Popular Music and the Growth of Brazilian Culture Industries since 1945

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Summary

The period following the end of Getúlio Vargas's second government (1951-1954) saw a massive expansion of the media industries with popular music in particular becoming an important cultural touchstone. Some salient trends in the post-War period include the politicization of music and other media (radio, television, social media), the incorporation of international musical influences (especially jazz and rock) into Brazilian musical production, the expansion and contraction of the recording industry, and the rise and prominence of regional genres in the national discourse. Brazilian media industry infrastructures take part in artistic expression, including both major multinational record labels as well as independent record companies. Popular music production has regularly responded to the social and economic upheavals that have characterized Brazil since the end of WWII. Interdisciplinary perspectives, including communication studies, history, anthropology, and ethnomusicology, show some possible new routes for music and cultural industry research in Brazil.

KEYWORDS

Bossa nova, Brega, Incentive Laws, Independent recording industry, Media Convergence, Modernism, Música Popular Brasileira [MPB], Regional music, Sertanejo, Telenovelas

The Lasting Influence of the Vargas Period

Any analysis of the development of the culture industry and popular music in Brazil in the post-war period needs to account for the considerable growth of the recording industry in the previous decades.

Popular recording started with the founding of Casa Edison in Rio de Janeiro in 1902 by Frederico Figner (1866-1946), a Czech immigrant from the United States.¹ In 1913, the first record factory in Latin America was built in Rio de Janeiro through the initiative of Figner and support of the German company Lindström.² Between 1928 and 1930, other large international record companies such as Columbia Records, RCA-Victor, and Brunswick came to Brazil.³

The early years of the record industry in the first half of the twentieth century laid a foundation for recording domestic repertoire. Within the first two decades of recording in Brazil, companies such as

Casa Edison and Columbia do Brasil recorded genres ranging from samba (from 1917) and the rural genre música sertaneja from 1929. Those would become the two most popular genres in the country, samba between 1930 and 1990, and música sertaneja between 1990 and the present.

Popular music began to have a huge presence in cinema and visual culture. *Coisas Nossas* (1931) was one of the first films with Brazilian music in the soundtrack. The film featured diverse musical numbers and began a tradition of musical film that would continue for dozens of films called “chanchadas,” produced by companies such as Cinédia and Atlântida Cinematográfica, founded in Rio de Janeiro in 1930 and 1941 respectively. Those films featured singers, orchestras and arrangers who came from radio.⁴

National radio and music were both crucial in Getúlio Vargas’s project of politically and culturally unifying the country.⁵ The government exercised control over communications media, both through censorship and promotion of artists and genres. Those two functions were enforced by the DIP (Departamento de Imprensa e Propaganda), formed by the Vargas government in 1937.⁶ The Vargas government utilized its hold over the cultural industries to repress genres that did not conform to its ethic, such as the samba subgenre samba-malandro which featured songs that celebrated scams and illegal activities epitomized by the “malandro” of the hills. Meanwhile, the government promoted samba-exaltação,⁷ the subgenre that valorized the state (the most famous example of which is “Aquarela do Brasil” by Ary Barroso from 1939). Additionally, through Rádio Nacional, some samba songs received sophisticated arrangements that were substantially influenced by jazz, setting the stage for the changes that would influence Brazilian music in the post-war period.⁸

Renato Ortiz memorably stated, if the 1940s and 1950s can be considered as the beginnings of consumer society in Brazil, the 1960s and 1970s would be the beginnings of market consolidation for cultural goods.⁹ Since market consolidation is often marked by precariousness and improvisation, that explains how creativity defined Brazilian cultural production, especially in popular music in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁰ Another factor to consider in the socioeconomic processes of this period is what Ortiz terms the formation of an audience (público) that does not transform into a mass defining the expansion of theater, film, music and even television in popular culture.¹¹ This public was formed primarily by the middle-class with a higher education level which helps to explain the aesthetic sophistication of that period’s cultural production, especially the major musical movements from the period such as bossa nova, MPB, and tropicalismo. Such movements constitute the bases of fields of cultural production where factors such as experimentalism, aesthetic sophistication, and political and social engagement become important elements of legitimacy in musical production. Those factors are still relevant in the present day.

From Samba-Canção to Bossa Nova

Juscelino Kubitschek's government (1956-1961) inaugurated a period of great economic development which opened up new possibilities for the market thereby creating the space for more sophisticated and diversified cultural production. In terms of popular music and the cultural industries, some of the important technological developments of the decade include the introduction of television (1950), the production of vinyl (1951), the development and appreciation of popular music criticism, and the emergence of bossa nova (1958).

From 1945 until the end of the fifties, the Brazilian music scene was dominated by "Cantores do Rádio" ("radio singers"), especially by interpreters of what was called samba-canção, a samba subgenre with romantic themes, sentimental bel canto style vocals, and international influences, especially the bolero. Those artists were featured not just on radio and record, but also in film (through the "chanchadas") and in specialized magazines. Another efficient mechanism of popularizing these artists was the Concurso Rainha do Rádio (The Radio Queen Competition), which ran between 1937 and 1958, in which listeners voted for their favorite artists by mail.¹² The radio singers, along with regional artists such as música sertaneja duos, were the core of the Brazilian star system of the period.

During this period, the number of national record companies grew to meet increased consumer demand. These new companies included Continental Gravações Elétricas (1943), Sinter (1945, renamed CBD in 1955), RGE (1947), Copacabana (1948), Rozemblit (1954), Festa (1955) and Chantecler (1958), which distributed international recording company catalogues and also recorded domestic Brazilian music.

It bears noting that all of the record companies cited above, with the exception of Rozemblit (from Recife), were located in Rio de Janeiro or in São Paulo. That was also the case for the international record companies that had arrived in the previous decades. In this way, one could say that the period of growth of the Brazilian recording industry following WWII concentrated mass cultural production and consumption in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Even regional artists only attained national success after relocating to Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo to record and distribute their recordings. That trend continued unabated until at least the 1990s.

These record companies also demonstrated major market segmentation that characterized the decades that follow. While Chantecler was founded in 1958 with the intent of recording regional music (especially música sertaneja) on 78 rpm records for audiences in the interior of the country,¹³ Festa was founded a few years earlier and was dedicated exclusively to releasing vinyl records and primarily recorded poetry and classical music for a more sophisticated audiences in the large urban centers.¹⁴ Festa stands out as the record company that recorded and released LPs widely considered the beginning mark of bossa nova: *Canções do Amor Demais* (1958), in which Elizabeth Cardoso recorded songs by Antônio Carlos Jobim (1927-1994) and Vinícius de Moraes (1913-1980) accompanied on the guitar by João

Gilberto (1931-2019). The success of “Chega de Saudade” allowed João Gilberto to record his self-titled record with the English record company Odeon, further marking the critical arrival of a new musical genre.

MPB and the Politicization of Popular Music

To understand a musical phenomenon as singular and consequential for popular music history in Brazil as bossa nova requires consideration of the broader economic, political, and cultural context of the country at the time. The modernizing force of the Kubitschek administration was symbolized by the construction of Brasília, designed through innovative concepts of modern architecture and inaugurated in 1960. The new national capital contributed to the general climate of optimism during this period, reflected in the musical innovation and popularity of bossa nova. Simultaneously, economic growth precipitated the expansion of consumerism that would enable the development of more sophisticated movements in music, theater and cinema.¹⁵

The other factor to consider in the historical importance of bossa nova’s rise is the presence of the specialized critic. It is worth highlighting the growth of the magazine *Revista de Música Popular – RMP*. Notwithstanding its brief existence—fourteen issues between 1954 to 1956—it was without a doubt the most important publication dedicated to music at that moment. Among its contributors, the magazine featured prominent names in Brazilian literature and music, establishing a rapprochement between popular music and other areas of intellectual production. *RMP* created (around samba) “images of tradition and authenticity, which opposed foreign music and commercialization.”¹⁶ Simultaneously, the publication dedicated considerable space to jazz artists from the 1920s, showcasing the stylistic closeness between jazz and samba as music of the African diaspora. That approach, to some extent, would help justify the fusion of the two genres in the creation of bossa nova and allowed it to be accepted as modern and universal but, above all, Brazilian.

Bossa nova grew as an authentic watershed in Brazilian music and “Chega de Saudade” represented the opposite of the samba-canção tradition in exalting the solitude and sadness of unrequited love. Aesthetically, through deep intimacy and restraint, bossa nova opposed the “operatic” interpretations of the radio singers with concise arrangements and reduced orchestral instrumentation. The style was also distinct by featuring melodic and harmonic complexity.

Aside from the first record on Festa, bossa nova was initially connected to international record companies in the country: Odeon and Philips. Philips opened an office in Brazil in 1958 upon acquiring Companhia Brasileira de Discos (CBD).¹⁷ 1962 saw the arrival of another important factor in the Brazilian recording industry: the record company Elenco, created by Aloysio de Oliveira, who had been a musical producer at Philips and Odeon. (Prior to his career in production, he had an international career

with Carmen Miranda's Bando da Lua and worked with Disney.) Elenco would record essential bossa nova records by top artists, such as Antônio Carlos Jobim, Roberto Menescal, Dick Farney and Baden Powell, among others.¹⁸ When Elenco was eventually absorbed by Philips in 1968 it practically ended the presence of Brazilian companies in the recording of sophisticated Brazilian music. Starting in 1968, Philips signed most of the main bossa nova and MPB artists.

Although bossa nova never reached the heights of popular success, it was very well received by the university-aged youth and profoundly influenced the next generation of songwriters and composers, and through its arrival in the United States and France via jazz and adult contemporary genres, it became the largest recognizable genre of Brazilian popular music in the world.¹⁹ It was likely the first popular music genre to attain a foothold after the rise of television, which turned out to be a fundamental promotional medium in the following decades. Aside from the relatively brief period of bossa nova's success, it would soon be eclipsed by MPB from the mid-point of the 1960s.

The 1960s were an extraordinarily rich period for Brazilian music but were also quite politically volatile. Political and economic crises followed the Kubitschek administration and reached its climax in the military coup d'état of March 31, 1964 marking the beginning of the military dictatorship that lasted 21 years (1964-1985). The years preceding the coup were also polarized on a cultural level, as audiences and musicians demanded a more politically engaged and nationalist art. That demand was best symbolized by the *Manifesto do Centro Popular de Cultura* (CPC-UNE) of 1962 in which artistic production was viewed as a means for mobilizing the working classes.²⁰ Due to the influence of the manifesto, many on the left viewed bossa nova as alienated and, due to its proximity to jazz from North America, culturally colonized.

Despite many bossa nova musicians such as Carlos Lyra (1939-) and Sérgio Ricardo (1932-) supported the CPC, the genre was not repudiated by "the better part of the engaged creators" coming from universities.²¹ Due to this, in general, the new generation opted to adapt the musical techniques from bossa nova (especially extended harmonies and the rhythmic approach to the guitar) to other vernacular and vernacular genres aside from samba. The CPC-affiliated artists also distanced themselves from the idyllic universe of the tonier south zone of Rio de Janeiro, where much of bossa nova was based, and instead adopted socially and politically engaged themes.

Through the televised music festivals between 1965 and 1969, new artists would become known to a large general public, songwriters and performers such as Elis Regina, Jair Rodrigues, Edu Lobo, Chico Buarque, Geraldo Vandré, Nara Leão, Gilberto Gil, and Caetano Veloso. Their music was defined through the name MPB—Música Popular Brasileira that, according to Marcos Napolitano, became transformed through the course of time "into a veritable institution, source of legitimacy in Brazil's socio-

cultural hierarchy, with its own capacity to absorb elements that were originally foreign to it, such as rock and jazz.”²²

Initially, MPB was framed in opposition to the *jovem guarda*, a musical movement that arose during the same period and was linked to the first phase of rock 'n' roll. Subsequently, MPB artists frequently accused the *jovem guarda* of being alienated (in a Marxist sense) and conservative. The division was most obvious in the separate television shows for the two movements, *O Fino da Bossa* (MPB) and *Jovem Guarda*, which both ran from 1965 to 1969. In 1967, there was an explosive rapprochement between MPB and rock via performances by Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil in the 3rd Festival of Brazilian Popular Music (III Festival da Música Popular Brasileira) on the Record network.²³ They competed by performing their songs “Alegria, Alegria” and “Domingo no Parque,” respectively, and were accompanied by groups playing rock featuring electric guitars live on broadcast television, something previously unthinkable in an MPB festival.

The festivals were also the where the “tropicalismo” or “tropicália” artistic movement that began in 1968. The movement brought together musicians, filmmakers, writers, and visual artists and its influence would be determined by the routes of Brazilian music in the decades that followed. Caetano Veloso explained that he and fellow *tropicália* artists such as Gilberto Gil, Tom Zé, Gal Costa, and Maria Bethânia, were engaging in a musical dialogue with rock that followed an “evolutionary line” of Brazilian popular music, initiated by bossa nova in its dialogue with jazz (Veloso 2004). The entire Brazilian cultural scene was significantly repressed due to a violent coup at the end of 1968 that led to the passage of the Fifth Institutional Act (AI-5). That moment marks the beginning of the most violent and repressive period of the military dictatorship known as “os anos de chumbo” (the leaden years). Just a few days after AI-5 went into effect, Veloso and Gil were arrested at the end of 1968, and sent into exile months later.

Paradoxically, although MPB presented political and aesthetic challenges to the Brazilian public, it galvanized the process of diversifying the musical market and became its principal product. This was a moment of tremendous growth of the music industry. In that sense, the Brazilian military dictatorship assumed the dual role in relationship to musical production. While the government repressed plays, films, and songs, it also stimulated growth in the cultural industries through fiscal policy. In relationship to the recording industry, this policy allowed for the growth in disc sales by 813 percent between 1967 and 1980, and of 1375 percent growth in record labels between 1970 and 1976.²⁴

The “Leaden Years” and the Growth of the Record Industry

While the 1970s have been dubbed the *anos de chumbo*, or “the leaden years,” due to the heavy-handedness of the military regime’s repression, the period saw an increased diversity of musical genres as well as an expansion in the relationship between recording and the rest of the media industries in Brazil.

For most Brazilian music scholars and critics, the period is, ironically, a high point of creative expression due in part to the tactics many MPB musicians employed to get around government censors. During the decade, exiled musicians who left at the end of the 1960s returned to a climate of harassment and censorship. As a result, many musicians were forced to employ creative workarounds. The cases of Chico Buarque's song "Apesar de Você" and Milton Nascimento's LP *Milagre dos Peixes* illustrate how this worked. "Apesar de Você" (1970) appeared on the surface to be a samba about a disappointed lover when it was actually about Buarque's outrage with the dictatorship. By the time government censors learned of the subtextual meaning, the song had been circulating for over a year and had sold over one hundred thousand copies. Members of the regime invaded Philips, Buarque's record company at the time, and destroyed copies of the recording, but they never destroyed the master which allowed the recording to be preserved. In contrast, when Milton Nascimento began recording *Milagre dos Peixes* in 1973, government censors demanded that he change some of the lyrics. Nascimento responded by singing lyric-less vocables. Even without the subversive lyrics, censors complained that the timbre of Nascimento's voice was aggressive, but his record label, Odeon, released the album, and the live album that followed was a huge hit.²⁵

In the 1970s, there was a flourishing of new musical styles coming from the northeast of the country. In addition to the founding of afoxés, Afro-Brazilian groups that perform versions of the music and rhythms of Candomblé on the street in Salvador, there were new infusions of soul, funk, and reggae through links to the Black Power movement in the United States. Musicians and fans used the English word "Black" when describing their musical movement.²⁶ The northeastern region also fostered innovations in rock, including acts such as Raul Seixas and the group Novos Baianos that infused their music with regional sounds and lyrics explicitly expressing Bahian identity, while Fagner and Belchior from Ceará embodied oppositional attitudes to the mainstream based in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.²⁷ Musicians such as Jorge Ben [Jor], Banda Black Rio, and Tim Maia experimented with the overtly "Black" sounds of funk and soul music, complementing the popularity of the "bailes black" dance parties.²⁸ The enormous success of Milton Nascimento allowed for the "clube da esquina," the name adopted by Milton and a group of fellow artists from Belo Horizonte (Minas Gerais), to also attain popular success. These artists include Beto Guedes, Lô Borges, and Toninho Horta. Like Nascimento, their music brought the influences of bossa nova and rock to the diversity of Brazilian music. Even as musicians adapted sounds coming from abroad, the most monumental change of the period was the assertion of the fundamental Brazilian spirit of their music, a reversal of the polarized climate from the 1960s.

The diversity in many of these musical genres was aided by the opening of the FM spectrum to niche radio stations. AM, however, was less diverse and by far the more popular medium in every sense

of the word. Thus, the diverse developments cited above paled in comparison to the widespread popularity of “música popular cafona,” a pejorative catch-all term for the romantic ballads (música romântica) that circulated across the country during the period epitomizing the tastes of the working class.²⁹ Música romântica was exemplified by the success of former jovem guarda singers Roberto Carlos and Erasmo Carlos. The genre was often dubbed by the music press in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo as música popular cafona, roughly meaning “tacky popular music,” due mostly to class-based biases against the style due to appealing to a demographic widely dismissed by critics in more wealthy sectors of Brazil. It later transformed into brega, a type of traditional romantic style popular with the working classes in the interior of the country, and was among the most widely heard styles during the period. As the decade progressed, those musicians jettisoned the more rock-oriented styles in favor of sentimental romantic ballads borrowing from Caribbean and pan-Latin American styles such as calypso and bolero.³⁰ From one frame of reference, brega and its related genres exhibit a type of cosmopolitanism often ignored by mainstream Brazilian music histories, mixing pan-Latin styles with pop.

The 1970s set the stage for one of the most important means through which the broader Brazilian public heard new music with the Globo television network’s investing in Som Livre, the record company created by music producer João Araújo to record and release soundtrack albums. Starting with *O Cafona* (1971), Som Livre packaged and distributed soundtracks from popular telenovelas. Many of the top musicians of the era, ranging stylistically from former bossa nova legends to new rock stars from the northeast, participated by creating original music. In 1975, Som Livre started producing compilations of radio hits. By the end of the decade, the record company was the clear leader in record sales.³¹ In effect, the music in Globo telenovelas and its record company nearly replaced the massive nationalizing role that the Rádio Nacional held just a few decades before.

By all measures, profits in the Brazilian record industry continued to grow until the end of 1978 which, alongside the generous incentive law, attracted international investment by some of the major international record companies. In 1976, music impresario André Midani left Polygram records to found Warner Music Brasil (WEA) which would record, produce, and distribute Brazilian and international artists. Midani’s connections to many of the top stars in MPB helped the label quickly grow. Prior to that moment, all Warner Music records had been distributed by EMI-Odeon. Just a few years later in 1979, Bertelsmann (BMG) financed the Brazilian record company Ariola after spending three years researching the country. The timing of the investment did not work well for the company, and by 1981, it was absorbed by Polygram.³² The economic malaise that ended the decade (and resulted in reduced sales) led many musicians to break away from the major record labels and infuse their music with a punk rock spirit.

1980s: The “Lost Decade” and Redemocratization

If the 1960s and 1970s were moments of incredible growth for the recording industry, the 1980s would be marked by permanent crisis. While between 1969 and 1973 Brazil lived the famed “miracle economy” of the military dictatorship, with an average annual economic growth at 11 percent per year,³³ the oil crisis and growing foreign debt had the opposite effect in the following years. Because of this, the 1980s would become known as the “lost decade” in Brazil and Latin America in general. The impact of the economic crisis on the recording industry was more extensive because it added to the international crisis that hit the sector in the early eighties.³⁴

Faced with an unfavorable economic situation, many national record companies discontinued operations or were absorbed by larger ones.³⁵ If the incentive law and economic growth had made the industry receptive to new experiences and trends in the sixties and seventies, it was becoming less effective, reducing its castings and investments in MPB and concentrating on market oriented initiatives.

Since many new artists were no longer being signed to contracts with the major record companies that were part of international conglomerates, or “majors,” the independent sector grew to be more organized towards actions more oriented to a younger consumer market largely through children’s music and **rock**. In addition, música romântica and regional music, genres that had previously been ignored to near invisibility (since the sixties), were beginning to find their place in the urban music scene and experienced a moment of affirmation.

While some might argue that various record companies and discs produced in earlier moments could be defined as independents, the emergence of an organized group of artists calling themselves “independent” only occurred in Brazil at the end of the 1970s. The group basically brought together artists linked to the MPB tradition. Among them, highlights include Antonio Adolfo (1947-), Boca Livre (a vocal group) and the collection of São Paulo based artists known as the *Vanguarda Paulista* including Arrigo Barnabé, Itamar Assumpção, Premeditando o Breque, Rumo, and Língua de Trapo. That collective was linked to a production nucleus that formed at the Teatro Lira Paulistana, a small private performance space located in a basement in the west zone of São Paulo, and from the record company bearing the same name.³⁶ The economic crisis would bring more challenges for the independent movement to sustain itself and the Lira Paulistana project would end in 1985.

Another movement that arose in a spontaneous manner in many larger Brazilian cities was rock. In that moment, rock was strongly inspired by punk. After the rapid appearance of the *jovem guarda* in the sixties, it was rare for successful Brazilian musicians to have an organic connection with rock, with Secos & Molhados, Rita Lee, formerly of the group Os Mutantes, and Raul Seixas as the most successful rock musicians of the previous decade. In the 1980s, however, hundreds of new bands emerged, many of

whom produced their demo tapes at home. The economic crisis and the difficult process of the slow political opening (called the “abertura”) of ending the dictatorship that was being lived throughout the country (and that only concluded with the presidential elections of 1989), inspired many of these bands into anti-establishment activities alongside independent MPB artists.

But to the contrary of what occurred with independent MPB, many of the names in rock in the eighties rapidly attained national success through the major international record labels operating in the country. Among these, some highlights are Lulu Santos, Paralamas do Sucesso, Blitz, Legião Urbana, Barão Vermelho, Cazuza, and Engenheiros do Havaii. All of these bands were formed in Brasília and in cities in the south and southeast of the country such as Porto Alegre, São Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro.

However the commercial strategy that most of the majors followed during the period was the systematic exploration of the children’s musical market. In actions coordinated with television, hosts from children’s shows became big music stars. The biggest of these was Xuxa, a host on the Globo network who recorded with Som Livre, who became the best-selling artist of the decade.

1990s: Stability, Growth, and Regionalization

In Brazil, the 1990s began with political and economic crises that followed the election of Fernando Collor de Mello which would bring about his impeachment in September of 1992. Despite that, the decade was largely positive for the Brazilian economy and for the recording industry in particular. This was especially evident starting in 1994 with the implementation of the Plano Real which stabilized the economy and the election of Fernando Henrique Cardoso as president.

An important point of the decade was the replacement of CDs for LPs and EPs on vinyl since the new format only had a modest adoption by the industry the previous decade. Between 1990 and 1999, CDs and DVDs sales increased by 114.3 percent.³⁷ The Brazilian recording industry experienced the most lucrative moment of its history: in 1996, it sold 99.8 million units at an estimated US \$1.3945 billion in profits thereby becoming one of the six most profitable markets in the world.³⁸

Another important characteristic of the period was the regionalization of musical recording and production which had historically been concentrated in the Rio-São Paulo axis. The popularization of digital technology in the production process allowed hundreds of recording studios and new recording companies across the country, giving a large push to independent music scenes that had begun in the previous decade.

Sales were concentrated principally in musical genres with widespread popular acceptance and distant from the political and aesthetic preoccupations of MPB. The first years of the decade were dominated by a type of rural, mass-mediated music called sertanejo music. After being relegated for

decades, the genre arrived at the international record labels through the contracting of artists and through the majors acquiring national companies.³⁹ The success of sertanejo continued to its inclusion in telenovela soundtracks, a space that had been previously reserved almost exclusively for MPB, rock, and international music.

The samba subgenre pagode was the other great success story in terms of sales for the big recording companies. Over the decade, pagode lost its local markers, such as those from Rio de Janeiro, and became popular with bands in states such as São Paulo, Bahia, and Minas Gerais. Like sertanejo, pagode managed to become mainstream through the adoption of pop instrumentation—electric keyboards, bass, and guitar—and through lyrical themes from *música romântica*.⁴⁰

Other new genres attained widespread national success linked to regional scenes. Top among these is axé music, linked to the carnival in Salvador from the northeastern state of Bahia.⁴¹ Although funk carioca music from the favelas and periphery of Rio de Janeiro began in the 1980s, it too experienced growing popular success in the 1990s.⁴² Other successes include Festa do Boi in Parintins, from the interior state of Amazonas in the north of Brazil, and even music from Catholic priests.

The major record companies adopted a strategy of an “open system” which favored the production of independent music, where they laid off producers and outsourcing many of their activities not directly related to distribution and promotion.⁴³ For this reason, an independent musical sector with substantial diversification could develop all the way up through the creation of ABMI (Brazilian Independent Music Association) in 2001.

Independent musical production favored the recording of hundreds of rock bands from different regions of the country which were influenced by grunge from the U.S. and were connected to different identity markets. In that process, Recife (capital of Pernambuco in the northeast of the country), became a new capital of rock through the annual Festival Abril Pro Rock where the new movement called mangue beat from the outskirts of the city became hugely successful. Bands such as Chico Science & Nação Zumbi, Mundo Livre S/A, and Cordel do Fogo Encantado (from the interior city of Arcoverde), among many others.⁴⁴ The rock style most influenced by Black identity politics and connected to ethnic affirmation and pride in the periphery also grew in popularity and influence through such bands as O Rappa, Cidade Negra, and Planet Hemp! among others. Other new style from the decade was rap brasileiro through its affirmation of the peripheries of cities such as São Paulo, Brasília, and Rio de Janeiro. The most successful group from this scene was, without a doubt, the group Racionais Mc's from São Paulo.

The Crisis of Digital Music and Its Effects in the Twenty-First Century

With the introduction of digital music in the 1990s came a flourishing market for piracy and what many in the record industry described as “the crisis for recorded music.” Soon, bootleggers all across Brazil built a massive, illegal infrastructure for creating “pirated” CDs. The record industry meanwhile filled the revenue gap by raising the price of CDs, artificially inflating their earnings while losing a generation of music fans.⁴⁵ By the time broadband internet arrived across Brazil in the early twenty-first century, the major and independent record labels had yet to develop new revenue streams to replace CD sales. Likewise, the wealthiest Brazilians who were the major source of record revenue soon abandoned CDs, which during this period could cost R\$25 (about the equivalent of US\$25 in that period) per disc once broadband internet became widely available. The main publics that had previously propped up the recording industry, fled to LimeWire and other file-sharing services. The result of this loss of revenue was that many record labels that had flourished at the end of the twentieth-century could no longer continue. Thus, over the long term, the crisis of recorded music resulted in a localized version of disintermediation that had significant consequences for how Brazilian musicians found support to perform and record their music while also affecting what music circulated in international markets and received the most financial support.

In a historical irony, just at the moment that piracy began to hit the independent music sector the hardest, Brazilian music was once again trendy in urban centers in North America, Japan, and Western Europe.⁴⁶ The styles that were the most internationally viable were mixtures with electronic dance music, especially drum 'n' bass which had been flourishing in the west zone of São Paulo since the mid-1990s.⁴⁷ Denilson Lopes cites the mixture of bossa nova with drum 'n' bass and electronica (bossatrônica) as especially emblematic of the post national and postmodern moment of early '00s nostalgia.⁴⁸ The sub-genre became ubiquitous in public spaces across the Global North due to the collaboration of numerous transnational actors. A Brazilian living in New York City named Béco Dranoff produced all of the biggest stars, including the group Bossacucanova (Márcio Menescal, Marcelinha da Lua, and Alex Moreira) and Bebel Gilberto. Dranoff founded Ziriguiboom Records through Crammed Discs, a record company based in Belgium that specialized in electronic dance music. Both of these artists were also connected to famous musicians from the bossa nova era: Márcio Menescal of Bossacucanova is Roberto Menescal's son and Bebel Gilberto is João Gilberto's daughter. Doubtless, nostalgia for the bossa nova era played a major role in their success. Bebel Gilberto's *Tanto Tempo* (2000) would eventually sell over a million copies and spawned numerous remixes. Meanwhile she continues to be mostly unknown with Brazilian publics, which was not surprising since many Ziriguiboom artists sidestepped the Brazilian musical infrastructure altogether.

The Brazilian record industry took note of the success of Ziriguiboom and the trendiness of Brazilian electronic dance music. Soon many of them were fielding licensing requests for compilation

records and DJ mixes while some record companies also forged strong relationships with Europe and the United States. Trama Records (founded in 1998) opened a satellite office in London to help nurture the careers of such musicians as Fernanda Porto while YBMusic (founded in 1999) worked with Sterns Music, a world music record label based in London. YBMusic also took the next step with licensing requests to build an online synchronization request system alongside an in-house advertising music unit.⁴⁹

Some artists managed to skip over this system and tap into international publics directly showing some of the possibilities of disintermediation. Céu (Maria do Céu Whitaker Poças) signed a deal with Hear Music/Six Degrees Records, the label associated with the Starbucks coffee chains, rather than going through Ziriguiboom, which had established foothold in Starbucks stores at that point. Her eponymous debut was readily available in the coffee chain.

Beyond the bossatrônica moment, the most successful artists in Brazil have taken advantage of disintermediation and built publics through a variety of media, including social networks, first through Orkut, and then through Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube. Some of the biggest breakthrough hits since 2010, such as those by Michel Teló (sertanejo universitário, an emerging pop variation of sertanejo) and Naldo Beny (pop funk) have occurred through online reactions to popular YouTube videos.

Piracy also nurtured other new genres in Brazil. Tecnobrega artists from Belém developed their publics and supported themselves through piracy and networks and bootleggers.⁵⁰ The sub-genre built off the brega that had emerged in the 1970s. Through its associations with the working classes in the north and piracy, the genre had an “outlaw” reputation, and as Paulo Murilo Guerreiro do Amaral argues, it had a stigma in the urban centers in the Rio–São Paulo axis.⁵¹ As a sign of the shifting fortunes for the working classes during the economic boom of the early twenty-first century, one of tecnobrega’s biggest stars, Gaby Amarantos, eventually became a national star, appearing on telenovelas and more.

Amidst all of this change, the logistical support required to nurture new music changed. With revenue for recorded music disappearing, artists and record companies began to rely on patronage and new social networks to support each other. This happened most clearly in the expanded role of venues funded by SESC (Serviço Social do Comércio, or Social Service of Commerce) that receive state business tax money, which in turn provide much needed structural support for developing music scenes.⁵² Beyond that, the most significant forms of support developed through overt cultural policies. Following the passage of a new incentive law (often called Rouanet’s law) in 1991, the amount of corporate resources flowing to cultural production increased at regular intervals starting in 1995. Since 2000, patronage of musical artist has expanded from former state assets such as Petrobras and Banco do Brasil to more corporations, including Skol (beer) and Natura (cosmetics).⁵³ The result is an infrastructure where corporations and business taxes are supporting new music, allowing it to thrive nationally while also expanding what kinds of Brazilian music reach international publics.

Discussion of the Literature

History and analysis of Brazilian popular music within the context of the culture industries has been largely accomplished through scholars coming from literature and communication studies in Brazil and North American scholars trained in anthropology and ethnomusicology, especially as pertains to music since the 1990s. Much of the most helpful scholarship on music industries research incorporates data released from the Brazilian government and is supplemented by ethnographic and archival research. For Portuguese language sources, studies originating in the two strongest graduate programs of UNICAMP (Campinas) and USP (São Paulo) will be the most immediately relevant to research, especially those whose work is based on that of Renato Ortiz. His book, *A Moderna Tradição Brasileira*, which while not focusing on music, is a must-read for scholars wishing to understand the main debates on modernity and cultural production in Brazil. Eduardo Vicente has written the most thorough single-volume account of the Brazilian recording industry in *Da Vitrola ao iPod*, an essential volume that balances analyses of data and oral histories. It is worth reading recent MA theses and PhD dissertations coming from UNICAMP and USP, especially for those interested in the histories of particular record labels over time.

Other scholars coming from ethnomusicology and anthropology, including U.S.-based scholars Alexander Dent (*River of Tears: Country Music, Memory, and Modernity in Brazil*) and Daniel Sharp (*Between Nostalgia and Apocalypse: Popular Music and the Staging of Brazil*), trace the relationship between rural musical genres and the question of Brazilian musical modernity. While the ethnographic approach has been crucial to some Brazil-based scholars studying the music industry (such as Thiago Galletta and Rita Morelli), there are few ethnomusicology programs throughout Brazil with the most influential located at UFRJ (Rio de Janeiro), UFRGS (Rio Grande do Sul), and UNICAMP. Thus, ethnomusicologists do not have the same influence on Brazilian musical history and criticism as do scholars coming from other fields, and in general, ethnomusicologists there do not focus on economic and industrial factors. More recently, however, focus on the Brazilian media industries has expanded with comparative industrial studies appearing in monographs and academic articles, especially those that investigate the largest media groups in Brazil.⁵⁴ This likely has to do with the reluctance on the part of scholars based at U.S. and U.K. institutions to learn a new language and comparative high demand for studies of the U.S. and U.K. media industrial complex. To fill this gap, more Brazil-based music scholars have been publishing in English, including the *Made in Brazil* edited collection which makes some inroads for moving English-language scholarship away from the dominance of MPB. What is more, while important scholarship is happening in the north and northeast of the country, there is a general lack of financial resources to invest in publishing from those locales. Luckily more scholars are opting to publish

in open access venues to the extent that the recent book-length study about tecnobrega music and piracy in Belém was published for free. As publishing in Brazil continues to be an expensive proposition, thesis depositories at universities and online journals show the best way to move this research forward. However, at this moment, a working knowledge of Portuguese is essential for future research.

Primary Sources

Primary sources for music industry research can be found at the various image and sound museums located throughout the country. The Museu da Imagem e Som (MIS) in Rio de Janeiro houses archives of over four thousand hours of recordings and eighteen thousand records of the Rádio Nacional. MIS announced in 2015 that it would digitize its collections with an unknown completion date. By contrast, the Instituto Moreira Salles (IMS) with locations in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Poços de Caldas is a privately held cultural organization that has an archive containing digitized recordings, photographs and films. For postwar recordings in particular, the IMS houses collections that are of particular interest to scholars research the 1960s. There is also a wealth of sources at the Instituto Cultural Cravo Albin (ICCA), the same institute that maintains the largest dictionary on Brazilian popular music. The institute is a non-governmental organization and is located in Rio de Janeiro with a special emphasis on Brazilian music. There are also archives in the north and northeast of Brazil, including MIS locations in Ceará (Fortaleza) and in Belém (Pará), that specialize in the regional cultural production that has been much neglected by the Rio de Janeiro - São Paulo axis.

The Biblioteca Nacional (BN) in Rio de Janeiro maintains archives of all of the top music periodicals in Brazil, which can prove especially helpful for documenting reception history and contemporaneous news about music industry developments. The BN also houses a sound and music archive, including a large collection of music related periodicals and digitized recordings. Although the emphasis of the collection is on the period of Brazilian music from before WWII, there are still plenty of sources of use to scholars.

Beyond archives in museums, the governmental agency Associação Brasileira da Produção do Discos (ABPD) continually publishes reports on the health of the recording industry, some of which are freely available online. The Associação Brasileira de Música Independente (ABMI) also publishes data on its website. Similarly, the IFPI (International Federation of the Phonographic Industry) publishes reports, but they often charge a premium for the data, depending on the year.

Additionally, many of the recordings from the dictatorship period have been commercially reissued and remastered in recent years, making the process of thorough historical research into the sounds of Brazil's musical past more feasible.

Beyond industry data, some of the best primary sources continue to be living musicians and recording industry employees, many of whom have been receptive to talking to researchers about their work. There are numerous conference and public discussions put on by the recording industry on a regular basis.

Links to Digital Materials:

[Digital Catalog at the Biblioteca Nacional](#)

[Digitized Recordings at the Biblioteca Nacional](#)

[Digital Archive at the Instituto Moreira Salles](#)

[Digital Archive of the Museu da Imagem e Som – São Paulo](#) (from within Brazil only)

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⁷ Saroldi and Moreira, 49-50.

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⁹ Renato Ortiz, *A Moderna Tradição Brasileira: Cultura Brasileira e Indústria Cultural* (São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense), 113.

¹⁰ Ortiz, 99-101.

¹¹ Ortiz, 102.

¹² Bryan McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil: Popular Music and the Making of Modern Brazil* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

¹³ Vicente, “A Gravadora Chantecler e a música regional do Brasil,” 331.

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- ²¹ Marcos Napolitano, *Seguindo a Canção: Engajamento Político e Indústria Cultural na MPB (1959-1969)*, digital edition revised by the author (2010), 30.
- ²² Napolitano, *Seguindo a Canção*, 7.
- ²³ The documentary about that festival *Uma Noite em '67* (2010, directed by Renato Terra and Ricardo Calil), features the contest's producer Solano Ribeiro acknowledging that they intentionally broadcast the program with a "good television program" in mind, complete with villains and heroes, and tense audience and judges. His statements demonstrate the convergence of music, politics, and the demands of the cultural industry in that moment.
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- ²⁵ Holly Holmes, "'With A Voice Like a Gun': Brazilian Popular Music, Censorship, and Strategies of Resistance during the Brazilian Military Dictatorship's Anos de Chumbo [Lead Years] (1968-74)," in *Researching Music Censorship*, edited by Annemette Kirkegaard, Helmi Järviuoma, Jan Sverre Knudsen, and Jonas Otterbeck (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 206-242.
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