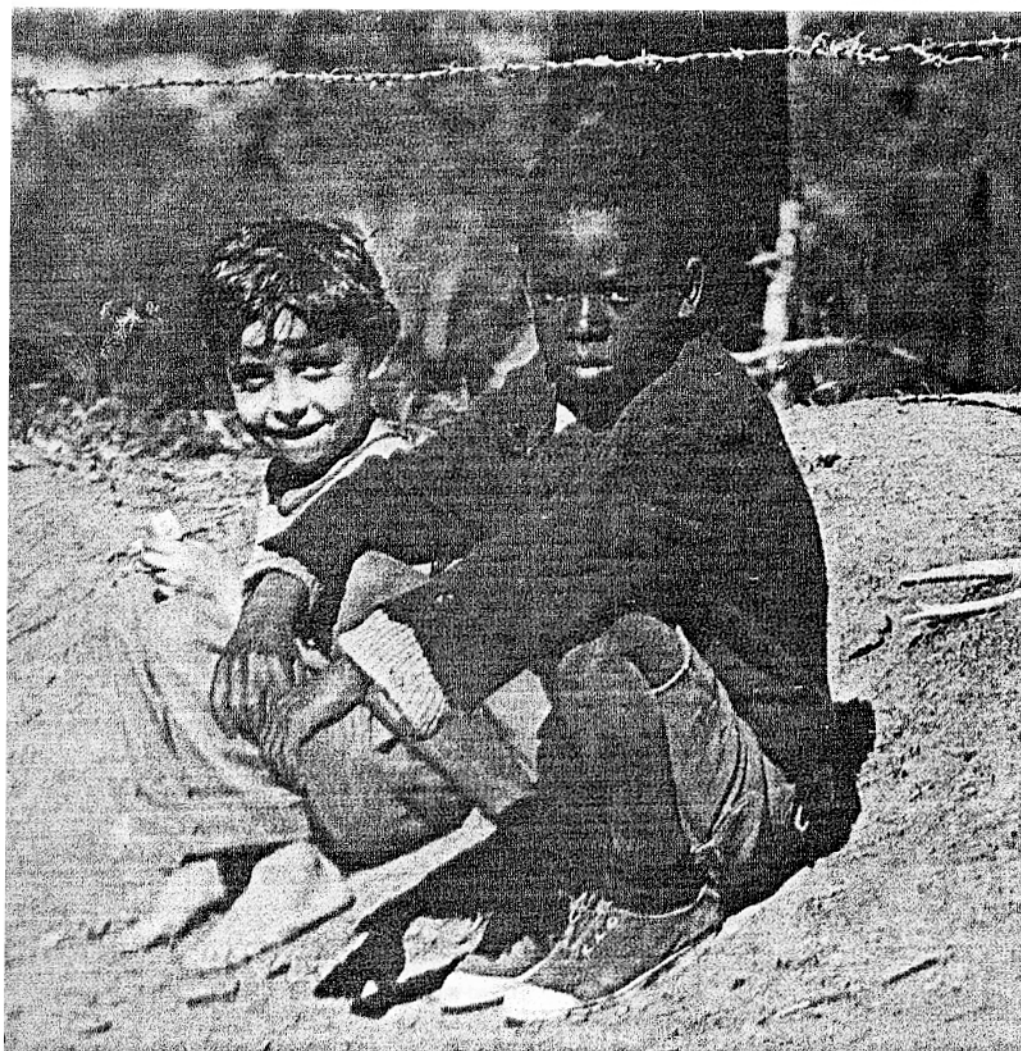


VINYL ARCHEOLOGY

MENTAL MINDFRAME

the radical musical vision of Milton Nascimento



Clube Da Esquina (EMI Odeon 1972)

This masterpiece double LP was a collaboration between Nascimento and young singer-songwriter Lô Borges. Its sheer diversity of music—from angelic overdubbed slow drip trips to scabrous guitar-based psychedelic bombs to melancholy string arrangements—makes this album the classic collectible and the most essential tool for cracking the Nascimento code. “I was friends with Lô’s older brothers; he would hang around us until one day he asked me out for a ‘serious talk,’” Nascimento remembers. “He was 12 then. We met at a bar, and he explained that he was not a kid and that he had written some songs. Back at the house he showed me some stuff and I was totally shocked—the ‘man’ was a damn good composer and singer. From that moment on he was officially part of the gang, and this album was basically made by the two of us.”

While his emergence in late '60s Brazil makes him a contemporary of tropicalia icons like Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, Gal Costa and Os Mutantes, Milton Nascimento rose to stardom by pursuing his own path that began with orchestrated folk songs and ran through insanely arranged acid jazz/rock fusions and emotionally-charged symphonic experiments sung without words. That path eventually led to hyperproduced later work that traveled to the world music bin at the record store. The radical mental mindframe of his musical vision still intrigues Brazil-obsessed record heads and has recently inspired a new generation of musicians—from Norwegian pop shoegazer Sondre Lerche to post hip-hop producer Scott Herren of Prefuse 73/Savath & Savalas. Nascimento’s return to form is documented on his latest album *Pietà*.

KNOX ROBINSON

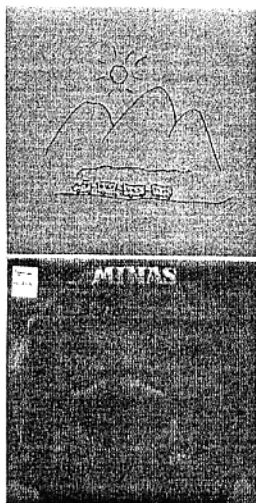
Milton Nascimento (EMI Odeon 1969)

Compared with what came later, Nascimento's early work was about as straightforward as could be coming from a young dude with an eclectic musical background in a country of several popular genres of music. "I was brought up in a very musical environment," says Nascimento, who began playing piano at age 2 and soon followed with accordion and guitar. "My mother used to sing in a choir and my father worked on a radio station for a long time. As a matter of fact, I was a DJ too. And at 14, I was a crooner at a big ball orchestra. I listened to and played everything, so I guess my music brings a little bit of all this."



Geraes (EMI Odeon 1976)

Nascimento's work is a fascinating counterpoint to the music of other black Brazilian musicians such as Gilberto Gil and Jorge Ben (now Jorge Ben Jor)—two men with notably different music themselves. "I guess the greatest difference in our music has to do with geography," he says. "Gil and Ben Jor were influenced by the beats and drums of a music played by the black communities of the seashore, both from Bahia and from Rio de Janeiro. My music brings the drums of the slaves' beats and the black communities from the inlands of my home state Minas Gerais. It's more intense, but brings the same beauty."



Minas (EMI Odeon 1975)

If you see it, buy it. This is the first of two albums intended as a tribute to Nascimento's home state of Minas Gerais. The jazz fusions and '70s pop turns on a basic guitar-based troubadour approach can make your mind melt away if you listen to this with a post-dinner spliff. Seriously. It happens. Try it.



Milagre Dos Peixes (EMI Odeon 1973)

Some of the music on this album is so beautiful it's difficult to believe it even exists. Nascimento stripped his music of its lyrics as a protest against government censorship and oppression in Brazil. Playing with the prog rock group Som Imaginário, the result is some of the most plaintive, searching and transcendent singing imaginable. "This album was a cry against the violence against our lives and it was conceived at the worst point in my life," Nascimento explains. "We lived under a very cruel dictatorship and many artists were forced to leave the country. I decided to stay, and that was very hard to deal with. I just received a copy of some footage from two concerts we did in São Paulo for a live version of this album in 1974. One night I played with a symphonic orchestra and the next day I played for 50,000 students. It was magic."

Sentinela (Verve 1980)

In the '80s Nascimento changed directions again, focusing on a more internationalist music for a more international audience. This meant not only covering North American pop hits but also songs from the Latin American Left, such as this LP's "Sueño Con Serpientes"—here a duet with Mercedes Sosa but originally a deeply surrealist dreamsong from Cuba's incomparable Silvio Rodríguez. "I am very connected to Latin American music in many different ways," says Nascimento. "Mercedes is a great and dear friend, as is [Cuban singer-songwriter] Pablo Milanés. We often collaborate. Lately I have also worked with Fito Páez from Argentina and have serious plans for [Mexican rockers] Maná—I met the band a couple of years ago."



Travessia (Som Livre 1978)

This is a reissued and renamed version of Nascimento's first LP from 1966, an easy listening jazz-pop record heavy on lite strings that showcased the airy quality of his soaring yet nimble voice. "In 1966 I was a very young guy stepping out from a very tough life in my home state into a dreamland where recording my music was a true possibility. It was a pure state of joy," says Nascimento. "Maybe that's why the album affects people in such a particular way even today. I loved what I was doing and the music was really special. Today it's very much one of my favorites."



Clube Da Esquina 2 (EMI Odeon 1978)

Always a collaborator, this album has Nascimento back in the studio with the "Corner Club": Lô Borges, Wagner Tiso, Toninho Horta and Beto Guedes, as well as with the fusion ensemble Azymuth. Though it lacks the dramatic complexity and live-wire danger of the first *Clube Da Esquina*, that's probably just reflective of Nascimento growing out of the '70s rather than any musical missteps. Not to say that maturation doesn't suck a lot of times, but there's still some good songs here. "I do not try to 'accomplish' in music, but to make it sound to others as it sounds inside me. If this is 'accomplished,' then it's a success. Here I worked just as I like: surrounded by friends...luckily for me, very talented ones. After *Clube Da Esquina*, I tried to keep that same mood in all my other records. It's there in all of them but especially on *Clube Da Esquina 2*, *Angelus* and now *Pietá*—I call these Clubes 3 and 4."