choro was performed in dancing, beer and concert halls and is credited as being the first musical expression of the then-emerging urban middle class in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's melting pot.

Choro had a prominent place in the development of Brazil's cultural identity and remained a major popular music style until the 1920s, leading directly into samba and later to bossa nova. As Villa-Lobos said, "Choro is the essence and soul of Brazilian music."

"In my previous music documentary 'Moro no Brasil,' I chose rather a social point of view, I showed music's role as kind of a social survival ritual of the people," Kaurismäki says.

"In 'The Sound of Rio,' my approach was slightly different. This time, I used music, choro, to present how musical expression and performance reflect in everyday life and vice versa."

After a slight decline in popularity, choro music has made a remarkable comeback over the past few decades. The film remembers the history but shows, above all, a colorful picture of choro's vitality today. The guiding line of the film is the combo "Trio Madeira Brasil" composed of three of Brazil's outstanding Choro musicians, Marcello Gonçalves, Zé Paulo Becker and Rolando Souza.

During a "roda de choro", a traditional Brazilian kind of private jam session, the Trio brings up a concert project and begins to invite the featured musicians. During these sessions, some of the most interesting choro musicians play and remember key events in the history of this Brazilian urban music, such as the radio period, the Big Bands or the traditional dancing events, the gafeiras. Interviews with well-known artists like Zezé Gonzaga, Elza Soares and Guinga illustrate the reciprocal inspiration with samba and bossa nova.

"My film is not only about music, but also about the people who make and play this music," Kaurismäki says. "Brazil is a country of many contradictions, it has huge social contrasts, a big part of the population lives in a constant survival struggle. In this battle of joy and sorrow music plays an extremely important role. I tried to capture the 'soul' of choro, the magic feeling and the unique emotional bond between all the involved - musicians and audience."

Born in Orimattila, Finland in 1955, Mika Kaurismäki had made a name for himself among European audiences by the mid 1980s with gangster films such as "Rosso" and "Helsinki Napoli," which were known for their unique sense of irony.

He consolidated his reputation as an unconventional filmmaker with the thriller "Condition Red" and the ecological adventure film "Amazonas." His collaboration with Jim Jarmusch and Sam Fuller, "Tigrero," won him the International Film Critics Prize in 1994. Since 1989, he has lived partially in Rio de Janeiro.

Milan Entertainment, Inc. launched its DVD label last year with Kaurismäki's "Moro no Brasil." The company has released award-winning soundtracks for film and television as well as cutting edge electronic, world and Latin music.

Its catalog includes such notable soundtracks as "Ghost," "Mulholland Drive," "Monsoon Wedding," "Spirited Away," "Talk To Her," "City of God," "Bend It Like Beckham," "Once Upon A Time in Mexico," "March of the Penguins", "Tsotsi" and most recently "Flags of our Fathers."

Milan Entertainment, an independently owned operation with offices located in Burbank, California and Paris, France, is distributed by WEA Inc., Warner Music Group's (an AOL Time Warner Company) manufacturing and distribution operation.

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Choro is Brazilian jazz, many people say. It could be true if Brazil's chorinho hadn't appeared before on the scene. After fading with the introduction of Bossa Nova in the '60s, the Brazilian music par excellence is getting a new lease of life.

Bruce Gilman in Brazzil Magazine

"The Sound of Rio: Brasileirinho"

Switzerland - Finland - Brazil - 2005, 90 minutes

Production: Marco Forster Productions (Switzerland), Marianna Films Oy (Finland), Studio Uno Produções Artísticas Ltda (Brazil), with SF DRS, TV YLE and ZDF in cooperation with ARTE, BNDES (Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social)

Director: Mika Kaurismäki.

Script: Marco Forster, Mika Kaurismäki.

Photography: Jacques Cheuiche.

Musical Direction: Marcello Gonçalves.

Editor: Karen Harley.

Recording: Carlos de Andrade.

Sound Design: Uwe Dresch.

Producers: Marco Forster, Bruno Stroppiana, Mika Kaurismäki.

Musicians: Marcello Gonçalves, Zé Paulo Becker, Ronaldo Souza, Yamandú, Elza Soares, Teresa Cristina, Pedro Miranda, Paulo Moura, Guinga, Ademilde Fonseca, Zezé Gonzaga, Marcos Suzano, Joel Nascimento, Silvério Pontes, Zé da Velha, Carlinhos Leite, Hamilton de Holanda, Henrique Cazes, Daniel Spilmann, Umberto Araújo, Joatan Nascimento, Fred Dantas, Edson Santos, Maurício Carrilho, Luciana Rabello, etc.

#### Director's Statement

"Choro is a very "flexible" music, it can be played in different ensembles and formations, from solo to big band, it can be sung or danced to, and it's also very suitable for improvisations. It adapts naturally to almost any musical and social environment, from 'Roda de Choro' to concert halls.

"And for me, after seeing Choro in different formations and situations over the years, I've noticed that, depending upon the combination of musicians involved, the differences could be extremely interesting and directly affect the musical performance. What each musician plays, what musical ideas he/she brings and how these ideas are treated within the ensemble, create the dynamics of the performance.

"However, my film is not only about music, choro, but also about the people who make and play this music. Even if Choro is often regarded as the music of the middle class, it unites people from different races, classes, sexes and ages. Brazil is a country of many contradictions, it has huge social contrasts, a big part of the population lives in a constant survival struggle, but in the end joy - alegria - always wins.

"And in this battle of joy and sorrow music plays an extremely important role. I tried to capture the 'soul' of Choro, the magic feeling and the unique emotional bond, the musical brotherhood, between all the involved - musicians and audience - of any successful Choro performance."

#### A Few Biographies

##### Trio Madeira Brasil

Together with Ronaldo do Bandolim, Marcello Gonçalves and Zé Paulo Becker established the Trio Madeira Brasil. Trio Madeira Brasil is one of the most exciting groups to emerge in the world of instrumental music in recent years. It brings together three virtuosos with the idea of making music that, at the same time, is both energetic and refined.

Their repertoire includes the classic as well as the eclectic, representing the best of Brazilian culture, while also attentive

to influences from other cultures. After the release of their first critically acclaimed CD in 1998, Trio Madeira Brasil has been enjoying success at a variety of levels such as:

Voted "Best CD" and "Best Group" in the Prêmio Sharp (Sharp Award).

Participated in the Free Jazz Festival 1999. Was the only national group to receive a top ranking by the O Globo newspaper (Rio de Janeiro).

Special recording for French TV with the guitarist Baden Powell.

Participated in the Festival Chorando Alto (Crying Loud Festival), the most important festival in the history of Choro, next to the composer Egberto Gismonti (Sesc Pompéia, São Paulo).

Voted Best Instrumental Show of the year by the O Globo newspaper (Rio de Janeiro).

In 2003, co-released a CD with the composer Guilherme de Brito, applying elaborate arrangements to the composer's classic compositions with Nelson Cavaquinho. The CD was an immediate hit with the critics.

#### Marcello Gonçalves

Born in 1972, he is already one of the most in demand 7-string guitarists on the scene today, having played and recorded with artists such as Elza Soares, Elton Medeiros, Baden Powell, Ney Matogrosso and Gal Costa.

He recorded the CD "Bach in Brazil" for EMI Classics which was promoted with a tour of Portugal and England. He has performed in Finland and Venezuela with Henrique Cazes to promote their duo CD "Pixinguinha de Bolso". He is also a member of the group Rabo de Lagartixa.

#### Zé Paulo Becker

Before diving deeply into the world of Choro, he built a solid reputation as a guitarist, dominating the classical repertoire and winning significant prizes in guitar competitions. He received a Masters of Music at The Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ).

He has already played and recorded with artists such as Armandinho, Francis Hime, Wagner Tiso, Zé Renato and Elza Soares. He released his first CD "Lendas Brasileiras", which featured his arrangements for solo guitar of classics from the Brazilian repertoire.

"Sob o Redentor", his second CD, features original compositions, two of which were written in partnership with one of Brazil's top lyricists Aldir Blanc. The CD also features special guests such as Dominginhos, Leila Pinheiro, and Elza Soares, among others.

#### Ronaldo do Bandolim

Born in 1959, Ronaldo is one of the top mandolin players in Brasil who for the last two decades has been adding his beautiful improvisations to the sound of the group Época de Ouro, the most traditional Choro group around today. He has recorded with some of the greatest names in Brazilian music, such as Marisa Monte, Paulinho da Viola, Rafael Rabello and Chico Buarque.

#### Paulo Moura

Son of a band leader and brother of other musicians, Paulo Moura started playing the piano and the clarinet in his native town, São José do Rio Preto, in the interior of the southeastern state of São Paulo. Later on, Moura moved to Rio de Janeiro where he played at balls, parties and casinos, as a member of Zacharias e Sua Orquestra (Zacharias and his Orchestra).

In Rio de Janeiro, Moura attended lessons at the National School of Music where he studied music theory, harmony, conducting, arrangement and orchestration. At 17, Moura was the first clarinetist of The National Theater Orchestra of Rio de Janeiro. In the same period, Moura accompanied Ary Barroso on a trip to Mexico and Russia where he conducted the Moscow Symphonic Orchestra.

Moura has always been extremely interested in jazz and was the founder of one of the first jazz bands in Brazil, playing the sax and clarinet. In 1957, he recorded the album "Paulo Moura e Sua Orquestra para Bailes".

Alternating between classical and popular music, Moura used to hang out with Bossa Nova musicians at the nightclub Beco das Garrafas, and wrote arrangements for Elis Regina, Fagner and Milton Nascimento. In 1976,

Paulo Moura made the album "Confusão Urbana, Suburbana e Rural" and toured Japan. In the 80's, he released one of his most famous albums, "Mistura e Manda". His repertoire comprises classical music pieces as well as choro and gafieira.

In 1992, in collaboration with the guitarist Raphael Rabello, Moura recorded the album "Dois Irmãos", winning the Sharp Music Award for best popular music performer.

#### Career albums (selection)

Paulo Moura visita Gershwin & Jobim, 2000

Mood Ingênuo - Paulo Moura & Cliff Korman, 1999

Pixinguinha - Paulo Moura & Os Batutas, 1998

Brasil Musical - Série Música Viva - Wagner Tiso e Paulo Moura, 1996

Instrumental No CCBB - Paulo Moura e Nivaldo Ornelas, 1993

#### Yamandú

Born in Passo Fundo, in Rio Grande do Sul, he began playing the guitar when he was 7 years old with his father Algacir Costa, leader of "Os Fronteiriços" band and perfected his playing with Lúcio Yanel, the Argentine virtuoso established in Brazil.

After listening to Radamés Gnattali, he started searching for other Brazilian artists, such as Baden Powell, Tom Jobim and Raphael Rabello, among others.

When he was 17 years old, he played in São Paulo for the first time in the Banco do Brasil's Circuito Cultural, produced by Estúdio Tom Brasil, and, from then on, he was recognized as a revelatory musician of Brazil's guitar.

One of the all time geniuses of Brazilian music, the young Yamandú confirms and deserves all praise when he plays his guitar. Alone on the stage, he is capable of elating the most sophisticated of crowds and touching the most refined of ears.

Yamandú plays choro, bossa nova and more, but he is also a gaúcho filled with milongas, tangos, zambas and chamamés. A guitar player and composer who does not fit into a single music style, he is a combination of all of them and creates his own style with a peculiar personality. Yamandú deserves the meaning of his beautiful name, "the precursor of waters".

Yamandú excels himself each year: besides playing a 7-string guitar, he is also a composer and arranger.

In June 2001, he won the 2001 Visa Award Edição Instrumental, first chosen by the official and popular jury.

In October 2001, he performed a singular presentation at the Free Jazz Festival in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, opening the night of Jazz traditional artists.

#### Participations (selection)

Release of third CD " Yamandú ao Vivo" - independent- 05/12/2003

Midem - 37th International Music Market -

Guitar Festival of Chile ( 2003)

Yamandú and Os Irmãos Flores (Argentina) - "Ares e Pensares" Sesc São Paulo, November, 2002

Caras Award 2002 - Revelation of 2001 - official and popular jury

Banco do Brasil Circuito Cultural - 2002 Tour around capitals of Brasil

Summer Festival of the north Littoral 2002 / state of São Paulo

Jazz Festival of Londrina - July 2002; 33rd. Winter Festival of Campos de Jordão - July 2002

Free Jazz Festival 2001 - Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo

Release of Visa Award CD - " Yamandú"- December 03, 2001

Winner of 2001 Visa Instrumental Edition

Nashville Festival (USA) - 1998

#### Teresa Cristina & Pedro Miranda

One of the best surprises of the present Brazilian Music, Teresa Cristina is assuredly a rising star. Born in Rio de Janeiro, more precisely at "Vila da Penha", one of the cradles of the samba, she symbolizes with grace the samba's spirit: sincere, emotional, melancholic and riant at the same time.

Her special way of singing, always with her eyes closed, clearly shows us that her voice comes directly from the heart.

Her first solo work, the excellent album "A música de Paulinho da Viola" (a tribute to the 60 years old of this great Brazilian musician) from the Deckdisc, appeared in 2003, signalized what would come next.

At this moment she attracted the rigorous public of musicians and appreciators of the Brazilian popular music, this showed through all the best reviews. Her new Album, entitled "A vida me fez assim" (Life made me this way), came as an irrefutable proof that she's not only a great singer, but also an admirable composer.

Pedro Miranda, a talented young performer and her partner in music and life, sings with her and plays the "pandeiro" (tambourine) in this album. In the prime of life, he's already considered an heir of some masters of Brazilian music, like Monarco or Roberto Silva. Together, they form a perfect couple: their adjustment and harmony increases the songs they play, creating a new one, this time sublime.

Mika Kaurismäki

Director / Producer

Mika Kaurismäki studied cinema in Munich, Germany, (Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film, 1977-1981) and made his diploma film "The Liar" in Finland in 1980. His younger brother Aki Kaurismäki, then a student of journalism, played the main role and also co-wrote the screenplay.

The film was an overnight sensation when first shown in Finland; it marked the beginning of the cinema of the Kaurismäki brothers and started a new era in the Finnish cinema. After the success of "The Liar", Mika Kaurismäki decided to stay in Finland and, together with his brother and some friends, he founded the production company Villealfa Filmproductions, that soon became a home of vital low- or no-budget film making.

During the active Villealfa years, Mika co-founded the legendary Midnight Sun Film Festival (1986) and the distribution company Senso Films (1987) with Andorra cinemas (and some bars) in Helsinki.

In the beginning of the 90's, Mika started to produce through his company Marianna Films. Its first independent production was the award-winning "Zombie and the Ghost Train" (1991). In 1994, Mika returned to the Brazilian jungle with Samuel Fuller and Jim Jarmusch and made the feature-length documentary "Tigrero" - A Film That Was Never Made". The film was awarded the International Critics' Award at the Berlin Film Festival in 1994.

In the course of the 90's, Mika established his base and second home in Rio de Janeiro and started to concentrate more on international co-productions. His biggest production so far is the comedy "LA Without a Map" (1998), with David Tennant, Julie Delpy, Vincent Gallo, Johnny Depp, James Le Gros, Anouk Aimee etc.. The new millennium started for Mika with the production of "Moro no Brasil" (2002), the acclaimed documentary about Brazilian music.

Mika has just finished his last films "Honey Baby", starring Henry Thomas, Irina Björklund and Helmut Berger, a road movie in the Baltic and Russia inspired by the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, and "Brasileirinho", a music documentary about choro music.

Films as director:

Sonic Mirror (music documentary with Billy Cobham), in post-production, 2006

The Sound of Rio: Brasileirinho (music documentary), 2005

Honey Baby with Henry Thomas, Irina Björklund, Helmut Berger, Kari Väänänen, 2004

Moro no Brasil (music documentary), 2002

Highway Society with Kai Wiesinger, Marie Zielcke, Jochen Nickel, 1999

Los Angeles Without a Map, with David Tennant, Julie Delpy, Vincent Gallo, Cameron Bancroft, Johnny Depp, James Le Gros, Anouk Aimee etc., 1998

Sambólico (30 min. episode), 1996

Rhythm (5 min. episode), 1996

Condition Red with James Russo, Cynda Williams, Paul Calderon, 1995

H.A.R.P.: Bubble Struggle (music video), 1995

Tigrero - A Film That Was Never Made with Sam Fuller, Jim Jarmusch, 1994

The Last Border, with Jürgen Prochnow, Jolyon Baker, Fanny Bastien, Kari Väänänen, Matti Pellonpää, Soli Labbart etc., 1993

Zombie and the Ghost Train, with Silu Seppälä, Matti Pellonpää, Marjo Leinonen, 1991

Amazon with Kari Väänänen, Robert Davi, Rae Dawn Chong, 1990

Paper Star with Pirkko Hämäläinen, Kari Väänänen, 1989  
(1998)

Cha Cha Cha with Kari Väänänen, Matti Pellonpää, Sanna Fransman, 1989

Night Work (TV film) with Martti Syrjä, Kaija Pakaerinen, Esko Salminen, 1988

Helsinki Napoli - All Night Long with Kari Väänänen, Nino Manfredi, Roberta Manfredi, Margi Clark, Samuel Fuller, Eddie Costantine, Wim Wenders and Jim Jarmusch, 1987

Rosso with Kari Väänänen, Martti Syrjä, 1985

The Clan - Tale of the Frogs, with Kari Väänänen, Matti Pellonpää, Markku Halme, Minna Soisalo, Lasse Pöysti etc., 1984

The Worthless with Matti Pellonpää, Pirkko Hämäläinen, 1982

Jackpot 2 (short) with Martti Syrjä, Jukka Mikkola, 1982

The Liar, with Aki Kaurismäki, Pirkko Hämäläinen, Juuso Hirvikangas, 1981