

Far away, not long ago, across the street from Ipanema Beach I met the man, whose Art has influenced my musical taste for many years.

In the capital of my dear "Bossa Nova" - Rio de Janeiro, thirty seven steps from the world's most musical ocean, stood "The Man," whose simple and beautiful melodies conquered many many hearts and souls around the world.

All these years I've wanted to meet him or at least talk to him on the phone and thank him for so many precious moments that his music brought into my life. Finally, with a little help from my good friend Claudio Slon, the "Master" was located somewhere in Rio and soon the magic began. Those few unforgettable days we spent with Donato recording his great songs -old and new-eating great food and making jokes in English, Portuguese and Russian (Donato likes to tell some jokes in Russian, probably in his previous life; pre-bossa times, he secretly played some sambas for the Russian Tzar) resulted in our first great record, which we are proud to share with you.

Usually, after you finish producing an album, you put it away for a few weeks, months, or even years and then return to it with a fresh perspective and start mixing. It didn't work that way with "Amazonas." From the moment the plane took off from magic Rio back to the U.S.A. on September 9th of 1999, there was not one day when Claudio and myself didn't spend hours listening, analyzing, but most of all, enjoying the "audio" results of our trip, choosing final takes and then spending weeks, carefully mixing and mastering song after song. One afternoon I called Slon and he sounded like he was not in the best mood. After I wondered what was wrong, Claudio took a pause and then asked me, "Don't you know what's wrong? We didn't listen to Donato today..."

There will be more exciting projects with Donato, who became an important part of our daily life, almost a member of the family. Wake up - brush your teeth - listen to Donato - have breakfast - mix Donato - have a drink - master Donato - have dinner - release Donato - have another drink - (or one more dinner if you are in Rio) - talk to Donato on the phone - (or in person over a third dinner if you are still in Rio) - smoke a fat cigar on Copacabana Beach and then... record Donato again. There will be many other great moments. But those first few days spent with João will always stay in my memories as some of the best days of my life...

Vartan Tonoian

President Elephant Records, Inc. & Vartan Jazz, Inc.

P.S. First Donato CD of the millenium! First trio album by Donato! First Donato recording of all original music!