

Specials > OBJETO SEMI-IDENTIFICADO NO PAIS DO FUTURO: TROPICÁLIA Y POST-TROPICALISMO EN BRASIL (1967-1976)

The *Specials* programs focus on projects by artists and curators who have some kind of connection to the Museum's programming and the MACBA Collection. On the occasion of the Cildo Meireles exhibition and with the idea of complementing the concert series *The Tropicália Effect* and the concert and lecture by Arto Lindsay *Tropicália: Movement and Moment*, we recover the sounds that revolutionised Brazil from 1967-1976 through the erudite vision of Raúl G. Pratginestós (aka DJ Zero), DJ and compulsive collector.

Curated by Raúl G. Pratginestós

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DJ, record collector and music critic, Raúl G. Pratginestós began his DJ career in the early 90s, quickly becoming one of the key figures on Barcelona's electronica scene. For the past ten years, he has combined his DJing activities with his job behind the counter at Wah Wah Discos, a record store specialising in collectible vinyls, and an essential stopover for all serious record collectors who pass through the city. He is also manages the Wah Wah Supersonic Sounds series of vinyl reissues.

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OBJETO SEMI-IDENTIFICADO NO PAIS DO FUTURO: TROPICÁLIA AND POST-TROPICALISMO IN BRASIL (1967-1976)

01. Summary

In the late 1960s, the movement known as Tropicaliá revolutionised Brazil's cultural scene. In spite of being open to all kinds of artistic expressions (theatre, film, plastic arts), Tropicaliá had its greatest impact in the field of music, due to the personality of its leading players (some of the most promising, edgy artists of the time) and also to the high quality of its artistic output. Often reduced to a kind of "psychedelia Made in Brazil", Tropicaliá was actually a reinvention of Brazilian popular music, which was able to encompass elements from the local scene and beyond, modern styles and traditional music, with all the contradictions that this implies.

From a record collector's perspective, *Objeto Semi-Identificado No Pais Do Futuro. Tropicália and post-Tropicalismo in Brasil (1967-1976)* is an overview of the musical side of Tropicalismo that offers an introduction to the movement and helps to explain some of its key aspects. With a special emphasis on the more experimental, avant-garde works of the genre, the selection also shows the ongoing presence and influence of Tropicalismo in the history of Brazilian music that came directly after it.

02. Playlist

Caetano Veloso, "Alegria Alegria" (from the LP *Caetano Veloso* Philips R 765.026 L), 1968
Gilberto Gil, "Geleia General" (from the LP *Tropicália. Ou Panis et Circensis* Philips R 765.040 L), 1968
Os Mutantes, "Adeus Maria Fulô" (from the LP *Os Mutantes* Polydor LPNG 44.018), 1968
A Banda Tropicalista Do Rogerio Duprat "Ela Faliava Niso Todo Dia / Bat Macumba / Frevo Rasgado" (from the LP *A Banda Tropicalista Do Rogerio Duprat* Philips R 765.048 L), 1968
Jorge Ben, "Pais Tropical" (from the LP *Jorge Ben* Philips R 765.100 L), 1969
Gilberto Gil, "Marginalia II" (from the LP *Gilberto Gil* Philips R 765.024 L), 1968
Caetano Veloso, "Nao Identificado" (from the LP *Caetano Veloso* Philips R 765.086 L), 1969
Gilberto Gil, "2001" (from the LP *Gilberto Gil* Philips R 765.987 L), 1969
Gal Costa, "Objeto Sim, Objeto Nao" (from the LP *Gal Costa* Philips R 765.098 L), 1969
Gilberto Gil, "Objeto Semi-identificado" (from the LP *Gilberto Gil* Philips R 765.987 L), 1969
O Bando, "Fossa Bobóca" (from the LP *O Bando* Polydor LPNG 44.043), 1969
Cilibrinas do Eden, "Cilibrinas do Eden" (from the LP *Cilibrinas do Eden* Philips 8025 658), 1973 *
Flaviola E O Bando Do Sol, "Canto Funebre" (from the LP *Flaviola E O Bando Do Sol* Solar LP 100.002), 1976



[Gilberto Gil and Os Mutantes, "Domingo no Parque", 1967]



[Various artists, *Tropicália. Ou Panis et Circensis*, 1968]

Raul Seixas "Mosca Na Sopa" (from the LP *Krig-ha, Bandolo* Philips 6349.078), 1973

Caetano Veloso "Sugarcane Fields Forever" (from the LP *Araça Azul* Philips 6349.054, 1973

Nelson Angelo e Joyce "Tiro Cruzado" (from the LP *Nelson Angelo e Joyce* Odeon SMOFB 3734), 1972

Alceu Valença & Geraldo Azevedo, "Seis Horas" (from the LP *Alceu Valença & Geraldo Azevedo* Copacabana CLP 11.695), 1972

Secos e Molhados, "Angustia" (from the LP *Secos e Molhados* Continental SLP 10.152), 1974

*record label note: in spite of having been recorded and handed over to Philips, this LP was never released, and did not become available until a bootleg edition was issued in 2008.

03. Listener's Guide

As early as 1966, different voices in Brazil began calling for a renewal of MPB (a generic label for Brazilian Popular Music), which was being held back by a restrictive, nationalist discourse, politicised and serious. These dissenting voices essentially came from Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, two promising musicians who were part of the group known as the *baianos* (because they came from São Salvador da Baía). Veloso advocated the idea of *linha evolutiva*, musical evolution as a way of artistic progress that aimed to avoid stagnation. Meanwhile, Gil was increasingly immersed in the quest for the *som universal*, the "universal sound" that, as he saw it, needed to abandon the nationalist focus of MPB and move towards the aesthetic of international pop music. Both approaches finally came to fruition at the 3rd Festival de Música Popular Brasileira, organised by TV Record in 1967, where Veloso and Gil performed what would become two landmark compositions. Gil played the iconic and transgressive "Domingo No Parque", deeply influenced by the maestro Rogerio Duprat, whose arrangements for this track combined the usual orchestra with a rock group (Os Mutantes) and traditional instruments like the berimbau. Meanwhile Veloso, by then already seen as Brazil's Bob Dylan due to his poetic gifts and his look, presented "Alegria Alegria": a fragmented description of a leisurely Sunday walk through the city, packed with pop culture images (from Brigitte Bardot to Coca-Cola), to the rhythm of *marchinha*. Wearing a bright orange jumper (that matched the record cover of his 1968 release) and accompanied by Brazil-based Argentinean rock group the Beat Boys, his performance thrilled and outraged audiences in equal parts, because it consummated an open, definitive break with the standards of the time, both aesthetically and in terms of the music and lyrics. These controversial, legendary performances are unanimously considered to have signalled the start of Tropicalismo in music.

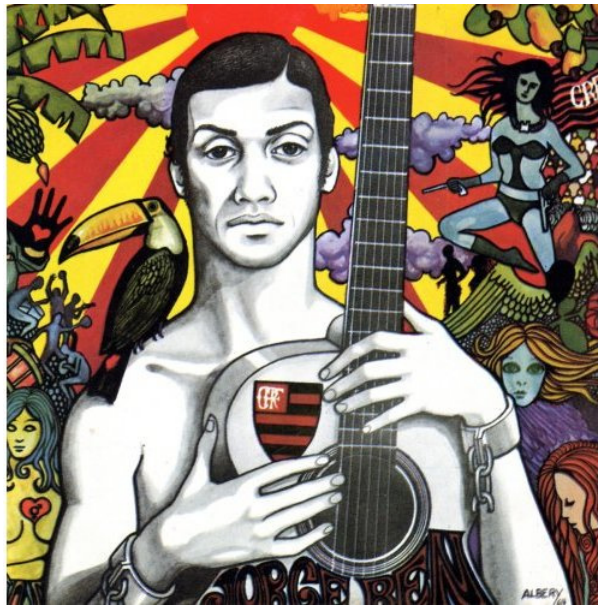
***Panis et Circenses*: the leading players**

Another of the movement's foundational moments was the July 1968 release of *Tropicália: Ou Panis et Circenses*, a compilation record that included contributions by the phenomenon's future leaders: Veloso, Gil, Gal Costa, Os Mutantes, Tom Zé, Nara Leão, Rogerio Duprat and the poet Torquato Neto. It was Neto, together with Gilberto Gil, who released "Geleia Geral", a vibrant, dynamic portrait of Brazil's *confitura general*, a term that the Tropicalistas borrowed from the poet Cécio Pignatari to describe the contradictions of the Brazilian context: a country perched halfway between unbridled modernity and archaic tradition, between new wealth and widespread underdevelopment.

One of the movement's most colourful and iconoclastic groups, famous in their own right, were Os Mutantes: a wild, psychedelic group led by their charismatic singer, the North American Rita Lee, who had formed the trio in 1965 with brothers Arnaldo and Sergio Baptista, borrowing the group's name from a science fiction novel. Os Mutantes came to the public's attention on *O Pequeno Mundo*, a television program hosted by pop singer and member of the *jovem guarda*, Ronnie Von. Linked to Tropicalismo from the start, Os Mutantes released their first album in June 1968: it was a schizophrenic collection of psychedelic rock, orchestral pop and wacky experiments that perfectly illustrated the trio's wealth of creativity.



[Duprat, Caetano, Gil and Os Mutantes. Party for the official launch of *Tropicália: Ou Panis et Circensis*. São Paulo, 1968]



[Cover of "Jorge Ben", 1969, by Jorge Ben with Trio Mocotó]

Famous for their impossible cover versions, such as the wild reinterpretation of Jorge Ben's "A Minha Menina", here we have their cover of "Adeus Maria Fulô", an original track by one of Brazil's musical greats: Severiano Dias de Oliveira, better known as Sivuca.

Rogerio Duprat was the hidden hero behind Tropicalismo. The true driving force of a large part of the scene's musical production, this composer and musician supervised and produced most of the records linked to the movement, as well as directing the music of Tropicalista television shows like "Divino, Maravilhoso". With a solid education and a restless spirit (in the early sixties he travelled to Europe to study with Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen), Duprat released a little-known LP under his name. *A Banda Tropicalista Do Rogerio Duprat* consisted of orchestral versions of many of the hits of the time, with a special emphasis on the musical influences of Tropicalismo, from João Gilberto ("Chega de Saudade") to the Beatles ("Lady Madonna"). It was a celebration and an exercise in self-referentiality, as shown by this little medley of songs by Gilberto Gil, in which, true to the authentic Tropicalista spirit, he re-absorbs his own musical production. Curiously, the compilation included "Bat-Macumba", one of the most emblematic pieces of the movement, which he transforms here into an exuberant march that is notably different from the versions by Os Mutantes and Gil himself.

Brazil: postcards from the end of the world

In the midst of the controversy that led to a definitive break between Tropicalistas and advocates of traditional MPB, Jorge Ben stands out for his unusual equidistance between the two extremes. Ben's work, respected by both factions, combines seemingly conflicting elements in a highly personal discourse. Although it was not strictly framed within Tropicalismo, his 1969 album is a true classic, as suggested by its record cover portraying the author surrounded by Brazilian icons like the violão (Brazilian guitar), Amazonian birds and the Brazilian soccer team's official shirt. With its music deeply rooted in the Brazilian tradition (specifically samba), Ben was able to take unrelated elements (in particular North American soul) and easily integrate them into compositions that retained a clear local flavour, a skill that won him the admiration of artists like Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil. All in all, there is a sense that Ben allowed himself to be seduced by the atmosphere of the Tropicalista movement, to the point of having Duprat write his arrangements. Like a declaration of intentions, this album included early examples of the samba-soul sound that would make him famous, such as "Take It Easy Brother Charles", a reflection of the racial tensions of the time, and "Pais Tropical", a calypso celebration of Brazilian culture clearly linked to the colourful nature of Tropicalismo. Caetano Veloso and Gal Costa even ended up making one of the earliest cover versions of the track that same year...

Complementing this simple, idyllic portrait of the Brazil of the time, "Marginalia II" (also based on a poem by Torquato Neto performed by Gilberto Gil) is a strongly ironic, exhilarating tribute to Brazilian life, which connects to Veloso's idea that "if you have to choose between living at the head of the world or in the arse end of nowhere, the arse end is better."

1969: Brazilian outer space odyssey

Science fiction, outer space and the future in general were some of the main sources of inspiration for the Tropicalistas, with a proliferation of references in their work from 1969 onwards. This recurring imaginary is no accident: it was the age of the "space race" and the conquest of the Moon, but Brazil was also in the midst of a decade in which flying saucer sightings were so common that they ended up becoming part of the national culture. True to his poetic gifts, Caetano Veloso dreamed up the intimist, psychedelic "Nao Identificado", a love song that flew over the city sky like an "unidentified flying object". The same kind of subject matter dominates Gilberto Gil's third album, which includes tracks like "Cérebro Eletrônico", "Futurível" and "2001", co-written with Rita Lee, in which Gil compares himself to an astronaut travelling through space. Further examples of this trend crop up in another track by Gil, the dream-like "Objeto Sim, Objeto Não", which Gal Costa sang on his second LP (an incisive, visionary, wild record based on the howls and guttural screams of Costa, the underground's new muse). The track, an ode to excess and distortion constructed over Rogerio Duprat's advanced electronic manipulations, once again evokes Gilberto Gil and his "Semi-identified Object", a kind of electroacoustic collage made up of



[Caetano, Nana Caymmia and Gil; "Passeata dos 100 mil". Rio de Janeiro, June 26, 1968]



[Rita Lee sings "2001" with Os Mutantes. 4th Festival of Brazilian Popular Music organised by TV Record. São Paulo, November 14, 1968]

snippets of poetry, biblical texts and digressions of all kinds, including fragments of the album itself (specifically, "Volks-Volkswagen Blues"), in an illustration of the experimental, avant-garde approach of these artists.

After Tropicália. Absolute *desbunde*: folk, mysticism, psychedelia and rock'n'roll

The military junta's passing of law AI-5 marked the sudden end of the movement. Under the new legislation, some of its most charismatic members (Veloso and Gil) were jailed, while many artists and intellectuals embarked on the road to exile. Even so, a new generation took up the baton of the Tropicalistas. Taking some of their discoveries as their starting point, these artists transformed Brazil's music scene throughout the decade of the seventies, providing the soundtrack for the phenomenon known as *desbunde* (literally, "hallucination"). The Brazilian version of hippie culture turned out to be a highly controversial counterculture movement that questioned the established order and advocated a return to rural roots. This worried government authorities and led to repression. Paradoxically, it also provoked the criticism of leftist intellectuals, who saw it as an alienating movement.

The direct heirs of the Tropicalistas include a series of groups who perpetuated their legacy in a new context. The group Os Brazoes, for example, had accompanied Gal Costa in her wild, psychedelic second LP. Now on their own, they released an album that expanded the experimental nature of Tropicalismo and integrated it into a rhythmic style similar to Jorge Ben's samba fusions. O Bando was another group active during the final stages of Tropicalismo, recording their only LP in 1969 with the collaboration of Rogerio Duprat and Damiano Cozzela as arranger/producers. Their lysergic pop and Duprat's arrangements followed in the purest Tropicália style, as shown by the inclusion of a cover of Veloso's classic "Alegria Alegria". Finally, Os Novos Baianos were a commune-group formed in Salvador de Bahia with its origins in Os Leifs, the group that accompanied Caetano and Gilberto on their farewell show before going into exile. In the course of their five LPs, they adopted some of the postulates of Tropicalismo, practicing a kind of psychedelic samba-rock and exploring local musical traditions.

With Os Mutantes at the peak of their popularity, Rita Lee decided to leave the group and start a solo career, although she continued to collaborate with her former bandmates on several occasions. One of these was Cilibrinhas do Eden, a duo with her friend Lucia Turnbull that had its debut at the 1973 Os Mutantes show in the Palacio de Convenções do Anhembi, São Paulo. Dressed up as beings from outer space, Lee and Turnbull breathed new life into the world of magic and fantasy that Os Mutantes had begun, now conceived as "a soft, delicate, acoustic mix of female voices, viola, electric guitar, flute and hand bells accompanied by the singing and beating of wings of birds".

An accurate reflection of the mood of the early seventies *desbunde* was the rural spirit (sometimes relaxed and simple, others mystical and mysterious) of many record releases of the time. These atmospheres pervaded the work of a group of artists based in Recife, in the state of Pernambuco, who represent what was known as the *desbunde nordestino*. Fusing elements of traditional northern music and introducing totally unrelated elements such as the sitar and Indian music, these composers created a mystical, psychedelic sound with a strong personality and a great deal of feeling. A good example of this sub-genre is the mysterious record by Flaviola E O Bando do Sol, which included the participation of some of the key figures of this scene, such as Flaviola, Zé da Flauta and Lula Côrtes, who were partly responsible for the legendary LPs *Satwa* (with Lailson) and *Paebiru* (with Ze Ramalho).

Raul Seixas has often been described as the first rock artist "made in Brazil". Born in Salvador de Bahia on June 28, 1945, Seixas grew up obsessed with the music of Elvis, Little Richard and other North American rock'n'roll stars. To Seixas, Brazilian music prior to the symbolic year zero embodied by Tropicália was completely irrelevant. In spite of this, in the purest Tropicalista spirit, Seixas recognised and adapted local traditions, in particular the canticles of the north that he remembered from his childhood experiences accompanying his father on his many trips as a railway inspector. "Mosca Na Sopa" is an iconoclastic example of this mix, in which Seixas takes advantage of the songs-in-dialogue of African rituals such as Candomblé.



[Os Novos Baianos, "Acabou Chorare", 1972]



[Rita Lee and Lucia Turnbull. Cilibrinhas do Éden launch their project in São Paulo, 1973]

Popular songs are also an integral part of "Araça Azul", one of the most transgressive records by Caetano Veloso, who resumed his career on his return from exile in 1972. Following the successful "Transa", Veloso surprised audiences and critics with this album, which the artist described on the inner sleeve as "not for the uninitiated": an exercise in artistic freedom that encompassed all kinds of experiments and brought back the transgressive, innovative spirit of avant-garde Tropicalismo, as illustrated in this "Sugar Cane Fields Forever", with its clear nod to the Beatles in the title.

Leaving behind the light-hearted style that had defined her work in the late sixties, promising singer Joyce, together with her husband Nelson, co-wrote a collection of songs clearly influenced by folk, in a record that exemplifies the path chosen by many Brazilian artists of the time: stylistic autonomy and highly personal works. Popular, 100% Brazilian culture once again flourishes in this "Tiro Cruzado", which also transports us to the relaxed rural environments that so often appeared in the music of the era.

As already mentioned, the Northern state of Pernambuco, in particular the city of Recife, was one of the most interesting and personal focal points of musical creation in the early seventies. Located far from the large urban centres in the south and with a strong local musical tradition, the artists from this area were able to create perfect fusions of regional music with styles that were totally foreign to it. One of the pioneers of this movement was the unclassifiable Alceu Valença, who released an enigmatic LP with his friend and collaborator Geraldo Azevedo. Produced and arranged by Rogerio Duprat, it is an authentic late-Tropicalista work, which includes traditional rhythms from the north-east such as frevo, baião, maracatu, coco, xaxado, embolada, toada and xote

This selection comes to an end with Secos & Molhados, one of the most important Brazilian groups from the early seventies. With Ney Matogrosso at the helm, they were defined by their transgressive style, symbolised by extravagant make-up and clothes that gave them an ambiguous look, similar to British glam rock. The group recorded two records which were commercial hits, before breaking up in 1974. The two albums entailed the full integration of the philosophy and languages of rock into Brazilian music, a process that would continue unstoppable through the years right up to the present day.

04. Related links

Tropicália

<http://tropicalia.uol.com.br>

<http://www.geocities.com/altafidelidade/tropicalismo.htm>

Videos of the Record TV festival of MPB (1967)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4tzSETbQcJk>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zbv3M-AdxCO>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0wpVAf1NwA>

Post-tropicalismo

Gal Costa: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8C-dcVvnj0k>

Raul Seixas and Paulo Coelho: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoIBW43-JfQ>

Lula Cortés: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LvQD508v24>

Alceu Valença: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VzZXN00WH24>

Secos e Molhados: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HK_msOCc0II

05. Acknowledgements

Roc Jiménez de Cisneros and André Chêdas.



["Caetano Veloso veste Parangolé P4 capa1 de Hélio Oiticica". Photo: Geraldo Viola]



[Nelson Angelo and Joyce, "Nelson Angelo e Joyce", 1972]

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