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## INTRODUCTION

**In Brazil,** music is everywhere. You can find it in a complex rhythmic pattern beaten out by an old man with his fingers on a café table, in the thundering samba that echoes in the streets of Rio in the months prior to Carnaval, and in the bars where a guitar passes from hand to hand and everyone knows all the lyrics to all the classic Brazilian songs played late into the night. Music is part of the Brazilian soul, and rhythm is in the way people speak, in the way they walk, and even in the way they play soccer.

In Rio de Janeiro, after the national team has won an important soccer game, fireworks explode in the sky and samba detonates in the streets. On sidewalks and in city squares, the celebration begins. Impromptu percussion sections appear, made up of all types of Brazilians, rich and poor, black and brown and white. As participants pick up instruments—a drum, a scraper, a shaker—an intricate, ebullient samba *batucada* (percussion jam) builds. Each amateur music maker kicks in an interlocking rhythmic part to create a groove that would be the envy of most professional bands in other parts of the world. The singing and dancing inevitably go on for hours.

Music is a passport to happiness for Brazilians, an escape from everyday frustrations and (for most) a hard and difficult material life. “There’s an amazing magical, mystical quality to Brazilian music. Their music is paradise,” said jazz flutist Herbie Mann.<sup>1</sup>

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▲ Rio de Janeiro. (Courtesy of Embratur.)



In the twentieth century more than a little of this paradise reached the outside world, and Brazil arguably had more of an impact on international popular music than any country other than the United States. It was successful abroad for as many reasons as there are types of Brazilian music. Just as the United States has exported a wide variety of musical genres, so too has Brazil, even though very few countries speak its national language, Portuguese.

Most Brazilian music shares three outstanding qualities. It has an intense lyricism tied to its Portuguese heritage that often makes for beautiful, highly expressive melodies, enhanced by the fact that Portuguese is one of the most musical tongues on the earth and no small gift to the bal-

◀ Musical notes in a sidewalk in Vila Isabel, a neighborhood in Rio known as the home of many great samba composers and musicians. (Photo by Ricardo Pessanha.)

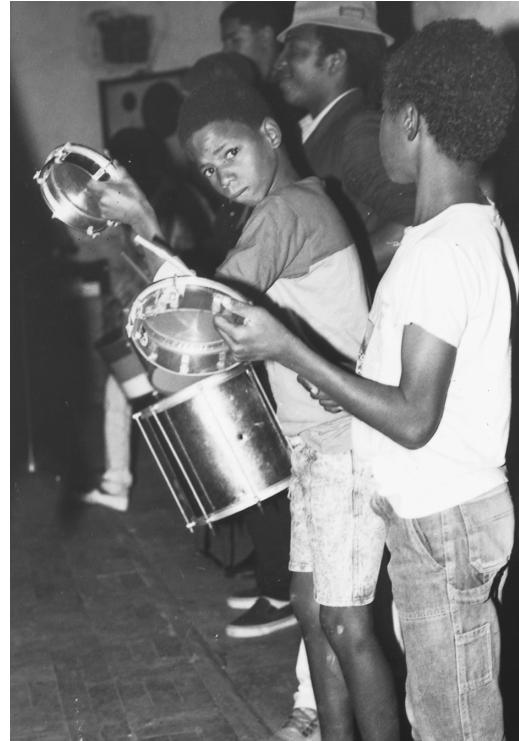
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lad singer. Second, a high level of poetry is present in the lyrics of much Brazilian popular music. And last, vibrant Afro-Brazilian rhythms energize most Brazilian songs, from samba to *baião*.

Brazilian music first grabbed international attention with the success of the dance-hall style *maxixe* in Europe between 1914 and 1922. The public was captivated by this vivacious and provocative song and dance, much as Europeans were taken with *lambada* in the summer of 1989. The 1940s saw the first exportation of samba, as songs like Ary Barroso's marvelous "Aquarela do Brasil" (known to most of the world as simply "Brazil") reached North America. Barroso's tunes were featured in Walt Disney films and covered in other Hollywood productions by a playful, exotic young woman who wore colorful lace skirts, heaps of jewelry, and a veritable orchard atop her head. Her name was Carmen Miranda, and she sang catchy sambas and *marchas* by many great Brazilian composers in a string of Hollywood feature films. For better or worse, she would symbolize Brazil to the world for decades and become a cultural icon in North America and Europe, a symbol of fun and extravagance.

Samba became a fundamental part of the world's musical vocabulary. Since it was first recorded early in the last century, samba has branched into a rich variety of styles. It has underpinned Rio's annual Carnaval celebrations and inspired the formation of "samba schools" around the world, full of non-Brazilians devoted to the batucada.

One of samba's subgenres, a cool modern variety called *bossa nova*, entered the world spotlight after the songs of Antonio Carlos Jobim and Luiz Bonfá were heard on the soundtrack of the 1959 movie *Black Orpheus*, which won the Cannes Film Festival Grand Prize and the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film. In North America, a bossa craze was ignited by the 1962 smash hit album *Jazz Samba*, recorded by guitarist Charlie Byrd and saxophonist Stan Getz. Jazz artists helped globally popularize the new sound, which had a breezy syncopation, progressive harmony, and a deceptive simplicity. Bossa nova was the big

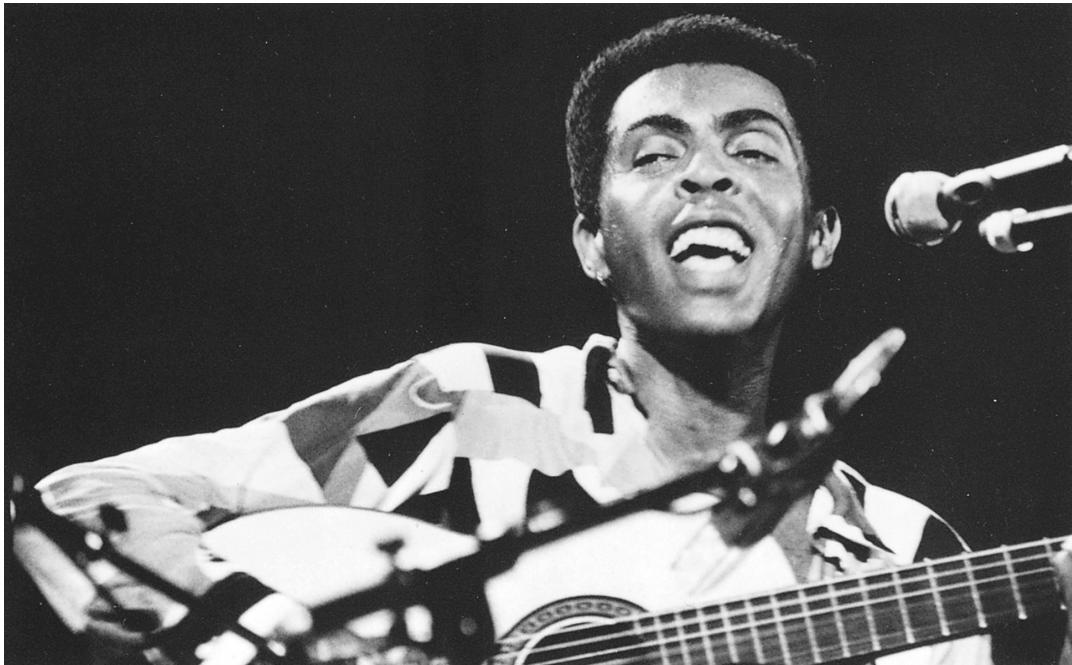


▲ Two youngsters in Rio playing the tamborim. (Photo by Ricardo Pessanha.)

pop-music trend of the early 1960s, until it was supplanted by the English rock invasion led by the Beatles.

Bossa, like samba, is now a solid part of the international repertoire, especially in the jazz realm. Bossa's leading figure, Antonio Carlos Jobim, was one of the most popular songwriters of the twentieth century, and his stature rivals that of George Gershwin, Duke Ellington, and other great composers of Western popular music. Bossa nova initiated a widespread infiltration of Brazilian music and musicians into North American music.

Beginning in the late 1960s, Brazilian percussion became an essential element of many international jazz and pop recordings, and a new generation of talented Brazilian musicians began a long-term interchange with jazz artists. Percussionist Airto Moreira and vocalist Flora Purim were two of these musicians, and they performed



on groundbreaking albums that helped establish the new subgenre called “jazz fusion.”

At the same time that Brazilian music was influencing jazz in the Northern Hemisphere, a remarkable new generation of singers and songwriters was coming to the forefront in Brazil in the late 1960s and 1970s. They fashioned original sounds from an eclectic variety of sources in and outside of Brazil. Milton Nascimento, Gilberto Gil, Caetano Veloso, Ivan Lins, João Bosco, Djavan, Gal Costa, Maria Bethânia, Alceu Valença, Chico Buarque, and others created and performed songs that came to be referred to as *MPB* (an acronym for *música popular brasileira*), a new catch-all category. Their superb integration of rhythm, melody, harmony, and lyrics resulted in one of the richest bodies of popular music ever to come from one country. In the '80s, a new musical movement swept Salvador: *axé music* became the name for new Afro-Bahian pop styles, including *samba-reggae*. Olodum, Carlinhos Brown, Timbalada, Daniela Mercury, Ara Ketu, Margareth Menezes, and Ivete Sangalo were artists who popularized *axé* music throughout Brazil in the '90s. In Recife, that decade saw the rise of the *mangue beat* movement, as Chico Science, Nação Zumbi, and

▲ Gilberto Gil. (Courtesy of Tropical Storm/WEA.)

▼ Elba Ramalho. (Photo by Livo Campos. Courtesy of BMG.)



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Mundo Livre S/A fused *maracatu* and *embolada* with rock and hip-hop. In recent years Belém has become another important musical center, with the rise of *guitarrada* and *technobrega*. And, throughout Brazil, the last two decades have seen musicians reworking bossa nova and samba, mixing them with funk, rap, techno, drum 'n' bass, lounge, and international pop to create new cosmopolitan hybrids.

Today, as in past decades, Brazil's popular music can lay claim to a dazzling variety of song forms and musical traditions. There are the troubadours who strum *violas* and trade improvised stanzas back and forth, each trying to top the other, in traditional *desafio* song duels. There are accordion virtuosos who lead their bands in rollicking syncopated *forró* music. There are ritualistic *afoxés*, festive *marchas*, frenetic *frevos*, and the

leaping instrumental improvisations of *choro*. And there are the walls of sound and waves of color that are the *escola de samba* (samba school) parades during Rio's Carnaval. Each escola's rhythm section, made up of some three hundred drummers and percussionists, works in perfect coordination with thousands of singers and dancers to create an awe-inspiring musical spectacle, the greatest live show on the planet.

Whether manifested in these or other forms, Brazilian music above all has a profound ability to move the soul. In its sounds and lyrics, it reflects the Brazilian people—their joy or despair, their remarkable capacity to celebrate, and the all-important concept of *saudade* (a deep longing or yearning).

To best understand Brazil's rich musical heritage, we must first journey back several hundred years, to where Brazil and its music both began.