

Claudio Slon



RS: What music/musicians inspired you as a young musician?

CS: early musical influences were: classical music, (my father was the concert master at the Brazil Philharmonic Orchestra, and my mother a choreographer-dancer). Oscar Peterson, Dave Brubeck, Miles Davis, among my early jazz heroes.

RS: As a professional drummer/percussionist what have been some of your most interesting gigs?

CS: I toured all over the world each year during 9 years with the Brazil '66 and '77 groups; also several Montreux Jazz Festivals with Paulinho Da Costa, and Dori Caymmi. Among my most interesting recordings, Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Wave" (A&M Records), the second Jobim-Sinatra collaboration ("Sinatra and Co.", Reprise Records), NBC TV "Sinatra, Ella and Jobim" special with Jobim, Sinatra, and Ella Fitzgerald. Lately, sessions with Herbie Hancock, Branford Marsalis, John Patitucci, Dave Grusin and others, for a Dori Caymmi CD. I just returned from a south american tour with Dori, where myself and bassist Abe Laboriel backed him, and other brazilian artists.

RS: What are some favourite albums that you have played on and why?

CS: Joe Pass (Pablo), where he played all brazilian songs, better than the originals. Also, "Agora", an album I produced for Paulinho Da Costa, with Lee Ritenour, Greg Phillinganes, and others; I also played drums. "Mad about the boy", with Stan Getz and Cybill Shepard, trying to duplicate the Getz-Gilberto early bossa nova sound without success, but I have seldom seen such a beautiful woman as the young Ms. Shepard (she still is) "Primal Roots" with Brazil '66 (A&M), recorded at Sergio Mendes' new home studio, the group playing live, without any overdubs, with Tom Scott and Clare Fischer, using a lot of african and voodoo rhythms, for which I had to do a lot of explaining in Brazil to some leaders of those religions, not to get in trouble. I still live, so I guess they accepted my excuses. It was a hit with musicians and jazz reviewers; sold 7 units.

RS: As a "Brazilian Jazz Drummer" what are your main instruments?

CS: Mainly drums and latin percussion (meaning Brazilian). Usually small sets for delicate or intricate playing, and bigger ones for power playing. Usually when Paulinho or Luis Conte are busy, I'll overdub percussion. (congas, timbales, cabasas, shakers, etc.) Among instruments I play and endorse: PAISTE Cymbals REMO Drums EVANS Drumheads TOCA Percussion PRO-MARK Sticks and Mallets (but check out the new Porcaro's "Diamond Tip" line; they're great for recording, and delicate, precise work)

RS: How do you approach creating drum/percussion parts for new or original material?

CS: After taking a look at the lead sheet, if there aren't any drum charts, I'll listen to whoever is playing the melody; (what kind of song is it?) Only after that, I will come up with a groove, and try it with the bassist. Then the producer will tell everybody what he wants, and we'll do it, muttering insults under our breath. Seriously; with an original song, the most important step is to talk it over with the writer, to see how he hears his song. If he's open, then we go to step # one.

RS: What advice would you give to young drummers that want to be studio players?

CS: I do not agree with lots of special preparation; the main attitude to have is to think that you're going to be playing and creating MUSIC, not technique or attitudes. Open your ears, and don't think too much; FEEL. Thousands (hopefully) of listeners are going to be in tune with your feel, not your technique or mental skills. Listen to everybody, and get a sense of what the producer wants, and what your colleagues are playing. There is not a "studio" style of drumming; there are drummers who know how to listen, have some reading skills, and know how to deal with different situation requirements; nobody can have the same approach to play rock, jazz, latin, etc..

RS: What about equipment preparation?

CS: Again, different approaches for different situations. Jazz?: Small set, dry and sensitive cymbals,(18", 16", 13" hats), thin drumheads. Rock, Latin?: Regular set, medium cymbals, (20", 18", 14" hats), and heads. Let your toms ring, but not as much as to give the engineer trouble. Try "Moon Gel", it's great. Small sets: light sticks with small tips. Larger sets: heavier sticks with larger tips. Take as many snare drums as you can to the studio - never get yourself in a corner, needing a different sound, and running out of options. (Wood, Metal, 3", 4", 5", 6 1/2", 8", etc.)

RS: Do you ever use electronic percussion equipment? If so tell us about how, what and why.

CS: Have all of that at home;(I just look at it); never could get creative with them. Sorry.

RS: Who are your favourite drummers/percussionists/musicians and why?

CS: There's a large amount of extraordinary technicians, not enough musicians. How fast you can play isn't and never was the measure of talent - it all comes from being patient, and of repetitive exercises - Paradiddles and Ratamacues have their place, but not in the creative process. Who will be remembered 100 years from now, the drummer with the fastest limbs, or the one who created music? Among my favorites; Steve Gadd, Jack DeJohnette, Elvin Jones, and any other youngster or senior citizen that is able to make me pay attention to the overall groove, and not to the particular drum part. If I start paying attention to what a drummer or other musician is playing, then that guy is not listening to the music and playing together with the rhythm section; he's trying to call attention on himself, on what he's doing. That is of no importance to me - I want to hear the whole groove swinging back and forth, not the individual parts. Forget the ego; leave that for trombone players...

F.Y.I. Claudio will be performing from July 16 - 21, 1996 at Catalina's, in Los Angeles, with Herbie Mann. It will be a very interesting trio: flute, guitar, and drums/percussion. Also, Claudio's own brazilian-jazz quartet will be performing at the Paradise Valley Jazz Festival in Phoenix, on July 6th, 1996

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