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## Dusty Groove gets groovier

Posted by Peter Margasak on 07.12.07 at 05:51 PM

Already a great record shop and mail-order service, [Dusty Groove](#) in Wicker Park recently expanded its business even further, becoming something of a record label. In the last couple of months it's released five out-of-print albums on CD, all of them licensed from Universal Music. If any retailer is in a position to start a label, it's Dusty Groove. The store sells tons of second-hand vinyl all over the world, so it has a pretty good idea how much demand there is for a particular item, and owner Rick Wojcik routinely tracks down releases from all over the planet—Brazil, France, South Korea—so he's got a pretty good handle on what's available.

The first batch of releases, unsurprisingly, appeals to a very particular niche market, and Wojcik considers it as a test run to determine whether it's worth doing more in the future. An album like *Seasons* by keyboardist [Pete Jolly](#) (a jazz-fusion record marked by a wide array of electric piano, organs, and Wurlitzer) is the kind of music only a crate-digger could love, but titles like *Funky Skull* by [Melvin Jackson](#) (who plays an almost psychedelic, effects-heavy upright bass over taut, heavy grooves) and *The Rubaiyat* of Dorothy Ashby (a trippy and funky jazz session inspired by the work of Omar Khayyam that features [Ashby](#) on untypical string instruments like harp and koto) deliver a broader, if still limited, appeal.

To me the new label is already a success, if for no other reason than its reissue of *Força Bruta*, a brilliant 1970 album by Brazil's [Jorge Ben](#) and the first of his many collaborations with the funky soul group [Trio Mocoto](#). Ben's ability to transplant samba tunes into deeply soulful, often funky settings was simply stunning. Gorgeous string arrangements swaddle many of the tunes, but it's Ben's characteristic acoustic-guitar riffs and Mocoto's jacked-up grooves that make the record tick. Ben never had the greatest set of pipes, but few musicians have turned an imperfect voice into such a valuable asset, reinforcing the rhythmic agility of his songs with pin-point phrasing, surprising intervallic leaps, and a plaintive kind of moan.

I was asked to write some liner notes for the reissue, but I ended up passing on the offer, partly because information about Ben's career and development is practically non-existent in the States, aside from thumbnail bios that only offer the slightest insight. It's astonishing, really, that Ben—one of the most successful, deep, and influential musicians to emerge from Brazil in the last four decades—hasn't been the subject of more substantial analysis. Hell, a bunch of his classics from the late 60s and early 70s remain unavailable. I sure hope that if Dusty Groove continues its reissue program, more albums by Jorge Ben will see the light of day.

Tags: Record Stores, Dusty Groove, Jorge Ben