

Gismonti Comes Home to Brazil at MIMO Festival

Caught >

THE PORTUGUESE WORD MIMO MEANS A LITTLE TREAT OR GIFT given to someone you like. Brazil's MIMO Festival of music and film has become a rather large gift to the people of Brazil from some of the country's major corporations. This festival is a remarkable example of government support for the arts, on a scale unknown and, politically, almost inconceivable in the United States.

Started in the historic city of Olinda in 2004 by music impresario and record producer Lu Araújo, MIMO (the name also stands for "Mostra Internacional Musica Olinda") has now expanded to four cities: Olinda, Ouro Preto, Paraty and Tiradentes, all Brazilian colonial heritage sites. Each city hosts a three- or four-day festival; the Paraty and Tiradentes festivals took place on consecutive weekends in October. All the concerts, films, lectures, workshops and master classes are free to the public. This year's program included a broad spectrum of Brazilian instrumental styles, jazz, classical, folk and pop music. An associated film festival was devoted to documentaries about music and musicians.

The Paraty shows included clarinetist-alto saxophonist Paquito D'Rivera paired with the Brazilian jazz group Trio Corrente; the Scottish folk trio Lau; Brazilian 10-string mandolin master Hamilton de Holanda, partnered with composer-singer Diogo Nogueira; and Brazil's master percussionist, Naná Vasconcelos, paired with Rio-born singer-cel- list-composer Lui Coimbra.

No performer was more spectacular than Egberto Gismonti. A virtuoso on guitar and piano, his compositions over the past 40 years stand at the cross-

roads of Brazilian folk and classical traditions, much like his major influence, the iconic Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959). Gismonti is in demand worldwide but rarely performs in his native country, so the Paraty event had the air of a homecoming. His concert filled the town's majestic Igreja da Matriz to the rafters. Dressed in a white tunic and his customary skullcap, Gismonti tamed the audience into rapt attention with his guitar pyrotechnics. After 45 minutes, he moved to a concert grand piano, displaying similarly explosive technique. The program consisted almost entirely of Gismonti compositions, with the exception of "Dança (Miudinho)," a piano work by Villa-Lobos.



Egberto Gismonti at the MIMO Festival in Paraty, Brazil, on Oct. 11

COURTESY MIMO FESTIVAL

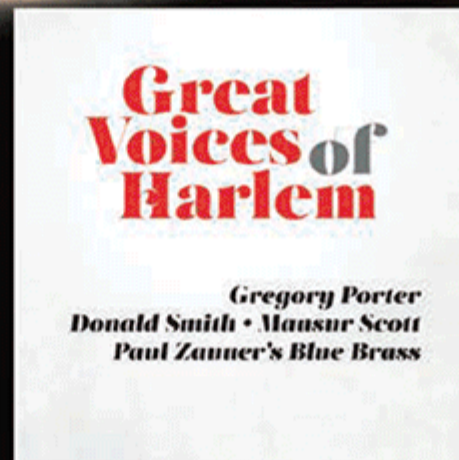
In the show's first half, Gismonti's "Alegriho & Saudações" combined elements of Spanish guitar with highly imaginative, modern harmonic flights, eventually developing into something more suggestive of samba. A world of Brazilian folk traditions and rhythms danced and sometimes exploded off his fingers. His idiosyncratic, two-handed fingerpicking technique, on both 10- and 12-string guitars, incorporated custom tunings, left-hand hammer-ons and right-handed percussion on the guitar's body. Barely pausing to catch his breath, Gismonti moved to the

piano and began an equally impressive program that included his famous, fast-paced "Dança das Cabeças," the hypnotic "Maracatu" and his lyrical "Palhaço." The romantic and the rhapsodic gave way to sections of frenetic dissonance, and vice versa. On both instruments his technique was blazing, but always in the service of an orchestral vision. —Allen Morrison

IT'S LIKE A HOT CUP OF JOE FOR YOUR EARS



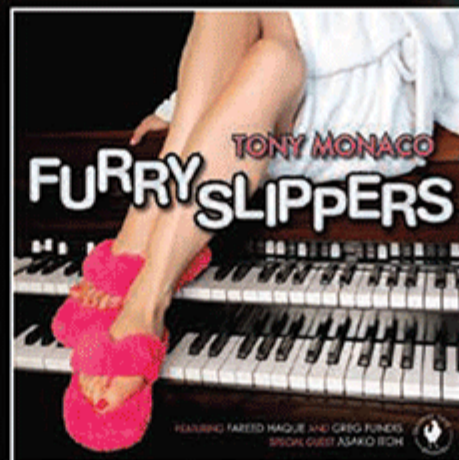
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