

## Claudio Slon

approached it very much like a recording session. You know, very precise, very controlled. He called me in after the show and told me that I had to play with more energy and not like I was in a studio. The next show I gave him what he wanted, and everything was fine after that.

**MD:** How many albums did you record with him?

**Claudio:** Counting the albums I did with him in Japan, fifteen.

**MD:** The album *Primal Roots* is considered a classic. What was the concept for that album, and how was it recorded?

**Claudio:** Sergio always recorded very precisely. Everything was worked out before we got to the studio. With *Primal Roots* he took a completely different approach. He had just finished building a studio in the back of his house, and he hired an engineer from A&M to come in and record us. In addition to the regular band, he brought in Clare Fischer on keyboards and Tom Scott on sax.

Sergio just let the tape roll. There were some basic ideas worked out, but we improvised from there. The whole thing was stream-of-consciousness. Everything was live except for the vocal parts. It was great, but I

remember on one of the tracks the engineer accidentally erased my bass drum. I had to go in and play just the bass drum part, which was not a lot of fun, but it had to be done.

I have to say that I think that record was the most musical album that we recorded. It didn't sell as well as his other albums, but musicians still come up and say that they love it.

**MD:** The albums you made with Dori Caymmi are so musical. I especially love his version of "Brasil" on the album *Kicking Cans*.

**Claudio:** Dori is one of a kind. He utilizes influences from the northeast of Brazil and jazz, and is very aware of percussion and drums. He never rehearses before an album because he wants the interpretations to be fresh. His approach is to not do the obvious musically. Sometimes instead of starting a tune on 1, he might start it on 2.

For that session Dori brought in Herbie Hancock on piano as a guest soloist. I remember the bass player looking at the chart and going, "Oh my God, what have I gotten myself into?" Even though this song is a standard, Dori had reharmonized every chord. It was very dissonant with a lot of

harmonic tension. Even Herbie was having some trouble in the beginning. I thought that if *these* guys were having trouble, I better look at the chart. I ended up not playing the bass drum at all for that song. I used a mallet on the floor tom and played the snare with the other hand using a stick. But it was a great record to do because on some tracks we had Dave Grusin, John Patitucci, and Branford Marsalis. It's a very interesting album, and I think that out of all the records I have recorded, it is my favorite.

**MD:** If a drummer wanted to learn Brazilian rhythms, what would you recommend?

**Claudio:** First of all, listen to as many different Brazilian albums as you can, because there are many rhythms from Brazil besides samba and bossa nova. There are some great books out there to get you started. You have to use a combination of listening and reading, just as if you were studying arranging.

When I was growing up in Brazil, when we received a new jazz album it was a big party. Back then American jazz albums weren't readily available, so it was a special event. It was also very difficult to get drum equipment, because we didn't have an import/export agreement with America. I

---