

BRAZILIAN PUNK SCUM ATTACK

by stuart arscoble

Next time your parent/teacher/priest asks you why you listen to loud, unintelligible music, wear a butt flap and have a devilock, tell he/she/it it's for your historical education. After four years of college, I can proudly say that the folks I know with some of the best sense of world history are punk rockers. Sure, not everyone is writing painstaking scumpit articles for MRR, but, while doing research for these articles, I have learned a great deal about world affairs that I would have never learned otherwise. Plus, it's always cool to note the looks and questions one gets while sending registered letters to Japan, Finland, Germany and Italy every week (they think you're a real jet setter with a lot of friends) (the real reason I collect records).

The other day, I was re-reading MRR # 5 (March-April '83), which has two crucial scene reports, one on Holland and one on Brazil. Perhaps this will be lost on others, but for me, what's so fucking awesome about hardcore punk is summed up in a picture of Fabio, singer of OLHO SECO, which accompanies the article: While he's screaming his head off, he's wearing his studded leather jacket and it has "Tampere SS" written on it. Ever since Havoc Records reissued the Tampere SS 7", they've become a relatively well-known early Finnish hardcore act, but before that, the band was essentially unknown outside Finland. Yet, in Brazil, thousands of miles, two totally unrelated languages, and several layers of CIA-backed government repression away, a young hardcore punk rocker was inspired to write that band name on his jacket. The businessmen and pundits of the world can talk all they want about international trade and the free flow of ideas, but we're smart enough to know that's bullshit. The pure rage of buzzsaw guitars transcends international boundaries in a way no commodity ever will.

Fabio, from OLHO SECO, writes about the São Paulo scene in MRR #5: "All the bands are poor. We have to fight a lot to get anything. We've got troubles with the cops, and the studios are s-h-i-t. Another problem is the lyrics of songs—if the government knows what you're saying. Punk records are rare here, because they are so high priced. But it's OK because our scene is growing every day. We like many foreign bands, like Discharge (best), Minor Threat, Kaaos, Disorder, Dead Kennedys, Exploited, Terveet Kädet, Black Flag, Rattus, Void, Chaos UK, Lama, Riistetyt, and many many others."

MRR editors write: "The Brazilian military, with the help of the CIA, overthrew the democratically elected leftist government, and established a very repressive system, which now is in great economic and political difficulty, and is being pressured by many segments of the the population to return to democratic elections."

From what I understand, the US, fearing a Brazilian government shift toward Communism in '63-'64 (which was really only agrarian reform), helped the Brazilian Army stage a coup, which resulted in a regime led by an unelected president who was a military general/kingpin legitimized by American investment. By the early '80s, the Brazilian military was engaged in violent repression of the Brazilian people, and the economy had faltered. Hardcore emerged during this period. In 1984, the military regime withdrew and a democratically elected government replaced it. In the following years, up to the present, as it had been during the military-regime years, the US has manipulated the Brazilian government through the usual litany of loans, trade and investment.

Brazilian records from the early '80s are all rare, even in Brazil. Unlike other countries, Brazil never had a '77-style punk explosion. There were punks, mostly students, but few bands and no records released. Punk then was violent and prone to media distortion. The punk explosion in Brazil was its hardcore explosion in '82-'83. Kids from the city of São Paulo and ABC (a region of industrial towns on the outskirts of São Paulo) began to squat and hang out and put on shows—and there was suddenly a scene. One enigma of Brazilian hardcore is that it takes its greatest influence from Finnish hardcore. It wasn't just Fabio's jacket—it was nearly every band. They all had the rawness, and many had the train wreck feel, of Finnish thrash, with guitar sounds rarely matched in intensity. Finally, one more thing



all excited and started singing "Nada"! I guess that's truly Lou's Anxiety Song.

The next classic LP compilation to be released was "Sub," which includes RATOS DE PORÃO, PSYKÓZE, CÔLERA and FOGO CRUZADO. Supposedly, the first version, on red vinyl, including a fanzine stapled to the sleeve, was numbered out of 444 copies. I don't know if that's true. Regardless, this is another super-rarity. I know it was repressed in Brazil on green vinyl later and a CD reissue of it exists. RDP were developing their raw, Finnish-influenced thrash sound here as were FOGO CRUZADO. PSYKÓZE and CÔLERA have more melodic, forceful Oi!-ish sounds. CÔLERA's tracks are my favorites on here, but all four bands are fucking amazing, so it's silly to pick a favorite. Try to find the CD version of this one because it's great.

CÔLERA were the first Brazilian band to tour overseas, with their European tour '86 for world peace. Their best stuff, as I indicated, appears on the earliest compilations, but they're a classic band. If you can find the bootleg LP that compiled many of their tracks, released Spring 2000, definitely pick it up. They released a 7" on Belgium's Hageland Records, in '85, which was featured on "Killed by Hardcore." There were also 2 LP's released in the mid '80s, "Pela paz em todo mundo" and "Tente mudar o amanhã," and a split live LP with Ratos De Porao, which is very rare, and which I don't have, so I can't comment on its sound.

Similar to CÔLERA were INOCENTES. They had a mid-tempo sound as well, but they strike me as more aggressive and raw. Their lyrics were staunchly political and their singer was quite outspoken. After the early compilation appearances, their LP was to be released on their own label. However, for reasons I can only guess, the government censored the record and allowed only 4 of the songs to be released as a 7", with the title track bearing a different title (but it's still the same as the version released later). This 7" is a testament to the adversity of releasing radical hardcore in Brazil in '83. If you want a museum-quality collection, you need this one. In 1988, apparently after the government chilled out a bit (remember, it was no longer a military government), Devil Discos released the LP version of "Miséria E Fome" in its entirety. It's a great LP.

Last winter, RATOS DE PORÃO came to the US. As far as I know, it was the first time one of the original Brazilian hardcore bands came here. They've been thrashing for longer than some of my friends have been alive and their show in NYC was one of the most fantastic shows I've seen. They played incredibly tight, no-holds-barred fast thrash from start to finish—and it was a fuckin' long set. RDP's first album, "Crucificados Pelo Sistema," is a gruff thrash attack with memorable mid-tempo songs amidst the chaos. Great drumming and an amazing, piano-dropped-on-the-head feel to the guitars. It's really an amazing record that builds on their great, Olho-Seco-like sound on the compilation tracks. Hell, they cover O.S. on the record and totally rip off Discharge on some guitar solos! The incredibly rare original version was released by Punk Rock Discos and has a red cover. Subsequent versions came out in Spain and Brazil with different sleeve colors: mine is silver.

Recently, Alternative Tentacles reissued this ultra-classic LP. It has the entire thing re-recorded, but the CD version includes the original recording. I personally see no need to hear a re-recording of classic thrash because what makes it classic is its original rawness and power, but people are saying that the new recording is a good one. There is also a CD version released by a Spanish label of the original recording. RDP never broke up. They did go in a more crossover direction later, but I have nothing but respect for this awesome band—especially because they came around here and blew me away with their thrash, which few bands do, let alone bands that went metal in the '80s.

I can't talk about every single Brazilian record, though there aren't many others, but they're all worth hearing. The last record I want to mention is another compilation LP, entitled "Ataque Sonoro". It was released on Ataque Frontal Records, and the original came with a gatefold. The

later repress I have doesn't have the gatefold. This compilation features 9 bands each doing two tracks. Among the bands are the classic Brazilian left-wing Oi! band GAROTOS PODRES, RDP, CÔLERA, LOBOTOMIA and the infamous ARMAGEDOM (this stuff sounds like their insane thrash LP "Silêncio Fúnebre", not like the metallic stuff on the recent split with FORÇA MACABRA). This compilation isn't as rare as the other ones that preceded it, but it's still a classic.

Brazil's hardcore scene continues today, with bands like ULSTER, ARMAGEDOM and RDP still around. The economic and political situation in the country, as I understand, is at a low point right now, with foreign debt and its companion, austerity, at a high. It sucks to know that such a situation will probably produce some great hardcore. What's important is not that Brazil produced some rare records. What is truly important is that the music which helps a lot of us First-World inhabitants make it through the day serves the same purpose in countries like Brazil where many of the inhabitants live in destitution. Anger and resentment of the political situation we face is universal and because of this hardcore punk will remain alive around the globe forever.

For more information, and some pictures of the records I've discussed, check Horst Firmanty's website at: www.securitate.de. Thanks to Eliza for the historical help. Also, thanks to Kerry/Sin Fronteras and the usual professors of thrash. Big thanks to Mike Clarke/Inflammable Material, for without his kindly invitation and subsequent reminders, I wouldn't have written this article; also continuing thanks to MRR for its unending support of international hardcore.

