



THINKFilm

A denizen of one of Rio's worst slums — or favelas — surveys the hustle of the streets in the documentary "Favela Rising."

Keeping the beat

'Favela Rising' documents the music that inspired residents of Rio's slums

By DENNIS KING
World Scene Writer

The shantytown slums that cling to the hills around Rio de Janeiro are some of the grimmest and most hopeless places on Earth. Called favelas, they exist within sight of Rio's sunny beaches, luxurious tourist hotels and garish nightclubs, but the poor residents of these areas live in feudal states of fear and deprivation, ruled over by brutal drug lords and corrupt cops.

That was their inevitable fate until about 13 years ago, when the pulsing sounds of music — music invested with social outrage and messages of self-empowerment — arose in the soft Brazilian air.

It was the music of Afro-Reggae, a feverish amalgam of rap, hip-hop, bossa nova, rock and Cajun rhythms that signaled the rise of a cultural self-help movement that has revolutionized life in the favelas.

That's the subject of "Favela Rising," an inspiring, upbeat documentary from Matt Mochary and Jeff Zimbalist that traces the rise of Afro-Reggae and examines the up-and-down lives of its two founders, Anderson Sa and Jose Junior.

Sa, a former low-level street soldier for the Red Command drug cartel, and Junior, a believer in the "Shiva effect," a principle named after the dualistic Hindu god of destruction and rebirth, founded the grassroots neighborhood movement after Sa's brother died in a drug shoot-out.

Rooted in the idea that music has the power to deliver potent messages that can transform people's lives, the duo formed the band Afro-Reggae (with the bespectacled Sa as lead singer and songwriter) and began putting on free concerts that were openly defiant of drug gangs and corrupt city officials.

By recruiting young people to train in drumming, dance, music, writing and other art forms, the movement grew into Grupo Afro-Reggae, a community-action group that arose in Vigario Geral (one of the worst favelas) and eventually spread to several other slums. Followers were urged to reject drugs, violence and alcohol and to dedicate themselves to bettering life in their local neighborhoods.

Employing lots of talking-head interviews, mainly with Sa and Junior recalling the hardships, gang wars and death threats they endured in fostering the movement, and a rigorous celebratory message of solidarity and self-help, "Favela Rising" has the contours of a standard conscientious documentary of social change.

It tells a fine and uplifting story of overcoming grim odds (especially in an unexpected third-act turn in which Sa is left paralyzed by a surfing accident) and rallying good people to a worthy cause.

But the movie truly comes to vivid

SEE 'FAVELA' D-5

movie review "FAVELA RISING"

Theaters:
Circle 2 (12 S. Lewis Ave. — call 593-FILM for show times)

Studio:
THINKFilm

Running Time:
80 minutes

Rated:
Not rated (adult language, scenes of violence)

Quality:
★★★
(on a scale of zero to four stars)



B. FEINSTEIN, T. WILKES, A. PARISER/Courtesy of Apple Films Inc.

George Harrison (left), Bob Dylan and Leon Russell in the "Concert for Bangladesh," a benefit concert that brought together major artists for a common humanitarian cause. The concert special airs at 10 pm. Aug. 8 on KOED, channel 11.

Music that made a difference

'Concert for Bangladesh' featured during 'AugustFest'

By RITA SHERROW
World Television Editor

The beat goes on during "AugustFest" on the Oklahoma Educational Television Network, Tuesday through Aug. 13.

The annual summer pledge drive, known for its musical flashes from the past, is offering up a real classic this time.

"The Concert for Bangladesh," the first-ever all-star benefit concert, will be broadcast at 10 p.m. Aug. 8 on KOED, channel 11.

Organized by ex-Beatle George Harrison and his friend, sitar master Ravi Shankar, the concert was designed to raise money for starving Pakistani refugees from Bangladesh.

Organized in a matter of days, the concert was held on Aug. 1, 1971. The sold-out Madison Square Garden in New York City showed, for the first time, that music could be used to advance an international humanitarian cause.

It was a landmark event that brought together the foremost artists of the time on one stage. There was guitar slinger Eric Clapton with another former Beatle, Ringo Starr, and Beatles sidekick Billy Preston alongside Bob Dylan.

The other headliner, Tulsa's own Leon Russell, brought with him a handful of other Tulsans to the show. In fact, there were more people from Tulsa on stage than from any other city on the planet.

Russell, whose performance of "Jumping Jack Flash" and "Youngblood," electrified the concert crowd, supplied keyboards, bass and vocals for the other performers. He, Dylan and Harrison stood stage center for the final set of the show.

But in the background were other members of the Mad Dogs and Englishmen tour, musicians who would tour with Dylan and Harrison, as well as with Russell in the years to follow.

There were drummer Jim Keltner, bassist Carl Radle and Okla-

homa City guitarist Jesse Ed Davis.

Among the songs featured are "Here Comes the Sun," "Something," "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," "My Sweet Lord," "Just Like a Woman," "Blowin' in the Wind" and "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall."

The "Concert for Bangladesh" paved the way for all major musical benefits that would follow — from Band Aid to Farm Aid and Live Aid.

The concert lives on through a Grammy Award-winning triple-album box set, a feature film and DVDs that continue to raise millions for UNICEF.

The concert documentary includes interviews with the performers, highlights of the concert and the making of the show, including footage of rehearsals and sound checks, with Harrison and Shankar.

"AugustFest" continues its musical bent with a number of other specials including:

"Magic Moments: The Best of the

'50s," 7 p.m. Tuesday.

"Grand Ole Opry's Vintage Classics," 7 p.m. Thursday.

"Patsy Cline — Sweet Dreams Still," 10 p.m. Thursday.

"Johnny Cash: Anthology," 8 p.m. Aug. 9.

"Andre Rieu: The Homecoming," 8 p.m. Aug. 6.

"Yanni: Live! The Concert Event," 9 p.m. Aug. 7.

"Marty Robbins: Seems Like Yesterday," 7 p.m. Aug. 9.

"Neil Sedaka: The Show Goes On," 9:30 p.m. Aug. 10.

"Chicago/Earth Wind and Fire Live at the Greek Theatre," 11 p.m. Aug. 7.

Also featured will be **"Blue Man Group: Inside the Tube,"** at 7 p.m.

Aug. 8, which introduces viewers to the group's unique creative process.

The event wraps up Aug. 13 with the **"Best of AugustFest"** featuring the top pledge programs.

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Nightingale production seeks performers with unusual talents

By KAREN SHADE
World Scene Writer

Crispy's been gone a long time, but he's back in Tulsa, looking for new talent to add to his family-friendly sideshow curiosity.

Crispy Knight, founder of the Crispy Family Sideshow Carnival, and other performers will be at the Nightingale Theater, 1416 E. Fourth St., from 7-10 p.m. Saturday for its Sideshow Idol competition. And while you may boast a dynamite set of vocal cords, Knight and his troupe could be more interested in your more unusual talents.

"It's a spoof on the whole 'American Idol' thing going on," said the professional sword-swallower. "We're actually doing it for a talent contest. We're looking for new talent. Now that we've moved, we're having to replace some people who are back in Denver."

Spectators are invited to watch the

fun, the voting and the outcome. Tickets are \$5.

Knight left the Tulsa area for Denver eight years ago. Before moving from Denver, Knight and the vaudeville-type act traveled to many parts of the country performing in theaters and clubs, at outdoor festivals, at rock concerts, tattoo conventions and sideshow conventions.

Now that he has returned to be closer to family, he is interested in recruiting magicians, acrobats, trapeze artists, contortionists and jugglers, to name a few.

"Of course, a good juggler is always good to have. I'm a very mediocre juggler, so I like to find a good one," he said.

If he doesn't count juggling among his best skills, Knight has a long list of other talents. According to the act's Web site, www.crispyfamily.com, he performs acts called glass walking, bed of

nails, human pincushion, eating fire, human dartboard and concrete block smash.

His fiance, who performs under the stage name of the Amazing Boobzilla, participates in some of his routines, but she has her own set of stunts as a unique strong-woman act, he said.

Knight also will have a few other performers moving to the area, and they will all be on hand to judge Saturday's contest, which already has several acts signed to try out. He hopes to recruit at least four new acts into the sideshow family and meet potential guest performers.

"When you work together doing this type of stuff, it really becomes family. You've got to trust each other on stage because we're up there doing a lot of dangerous stuff and you get a real bond with all the people you're performing with," he said.

While the sideshow carnival has a few hard-core, dangerous stunts, Knight saves those for special performances. Most of their shows are geared toward family entertainment, he said.

"Pretty much all of our act is built around a punchline or story ... We try to make it more family-oriented, more vaudeville-oriented. It's a classic form," he said.

After he has completed the sideshow's final lineup, Knight said he plans to begin booking the act in area venues.

Sideshow Idol contestants must be at least 18, and performances should not include any nudity, abrasive language or adult content.

For more about the contest and event, call Nightingale Theater at 583-8487.

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