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João at full speed

Author of classics such as "The Frog", João Donato releases a piano solo CD, other with Bud Shank and makes shows in SP

RONALDO EVANGELISTA
COLLABORATION TO A FOLHA

The history of Brazilian music runs through curious paths. Who could forecast that João Donato – one of the most influent and fundamental piano-players of the bossa nova, a representative of Brazilian music in the United States in the 60's, a sought arranger and author of cultivated albums of the 70's – would reach the heyday of his production now, after the turning of the century?

For this was the way it happened to the author of "The Frog", and "Common Place", a collaborator of several and known composers, such as Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, and unanimously pointed out as one of the brightest artists of the Brazilian music. Of the few more than 20 albums he released in his 50-year album career, practically half of them were produced as of the last decade to this date. Now, sealing off this period of intense creation, Donato presents two albums at a time, by different labels, - further to presenting shows in São Paulo for releasing them, with guests.

"O Piano de João Donato", one of the CD's to be released this month, has a special flavor: it is his first piano solo album. A common stuff for jazz-influenced pianists, especially those having such a proper style, as Donato's, the impression left is that this album is late. "Now I thought I could say my little things in one piano solo album", he states to the

Folha. "Before, I thought time hadn't come yet. Because I'm more laconic than prolix in my style, I'd rather sublimate things through a tender side of the music than by pyrotechnics", he explains by telephone, sitting, as he says, at the piano and with his usual peaceful mind. "I've put myself on this more "'economic" side of people, as Miles Davis and Chet Baker, of pianists such as Thelonius Monk and Horace Silver. Since I don't have all that speed, I had to get off on a tangent. Therefore, a piano solo album of my own should not be appreciated for its skill, but for its limitation, that is sweet. Since you only have to concentrate in the piano, you can hear all your thoughts. You don't admire anything, you just feel". The same serenity that features his music, it is clear, is what assures his high and talented productivity to this date. "Productions do not stop exactly for that reason", he says, "I keep on playing, slow and ever. Long pathways, small paces, in order not to trample.

If not, you get tired in the midst of the trip and end out doing nothing."

Bud Shank

This almost Zen relationship with time is one of the sources of the other CD to be soon released. "Uma Tarde com Bud Shank e João Donato" was recorded in 2004, when the North-American saxophonist came to Brazil for a presentation and spent two afternoons in a studio with Donato, improvising and reactivating old recollections.

Why Donato and Shank had already a story together: when the pianist lived in California, in the 60's, Shank was one of his main partners, and together they made some albums and a handful of live presentations. "When we were in the studio featuring this album", recalls Donato, "Bud told me he never had traveled so far in a cut. Of course he was talking about music, but he was also talking about time, of memory. We cut that album just like that, unexpectedly, without rehearsal. It has been a long time

without us seeing each other. We got to the studio and recorded the tunes I knew, the tunes he knew, that we recalled and suggested one to the other". Donato, eventually, is one of those musicians of no time or era. "Art has no change, only ripeness", says he, that will be 73 years old in August. "You're today what you're all the time. I play the same way I've always did, I just am more mature."

JOÃO DONATO

When: Friday, at 21:00 pm; Sat. and Sun., at 20:30 pm

Where: Auditório Ibirapuera – parque Ibirapuera (av. Pedro Álvares Cabral, s/nº, portão 2, tel. 0/xx/11/5908-4299)

Price: R\$ 30

Critic/music

In two releases, Donato shows new forms of his music Impromptu keeps on being the fundamental base of the pi-

anist, that plays and thinks with the infinite sound possibilities. There is a tale of the Argentinean writer Julio Cortazar inspired on saxophonist Charlie Parker, called "O Perseguidor". In a very simple way, its character says that, in jazz, time is something else. A tune with three minutes has not just three minutes, but the time of all ideas inserted therein. Music is harmony, melody and rhythm. And music is what you feel when you hear our play such harmony, melody and rhythm. With João Donato is this way: his piano takes you within the music, shows you all its possibilities. It is almost a metaphor of life itself: each moment, everything changes. In Donato's music, impromptu is the most important. What he feels in that moment is what turns into that music. As of a base, a tune, a theme, Donato strolls, improvises, and shows his ideas, as a consciousness flow registered in notes.

When we put a Donato's album in the audio system we can hear all his

thoughts, as he says himself. What will those thoughts be and whereto they will go is something that depends on each person – and of what each person will feel while hearing Donato. Just like as when he sits in front of the piano, before knowing what he will feel and which notes he will chose for expressing this – the possibilities are infinite. What is common between the two new Donato's releasing is that both have the strong trace of improvisation, exactly as his nature is. In "The Piano...", without any previous rehearsals or second takes, Donato simply lets his memory rescue tunes and thereupon he is smoothly led to the piano. There are his old compositions such as "Fim de Sonho". There are new compositions such as "Ivone". There are tunes he heard a long time ago in old jazz albums, such as "Paradise Found", of the American trumpeter Shorty Rogers. It is an album that relates with piano solo classic recordings of musicians

such as Bill Evans and Thelonius Monk, very much for Donato's musical personality, an incomparable musician, with a peculiar style. Donato made great albums in several different formats, but it is a delight to hear him for the first time this way, backed up by him only. Exuberating in his intimacy, gorgeous in delight, he suggests rhythms, reveals harmonies, comes and goes with tunes. Already in "Tarde com Bud Shank..." Donato shows the freedom he feels to be himself within a more traditionally jazziest climate – and how he discretely layers in this climate his Brazilian, Latin, swung, melodic influences. They play American standards, such as "But not for me" and "Night and Day", They play Donato's compositions such as "Minha Saudade" and "Gaiolas Abertas". Totally at ease, Donato plays with the tunes, exchanges ideas with Shank, together they discover and show us new possibilities within each one of

those tunes. Because, eventually, each music Donato plays, such as life, is full of possibilities.

(RONALDO EVANGELISTA)

O PIANO DE JOÃO DONATO

Artist: João Donato

Release: Deckdisc

Price: R\$ 30, average

Evaluation: great

UMA TARDE COM BUD SHANK E JOÃO DONATO

Artist: João Donato and Bud Shank

Release: Biscoito Fino

Price: R\$ 30, average