The Brazilian Sound: Samba, Bossa Nova, and the Popular Music of Brazil. By
215 pp. Paper. $18.95.

Brazil is a country with a rich and diverse musical heritage. Today Brazilian popular
music is widely recognized as one of the most innovative, original, and vital in the
world. It has had a significant impact on U.S. music, particularly jazz, over the
last three decades, especially since the appearance of Bossa Nova in the 1960s,
when composers and singers such as Antônio Carlos Jobim and João Gilberto were
"discovered" by U.S. musicians such as Charlie Byrd, Herbie Mann, and Stan
Getz. The cross-fertilization of musical styles engendered at that time has con-
tinued to the present, as a new generation of jazz musicians—Pat Metheny, Wayne
Shorter—have recorded with or been influenced by Brazilians such as Milton
Nascimento, Airto Moreira, and Ivan Lins.

The Brazilian Sound surveys the wealth of different forms of popular musical
expression in Brazil. This richly illustrated volume, written in an accessible,
journalistic style, includes discussions of the samba, Bossa Nova, MPB (música
popular brasileira), Milton Nascimento and the music of Minas Gerais, the musical
traditions of Bahia and the northeast, jazz and instrumental music, and finally
"tropical rock." The book is well researched and generally accurate. In all cases
it attempts to provide appropriate historical and cultural contexts in which to
situate the diverse musical forms. In addition, it attempts to trace the relations be-
 tween Brazilian and U.S. musicians by mentioning specific recordings and mutual
influences.

The volume is clearly intended for a broad, general audience, and that ac-
counts for both its strengths and, from an academic viewpoint, its weaknesses. Its
breadth of coverage is impressive. Its depth is not. Although it provides a good
deal of information, its discussions are almost always—and perhaps inevitably—
superficial. In many passages it reads like a series of blurbs on a record jacket. It
also evidences a primary concern with commercial success and, often, recognition
in the United States, which leads it to devote more space, for example, to Ivan
Lins, whose music has been recorded by Paul Winter, Quincy Jones, and George
Benson, among others, than to Chico Buarque de Hollanda, who is arguably the
most important composer of contemporary Brazilian popular music. Taken on its
own terms, however, The Brazilian Sound serves as an excellent introduction to
its subject matter. The selective discography is comprehensive enough to allow
readers to finish the book and start enjoying the music.

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