

Time Out New York

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Also opening

Saudade do Futuro

Dir. Cesar Paes. 2000. N/R. 94mins. In Portuguese, with subtitles.

Documentary. São Paulo's vibrant street-musician culture is the subject of this documentary. (Opens Wed 20; Film Forum. Reviewed in next issue.)

Critics' picks

All-Documentary Version!

Saudade do Futuro

(Film Forum) Groove with the street musicians of São Paulo—and learn something about bigotry and resilience while you're tanning your feet

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Saudade do Futuro

Dir. Cesar Paes. 2000. N/R. 94mins. In Portuguese, with subtitles. Documentary.

Those who have seen Godfrey Reggio's empty-headed dystopian techno flick *Koyaanisqatsi* might have to stifle an "uh-oh" during the first minute of Brazilian documentarian Cesar Paes's *Saudade do Futuro*. A suitably foreboding quotation from Walter Benjamin flashes onscreen, and then, presto, we're in time-lapse photography mode, taking in several sparkling aerial views of the city of São Paulo followed by one of its traffic snarls. Paes seems to be leading us down a road we've traveled before: You don't have to know anything about São Paulo's industrial pedigree or its location in southern Brazil to understand

that this city doesn't get much sleep.

But the comparisons end when the music starts. The soundtrack is a combination of *forro* and *prepete*, two Brazilian music styles that have roots outside São Paulo—in the rural north country, a region whose residents head for the city in search of opportunity. The first *nordestinos* (northerners) we meet are Sonhador and Pineira, two tambourine-wielding "poets" who volley a barrage of tongue-twisting improvised verses as a throng looks on. They're among the lowest members of the caste Paes is introducing us to, but

RHYTHM NATION The vibrant music scene of Brazil—and its underlying bigotry—is explored in Cesar Paes's documentary.

that doesn't seem to have cowed their vigor, joviality, sharpness and talent.

Those four qualities return again and again throughout Paes's gorgeous, if sometimes slippery, discourse on surviving bigotry. They're evidenced

in the encounters with the art dealer who at first facetiously pretends not to be *nordestino*; in the pelvic thrusts of dancers at a local bar; in the sisterly rapport between a single domestic worker and her grown daughter; and in

the forthrightness of Dona Erundina, the woman who became São Paulo's *nordestino* mayor. Paes's vision isn't necessarily cliché-free, but he makes up for it with an astonishing gift for structure and pacing. The film manages to weave the above and several other stories together without the benefit of a narrative line. What's holding it all together? Fantastic music. (Now playing: Film Forum.)

—K. Leander Williams



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