

Schismogenesis?: the Global Industrialization Of Brazilian Popular Music

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From that historic moment in 1877 when Thomas Edison succeeded in capturing his voice for later playback, the phenomenon of *schizophonia* has existed. Although it would take one hundred years for this phenomenon to receive its name from R. Murray Schafer in *The Soundscape* (1977: 90), the separation of sound from its original source through electroacoustical technology instantly impacted the cultures of the world. This *schizophonic split* has arguably been the single most important moment in the history of music. As recording technology progressed, so grew its effects on popular culture. One of the most significant moments came when Emile Berliner's flat disc format replaced Edison's cylinder as the format of popular choice by the late 1910s. However, during the struggle between the two formats for supremacy in the marketplace there was a shift in emphasis from the hardware to the software, or from selling machines to selling music. This occurrence was no accident. Berliner had astutely predicted that the lucrative future market would be in selling the music to be played on the machines. Therefore, from the very beginning his intentions were to develop a method for recording and reproducing high quality records industrially for sale to the mass public (Gronow and Saunio 1998: 9). At the turn of the century, with the latest improvements in sound quality and the duplication process perfected, the demand for pre-recorded discs skyrocketed, and the record industry, as we know it, was born.¹ By 1902, Edison, Columbia, and Victor had emerged as the big three companies controlling the recording industry. Having previously

established branches and facilities in Europe, Asia and Latin America in the later years of the 19th century, the big three began recording music to feed the growing market.

Although most of the recordings were marketed nationally, rather than transnationally, this stage is also considered the birth of the international recording industry.² This era also marks the beginning of music's industrialization and commodification, and from this point on, music, culture and technology would co-exist inseparably. As Seeger and Théberge remind us, "The sounds of music cannot be separated from the technology involved in their conception, performance, transmission, and audience reception because the technology is an integral part of the sounds themselves" (Seeger and Théberge, 235). Over the years, this technological mediation has defined the qualities of music in popular culture as well as provided a means of corporate control over what is conceived, performed, transmitted, and received by any audience at any given time. For a musician or band to become successful in the popular music market, their musical creation must undergo considerable industrialization. Technology is central to this phenomenon, at once providing a resource for creative construction, consumption, and the use of music by its creators and audiences, while "at the same time providing a mechanism through which corporate profits are realized and social relation affected" (Lull 1987: 12).

At each stage in its evolution, technology has changed the nature of the schizophrenic product, and in doing so, has exerted powerful influences on the production and consumption of popular music. However, these changes also represent a larger phenomenon of technology related to the dissemination of local music through the vast media networks of the international recording industry. It is in this relationship between the local and the global that we find the effects *complimentary schizmogenesis*.

Schizmogogenesis: Changes and Patterns of Control

In the early years of recording technology, the industry, trying to feed the newly created public need for recordings, was extremely dependent upon the cooperation of the artist. Although the industry owned the expensive technology, it needed quality material to record and distribute. The power relationship in this scenario was at best, equal, if not tilted in favor of the artist. However, within a few years music became a very lucrative commodity for distribution via the industry's international "empires of sound" (Millard 175), and the power relationship shifted in favor of the recording industry, which by then had the networks in place to reap maximum gains from the music and offer artists a chance at wealth. With access to the empires of sound under corporate control the artists now needed the industry more than the industry needed the artists. This shift in power led to the emergence of a dominant-submissive relationship between the international recording industry and local musicians and music cultures that is still evident today. When considering this relationship, anthropologist Gregory Bateson's concept of *complimentary schizmogogenesis* provides a paradigm for organizing ideas of "mutually promoting actions [that] are essentially dissimilar but mutually appropriate" (Bateson 1972: 109), such as dominance-submission. I was first introduced to the use of this paradigm to examine music cultures in an article by Steven Feld, which offered it as a means by which to study "world music" or "world beat" as techniques of music commodification (1994). I began to consider such effects on the Brazilian music presented to audiences in the United States, especially during the heaviest stages of the bossa nova era of the 1960s, and the initial years of the "world beat" trend in the late 1980s.

Esquizmogenesisismos dos anos 60

Stan Getz e Charlie Byrd
Jazz Samba



Em 1962, Bossa Nova foi lançada nos EUA pelo saxofonista Stan Getz e guitarrista Charlie Byrd sem músicos brasileiros



Em 1964, outro lançamento, mas sem A. C. Jobim



No ano seguinte, 1963, veio o disco com João Gilberto, Astrud e A. C. Jobim



1967

1971

A lamentável combinação de A. C. Jobim e Frank Sinatra

Schizmogenesis in the 1960s

The first *successful* attempt to mass market Brazilian music to the United States came in the early 1960s. Film has long been one of the most powerful means of disseminating music to audiences around the world, and riding the wave of popularity enjoyed by the 1959 film *Orfeu Negro* (Black Orpheus) and its samba/bossa nova soundtrack, the recording industry began marketing the new sound to the consumers of the U.S. as early as 1962. However, they did not introduce bossa nova to the U.S. audience as it stood in

the film, a manifestation of samba and other Brazilian elements, it was nuzzled up close to jazz like *its* long lost cousin, a South American offshoot of the North American genre. The portrayal of jazz as the ancestor of bossa nova without attention paid to the numerous Afro-Brazilian styles that went into the mix gives an altered representation to audiences who, for the most part, have no reference point. It was therefore common during this time to hear bossa nova referred to as Brazilian jazz, or mentioned in liner notes as a form of jazz samba, or jazz versions “of modern, Brazilian folk music” (Getz 1962). The practice of marketing bossa nova as the latest commodity within the jazz genre, while having a positive effect on sales, produced negative connotations for Brazilians. In Brazil, bossa nova’s authenticity fell under critical attack as a by-product of the “Yankee Imperialist” domination of the Brazilian composers (Béhague 1973: 211). Such domination was evident as João Gilberto and Tom Jobim attempted to impose this cultural expression abroad, and, according to Tinhorão, “in so doing...have started to renounce the Brazilian stylistic peculiarities, in a desperate attempt to approach the so-called international style” (cited in Béhague 1973: 211). Through this dominant-submissive dynamic, the recording industry gained a lucrative commodity upon which to capitalize in foreign markets, while Brazilians were left to contend with foreign, watered-down representations of their cultural product. Referring to this phenomenon Gerard Béhague stated, “in the best hypothesis, what the popular musicians belonging to weaker economic structures would gain would be a product which no longer represents their original culture” (Béhague 1973: 211). Béhague continued to point out further evidence of this phenomenon in the “unfortunate combination of A. Carlos Jobim and Frank Sinatra” (ibid.). However, it is precisely in these combinations, or “collaborations” that we find evidence of

complementary schizmogogenesis (Feld 1994: 270). Popular musicians in the United States are used to introduce and validate Brazilian music and musicians as the industry seeks to move them from their previously marginalized position toward the mainstream of public consciousness.

Twenty years later in 1982, technological advancements once again changed the nature of the music industry with the invention of the compact audio disc. Invented jointly by Philips and Sony, the CD inspired a new surge in the failing recording industry and sparked its interest in the cross-cultural marketing of popular music. When Texas DJ and musician Dan Del Santo coined the phrase “world beat” in the mid-1980s, it was meant as a label for “all ethnic-pop *mixings*, *fusion* dance musics, and emerging *syncretic* populist musical *hybrids* from around the world, particularly from urban centers” (Feld 1994: 266, my emphases). In short, it denoted the hybridized music of any urban-based band in the world whose music was derived from a collaboration of various cultural sources. This style of music became extremely popular in the urban centers of the U.S. and within a few short years the record industry had fashioned this popularity into the category of “world music.” Altering the original concept of “world beat,” the “world music” marketing category came to mean “music of non-Western origin and circulation, as well as musics of dominated minorities within the Western world: music *of* the world to be sold *around* the world” (Feld 1994: 266).

A major part of the industry’s marketing strategy for selling huge numbers of records around the world is to avoid offending the general public. Therefore, in preparing foreign music for introduction to U.S audiences, record labels often examine the music for material they deem “inappropriate” for the target audience. This played out as the major

labels produced less “abrasive” versions of the original music, applying the sophisticated techniques of their studios to the songs (Millard, 235). This practice was readily seen in CDs belonging to the new “world music” category. In 1987, Columbia introduced Djavan to the mainstream U.S. audience via the release *Bird of Paradise*, an “americanized” version of *Não é Azul, Mas é Mar* simultaneously released in Brazil.



Djavan and schismogenesis

The first notable change is in the appearance of the package itself. The cover photo was changed from an expressionless Djavan leaning against a paisley wall with arms crossed in front of his chest, to a “happier” image of Djavan smiling with his hands up in

front of him displaying a more welcoming body language. It is common for foreign releases to bear different covers than the originals, but in this case these changes reflect a deliberate attempt to make the package more appealing to the new audience, which has been defined by the industry's demographic studies. More dramatic changes came, however, in the musical content itself. First, the sequencing of the ten songs on the CD was inverted taking the last five songs from the Brazilian release and making them the first five on the U.S. release. While this may not seem significant, it reveals two important points: 1) the music has been relegated to a commodity that bears allegiance, not to the creative processes, but to its earning potential, and 2) the adjustments made were made solely on the basis of industry demographic data. The re-sequencing effectively undoes the CD as a collection of songs carefully arranged by their creator, and re-configures its "personality" to suit the foreign market. This arrangement is further undone when English words are written to three of ten, or 30% of the songs. However, the most pronounced change made to this release has been the de-politicizing of Apartheid and the neutralization of triumphant black themes by replacing them with messages that covertly and overtly subjugated blacks. In the conversion of Djavan's "Soweto" into Brock Walsh's "Stephen's Kingdom" CBS "whitened" the anti-Apartheid message and positive black themes by replacing them with Christian Biblical references and a fictional, presumably "holy" war in Soweto. By making these changes, the label discarded a powerful message of blackness and the social commentary on racial injustice intended by the artist, and replaced it with a safer, ambiguous fable. In a more glaring travesty of artistic justice, Walsh also penned the English lyrics to the love song "Florir" turning it into "Miss Susana" a cinematic creation that represents a white viewpoint of an

imagined slave experience through which the emotional suffering and fear endured by slaves are trivialized. In the song, the male slave protagonist is seduced by the plantation owner's white daughter in her bedroom. The dominant white and the submissive black personal relationships that were established during the slavery era are revisited in the lyrics. The repeated refrain offers the moanings of the slave's fear: *If the word gets out, whoa, o ,o ,o / There would be no doubt, whoa ,o ,o, o / They will hang me high, whoa ,o, o ,o / in a moonless sky, whoa, o, o ,o*. The irony is that this release coincided with the centennial of emancipation in Brazil that was marked by a growing black consciousness and a philosophical questioning of emancipation in light of the poor quality of life for black Brazilians. If such a song as "Miss Susana" had been released to the Brazilian audience at that time, I suspect it would have met with strong negative reactions from the black communities and social critics. So, the question remains, why then, did the recording industry feel this message was appropriate for U.S. or other foreign audiences?

Esquizmogenesisismo na Onda Brasileira



Schismogeneses of the 1980s

The alterations, combinations and collaborations we have seen are the direct result of complementary schismogenesis on the global industrialization of Brazilian popular music. In the case of the translated songs these changes also represent a covert form of musical and cultural censorship that also suppress the first amendment rights of free speech. Additionally, they point to the cultural ignorance that was rampant in the early marketing strategies of the industry and in the consumers, particularly during the “world music” trend. Although numerous examples of this dynamic are available to study, to go into their detail here would belabor the point. As audience taste for “world music”

became more educated and sophisticated, it became less necessary for the labels to “prepare” the releases and such alterations began occurring less and less throughout the 1990s. By the late 1990s, a decade after the “world music” craze had settled in under the umbrella term “international music” it was common for unedited versions of Brazilian music to be simultaneously released around the world on their own merit. During this period, and into the present, the dominant-submissive dynamic becomes less obvious in the music being distributed and more evident in the lop-sided contracts of subservience being made between the multi-nationals and local artists.

Conclusion

Complementary schizmogogenesis is a one-way street. Releases from the U.S. exported to Brazil are not musically edited and refashioned to conform to the Brazilian aesthetic, although many of the Brazilian imports to the U.S. have been altered to conform to the business codes of the industry’s status quo. In such cases, the artists’ original concepts are circumvented by a boardroom committee, often thousands of miles away, and through contractual clauses the artist is forced to comply with the changes made to the project. Such changes have the tendency to refashion the music’s original meaning bringing it into harmony with social ideologies of the dominant economies while often leaving the creator with a product that no longer truly represents the original music culture (Béhague 1973: 211). The dominant-submissive relationship between the recording industry and local music is an unfortunate by-product of international relations and global commerce. This relationship has the power, as we have seen in the bossa nova and Djavan examples, to alter artistic creations by imposing foreign models, or cultural standards onto them. And in an age of expanding globalization, such marketing techniques misrepresent the

music to U.S. audiences, and impress upon them a synthetic, “internationalized” version of Brazilian identity and musical authenticity.

Notes

1. While Edison and Columbia had been manufacturing cylinders for playback in the coin-slot players (the first jukeboxes) of the amusement parks since 1889, owning the phonograph was still very expensive and pre-recorded products were few. Failing miserably as a dictation machine, this period marks the early stages of the introduction of the phonograph as a device for entertainment. These early years are certainly the meager beginnings to a consumer market, but the technology had not yet advanced to the point where there was a “phonograph in every home.” With the invention of a reliable duplication process, high quality playback, and the spring-driven motor (which made speeds consistent, players smaller, lighter, and more affordable) the “talking machine” industry was off and running. When Berliner perfected his flat disc format and his problems with playback quality, he founded the Victor Talking Machine Company in 1902, and phonograph and gramophone players were sold in the thousands driving the demand for pre-recorded music and the “boom” was on. The Big Three of the era were Edison, Columbia and Victor. For this reason I have marked this moment as the true beginning of the record industry as we know it today.

2. By 1902 due to a successful marketing campaign by Victor, the Italian tenor Enrico Caruso became perhaps the first international recording star. Having recorded him in Milan, Italy for the Gramophone Company of London (affiliate of Victor), his recordings were mastered in Camden, New Jersey and distributed among the New York Opera elite. Caruso instantly became an immense star. Invited the following year to the Metropolitan Opera House, he moved to New York in 1903, became a U. S. Citizen, and remained a permanent fixture at The MET for seventeen years (See Gronow and Saunio, 14).

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