

Jon Gold Biography

While most recording artists are focused on achieving gold and platinum, California bred, NYC-area based pianist/composer Jon Gold tells a fantastic story about being the first person ever to singlehandedly melt a diamond that has followed him since his grad school days at Cornell, where he was studying to be a chemist.

On his new, highly anticipated Zoho recording *Brazil Confidential*, Gold takes his lifelong talent for chemistry to a whole new creative level. He combines his deep immersion into Brazilian music, a rich array of jazz influences and his natural melodic and harmonic sensibilities into an exciting melting pot with a batch of renowned Brazilian musicians working under producer and guitarist Scott "Scottinho" Anderson. The eclectic 12 track collection, which also features renowned bassist Harvie S., was recorded mainly in New York City—but some parts, like the vocals for "Confissao," a beautiful song about a rainy day in Rio he wrote with Ivan Lins' producer/arranger Luis Ribiero, were recorded by Tatiana Para in Sao Paulo.

As the brilliant liner notes by Greg Hillis, host of "Aqui Se Puede," KCSB-FM in Santa Barbara, explain, each song on *Brazil Confidential* has a singular inspiration. A few examples: "Alem Do Azul" translates to "Beyond The Blue," based on a "stars beyond the stars" concept Coltrane once talked about; the song is dedicated to Gold's mother in law Esther. "Funky Jabour" is a tribute to legendary musician Hermeto Pascoal, whose house was in a hot and funky suburb of Rio called Bairro Jabour. "Teresinha" is a saint who lives in Gold's house. Gold wrote "Singela" after watching his wife Caroline napping on the couch one winter afternoon. "Paraty" is a small colonial town on a beautiful tropical bay a few hours south of Rio.

"The album brings together an important phase of my life by paying tribute to Brazil and the great musical influences there that have affected my development as a songwriter and performer," says Gold. "As a whole, the project sums up over 20 years of my life and the connections I have had to that country, sort of like a love letter, as if I'm giving something back. I'm taking stock of all that energy and reflecting on the incredible respect for the place, its people and its culture. I see Brazil like an onion, and the more layers of skin you peel, the deeper it fascinates me."

Digging deeper into Gold's multi-faceted history brings us back to the serendipitous "diamond melting" tale. While also taking classes taught by legendary astronomer Carl Sagan, Gold worked with the brilliant geophysicist William Bassett on an experiment involving the Diamond Anvil Cell, two gem quality diamonds with the points ground to a small face. Since diamonds are transparent, one can focus a laser on the sample in the cell and generate very high temperatures which can simulate conditions inside the earth's mantle.

"We were working on the understanding the behavior of the element Carbon by placing small amounts of graphite in the cell and observing their behavior," he says. "I had noticed that the laser we were using was not working as well as it should. I had made some adjustments to the optical elements but began an experiment still running the laser at very high powers. When I began to run the laser across the face of the diamond, incredible amounts of light were produced from the heating of the diamond face and a small TV camera used to monitor the experiment began to smoke. It was quite dramatic and I thought that perhaps I had destroyed some very expensive equipment and that my graduate career was over!

“I retained the diamonds,” he says, “and quietly began to study them under the electron microscope. It became clear that something very interesting had occurred and that indeed the face in contact with the sample at high pressure had a “furrow” due to melting.”

Riffing on this colorful incident and his surname, the chemist/musician called his 2000 independent debut *Aqua Regia*, a term for a mixture of acids that dissolve gold—as if to tell the world that Brazil, where he lived and taught at the Catholic University of Rio De Janeiro from 1990-95, had melted his heart. Gold grew up playing classical music (from Bach and Chopin to Ravel, Janacek and Poulenc) and went crazy in the 70s for jazz legends John Coltrane and McCoy Tyner, whose solos Gold transcribed and recorded note for note. While learning to play piano, he also studied jazz improvisation with saxophone legend Joe Henderson.

Building on this diverse background, Brazilian music became a driving creative force in Gold’s life. He developed an early love for Sergio Mendes and *Brasil ’66*, then dug further into the catalogs of Milton Nascimento, pop singer Ivan Lins, the legendary Antonio Carlos Jobim (whom he later got to meet) and the lesser known indigenous sounds of the northeast region. His heart was also captured by a Brazilian woman, Caroline, who became his wife. Even after moving back to the Bay Area of California (he’s a native of Palo Alto), he formed a Brazilian band called *Caravana* with Brazilian singer Claudia Villela.

Then there’s the chemistry side of Gold’s joyfully schizophrenic resume. His interest in chemistry grew out of his original desire to become a winemaker. He became involved with a small group of friends who also loved wine and we began to buy grapes and produce wine. As the member of the group with the highest proclivity towards science, he began to study and understand this chemistry and the techniques of chemistry so that they might be applied. After studying at Cornell, he received his Ph.D. in Chemistry from UC Santa Cruz, where he had done his undergraduate studies. Not long after becoming aware of Brazilian music through possession of the classic Sergio Mendes album *Equinox*, he moved to South America for the teaching position at PUC-RIO, an era which changed his life.

Ironically, despite his glorious history with the country and its culture, the pianist doesn’t see the *Brazil Confidential* as “Jon Gold’s Brazilian Album”—it’s more like a full reflection of the entire scope of his musical background, which perfectly combines his love for Brazil and, he laughs, “all my baggage as a jazz musician. If you listen to ‘Vitamin B’, you can hear a little homage to Coltrane’s ‘A Love Supreme.’ That’s what makes this unique, that I didn’t set out to do a Brazilian album.

“To me,” he says, “it sounds honest, organic, with none of the clichés that are always tempting when American born musicians tackle the music of an exotic culture. So I like to say it’s not jazz or Brazilian music, it’s just my music. My goal is to make music that’s both challenging and accessible, that draws people in while also giving them something that stretches their imagination. I see a strong connection between my two lives because creativity is the mother of all great science. Music and science are incredibly human and deeply emotional and I’m thrilled that both continue to be part of my life.”

For bookings contact management@jongold.com or call 845-353-3643. www.jongold.com

Discography



Brazil Confidential

Zoho Music 2010



Aqua Regia

Pacific Street 2000

Brazil Confidential



Songs

1. **Além Do Azul** 8:01
2. **Funky Jabour** 3:30
3. **Teresinha** 4:50
4. **Carioca Da Clara** 5:07
5. **Confissão** 6:12
6. **Singela** 3:45
7. **Vitamin B** 2:10
8. **Paraty** 6:41
9. **Parafuso A Menos** 2:41
10. **Janacek Suite No. 4** 2:29
11. **Rapadura** 7:44
12. **Parazen** 6:32

Musicians

Jon Gold piano and keyboards
Harvie S bass (1-4, 7-9, 11)
Mauricio Zottarelli drums (1-4, 7-9, 11)
Jorge Continentino woodwinds (1,3,4,11)
Scott "Scottinho" Anderson guitars (1,3,4,5,7,8,12)
Ze Mauricio percussion (1-5, 7-9, 11)
Anat Cohen woodwinds (2,7,9)
Zach Brock violin (1,9)
Andrew Sterman flute (2,7,9)
Bryan Murray woodwinds (2,7,8)
Luiz Ribeiro guitar (5)
Toninho Ferragutti accordion (11)
Tatiana Parra vocals (5)
Leah Siegel vocals (8, 12, 5 backup)
Katie Scheele English horn (6, 10)
Lauren Riley Rigby cello (12)

All compositions: Jon Gold. Publisher and copyright for all compositions: © 2010 Jon Stuart Gold Music (ASCAP).

Lyrics on "Confissão": Luiz Ribeiro. Produced by Scott "Scottinho" Anderson. Sample of Mestre Acordeon used by permission of Ubirajara Gumaraes Almeida. Rapadura coda *pifano* arrangement by Jorge Continentino.

Recorded at Kaleidoscope Studios, Union City, NJ, Madureira Sound, Brooklyn, NY, and Sao Paulo, Brazil, November 2008 - June 2009.

Mixed by Scott Anderson with technical assistance by Steve Rodby.

Mastered at Universal Studios. Mastering by Seth Foster.

Quotes about Brazil Confidential

"Jon Gold is a wonderfully soulful pianist...I was delighted to hear how his music has grown and evolved in a very insightful and delicate direction that speaks directly and powerfully to the listener. Using interesting instrumental combinations, a wide compositional palette and featuring an all-star cast of American & Brazilian musicians,"Brazilian Confidential" will reward repeated listenings".

Tim Jackson
Director of the Monterey Jazz Festival

"...Intricate arrangements with a lively sense of rhythm, this recording of Jon Gold's music is attractive and full of a palpable joie de vivre. You will be entertained for sure."

Dave Liebman
saxophonist

"...a music that is at once tunefully melodic and harmonically complex...His piano style is expansive and orchestral, providing a deep harmonic base to the remainder of his band. Gold boasts a special interest in writing for the audience...composing complex music that is readily accessible and enjoyable."

AllAboutJazz.com

"The new release by Jon Gold "Brazil Confidential" it's the now connection between Bossa Nova and the New Brazilian music of the 21 Century. I play and the listeners love it."

Jassvan DeLima
DJ, Producer and Host of Som do Brasil (WKCR - NY)

"...Gold's compositions are some of the best Brazilian-influenced music I have ever heard."

ThisIsBooksMusic.com

"... this is very well-played, catchy, lively, 'glass is completely full' World music to make you smile."

JsoJazzScene.org/cdreviews.htm

"...superb music that displays the kind of energy and talent you seldom hear these days. I'm highly impressed, and that takes some doing these days... I give this wonderful CD a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, with an "EQ" (energy quotient) rating of 4.96."

Dick Metcalf, aka Rotcod Zzaj
zzaj.freehostia.com

Reviews of Brazil Confidential

March 12, 2010

AboutJazz.com

By C. Michael Bailey

Moving north from Argentina to Brazil, the music becomes creamier, more richly nuanced. San Francisco cum NYC native Jon Gold takes a more impressionistic approach to Brazilian music on *Brazil Confidential*. Gold holds a Ph.D. in Chemistry which he combined with his interest in music, moving to Rio de Janeiro to teach at the Pontificia Universidade Catolica, woodshedding at night and making friends with the likes of composers A.C Jobim and Hermeto Pascoal. At the confluence of these circumstances lies a music that is at once tunefully melodic and harmonically complex.

Gold's music has many moving parts realized in such a way to give an overall impressionistic opacity where the instruments fade in and out of one another. His piano style is expansive and orchestral, providing a deep harmonic base to the remainder of his band. The prominent voices here are Gold's, Jorge Continentino's soprano saxophone (particularly on "Rapadura") and Andrew Serman's flute. Bassist Harvie S, a Zoho mainstay, firmly grounds Gold's complex compositions and solos deftly on "Teresinha," which also sports Continentino's soprano saxophone.

Gold boasts a special interest in writing for the audience. He largely achieves this, composing complex music that is readily accessible and enjoyable. His embrace of Brazilian culture is potently evident in his music, making him a worthy addition to the ranks of Zoho Music.

February 19, 2010

Midwest Record

Volume 33/Number 110

By Chris Spector, Editor and Publisher

Until the flutes kick in, this doesn't really seem like a Brazil oriented record. Even then, it seems more like keyboard ace Gold is going for a supreme position in impressionistic, progressive chamber jazz.

Rounding first and heading into the rest of the record, it comes together as a breezy, delightful adult set of Brazil flavored jazz/funk lite that just feels like closing up the home office Friday afternoon and putting the smart phone on vibrate as you get the weekend kicked off properly.

This is a cat that knows how to get it done and surround himself with jazzbos that play like they do it for the fun of it above all else.

Clearly an adult instrumental winner that'll keep you coming back for more.

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March 2010
JazzChicago.net
by Brad Walseth

Pianist/composer AND chemistry professor Jon Gold's love of Brazilian music led to him living and teaching in Rio where he met and befriended many in the Brazilian music community including Jobim and Pascoal. That the classically trained jazz pianist absorbed the sounds of the land well as is very apparent on his new CD - Brazil Confidential.

The opening track, "Alem do Azul (Beyond the Blue)" starts off with Harvie S.' bowed bass, and features Jorge Continentino's flute dancing above Gold's shimmering piano. The rhythm section of drummer Mauricio Zottarelli and percussionist Ze Mauricio are simply first rate - and violinist Zach Brock solos wonderfully at the end. You can feel the heat of the Rio streets when woodwind player Anat Cohen joins the fun on "Funky Jabour" - she is on soprano - with Bryan Murray on tenor and Andrew Serman on flute playing almost impossibly difficult intricate parts on this "funky indeed" number. Producer Scott "Scottinho" Anderson also provides excellent guitar work throughout - "Teresinha" is a perfect example of his exceptional nylon string work. Gold here adds B-3 color along with his piano, Harvie S. has a great bass solo, as does Continentino on alto and Mauricio propels everything with his berimbau.

Meanwhile, catchy tracks like "Carioca Da Clara" and "Paraty" show Gold has not forgotten his love of the Sergio Mendes-flavored Brazilian-flavored pop. Tatiana Parra and Leah Siegal add some lovely vocals on a couple tunes (Parra on the haunting "Confissao" - which also features Luiz Ribeiro on guitar), Katie Scheele enhances "Singela" (and "Janacek Suite #4") with her English horn, "Vitamin B" and the high energy "Parafuso a Menos" shows Gold's playful nature (while featuring stellar ensemble playing), while his "Janacek Suite No. 4" clearly shows his skills as a classical composer.

The delightful "Rapadura" features Toninho Ferrgutti on accordion and Gold on melodica and is one of several memorable tunes. As if that isn't enough instrumentation, Lauren Riley Rigby's cello combines with Anderson's guitar, Gold's tasteful piano and Siegal's wordless vocals on the album ending "Parazen."

Throughout the album, the compositions are colorful, deeply layered and impeccably structured with interesting changes and melodic verve. A delight for fans of Brazilian music (like me) many of the songs reference towns or regions of Brazil and will have your mind wandering to sandy beaches and blue sky over splashing waves.

March 2010
ThisIsBooksMusic.com

Jon Gold's Brazil Confidential (Zoho) begins ceremoniously with "Além Do Azul", where everyone in his group starting up and creating an aura of wonder. When Anat Cohen plays the flute and breathes with each sound, I'm gone. I'm already loving this, and Gold hasn't even started to play. When he does, what you begin to hear is a sound that merges jazz and classical, and at times gets into that touchy John Tesh new age hoo-haa but without getting hokey.

What makes it not hokey is that this sounds true to me, especially as Gold, Cohen, and violinist Zack Brock harmonize together to create something that sounds like it would fit in well on a Chuck Mangione album circa 1972. Gold and friends are musical explorers, and that's what I like, songs that go past the 4 minute mark so I can hop on their journey to listen and learn. Tracks like "Carioca Da Clara", "Paraty", "Parafuso A Menos", and "Funky Jabour" are not for those who live a sedentary lifestyle, you can't help but groove to these tracks. It was almost a downer when "Além Do Azul" started to fade, as it could have went on for four minutes past its final 8:01 mark

Brazil Confidential is perhaps a more sophisticated sound of Brazil than what most are used to, yet a deeper listen will tell you that the streets of Brazil can go from smooth sailing to trauma in the favelas, and this album ties both vibes together with ease. The music represents the people, the culture, and the land in their own unique way, and Gold's compositions are some of the best Brazilian-influenced music I have ever heard.