

Drummer Slon kept the beat going for lovers of jazz and Brazilian music

By [Bret Saunders](#)
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Thursday, April 18, 2002 - Denver's Claudio Slon, a drummer known for his sunny contributions to the popularization of Brazilian music across the world, died on Tuesday. He was 58.

Slon's career included stints in the drum chair for Sergio Mendes and Antonio Carlos Jobim, and a seemingly endless list of recordings with 20th-century musical icons such as Frank Sinatra and Billy Eckstine.

After establishing rhythmic credentials in his native Sao Paulo, Brazil, Slon arrived in the United States as a member of organist Walter Wanderley's trio in 1965. The group had a top-five hit, "Summer Samba," and a million-selling album, "Rain Forest."

"When I arrived in New York in 1965, it was a dream for me," Slon told The Post in March. But he felt that Wanderley "wasn't ready for big success," and left the group to work with Brazilian legend Jobim in an association that led to Slon's appearance on Sinatra's "Sinatra and Company" album.

Slon was fearful of meeting with the volatile Sinatra, stating that "I expected to have to wear boxing gloves!" The gloves weren't necessary, however, and Slon made well-regarded music with the Chairman of the Board.

After spending the better part of a decade with Brazilian adult-contemporary bandleader Mendes, Slon occupied various Los Angeles recording studios from the 1970s to the '90s, working as a session drummer for an eclectic lineup of performers.

His relocation to Denver in the late '90s gave him the opportunity to record under his own name for local labels owned by jazz impresario Vartan Tonoian. He recently appeared on an upbeat series of discs for Brazilian pianist Joao Donato. Slon also served as house drummer of sorts at Tonoian's club, Vartan's, which closed late last year.

After a debilitating car accident on Dec. 31, Slon discovered that he had lung cancer, which claimed his life Tuesday.

"Claudio was a very unassuming individual with a great sense of humor. Even though he had a multitude of accomplishments, he did not let his ego get in the way," family friend Toni Riggio said Wednesday. "I know my life is all the richer for having met Claudio and to hear his music."

Slon is survived by his wife, Evangelina, and two daughters. A memorial service is scheduled for 1 p.m. Saturday at Mile Hi Church, 9079 W. Alameda Ave., Lakewood. A reception will follow.

A benefit concert to help defray Slon's medical expenses was held in Boulder earlier this month, and there are tentative plans to hold a similar function in Los Angeles in May. A donation fund has been established to aid his family with medical and other expenses.

Donations can be made to the Claudio Slon Donation Fund at any area Wells Fargo Bank, routing No. 102000076.

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