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## The Sound of Brazil

### *Moro No Brasil*

(Docu -- Germany-Brazil-Finland)

A Magnatel and Marianna Films production in association with YLE, TV Cultura and Lichtblick. Produced by Phoebe Clarke. Executive producer, Hans Robert Eisenhauer. Co-producers, Frank Scharf, Joachim Ortmanns, Mika Kaurismaki. Directed, written by Mika Kaurismaki, adapted by Kaurismaki, George Moura.

**With:** Grupo Gleetwtxya, Children Fulni-o, Grupo Fethxa, Setka, Band Fulni-o, Tavares da Gaita, Joao do Pifano, Silverio Pessoa, Banda de Pifanos de Caruaru, Jacinto Silva, Cambina Brasileira, Maracatus Rurals de Pernambuco, Mestre Salustiano, Antonio and Gabriel Nobrega, Ze Nequinho do Coco, Caju and Castanha, Darue Malungo, Maje Mole, Afoxe Alafin Oyo, Afoxe Oxum Panda, Grupo Cultural Banguncaco, Margareth Menezes, Walter Alfeiate, Seu Jorge, Gabriel Moura, Dona Zelia, Velha Guarda de Mangueira, Quincas, Ivo Meirelles, Funk'n Lata, Zenith.

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By DENNIS HARVEY

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**You can't accuse Mika Kaurismaki of dilettantism in his love of Brazilian music - - the Finnish director grew so deeply smitten he's actually moved to Rio de Janeiro and opened a live-performance venue. His feature docu "The Sound of Brazil" takes a loose, unevenly educational but often exhilarating sweep through that nation's diverse indigenous music. Commercial prospects are upbeat for pic to access world-music fans in many territories via arthouse and broadcast by following the trail blazed by "Buena Vista Social Club."**

Pic takes the form of a north-to-south travelogue, with Kaurismaki logging some 2,500 miles as he journeys from the remotest Indian lands (visiting the Tribe Fulni-O, whose customs seem frozen in an ancient time) through various villages, cities and at last to Rio. "Sound of Brazil's" least appealing feature -- really the only unappealing one -- is tall, blond, ever-sunglassed helmer's own ubiquitousness on-camera, which only emphasizes "cultural tourist" aspect the doc otherwise largely transcends. (Print screened had his voiceover narration in English; given his multilingual fluency, presumably Portuguese- and Finnish-language versions do or will exist.)

Bits of historical, regional and musical-subgenre specifics come through occasionally. But docu is less interested in explaining the incredibly complex range of Brazilian music -- with its tangled influences from indigenous peoples, African slaves, Portuguese and other European emigres -- than in simply offering a vibrant current sampler.

Emphasis is on music's role in everyday life, as opposed to its showbiz appeal. While numerous well-known singers and instrumentalists appear here, Kaurismaki stresses their often impoverished roots, as well as individuals and organizations that use music (and dance) to empower slum dwellers who might otherwise slip into an underworld of drugs and prostitution.

Performance highlights among many include those by Caju and Castanha, street-busker stars of the improvisational rap/percussive *embolada* form; dynamic women's dance troupe Maje Mole; and punkily white-haired Seu Jorge, a hip-hop/rock/samba fusionist who has proudly remained in his dirt-poor Rio neighborhood to encourage others with his celebrity success. Climactic clip of him on a rooftop with one satellite band, Funk'n Lata, is a virtual musicvideo in itself -- and a terrific one.

Despite the often grinding poverty onscreen, tenor is insistently upbeat, taking its cues not only from the persuasive music, but also from the frequent sight of spectacular native costumes and celebrations (encompassing far more than just the expected Carnivale scenes). Jacques Cheuiche's lensing is, thus, drunk on color; editor Karen Harley manages to maintain interest through the long, episodic, potentially exhausting sameness of high-energy progress. Live musical sound recording is exceptionally good.

Camera (color), Jacques Cheuiche; editor, Karen Harley; sound (Dolby Digital), Cristiano Maciel; sound designers (Dolby Digital), Uwe Dresch, Robert Faust. Reviewed at San Francisco Film Festival, April 19, 2002. Running time: 108 MIN.