

ceremonies, honoring the *orixás* (Afro-Brazilian deities) and reminding the partiers where all this music really started. And there were numerous shows, planned and impromptu, from recording stars like Elba Ramalho, Margareth Menezes and Daniela Mercury. But the great sensation of this Carnival season was the *Requebra*, a dance that developed to the song of the same name by Odlum songwriter Pierre Onassis. *Requebra* was performed with enormous enthusiasm throughout Carnival week by Odlum, the Timbalada and various other blocos and bands, and was the undisputed favorite Carnival song, an honor shared last year by Odlum's "Nossa Gente" and "Canto Pro Mar" by Carlinhos Brown and the Timbalada.

For the first time in its 14 years of existence Odlum selected a Brazilian theme—Tropicália—for its Carnival *enredo*; the bloco had previously used African or Afrocentric themes. With 3,500 integral participants and accompanied by a multitude of 30,000, Odlum marched triumphant through the streets of the Pelourinho, the colonial section of Salvador, showing that that even after seven albums and numerous international stints, the band retains its base as a cultural group with its roots in the popular festivals and the community itself.

And this community is now breaking the tradition of the male-dominated percussion group. Odlum Director Zulu Araújo commented that today approximately 60% of Odlum's participants are women.

For a good long time now Carlinhos Brown has been poised and ready to take his place of honor in the festivities. 1993 was his big break, with two singles breaking the Top 10 in radio play, culminating in the release of the album *Timbalada*. Carnival '94 was the consecration of this great talent and the bloco that turned the Bahian rhythms upside down. Sporting feather headdresses and the now famous all-over body paint, Brown and the Timbalada took to the streets in a rousing, roving performance featuring old hits and new songs like "Grite Se Quiser" and "Choveu Sorvete." The big surprise was the commandeering of a trio elétrico, which are rarely if ever incorporated into a bloco afro. Trios elétricos, which are essentially a truck, speaker tower and stage all in one, have 35 years of tradition in Bahia, and today can exceed 3,000 megawatts. The four vocalists of the Timbalada rode atop the trio while Brown walked amongst the timbaleiros, playing *tan-tan*, singing into a cordless mike, and driving the frenzied crowds into a delirium.

The group that started as a pack of street kids drumming on pots and pans under the direction of a wild-eyed youth everyone called *louco* has evolved into a veritable artistic movement with an impressive diversity of projects. Brown is in the process of creating a three-pronged Timbalada, with permanent installations in Salvador and Rio and a streamlined version that will tour internationally. Various year-round community programs exist for children and adults. And not to be outdone in the wave of gender-balanced percussion, Brown facilitated the creation of Bolacha Maria, a female counterpart to

the Timbalada. His solo album is due out on EMI in the first half of this year.

In recent years an intense Carnival rivalry has surfaced between Rio de Janeiro and Bahia (more in political, business and media circles than among the people), becoming more bitter over the past three years as the violence in Rio has gained international infamy. There are those who were betting long before Fat Tuesday that Manguera had no chance of winning the samba

school championship simply because of the Bahian content of its *enredo*. And in fact, despite near-universal popularity, the judges struck Manguera down. The evidence of this rivalry persists, and every Brazilian has his or her preference, but for one observing with the eyes of a foreigner, both are awe-inspiring—Rio, in all the pomp and splendor of the world's most spectacular Carnival show, and Bahia as the consummate street carnival. ★



PHOTO BY JOSÉ REMATO

The Universal Urban Language

By Monica Cavalcanti

Long dreadlocks falling into his face, a silver "savage bull" nose-ring, a pacifier and a chronometer hanging around his neck ("because Bahians are always late"), composer, singer and percussionist Carlinhos Brown is one of Brazil's biggest sensations at the moment. Since the mid-'80s, Brown has been identified with the boom in Bahian music. In his own right, he has been a major force behind the re-Africanization of Brazilian music and has created some great new rhythms.

The 30-year-old revolutionary Bahia-born artist has worked with MPB stalwarts Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, João Gilberto, Gal Costa, João Bosco and many others during his 15-year career. He has also recorded with great international musicians such as saxophonist Wayne Shorter, pianist Herbie Hancock and guitarist Lee Ritenour.

Regarding his work on the highly acclaimed *Bahia Black* recording, Brown related: "We worked basically on the harmonic experimentation of sounds and words. With *Bahia Black*, we wanted to create different ways to make songs, and man, I must say, I loved it."

Seeking new outlets of expression for his Afro-Brazilian roots, Brown was an essential contributor to Sergio Mendes' *Brasileiro*, which won the 1992 Grammy for best world music album, composing and playing on five of the tracks.

Bahia is one of the few places in Brazil that does not follow the rules of the music industry. It

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cultivates its own regional market through independent labels, which released some 100 albums in 1993 to the local population. By 1986 the young artist was already a radio phenomenon, and awarded the Troféu Caymmi, the biggest prize in Bahian music. During that time, his songs were played on Northeastern stations 40 to 50 times a day, and at one point, 26 of his songs were on the hit parade simultaneously.

But Brown got his real chance within and out of Brazil in 1988, when he worked with Caetano Veloso's band. On *Estrangeiro*, he composed "Meia Lua Inteira." "Working with him synthe-



110 percussionists playing 35 timbales, 20 *surdos*, 10 *bacurinhas*, 15 torpedos, as well as *agogos*, triangles, clefts and cowbells, plus guitar, keyboards, and horns. Other leading members of Timbalada are Xexeu, Patrícia Gomes, Fialuna, Augusto Conceição, Alexandre Guedes and Cabo Del.

"The idea is to recreate the sound of Carnival," Brown explained. Most of the band members come from Candeal, a poor neighborhood where Brown grew up. When they take to the streets, they attract at least 10,000 spectators. He doesn't hesitate to talk about his contribution to the establishment of the blocos afros movement: "I am a child of this movement and I was one of those who brought out the best in the music. Timbalada is a result of innovation on the samba-reggae and *fricote*."

Produced last August with Wesley Rangel, Timbalada's album is already a great success in Brazil, especially the tracks "Canto Pro Mar" and "Beija-Flor." "Some people used to say that I could be making a lot of money, but right now I prefer to

invest in the future. It is bullshit to say that Bahia supports her culture. Bahians are just like everybody else: They need to survive. I mean, options are limited in a place like this. The illiteracy rate is very bad and the original *blocos afros* are the ones who finish last."

The hit of Bahia's 1993 carnival, Timbalada's wild sound has conquered Brazil and is ready to break across international borders. "I want to use the timbal to show the ideas of today's percussion in a contemporary language. That's why my biggest influence is what happens on the streets," Brown noted. "I haven't done only Bahian music. I did Brazilian music because I am in Brazil, but the sound is a universal urban language."

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sized all of my ideas. Caetano was one of the only people who gave me a true musical education," Carlinhos noted. "Meia Lua Inteira is a homage to the martyrs, from Jesus Christ to Chico Mendes, and others yet to come."

In 1989, the singer/composer created Timbalada, a musical riot where the *timbaleiros* play samba reggae, *xote*, funk, *fricote*, rap and other sounds in an authentic conjunction of rhythms. The band is made up of



PHOTO BY JOSÉ RENATO

