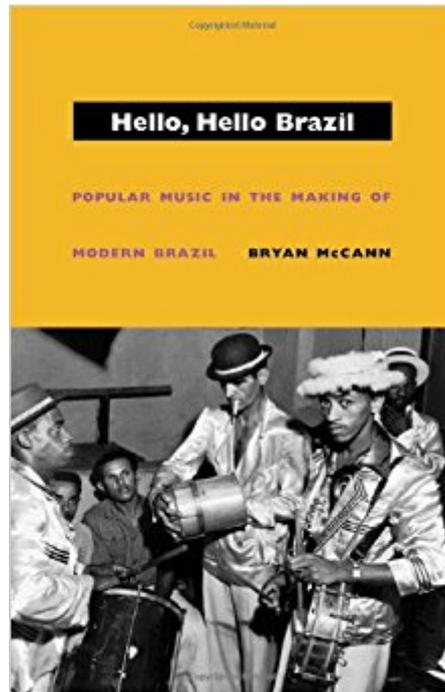


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Hello, Hello Brazil: Popular Music In The Making Of Modern Brazil



Synopsis

“Hello, hello Brazil” was the standard greeting Brazilian radio announcers of the 1930s used to welcome their audience into an expanding cultural marketplace. New genres like samba and repackaged older ones like choro served as the currency in this marketplace, minted in the capital in Rio de Janeiro and circulated nationally by the burgeoning recording and broadcasting industries. Bryan McCann chronicles the flourishing of Brazilian popular music between the 1920s and the 1950s. Through analysis of the competing projects of composers, producers, bureaucrats, and fans, he shows that Brazilians alternately envisioned popular music as the foundation for a unified national culture and used it as a tool to probe racial and regional divisions. McCann explores the links between the growth of the culture industry, rapid industrialization, and the rise and fall of Getúlio Vargas’s Estado Novo dictatorship. He argues that these processes opened a window of opportunity for the creation of enduring cultural patterns and demonstrates that the understandings of popular music cemented in the mid-twentieth century continue to structure Brazilian cultural life in the early twenty-first.

Book Information

Paperback: 312 pages

Publisher: Duke University Press Books (May 4, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0822332736

ISBN-13: 978-0822332732

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.8 x 8.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars See all reviews (3 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

This is a fascinating book that begins a much needed investigation into how the politics of Getúlio Vargas’ “Estado Novo” were tied to the development of many of the trends that led to overt “Brasildade” in popular music. McCann argues that these relationships were intricately connected and complicated as he balances the varying ideas of nationalism, commercialism, and creativity.

McCann carefully traces concurrent histories of radio development, musical development, the influence of the US, the invention of choro as traditional music, fan culture, advertising, and regional styles in a rich and deeply nuanced tale. McCann gets most of his sources from radio archives, which clearly come from work he did for his dissertation. Fittingly, his discussion is framed by the rise and fall of radio as the primary medium for entertainment in Brazil. As a music scholar, I was a little sad to see that McCann's discussions of music were limited to the lyrics of the songs he described. When he attempted to discuss rhythm (essential to any discussion of the samba or choro), he was reduced to using syllables like "tam tam-tam" which hardly do the music any justice. Understandably, McCann is not a trained music scholar, but in this period of interdisciplinarity, I was surprised by its complete absence. Additionally, the chapter on fan clubs and auditorium shows marked the only point in McCann's book where he lost his momentum and got bogged down by details. Otherwise, the book is a thorough and fun read.

Intensely Captivating Bryan McCann covers the rise of samba in the first half of the twentieth-century with the literate swing of a songwriter, covering the ascents and descents of its key movements and composers while laying open the social and political impulses that informed and influenced the eras. His virtuosity as a researcher and writer is seen in his panoptic scope- from detailing the machinations behind the rise of Radio Nacional, to amplifying the overlooked voices of the fan club loyalists of 50's era Samba CanÃfÂ§ÃfÂ£o singers, one feels a sense of delightful privilege to being in the passenger seat of his well-conducted tour. McCann brings needed context in his analyses of key song lyrics of several eras and connects the dots in a very compelling way between seemingly disparate social phenomenon. I'd be very curious to know how a Portuguese language version of this title would be received :).

For any who are interested in the effect Getlio Vargas's nationalism as projected via 1920s radio's promotion of the Samba had upon the national character, I find "Hello Hello Brazil" a fascinating book. I got into this field because the Bossa Nova seduced my musical tastes. I had to know more. Clearly Rui Castro's book on the subject, plus a book entitled "The Brazilian Sound" by Chris McGowan and Ricardo Pessanha told me much. "Hello, Hello Brazil" though scholarly oriented, fills in many of the blanks. I'm still reading it and I can barely put it down.

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