

Diggin' For GOLD

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LATIN: ON A DIFFERENT TRIP

José Prates

Tam... Tam... Tam...!

(Polydor LPNG 4016, Brazilian LP, 1958) £1,000

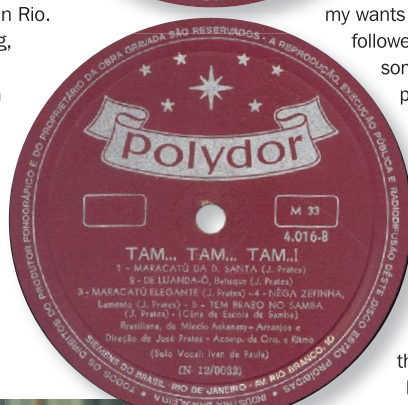
Long associated with Latin music, Gilles Peterson is one of the country's most respected DJs; his collection of grooves from around the world is so large that he had to move out of his own flat. He's also just produced an album with "some of my heroes from Brazilian music", under the name Sonzeira (reviewed on p97). The album looks to answer his own question: "What was it that made me, at 16, 17 years old, play Brazilian batucadas in a pub in Richmond?" He gives some credit to fellow DJs Chris Hill and Robbie Vincent, "who might play a bit of Gilberto Gil", but it's clear that Peterson's focus on the music was fresh for London at the time.

There is one particular Latin record that Peterson desires above all others. Polish producer Miccio Askanasy's long-lived dance show *Brasiliana* toured the world, ticking off countries and picking up performers of varying nationalities as it went, leaving in its wake a book and several vinyl releases. The latter were recorded by Brazilian musician José Prates (who later moved to Australia), who pulled in various Brazilian styles; it's the sort of cross-continental globetrotting story that Peterson acknowledges is not unlike his own.

Peterson initially came across *Tam... Tam... Tam...!* via Joe Davis from Far Out Records, an associate from The Belvedere Arms in Richmond, London. Davis took a trip to Brazil and "discovered all this untouched music that existed over there", Peterson recalls. "It was just being thrown out of all these shops. He ended up buying all these records and then selling them to DJs around the world."

Every time Davis returned to the UK, Peterson would go and listen to his hoard, buying what he needed. "Apparently I said to him, 'Oh no, I don't need another version of Mas Que Nada,' when he played me José Prates' version [Naná Imborô]." Fast-forward to the end of last year, however, and Peterson was visiting Ed Motta in Rio. When Motta played him José Prates' version of the song, Peterson recalls, "I went, 'Oh my god, this is just so unbelievable,' because it's obviously the basis for which Jorge Ben wrote the [1963] song. Where we thought Ben's version was the original, he'd actually taken it off José Prates and just added some lyrics to it. In a way he did to José Prates what Rod Stewart did to Jorge Ben with Do Ya Think I'm Sexy? [partly derived from Ben's tune Taj Mahal]."

Peterson found the remainder of *Tam... Tam... Tam...!* just as alluring. "It has an old school, slightly operatic vocal thing going on but it's also incredibly rootsy and raw – and actually quite free, quite avant-



garde in a way... It's this unique record that wasn't yet bossa nova, and still had a very strong sense of Africanism in it." Indeed, the owners of Tropicália Discos in Rio, where Ed Motta discovered the record, described it as black rhythms "with a bright garb". "When you look at the year it was made, it's on a completely different trip [to other Brazilian music at the time]," Peterson says. "It opened up a whole other important aspect of Brazilian music that I didn't know existed."

Peterson has Prates' other records, but "nothing touches *Tam... Tam... Tam...!*. It's very much at the top of my wants list". He even made an appeal for it on Twitter. One follower responded to say he had the sleeve, with the record somewhere in the attic, but the subsequent search for it proved fruitless. "So the guy gave me the sleeve," Peterson says, "but there's no vinyl in it!"

Peterson now has an international network searching on his behalf: Japanese dealers, friends in Portugal, Brazilian specialists in Paris... Of "two or three" people actually in Brazil, "the biggest collector that I know is DJ Nuts," he says. "He emailed me two or three weeks ago saying, 'Gilles, man, I've only just managed to get a copy for myself.' There must be some floating about, but the dealers haven't come through with it."

Peterson has even started campaigning Universal, who own Polydor, to reissue the album: "I've spoken to Johnny Chandler, who works in the archive department at Universal, and said to him: 'Just reissue it.' I don't suppose there are master tapes anywhere." Peterson hopes to get enough people chatting about the record to create significant buzz to support a reissue. "It's an extraordinary record," he asserts. "It's not just a rare record. It's a record I could almost create an entire DJ set around. There are at least three or four songs that I could subtly beef up. The vibe of the record – the essence of it – is so spot-on for right now."

So there's no question over the copy Peterson wants – he has to have the vinyl! "I have to, yeah. I have to. Obviously it'd be great if there's a really brilliant digitally remastered version to play with, but I just wanna get that Polydor 1958 pressing on my decks and coming out of my speakers."

Phil Smith, with thanks to John Tree



Nah... that ain't it. Gilles Peterson's quest continues