

# BRAZILIAN PUNK SCUM ATTACK

by stuart arscoble

Next time your parent/teacher/priest asks you why you listen to loud, unintelligible music, wear a butt flap and have a devilock, tell he/she/it it's for your historical education. After four years of college, I can proudly say that the folks I know with some of the best sense of world history are punk rockers. Sure, not everyone is writing painstaking scumpit articles for MRR, but, while doing research for these articles, I have learned a great deal about world affairs that I would have never learned otherwise. Plus, it's always cool to note the looks and questions one gets while sending registered letters to Japan, Finland, Germany and Italy every week (they think you're a real jet setter with a lot of friends) (the real reason I collect records).

The other day, I was re-reading MRR # 5 (March-April '83), which has two crucial scene reports, one on Holland and one on Brazil. Perhaps this will be lost on others, but for me, what's so fucking awesome about hardcore punk is summed up in a picture of Fabio, singer of OLHO SECO, which accompanies the article: While he's screaming his head off, he's wearing his studded leather jacket and it has "Tampere SS" written on it. Ever since Havoc Records reissued the Tampere SS 7", they've become a relatively well-known early Finnish hardcore act, but before that, the band was essentially unknown outside Finland. Yet, in Brazil, thousands of miles, two totally unrelated languages, and several layers of CIA-backed government repression away, a young hardcore punk rocker was inspired to write that band name on his jacket. The businessmen and pundits of the world can talk all they want about international trade and the free flow of ideas, but we're smart enough to know that's bullshit. The pure rage of buzzsaw guitars transcends international boundaries in a way no commodity ever will.

Fabio, from OLHO SECO, writes about the São Paulo scene in MRR #5: "All the bands are poor. We have to fight a lot to get anything. We've got troubles with the cops, and the studios are s-h-i-t. Another problem is the lyrics of songs—if the government knows what you're saying. Punk records are rare here, because they are so high priced. But it's OK because our scene is growing every day. We like many foreign bands, like Discharge (best), Minor Threat, Kaaos, Disorder, Dead Kennedys, Exploited, Terveet Kädet, Black Flag, Rattus, Void, Chaos UK, Lama, Riistetyt, and many many others."

MRR editors write: "The Brazilian military, with the help of the CIA, overthrew the democratically elected leftist government, and established a very repressive system, which now is in great economic and political difficulty, and is being pressured by many segments of the the population to return to democratic elections."

From what I understand, the US, fearing a Brazilian government shift toward Communism in '63-'64 (which was really only agrarian reform), helped the Brazilian Army stage a coup, which resulted in a regime led by an unelected president who was a military general/kingpin legitimized by American investment. By the early '80s, the Brazilian military was engaged in violent repression of the Brazilian people, and the economy had faltered. Hardcore emerged during this period. In 1984, the military regime withdrew and a democratically elected government replaced it. In the following years, up to the present, as it had been during the military-regime years, the US has manipulated the Brazilian government through the usual litany of loans, trade and investment.

Brazilian records from the early '80s are all rare, even in Brazil. Unlike other countries, Brazil never had a '77-style punk explosion. There were punks, mostly students, but few bands and no records released. Punk then was violent and prone to media distortion. The punk explosion in Brazil was its hardcore explosion in '82-'83. Kids from the city of São Paulo and ABC (a region of industrial towns on the outskirts of São Paulo) began to squat and hang out and put on shows—and there was suddenly a scene. One enigma of Brazilian hardcore is that it takes its greatest influence from Finnish hardcore. It wasn't just Fabio's jacket—it was nearly every band. They all had the rawness, and many had the train wreck feel, of Finnish thrash, with guitar sounds rarely matched in intensity. Finally, one more thing



that all Brazilian hardcore seems to share is a trebly recording. The high end is always prominent—making some taped copies of Brazilian records nearly unlistenable due to hiss. There were only about fifteen Brazilian hardcore records before '87, but they're pretty much all classics. Unfortunately, due to the economic situation, many bands made only demos and many more never recorded. Luckily, ABC Records has reissued many of these crucial, and otherwise unheard, demo tapes from the old days.

The first Brazilian HC punk record (actually I think it was recorded first, but released after "Grito Suburbano") was LIXOMANIA "Violencia & Sobrevivencia" 7". This record is ridiculously rare. Two tracks from it were nobly compiled on KBD #41, but this 7" leans more toward hardcore than the average KBD record. Like many of the early Brazilian stuff, it's melodic, but raw. The band obviously had good rock 'n' roll songwriting ability and wrote memorable tunes. I think it has pretty good recording considering it was the first! Anyone who has an extra copy and needs to pay the rent, please get in touch with me.

The Brazilian hardcore record that really inspired many kids in São Paulo and the ABC region was the first of four compilations to document the Brazilian sound. "Grito Suburbano" is a 45 rpm 12" with CÔLERA, INOCENTES and OLHO SECO released on the label run by Fabio of OLHO SECO, Punk Rock Discos. I wish I had been there the day Tim Yo and Jeff Bale opened the package with this record in it and threw the disc on the turntable. From the cover depicting a bunch of angry punk rockers at shows to the excited, early thrash on the record, this had to have been a wake-up call. Unfortunately, this record is one of the rarest (OK, rather than saying that about each record, let's take it as a given that these records are rare). It was reissued in '84 by the German label Pogar and also by the Brazilian label New Face Records, both of which did many domestic presses of foreign records. Each band contributed 4 songs to the compilation. OLHO SECO has some of the most mind-bending distortion on their guitars and are the thrashiest. INOCENTES play their trademark mid-tempo hardcore and CÔLERA contribute some memorable, raw, mid-tempo numbers. I would say that this record laid the foundation for the Brazilian sound: all the bands are raw and angry, but not all are totally fast thrash attacks. My copy of the record has a lyric insert.

Perhaps the most amazing Brazilian record is the next one to have been released in '82, a live compilation LP called "O Começo Do Fim do Mundo". As far as what you might pull out to listen to, this one wouldn't be the first, since its sound isn't great. However, considering it was live in Brazil '82, its sound isn't terrible either. 21 bands, pretty much every hardcore band in the São Paulo area, played the festival in Nov. '82. It was free, 2-day event, and over 3000 punks attended. The cops ended the show and arrested 25 punks, but it seems the fest was a huge success. The cover of the record depicts a huge mass of punks who made up the audience at the fest. More punks than I've ever seen at a show in the '90s in the US. One live track per band ended up on the compilation. There's a CD version floating around, too.

Strangely, one band played the show but was left off the compilation: ULSTER. This band is probably the most infamous band of the era as they always wore executioners' hoods to cover their faces while they played—an excellent protest against, among other things, the state executions of radicals that have been common across South and Central America for far too long. The liner notes to the CD reissue say, "This Compact Disc shows who was in my opinion the most truly radical band at Brazilian punk scenery ever. Who took to the extreme the speech against the system, not only with words, but with attitude as well. In a time where a simple behavior deviation could take one to jail. Here, we don't show sound quality, we show rebellion in its more pure and real state." ULSTER have gotten back together and are releasing records. You can still get their CD reissue of early stuff which tests the outer limits of headache-inducing, noisy rawness in hardcore. Write to: Rasura Records, PO Box 155, 09901-970 São Paulo, Brasil.

The international hardcore compilation, "Beating the Meat," which was released on the UK label Xcentric Noise in '82 or '83, feature OLHO SECO and CÔLERA alongside other classic bands like Terveet Kädet and Huvudtvätt. The OLHO SECO tracks, from their '81 demo, are available on the awesome reissue 12" "Os Primeros Gritos" released on ABC Records. However, I don't think the CÔLERA tracks are available anywhere else, which is a shame. These two tracks, one of which appears in a different version on "Grito Suburbano," are mid-tempo attacks of sheer rawness. The vocals sound totally pained. I think these two tracks, likely from their first demo, are my favorite that the band ever did.

Anyone who knows me (or has read stuff I write about hardcore history) should know that I use Anti-Cimex's "Raped Ass" as the record by which all others are judged. OLHO SECO's "Botas, Fuzis, Capacetes" 7" is Brazil's "Raped Ass." It's not the first nor the last; it's simply the best! 3 quick songs that define thrash destruction Brazilian style: super-gruff vocals, trebly production and chainsaw guitars. I've heard that some have criticized the lyrics on the song "Nada" because it's ostensibly about unemployed migrants who had left rural areas due to crop failures and the general shift toward an economy based on export. The song was written in 1980, when the band members were quite young, and I think it expresses frustration at a political situation with historical roots going back to the '60s and the Cold-War US government's prevention of agrarian reforms more than sketchy politics. Either way, I think any such criticism is simple-minded: regardless of the lyrics, this record is hugely influential and, through the inclusion of the classic "Nada" on MRR's "Welcome to 1984," its political effect has been one of destroying borders and furthering an international underground of sick thrash. That song, "Nada," has been an anthem, I think, for many hardcore punks from south of the border, uniting disparate scenes. Hell, I read a SEBADOH interview where Lou Barlow got



all excited and started singing "Nada"! I guess that's truly Lou's Anxiety Song.

The next classic LP compilation to be released was "Sub," which includes RATOS DE PORÃO, PSYKÓZE, CÔLERA and FOGO CRUZADO. Supposedly, the first version, on red vinyl, including a fanzine stapled to the sleeve, was numbered out of 444 copies. I don't know if that's true. Regardless, this is another super-rarity. I know it was repressed in Brazil on green vinyl later and a CD reissue of it exists. RDP were developing their raw, Finnish-influenced thrash sound here as were FOGO CRUZADO. PSYKÓZE and CÔLERA have more melodic, forceful Oi!-ish sounds. CÔLERA's tracks are my favorites on here, but all four bands are fucking amazing, so it's silly to pick a favorite. Try to find the CD version of this one because it's great.

CÔLERA were the first Brazilian band to tour overseas, with their European tour '86 for world peace. Their best stuff, as I indicated, appears on the earliest compilations, but they're a classic band. If you can find the bootleg LP that compiled many of their tracks, released Spring 2000, definitely pick it up. They released a 7" on Belgium's Hageland Records, in '85, which was featured on "Killed by Hardcore." There were also 2 LP's released in the mid '80s, "Pela paz em todo mundo" and "Tente mudar o amanhã," and a split live LP with Ratos De Porao, which is very rare, and which I don't have, so I can't comment on its sound.

Similar to CÔLERA were INOCENTES. They had a mid-tempo sound as well, but they strike me as more aggressive and raw. Their lyrics were staunchly political and their singer was quite outspoken. After the early compilation appearances, their LP was to be released on their own label. However, for reasons I can only guess, the government censored the record and allowed only 4 of the songs to be released as a 7", with the title track bearing a different title (but it's still the same as the version released later). This 7" is a testament to the adversity of releasing radical hardcore in Brazil in '83. If you want a museum-quality collection, you need this one. In 1988, apparently after the government chilled out a bit (remember, it was no longer a military government), Devil Discos released the LP version of "Miséria E Fome" in its entirety. It's a great LP.

Last winter, RATOS DE PORÃO came to the US. As far as I know, it was the first time one of the original Brazilian hardcore bands came here. They've been thrashing for longer than some of my friends have been alive and their show in NYC was one of the most fantastic shows I've seen. They played incredibly tight, no-holds-barred fast thrash from start to finish—and it was a fuckin' long set. RDP's first album, "Crucificados Pelo Sistema," is a gruff thrash attack with memorable mid-tempo songs amidst the chaos. Great drumming and an amazing, piano-dropped-on-the-head feel to the guitars. It's really an amazing record that builds on their great, Olho-Seco-like sound on the compilation tracks. Hell, they cover O.S. on the record and totally rip off Discharge on some guitar solos! The incredibly rare original version was released by Punk Rock Discos and has a red cover. Subsequent versions came out in Spain and Brazil with different sleeve colors: mine is silver.

Recently, Alternative Tentacles reissued this ultra-classic LP. It has the entire thing re-recorded, but the CD version includes the original recording. I personally see no need to hear a re-recording of classic thrash because what makes it classic is its original rawness and power, but people are saying that the new recording is a good one. There is also a CD version released by a Spanish label of the original recording. RDP never broke up. They did go in a more crossover direction later, but I have nothing but respect for this awesome band—especially because they came around here and blew me away with their thrash, which few bands do, let alone bands that went metal in the '80s.

I can't talk about every single Brazilian record, though there aren't many others, but they're all worth hearing. The last record I want to mention is another compilation LP, entitled "Ataque Sonoro". It was released on Ataque Frontal Records, and the original came with a gatefold. The

later repress I have doesn't have the gatefold. This compilation features 9 bands each doing two tracks. Among the bands are the classic Brazilian left-wing Oi! band GAROTOS PODRES, RDP, CÔLERA, LOBOTOMIA and the infamous ARMAGEDOM (this stuff sounds like their insane thrash LP "Silêncio Fúnebre", not like the metallic stuff on the recent split with FORÇA MACABRA). This compilation isn't as rare as the other ones that preceded it, but it's still a classic.

Brazil's hardcore scene continues today, with bands like ULSTER, ARMAGEDOM and RDP still around. The economic and political situation in the country, as I understand, is at a low point right now, with foreign debt and its companion, austerity, at a high. It sucks to know that such a situation will probably produce some great hardcore. What's important is not that Brazil produced some rare records. What is truly important is that the music which helps a lot of us First-World inhabitants make it through the day serves the same purpose in countries like Brazil where many of the inhabitants live in destitution. Anger and resentment of the political situation we face is universal and because of this hardcore punk will remain alive around the globe forever.

For more information, and some pictures of the records I've discussed, check Horst Firmanty's website at: [www.securitate.de](http://www.securitate.de). Thanks to Eliza for the historical help. Also, thanks to Kerry/Sin Fronteras and the usual professors of thrash. Big thanks to Mike Clarke/Inflammable Material, for without his kindly invitation and subsequent reminders, I wouldn't have written this article; also continuing thanks to MRR for its unending support of international hardcore.

