

THE ROUGH GUIDE to

# Brazilian Street Party

An alleyway in Cidade de Deus favela? A country lane somewhere in the palm-fringed northeast? An Amazon forest path and clearing outside Belém hosting a country fair? The main Sambadrome in Rio? They're all Brazilian streets, in a way. Of course, 'street' is a musical genre as well as a physical location. Does it mean (as in the Euro-American music industry) modern urban black music? Or marching music? Or just honest-to-goodness music heard in the street rather on the record player, TV or PC?

Brazil's range – musically, historically and geographically – is easily wide enough to accommodate all definitions comfortably, with room to spare. After all, Carnival is the biggest street party in the world today, and although its roots lie in the medieval Catholic processions of Spain, Italy, Portugal and France, Brazil's

multifarious Carnival celebrations are sufficiently diverse to refute claims of unoriginality.

Of the three great Carnivals in Brazil, Rio's is the least 'street', with its focus more and more on sponsored tourism spectacle rather than individual participation. Even so, the real street parties in the 'Cidade Maravilhosa' ('Marvellous City') take place at the myriad balls and private parties that fringe the main event and are so often missed by the package tourist. Salvador's Carnival in Bahia can probably lay good claim to being Brazil's biggest street party, in the sense that all the action is literally on the street. But supporters of Olinda's Carnival, with its marching *frevo* bands and close links with northeastern and indigenous Indian and *caboclo* folklore, would dispute that title strenuously.

But perhaps the most characteristic – and most charming – of Brazil's street-celebration culture lies in the modest, local *micareta* street marches and parties that take place in almost every major provincial town in the country. Deriving from the French fifteenth-century 'Mi-Carême' ('Mid-Lenten') ceremonies, these deliberately old-fashioned *micaretas*, with their accent on live rather than recorded music, now take place throughout the year from Rio Grande Do Sul to Fortaleza.

Another valuable source of street music is the Brazilian version of the County Fair. These street parties are particularly frequent in farming and fishing communities, where a good season's crop or catch is celebrated whenever possible. There are bull-riding rodeo parties in Brazil's relatively non-tourist south, and even a *gaucho* songwriting street festival – confusingly called California. In the

*sertão* – the inhospitable and almost endless scrubland of the northeastern interior – there's a famous fair at the country town of Caruaru, where *forró* accordionists play your request for a beer '*estupidamente gelado*' ('extremely well-chilled') and *Cordel* sellers trade their traditional printed stories.

And, last but not least, there are the hundreds of BRock (Brazilian rock, indie and heavy-metal) festivals – at the last count, almost as many as there are in the USA.

With this diversity in mind, I've tried to choose something for every taste in street music. The criterion was that it had to sound very Brazilian – but it also had to rock. Within that framework, it's possible to have the roots grit of Olinda's acoustic street-funk (Comadre Fulazinha and Zé Cafofinho), the roots-funk of Rio's electro favela

Perfect backdrop to a celebration

# Brazilian Street Party

exploding with rhythms  
and dance styles



*baile*-funk and samba-hop (MC Marcinho and B Negão), the reggae inflections of Afroreggae, the comparatively sophisticated, clubby *sambalanço* of João Sabiã, Marco André's Amazonian *carimbó*-disco, Funk'N Lata's definitive homage to James Brown's original street style, the country accordion party (Chico Salles), the rock festivals (Ana Luisa) and the smoke-filled Lapa *choro* club with its smouldery-eyed *malandros* (Sururu Na Roda).

DJ Marcelinho Da Lua, always modest enough to spice his brilliant electro-samba mash-ups with a respectful nod to the past, is another essential component, as is Capoeira Experience's drum and bass reading of the Brazilian instrument that everyone recognizes.

The concept of this compilation may be modern, but it's drenched with traditional street flavour.

Gabriel Moura is a funky young soul-samba artist usually, but here he's doing a straight Recife *bloco frevo*. And Ana Luisa's sassy rock-chick style is the perfect foil for Pedro Luís's patented rock-loric arrangements.

And finally, it doesn't even have to originate in Brazil itself, so long as it's true to Brazil's street spirit – as the brilliant production team Ashen & Walker and the erstwhile *shaabi/gnawa* Flanders collective, Think Of One, amply demonstrate.

So for the next hour or so, pull the Brahma and Antarctica beers out of the freezer, get the *picanha* steaks on the *churrasco* – and party!

**FUNK'N LATA** – This *batucada bloco* was formed in the late 1990s by Mangueira Samba School stalwart Ivo Mereilles, in partnership with

Brazilian rock guitar hero Lobão. The quest, which lasted over two albums, was to mix traditional *batucada* drumming techniques with funk, rock, disco and pop. Unfortunately, the band no longer performs together on a regular basis, but there are rumours of a possible 'revival' studio set in the near future. This live performance from a 1999 tour of Europe shows them at their funkier, with Ivo and the audience communicating like a big house party.

**CAPOEIRA EXPERIENCE** – In the urban favelas of Brazil, *capoeira* and reggae have a strikingly similar profile: a message of peace and anti-violence, through art and spirituality. The *berimbau* is a bow-shaped instrument that probably arrived in Brazilian sugar plantations in the late eighteenth century with Bantu slaves. It was used to accompany a stick dance, which later

developed into a martial art, with the addition of voice and percussion. 'In Capoeira Experience, we have tried to communicate the traditional songs to a wider audience by adding elements of modern music such as drum and bass, trance and reggae,' says Mestre Di Mola, the leader of this project.

**ZÉ CAFOFINHO E SUAS CORRENTES** – Although this Recife multi-instrumentalist (*rabeca*, *viola de arco*, mandolin) has been a mainstay of the northeastern alternative music scene for a decade or more, this is his first solo project. The idea of Zé Cafofinho is the fantasy group – the band that we always hope to see when we walk into that obscure, backstreet corner-bar that we've never noticed before. The band describe their music as 'a mix of *samba de gafieira*, *jazz de churrascúria* [barbecue jazz], ska and *samba da mesa de bar* [samba played with your hands on the bar]'.

Zé Cafofinho



João Sabiã



B Nedão & Digitalbubs



Gabriel Moura



**AFROREGGAE** – From their beginnings in Rio’s sprawling Vigarão Geral favela, Afroreggae has been part of a more general cultural organization working within the poorest favela communities, with a mission to discourage young people from becoming part of the drug trade through various art-based activities, including music. The reggae tag is a little misleading; the ten-piece band play pretty much everything urban, from samba, hip-hop and funk to, yes, reggae, with leader Anderson Sá’s powerful voice the common factor throughout. This song features a guest spot from Manu Chao, whose politically charged approach to music makes the perfect bedfellow for Afroreggae’s themes.

**JOÃO SABIÁ** – Born and raised in Rio, João Sabiá started his musical career at 17, inspired by the popular stars of the time such as Wilson Simonal, Jorge Benjor and Tom Jobim. In the late 1990s he found popularity with his fresh, updated version of *sambalongo* – samba with swing. A victory on Brazil’s version of Pop Idol, FAMA, led to a main part in the hit soap opera *Hoje é Dia de Maria*, and thence to the recording of his first album, *Pisando De Leve*, from which this track is taken. João is currently working on new material.

**ASHEN & WALKER** – You don’t have to be Brazilian to get that unique percussive sound correct, and this can definitely be said for remix/production team Ashen & Walker. Although better known for more mainstream remix projects (such as R&B star Shaun Escoffery), they’ve also had success with Eastern and Asian-tinged house

material. This multi-movement *batucada* spectacular takes us from the main Rio Sambadrome to the *cencerro*-bell *afoxé* tempo that always heralds the ‘Filhos de Gandhi’ marching rhythm of Salvador’s carnival.

**B NEGÃO & DIGITALDUBS** – In the mid-1990s, near the beginning of Rio’s enduring love affair with hip-hop, was Planet Hemp, a group with a hip-rock production sound somewhere between the Beastie Boys and Cypress Hill. Two members, Marcelo D2 and B Negão, were both to move on to much greater things: Marcelo D2 as one of Brazil’s two most popular commercial hip-hop stars (the other being Gabriel O Pensador); and B Negão as an intrepid explorer and developer of existing rhythms and styles. Here we see him exploring and revising the links between the 1980s electro basis of the *carioca* baile-funk craze, and the deeper samba traditions. As is shown on this digital re-rub of Jovelina Perola Negra’s 1980s samba *negra* classic, these two street-music genres have much more in common than a first reading might reveal.

**GABRIEL MOURA** – Aged 18, Gabriel Moura was inducted by his uncle, Paulo Moura, into the pit orchestra of the influential Teatro Do Uerj, where he learned the crafts of arranging and showmanship. A spell in partnership with international star Seu Jorge as co-founders of the Rio funk-samba outfit Farofa Carioca led directly to the resurgence of 1970s samba-soul, with Gabriel’s flame burning brighter as solo recording invitations started arriving. This very

traditional Recife Carnival *frevo* may seem completely out of sync with the career of a *carioca* samba swinger, but if it works – as it clearly does – then why not?

**MC MARCINHO** – Some years ago in the Rio favelas, house-party DJs locked on to an unlikely assortment of early 1980s electro hip-hop records, Miami booty-bass, Caribbean bashment, digital reggae and cheap Casio sound-samplers. This became a soundtrack to the fight-balls: rival-area boys would line up, and a mixture of one-on-one kickboxing and general martial arts moves would result in dance ‘winners’ and ‘losers’. The soundtrack, invariably compered by whoever had the foulest and wittiest mouth in the dancehall, became known as *baile-funk* and, like all trends, soon diffused into a number of different subcategories, some more commercial than others. There are still a few artists making rootsy *baile-funk* with melodic hook-lines and non-pornographic lyrics, MC Marcinho being a leader among them.

**CHICO SALLES** – Born in the little town of Sousa in the northeastern state of Paraíba, accordionist and songwriter Chico Salles moved to Rio in the 1970s, picking up whatever session work he could with leading artists such as Paulinho Da Viola, Chico Buarque and Martinho Da Vila. In the 1980s, Chico became involved more strongly with samba and *pagode* bands and artists with a Mangueira school connection. A friendship with Mangueira parade designer Mussum led to the founding of the *bloco* ‘Elas E Elas’, which, unusually, featured

a few songs with northeastern rhythms, such as *xote*, *xaxado* or *baiao*, instead of the invariable *samba de enredo*. But Chico continues to play whole sets of northeastern dance music whenever the occasion arises. *Côco* is an African-derived country dance usually danced to a typical *forró* line-up: accordion, *bumba* drum and triangle.

**COMADRE FULAZINHA** – Not Beto Alvarez’s Miami-based tropical-dance aerobics craze called Zumba, but this all-girl Olinda carnival band’s life-spirit Zumba. The percussion-based *maracatú* line-up adds *rabeca*, mandolin, sax, flute, etc., when it feels right. The band explores primal rhythms with a strong similarity to *maracatú* – *candomblé*, *ijexá*, *afoxé* and even *merengue*. This is Zumba: hands in the air, the beauty of nature, the sunlight ...

**MARCELINHO DA LUA FEAT MARTINHO DA VILA** – Prominent *carioca* DJ/remixer Marcelinho Da Lua first came to wider attention in 2004, when he released an inspired drum and bass version of the Chico Buarque classic *samba-canção*, ‘Cotidiano’. This was *Brazilian* drum and bass, rather than just a Brazilian DJ playing drum and bass – a subtle distinction that wasn’t lost on the national record-buying public that helped make it one of the year’s biggest sellers. Marcelinho’s most recent album, *Plim Plim*, continues to build on this very Brazilian sound: it’s house, it’s drum and bass, it’s reggae, but not as we know it. The title track is a furious street version of the Martinho Da Vila samba classic ‘Plim Plim’. Marcelinho has the good sense to invite the

original singer to contribute, and Martinho has the good grace to accept.

**THINK OF ONE** – As with Ashen & Walker, you don't have to be Brazilian to make a great Brazilian record. Admittedly, though, it does help if you've got a great Brazilian voice drafted in for the occasion, as Flanders-based, erstwhile Egyptian *shaabi* and Moroccan *gnawa* enthusiasts Think Of One do. It's the rubbery bassline that gives the track a real street feel, while Dona Cila De Côco's raucous, market trader's voice gives it the true stamp of authenticity.

**MARCO ANDRÉ** – A son of the music-rich Amazonian estuary city of Belém, Marco André moved to Rio in 1985 to further a musical apprenticeship steeped in *carimbó*, *forró* and other indigenous music styles of Pará. His first national

recognition came with the recording of the song 'Meu Bem, Meu Mal', the title song of the hit Globo TV soap opera of the same name. His album *Amazônia Groove*, an album of modern versions of Amazonian classics and Amazon-inspired new material, was chosen by many world music critics as among their top ten records of 2004, and Marco's music has also achieved exceptional exposure in Japan.

**SILVÉRIO PESSOA** – Formerly the lead singer with the Recife band Cascabulho, and more recently featured in Mika Kaurismäki's brilliant movie *Moro No Brasil*, this musical gypsy has even made a record with B Negão. This remix by DJ Digital Groove originates from Silvério's debut solo album, *Bate O Manca*. Since then, the band has also released the album *Batidas Urbanas*, which is equally well worth searching out.

**ANA LUISA FEAT PEDRO LUÍS & A PAREDE** – Ana Luisa is a comparatively new name. A carioca, she takes her inspiration equally as much from bossa nova and samba as from Brazil's leading rock acts, such as Los Hermanos (who guest on another track from the album that includes our choice here), Kid Abelha and Capital Inicial. Pedro Luís is one of Brazil's studio wizards as well as leader of one of the country's most underrated and inventive bands, a *batucada*-heavy outfit called A Parede (the whole ensemble better known to their fans as PLAP).

**SURURU NA RODA** – When all's said and done, the most celebrated Brazilian is, in some ways, the most complex musically: samba, samba-choro, *samba de gafieira*, and all its branches. Samba-choro is a unique mixture of European, Indian and African elements, and Lapa-based

quartet Sururu Na Roda have the art down to ... well, a fine art. Siblings Nilze and Silvio Carvalho join Camila Costa and Fabiano Salek on a romp through the classic repertoire of *xotes*, *maxixes*, *marchinhas*, sambas and *choros* written over the last century or so by Assis Valente, Dorival Caymmi, Candeia, Ze Ketí, Noel Rosa and Chico Buarque. Gloria, the subject of the song, was a quarter of Rio that was particularly favoured by *la vie bohème* when this classic was written in the 1940s.

*A media lawyer by profession but a DJ by passion, John Armstrong has put together around 100 compilations over the years, covering all aspects of Latin, Brazilian and African music and soul, as well as early rock & roll, rockabilly and vintage R&B. [DJ bookings via [www.latinvibe.co.uk](http://www.latinvibe.co.uk).]*

Camadre Fulazinha



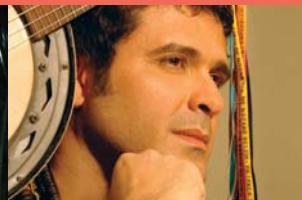
DaLua



Da Lua & Da Vila



Marco André



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(Zé Cafofinho) pub UBC. Licensed from LAB 344
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- 13 **THINK OF ONE** Tirar Onda  
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