

Review

Stroud, Sean. 2008. *The Defence of Tradition in Brazilian Popular Music*. Hampshire: Ashgate. ISBN 978-0-7546-6343-0 (hbk). 215 pp.

Popular music occupies a privileged place in the socio-cultural history of Brazil. It is the music from different ethnicities, classes and regions that form our national mosaic. This book is an important contribution to the understanding of what constitutes popular music in Brazil. It examines how definitions of Brazilian popular music have been constructed since the mid 1960s, focusing on the tradition known as MBP or Brazilian Popular Music.

The book begins with a brief personal explanation of how the author became interested in Brazilian popular music. Stroud provides a useful introduction, giving a brief and significant overview of the genre. He describes its development and highlights the importance of the concept of authenticity.

Most of the literature about Brazilian popular music approaches the lyrical and musical analyses. Stroud instead focuses on how and why the genre MPB has received a strong reception within Brazilian music, even though record sales have been low. The author does not provide textual or musical analyses.

From the first chapter to the last of its seven chapters, *The Defence of Tradition in Brazilian Popular Music* offers English-language readers an adequate synthesis of what constitutes Brazilian Popular Music. Chapter 1 presents the central theme of music nationalism as 'an underlying ideology that has acted as an ever-present backdrop to discussions about Brazilian popular music since the 1920s, and one that has been an important factor in the creation of the concept of tradition in the field of popular music' (7). Stroud provides an informative overview of the rise of musical nationalism within the context of ideas about national culture. He mentions the writings of Mário de Andrade, Lúcio Rangel and Ary Vasconcellos who impacted the public's reception and opinion.

Chapter 2 focuses on the formation of the concept of MPB and on those who have been responsible for its development. According to Stroud, 'due to a variety of interconnecting factors the original significance attributed to the acronym shifted away from its original connotation in the mid 1960s and has developed over the intervening years into a type of shorthand that alludes to a series of values and assumptions about popular music in Brazil' (39). Stroud establishes the limits of the term MBP, considering the role of the record industry and the press in the 1970s into the creation of the mythical aspect of 'authenticity'.

Chapter 3 analyses the relationship between television and popular music in Brazil, specifically the televised song festivals of the 1960s and the role of music in the Brazilian soap opera. Stroud wisely comments, 'One of the most important, if not *the* most important means by which popular music has been disseminated within Brazil since the early 1970s, has been through the use of music as the soundtrack to *telenovelas*' (80). The following chapter contains an informative section on music piracy in Brazil, which ranks second only to China in terms of the volume of pirated material (96). Also in chapter 4, Stroud investigates the role of the Brazilian record industry within a theoretical framework of cultural imperialism and globalization and how relevant these theories are to Brazilian popular music.

Chapter 5 examines in detail the way that the military dictatorship used popular culture, particularly music, to dialogue with the civil society. The establishment of FUNART (The National Art Foundation) and the *Projeto Pixinguinha* reflect the government's new approach. *Projeto Pixinguinha* was an interesting attempt to take Brazilian popular music to a poor audience, and as Stroud observes, it 'certainly increased the aura of importance surrounding MPB by promoting the idea that this type of music merited being supported, cherished and defended, and as it was a national project it propagated that notion around the country as a whole' (130).

In chapter 6, Stroud analyses two projects, which sought to 'map' the popular music of Brazil 'by investigating and recording aspects of the diversity and richness of the nation's regional popular music' (131). The first one is that of Mário de Andrade in the 1930s and the efforts of Marcus Pereira in the 1970s. In the final chapter, he considers more recent 'mapping' projects, namely Hermano Vianna's *Música do Brasil* and *Rumos Itaú Cultural Música*. Stroud shows how these four projects have been significant to educate the Brazilian public and to bring the nation closer together through popular music (178).

The Defence of Tradition in Brazilian Popular Music's greatest value lies in its role as a useful MBP reference book, providing a wealth of information on the subject through a variety of topics. This book is important reading for those studying Brazilian popular music and an essential addition to the bibliography on MPB. The only criticism that can be pointed out in this brilliant study is some typographical errors found in the text.

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