

**WHO SIGNS THE COVER? AUTHORSHIP AND INDUSTRIAL MEDIATION IN BRAZILIAN PROGRESSIVE ROCK OF THE 1970s** <https://doi.org/10.63330/aurumpub.064-018>**Alexandre da Silva Cortez<sup>1</sup>****Abstract**

This study addresses the authorship of Brazilian progressive rock album covers of the 1970s, which are usually attributed to the intention of either the band or the illustrator. It is a qualitative multiple case study, documentary and iconographic in nature, whose aim is to examine the chain of decisions that leads from commission to printed image, distinguishing who commissions, who executes, who approves or rejects, and what the sources allow us to state about each link. The methodology combines a staged description of the images, a survey of credits, testimonies and specialized press, and an explicit hierarchy of evidence, applied to four covers: Moto Perpétuo (1974), Terreno Baldio (1976), Bacamarte's Depois do Fim (1983), and Ave Sangria (1974). The results indicate that industrial mediation is documented only in the case of Ave Sangria, in which the record label rejected the original artwork and had it redone without consulting the group, whereas in the remaining cases the chain remains partial or invisible. Four authorship situations are identified (indeterminate, credited, deliberate and institutional), together with the role played by the stock of graphic procedures in the circulation of international repertoires. The study concludes that attributing a cover to a single author should give way to identifying agents for each link, with declared degrees of documentation.

**Keywords:** Album covers, Authorship, Brazilian progressive rock, Industrial mediation, Recording industry.

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## INTRODUCTION

### RESEARCH TOPIC AND PROBLEM

An album cover is, at one and the same time, an image, a catalogue item, a production cost and a sales device. Research on progressive rock covers tends to privilege the first of these aspects. The image is described, a repertoire is recognized in it, the result is interpreted and, almost always, the whole is attributed to an intention: that of the band, which supposedly wanted that aesthetic, or that of the illustrator, who supposedly executed it. This procedure, inherited from art history, yields good results when the object was conceived by someone who can be named. It becomes less reliable when the object was produced within a company, under deadlines, budgets and commercial criteria that rarely show in the image.

Such was the environment of Brazilian progressive rock in the 1970s. Records were recorded and pressed by companies with their own graphic production structures, and the cover passed through hands other than the band's. Vargas (2013, p. 1) defines the cover not as mere commercial packaging, but as an element of aesthetic mediation, of taste and of consumption within the media field of song. The formulation is precise, yet its consequences for the attribution of authorship are seldom drawn. When a cover is recognized as bearing a foreign visual repertoire, who brought that repertoire to it? The musician who listened to English records? The illustrator who was familiar with the fantastic illustration of the period? The record label's art department, which had the international catalogue on its desk? These questions have different answers, and the answer changes what can be said about the visual culture of the genre in Brazil.

The research problem can be formulated as follows: to what extent can the visual configuration of a 1970s Brazilian progressive rock cover be attributed to the band, to the illustrator, or to the production structure that commissions, approves, rejects and redoes it, and what do the available sources allow us to state in this regard? The question has two parts. The first is historical and concerns who decided what. The second is epistemological and concerns the degree of certainty with which this can be stated.

Separating the two parts is essential, because a plausible statement about the intention behind a cover may have no documentary grounding whatsoever, and the difference between the plausible and the documented is precisely what tends to disappear when the image is taken as the expression of an author.

The hypothesis is twofold. First, in records released by labels with their own art departments, a significant part of the visual configuration must be attributed to the production structure, and not only to individual agents. Second, the circulation of visual repertoires from international rock to Brazilian covers took place, to a large extent, through the stock of graphic procedures available to these departments, and not solely through deliberate quotations of specific models.

The empirical scope comprises four covers: *Moto Perpétuo* (Continental, 1974), *Terreno Baldio* (Pirata, 1976), Bacamarte's *Depois do Fim* (Som/Arte, recorded in 1979 and released in 1983), and *Ave Sangria* (Continental, 1974).<sup>2</sup> The Ave Sangria case occupies a central place, because in it a conflict between the group, an illustrator and the record label left documentary traces that allow the chain to be seen at work. The others serve as contrast and show what can and cannot be known when such traces do not exist.

## OBJECTIVES

The general objective is to examine the chain of decisions leading from commission to printed image in four Brazilian progressive rock album covers released between 1974 and 1983, with attention to the role of the record labels. The specific objectives are:

- to describe each cover and reconstruct, on the basis of the available sources, the links of commission, execution, approval or rejection, and record;
- to classify the degree of documentation of each link according to an explicit hierarchy of evidence;

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<sup>2</sup> The same records were analysed, under a different question, in an article submitted to the *Revista de História da Arte e da Cultura* (RHAC/Unicamp) and still under review (Cortez, 2026), devoted to the hybridization of visual topoi and to iconographic reading on three levels. That detailed reading is not reproduced here. The covers are revisited only insofar as they inform the decision chain of each record.

- to compare the cases in order to identify distinct authorship situations and different pathways through which international repertoires entered the covers;
- to propose a verification protocol to guide future research in archives and interviews.

## RATIONALE

There are at least four reasons for asking this question. The first is historiographical. Album covers have been studied as objects in their own right, as shown by the work of Vargas (2013, 2023) on Continental and on Brazilian rock between 1968 and 1978, by the reading of the cover as paratext proposed by Vad (2021), and by Albuquerque's (2020) master's thesis on Terreno Baldio. Even so, the attribution of authorship is rarely treated as a problem.

The second reason is methodological. Attributing intention to an image without verifying the chain that produced it may lead to interpretive errors, such as explaining as an aesthetic choice what was in fact a cost or market decision. The third is related to heritage. Records such as Ave Sangria's, banned and withdrawn shortly after its release in 1974 and the object of a political amnesty granted in March 2026 (Rolling Stone Brasil, 2026), have returned to the centre of Brazilian musical memory, and the documentation of their covers is part of that heritage. The fourth reason concerns contribution: the chapter offers a reusable analytical framework and a verification protocol that may guide research in archives and interviews, both on progressive rock and on other genres and periods of the Brazilian recording industry.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The framework draws on five contributions. The first is that of Vargas, who provides the corpus and the industrial context. Vargas (2013, p. 17-18; 2023, p. 452) shows that Continental, a Brazilian-owned company, invested in progressive rock artists and in cover design as a means of competing with the multinationals throughout the 1970s. The author ascribes to the cover the functions of medium and of artistic cultural text (Vargas, 2023, p. 451, 461) and describes the lysergic image as a trend followed by

the record labels (Vargas, 2023, p. 466). These formulations already place the company on the scene, but the author does not make the decision chain the object of analysis.

The second contribution is that of Vad (2021), who proposes reading the cover as a paratext of entry, that is, as a liminal zone that frames the listening experience before it begins. If the cover works in this way, then for whoever sells the record it is an instrument for capturing the listener, and this gives the label a concrete motive to intervene in it. The third is that of Alleyne (2014), who examines the work of the Hipgnosis studio and of Storm Thorgerson in shaping the visual repertoire of the rock album cover. His study reminds us that the images that reached Brazil as “English progressive rock” were themselves products of studios and illustrators working on commission. The circulation at stake, therefore, is not only that of Brazilian musicians who listened to English records and wanted similar covers. It is also a circulation between systems of graphic production.

The last two contributions come from outside the study of album covers and concern the very notion of authorship. Foucault (1992) proposes treating the author less as a person than as a function, one that groups works together, assigns responsibilities and confers unity on what circulates. Becker (2010), in turn, describes the work of art as the outcome of collective action, in which many participants besides the artist cooperate according to shared conventions, among them those who supply materials and carry out support tasks. From these two ideas an operational use is derived. Attributing a cover to an author is a gesture made by the analyst, which must be justified by evidence, and the cover is, in principle, the product of a cooperation that may be harmonious or conflictual.

On the basis of this framework, two working categories are proposed. The first is the *decision chain*, made up of four links. *Commission* is the act of requesting the image and of setting, explicitly or tacitly, what is expected of it. *Execution* is the work of whoever draws, photographs or assembles it. *Approval or rejection* is the power to validate, veto or order a redo, and it is in this link that the company's authority tends to be concentrated. *Record*, finally, is what remains of all this in credits, testimonies, archives and the press. The first three links belong to the history of the object. The fourth belongs to the

history of the sources, and the gap between them makes it impossible to turn every cover into a demonstration, since a link may have existed without leaving any record.

The second category is the *stock of procedures*, which designates the set of techniques, conventions and graphic solutions actually available to whoever executes the image at a given moment, such as high-contrast photomontage or airbrushing. Those who work with this stock reproduce effects without needing to quote a specific work, and the stock may have been shaped by international circulations that the executor does not always perceive as such.

The chapter is organized into four sections. The second presents the methodology, covering the type of research, the corpus, the sources and the analytical instrument. The third brings together the results and discussion, with the examination of the four covers, the comparison between them and the verification protocol. The fourth presents the conclusion.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **TYPE OF RESEARCH**

This is a qualitative, exploratory and descriptive study, conducted as a multiple case study. The procedure is documentary, since it relies on edition credits, academic texts, the press and previously published testimonies, and it is also iconographic, since it starts from the description of the images. Multiple cases were chosen in order to allow comparison between chains with different degrees of documentation, and not for the purpose of statistical generalization. The question guiding the selection is what each case allows us to state about the decision chain, and not whether the set is representative of the genre.

The approach is interpretive in nature, but with explicit control over the status of statements. Each claim about the chain is associated with a level of evidence, and low-level claims are formulated as hypotheses. This control seeks to avoid the slippage, common in image studies, between what the image suggests and what the documentation supports.

## CORPUS AND SELECTION CRITERIA

The corpus comprises four covers by Brazilian progressive rock bands: *Moto Perpétuo* (Continental, 1974), *Terreno Baldio* (Pirata, 1976), Bacamarte's *Depois do Fim* (Som/Arte, recorded in 1979 and released in 1983), and *Ave Sangria* (Continental, 1974). The selection criterion was the existence of some information about the decision chain of each record, whether in credits or in testimonies. For this reason, the cover of *Sagrado*, by Sagrado Coração da Terra (1985), was excluded: it can be analysed from an iconographic standpoint, but the sources consulted record no information about its production. The records by Secos & Molhados (Continental, 1973) and Raul Seixas (Warner, 1977) serve only as context, since they stand closer to singer-songwriter repertoire and experimental MPB (Brazilian popular music) than to the genre under study.

The time frame runs from 1974 to 1983. The covers of *Moto Perpétuo*, *Terreno Baldio* and *Ave Sangria* belong to the 1970s, the period of the genre's greatest effervescence in Brazil. That of *Depois do Fim* was included despite its 1983 release because the record was made in 1979, which makes it possible to observe the persistence of 1970s visual repertoires at the beginning of the following decade and, at the same time, the effect of a four-year interval between recording and release on the decision chain.

Two covers were issued by Continental and two by other labels. This distribution allows a first contrast, but it should not be overstated. The sources consulted provide no information on the size, graphic structure or degree of independence of the Pirata and Som/Arte labels, so the chapter does not classify the labels by size. The contrast that matters is a different one: what can be known about the chain of each record.

## SOURCES AND HIERARCHY OF EVIDENCE

The sources are highly diverse in nature. There are academic works, such as those by Vargas (2013, 2023) and Albuquerque's (2020) master's thesis on *Terreno Baldio*, which draws on testimonies by the musicians. There are press articles and specialized publications, such as *Poeira Zine* (2013), *Revista*

*Select* (2022), *Revista Continente* (2014), the newspaper *O Povo* (Holanda; Sampaio, 2011) and *Rolling Stone Brasil* (2026). There is a blog, *Apólogo 11* (2009), and there is the collaborative database Discogs (2026), from which the edition credits are taken. These sources do not carry the same weight, and the chapter adopts a four-level hierarchy:

- level 1, primary record: printed credit or testimony by a directly involved agent;
- level 2, academic study reporting primary records, such as testimonies collected by the researcher;
- level 3, journalistic or blog synthesis, which gathers accounts without documentation of its own;
- level 4, inference by the analyst based on the image, without support from any record.

Level 3 and level 4 claims are formulated in the text as conditionals or hypotheses, and Table 3 records the predominant level for each case. The hierarchy is not intended to discredit journalistic sources, which are often the only ones to preserve the memory of episodes that official documentation did not record. It is intended only to make explicit what each claim rests upon.

When sources diverge, the chapter records the divergence rather than arbitrating it. This is the case, for example, with the descriptions of the creature on the Ave Sangria cover, which the band members call a drag queen parrot, which the illustrator of the original artwork describes as a woman metamorphosed into a bird, and which iconographic convention identifies as a harpy. In such cases, the descriptions are treated as data on the reception and production of the image, and not as mutually exclusive alternatives. When the divergence concerns a fact, such as the authorship of the execution, the claim is kept at the lowest level of evidence among the sources that support it.

## ANALYTICAL INSTRUMENT AND PROCEDURES

The analytical instrument is a record sheet for each album, organized according to the four links of the decision chain and completed on the basis of the sources for each case. Table 1 presents its structure.

The sheet requires recording, for each link, what was found, in what type of source and with what level of evidence, and making explicit the links for which nothing was found.

**Table 1**

*Structure of the decision chain analysis sheet.*

| Link                  | Guiding question                                   | Types of record consulted                                                        | Classification                                     |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Commission            | Who requested the image and with what expectation? | Testimonies by band members, press reports, academic studies                     | Documented, reported, hypothetical or undocumented |
| Execution             | Who drew, photographed or assembled it?            | Printed credits, Discogs database (2026), testimonies                            | Documented, reported, hypothetical or undocumented |
| Approval or rejection | Who validated, vetoed or ordered a redo?           | Press and blog accounts, testimonies                                             | Documented, reported, hypothetical or undocumented |
| Record                | What remains of the process and in what medium?    | Nature of the sources: credit, academic study, journalistic synthesis, inference | Level of evidence from 1 to 4                      |

Source: prepared by the author.

The procedures follow six steps. The first is the identification of the record, with label, year and edition. The second is the description of the cover, which follows, in summary form, the levels proposed by Panofsky (1991) and operationalized for image series by Anchieta (2022), namely the pre-iconographic, which describes forms, colours and composition, and the iconographic, which identifies conventions. The third level, the iconological, which interprets the meaning of the image, is not developed here, because it goes beyond the question of the chain and has been addressed in another work (Cortez, 2026).

The third step is the survey of credits and testimonies in the editions and in the literature. The fourth is the reconstruction of the links together with the classification of the evidence. The fifth is the comparison between the cases, guided by two questions: which links appear documented for each record, and through what means the international repertoire seems to have reached the image. The sixth is the formulation of a verification protocol which indicates, for each open link, the type of source that could close it.

## LIMITATIONS AND ETHICAL ASPECTS

The research is documentary and relies exclusively on published sources; it therefore involves no data collection with human participants and requires neither Research Ethics Committee approval nor informed consent forms. The testimonies mentioned were collected by other authors and are cited with due reference.

The limitations are documentary in nature. The chapter does not draw on record label archives, on interviews with art directors or illustrators, or on direct examination of the physical editions, and the credits are those reproduced by the Discogs database. For this reason, some of the statements that follow are explicitly conditional, and the contribution of the study lies less in closing the chain of each record than in showing where it remains open and indicating how it might be closed.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### THE INDUSTRIAL CONTEXT: CONTINENTAL AND THE LYSERGIC IMAGE

The history of the album cover in 1970s Brazil is inseparable from the commercial competition among record labels. If Continental invested in cover design as a means of competing with the multinationals (Vargas, 2013, p. 17-18; 2023, p. 452), this investment in image should be read as a market strategy pursued by the company, and not as a gesture of aesthetic generosity. The grouping Vargas (2023, p. 466) establishes among the covers that followed the lysergic image, which includes *Ave Sangria*, *Terreno Baldio* and *Lar de Maravilhas*, describes the record labels as agents that followed a trend which international progressive rock had normalized.

Two examples from the period, both outside progressive rock proper, show the degree of visual ambition that such investment could reach. The cover of Secos & Molhados' first LP (Continental, 1973) arranges the four members as heads on platters, on a table laden with bread, fruit and wine. Vargas (2023, p. 467) reads it as a provocative dialogue with Caravaggio's baroque aesthetic, and Vargas (2013, p. 23) recognizes in it the coexistence, without synthesis, of baroque darkness, androgyny and anthropophagy. In

the insert of Raul Seixas's *O dia em que a terra parou* (Warner, 1977), a reproduction of René Magritte's *The Human Condition* appears alongside the lyrics, the credits and an ID-style photograph of an unidentified person (Vargas, 2023, p. 470).

In both cases, repertoires from European art reach the Brazilian record within industrial products. Vargas's analysis, centred on the reading of the images, leaves open a question that is of interest to this chapter, namely: who, in each case, decided to bring them there? The sources consulted do not answer this question, but it allows the following four cases to be situated. All of them were released in the same commercial environment, and in all of them the issue is what the documentation allows us to say about the passage from a band's wishes to the image printed on the packaging.

Vargas's formulation regarding the trend of the lysergic image has a methodological consequence. If the record labels followed a trend, it is plausible that their art departments monitored the international cover market with the same attention that their A&R departments paid to the record market. The decision chain of a cover is therefore not merely a sequence of requests and executions internal to a company. It is embedded in a system in which labels, design studios and illustrators observe what others are doing and adjust their procedures accordingly. The circulation of visual repertoires<sup>3</sup>, from this perspective, is also a circulation of professional solutions, and the question of influence needs to be reformulated as a question about the transit of practices.

### *MOTO PERPÉTUO* (CONTINENTAL, 1974)

At the pre-iconographic level, the cover of *Moto Perpétuo* (Figure 1) is a high-contrast photomontage. The band members, photographed in individual portraits, appear superimposed on urban scenes of cars, buses, buildings and a busy avenue, arranged in three horizontal bands of flat colour (blue-green, sepia and orange) that fragment the pictorial space into distinct chromatic registers. There is no fantastic landscape, no hybrid creature and no explicit learned quotation.

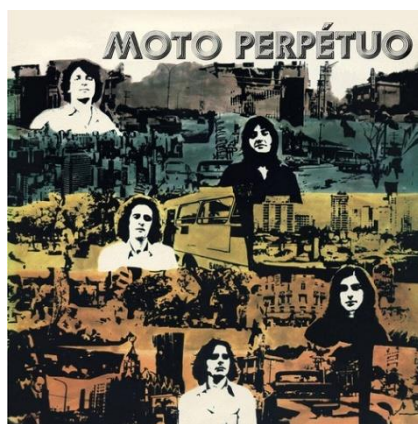
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<sup>3</sup> The terms “visual repertoire” and “visual topos” are used in the sense of iconographic formulas and conventions that circulate between contexts and can be traced from one image to another, as defined in Cortez (2026).

At the iconographic level, the high-contrast photographic collage and the saturated, non-naturalistic colours form a recognizable convention of international graphic psychedelia of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Vargas (2023, p. 474) reads the composition as a figuration of the urban experience that the group's name ironically evokes, and sees in it critical sensations of pollution, frenetic movement and chaos.

### Figure 1

*Cover of Moto Perpétuo, by the group Moto Perpétuo (Continental, 1974).*



Source: Discogs (2026).<sup>4</sup>

From the standpoint of the decision chain, this is the least visible case. The sources consulted do not identify who commissioned the image, who assembled it or who approved it. The record was released by Continental, and that is all that is known about the process. The presence of the members' portraits implies at least that there was a photo session or that photographs were supplied, which suggests some contact between the band and whoever assembled the cover, but this level 4 inference does not tell us who led the decision or on what terms.

What can be stated with certainty is limited to the image. High-contrast photomontage belongs to an international technical repertoire of the psychedelic graphics of the period, and what is local in the cover is the photographed referent, the landscape of a Brazilian city in the 1970s. In other words, what

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<sup>4</sup> The reproductions of the covers are for exclusively analytical and academic purposes. The rights to the images belong to their respective holders.

migrates is the technique, and what is recombined locally is the subject matter. This distinction matters for the question of authorship, because the technique may have been brought in by any link in the chain, whereas the subject matter, since it includes the band's portraits, has some connection with the group.

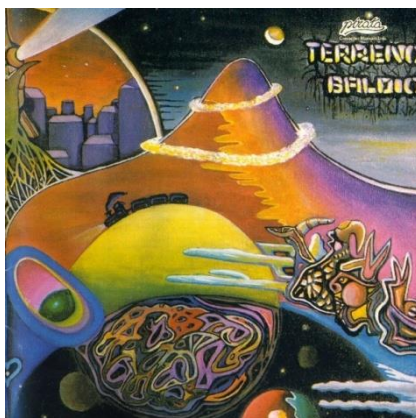
The absence of data, however, is not neutral. Faced with a cover whose author is unknown, it is easy to attribute it to the group's sensibility, an inference that the image itself does not warrant. Since the group's name resonates with the theme of the cover, Vargas's reading is plausible, but interpretive plausibility does not answer the question of who decided. *Moto Perpétuo* thus functions as a limit case: the chain is invisible, and any attribution of authorship is, given the current state of the sources, a hypothesis. Recording this condition is a result in itself, because it prevents the coherence between name and image from being taken as proof of intention.

#### *TERRENO BALDIO* (PIRATA, 1976)

At the pre-iconographic level, the cover of Terreno Baldio's self-titled album (Figure 2) brings together, in a single painted composition, a starry night horizon with a crescent moon, a skyline of stylized skyscrapers in the upper left corner and a conical mountain in a gradient from orange to violet, encircled by two concentric luminous rings. Along the crest of the mountain, a miniature train crosses the scene. At the base, a yellowish-green globe emits beams of light; on the right there is a faceted creature, somewhere between reptile and bird; and in the lower foreground a sinuous, colourful pattern appears that evokes at once a brain, a labyrinth and a shell.

## Figure 2

Cover of *Terreno Baldio*, by the group *Terreno Baldio* (Pirata, 1976), illustrated by *Beny Tchaicovsky*.



Source: Discogs (2026).

At the iconographic level, the pictorial technique and the palette recall Roger Dean's covers for artists such as Yes, Steve Howe and Uriah Heep, as can be seen in Steve Howe's *Beginnings* (1975). This similarity, on its own, would be merely an inference from the image. The decisive piece of information comes from another source. Albuquerque (2020) identifies Beny Tchaicovsky as the illustrator and, drawing on testimonies by the musicians, describes the painting as a direct reference to Roger Dean's illustrations (Albuquerque, 2020, p. 9). The testimony raises the claim from level 4 to level 2.

The same testimonies record that the group drew on the repertoire of Gentle Giant, Yes, King Crimson and Genesis while at the same time seeking an identity of its own (Albuquerque, 2020, p. 11), and the track “A Volta”, from the first album, incorporates a baião into a harmonic and formal structure of English origin (Albuquerque, 2020, p. 11). In this case, the visual orientation seems to coincide with the group's musical orientation. Albuquerque (2020, p. 18-25) further interprets the group's name (literally, “vacant lot”) in the light of the concept of spleen, as a symbolic space of refuge and transcendence in the face of urban experience and the political oppression of the early 1970s, a reading with which the impossible landscape of the cover, bringing together city, mountain, train, cosmos and creature on the same plane, is compatible.

For the decision chain, the case has two sides. On the one hand, it is the only case in the corpus in which the foreign reference is recorded as deliberate. On the other, the testimonies accessible through the

thesis inform us of the group's general intention, not of the commissioning process. It is not known whether the band handed the illustrator a reference, whether the illustrator brought it in, or whether the label played any role. Deliberation is documented at the level of the result and remains open at the level of the process.

The case serves as a counterpoint to the idea that every visual migration is an effect of the system. It shows that authorial agency existed and left traces when someone went and asked. What varies between the cases, here, is the documentation, not the existence of agents. This point protects the general argument from a deterministic reading: to claim that the production structure matters is not to deny that bands and illustrators make decisions, and Terreno Baldio is the case in which those decisions are visible.

#### *DEPOIS DO FIM*, BY BACAMARTE (SOM/ARTE, 1983)

At the pre-iconographic level, the cover of *Depois do Fim* (Figure 3) is organized in two distinct visual layers. The first is a decorative gold frame, with curved and symmetrical lines on a black background, topped by the label's logo and the band's name in ornate cursive lettering. The second, set within the frame, is a painting in warm tones of brown, orange and gold, in which two female figures in long, light-coloured robes, one standing and the other kneeling or sitting at her feet, appear to be carving a stone inside a cave or rock arch, with an orange glow in the background suggesting fire or the light of lamps or candles. Below, the title appears in gold Gothic lettering.

**Figure 3**

*Cover of Depois do Fim, by Bacamarte (Som/Arte, 1983).*



Source: Discogs (2026).

At the iconographic level, two distinct conventions are superimposed without merging. The frame quotes a decorative repertoire from devotional or religious prints, of the same kind that frames images of saints and votive miracle paintings in Brazilian popular Catholic visual culture. The painted scene quotes internationally circulating dark fantasy illustration, with caves, firelight and an earthy palette, a convention widely disseminated both by hard rock and symphonic rock covers and by the covers of 1970s fantasy paperbacks. The credits of the 1983 edition attribute the cover and insert to Eduardo Pereira (Discogs, 2026). None of the sources consulted indicates which visual references he drew upon, who commissioned the work from him, or whether the group followed the production.

There is, however, a piece of information provided by the chronology that is relevant to the chain. The record was made in 1979 and released in 1983, and the credits attributing the cover to Eduardo Pereira are those of the 1983 edition. Four years therefore separate recording from release. It is reasonable to assume, as a level 4 hypothesis, that the visual packaging was conceived for the moment of release and by those who made the release possible, and not as part of the 1979 aesthetic project. The hypothesis is compatible with what the cover shows, but lacks documentary confirmation. The iconography draws on conventions already widespread in the 1970s and, for this reason, does not allow the decision about the image to be dated.

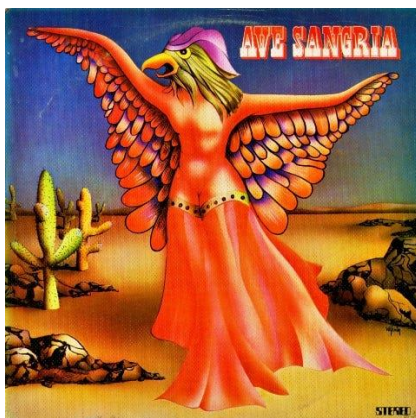
The case teaches something about the limits of credits: knowing who signs is not the same as knowing who decides. Eduardo Pereira's name indicates the execution and leaves open the commission and the approval. It also shows that the combination of repertoires may have taken place in the act of execution, when an illustrator brings together a local devotional frame and an international fantasy scene, and not at the moment the record was conceived. If so, the hybridization visible on the cover would be less a project of the band than an effect of the personal and professional repertoire of whoever painted it, which reinforces the need to distinguish the links before interpreting the image as an expression of the group.

#### *AVE SANGRIA* (CONTINENTAL, 1974)

At the pre-iconographic level, the cover of Ave Sangria's first album (Figure 4) presents, in figurative illustration, a hybrid, anthropomorphic creature with a winged female body, a bird's head, large feathered wings in a gradient from orange to red and a long, flowing dress of the same colour. The figure stands on dry ground, among cacti and rocks, under a blue sky. In terms of Western convention, the composition corresponds to the schema of the harpy, a hybrid figure of bird and woman found in archaic Greek pottery and taken up by medieval bestiaries and Renaissance emblem books. The sources consulted offer no dated evidence of which specific image the illustrator or the art department might have consulted, so the analysis remains at the level of iconographic identification.

**Figure 4**

*Cover of Ave Sangria, by the group Ave Sangria (Continental, 1974).*



Source: Discogs (2026).

The very naming of the image is evidence that it circulates between repertoires. According to the band members themselves, the creature is a “drag queen parrot” (“papagaio drag queen”) (Holanda; Sampaio, 2011; Revista Select, 2022), a designation that shifts the reading towards native fauna, anthropophagic devouring and gender ambiguity, whereas the illustrator of the original artwork spoke of a woman metamorphosed into a bird. There are three namings for a single image, and what matters here, prior to any interpretation, is a fact that precedes them all: the printed image is not the commissioned image.

According to converging accounts, the label rejected the original drawing, made by Lailson de Holanda Cavalcanti, a cartoonist for the *Diário de Pernambuco* and a member of the Recife music scene, citing the cost of the artwork, and had another image produced by its own art department, without consulting the group (Poeira Zine, 2013). One of the sources attributes the final execution, in airbrush, to the team of illustrator Sérgio Grecu and records that the band disliked the result (Apólogo 11, 2009). The original drawing, in gouache, showed a woman transformed into a bird in a setting that Lailson himself described as “a Northeast seen through acid-psychedelic eyes” (“um Nordeste visto com olhos ácido-psicodélicos”) (Apólogo 11, 2009, our translation). There is also an account that the bird of the group's logo, close to a carcará (crested caracara), was crudely redrawn in Rio de Janeiro for the cover.

Should these accounts be confirmed by the record's documentation, the case displays the links of the chain in an almost pure state. The original artwork was commissioned, according to the accounts, from a cartoonist of the local scene, although the sources do not specify who placed the commission. The rejection came from the label, on grounds of cost. The new execution fell to the company's art department, without consulting the band. The record, finally, depends on a press that gathered the episode decades later. The figure of the bird-woman runs through three images (the logo, the gouache and the printed illustration), but each transition was carried out by a different agent and with different means.

The decisive point is the rejection. It was there, and not in the execution, that the power to define the image was concentrated. The mediation to which Vargas (2013, p. 1) refers in general terms acquires a face here: that of an art department working to sell. The hybrid figure seen on the printed cover, a creature of ancient convention in a setting of cacti and cracked earth, results from a decision taken by a company, according to criteria of cost and in-store impact. The setting, moreover, can be read at once as the *caatinga*, the semi-arid scrubland of the Brazilian Northeast, a regional anchor that re-inscribes the psychedelic *desbunde* (the countercultural “letting go” of the period) in northeastern territory, and as a generic desert of international convention. This ambivalence is not a failure of reading. It is characteristic of an image made to be recognized at a distance, and Lailson's formula of a Northeast seen through acid-psychedelic eyes describes the procedure precisely: the point is not to represent the *sertão*, but to subject it to an imported optics.

The technique reinforces this reading. The airbrushing of the printed version belongs to the repertoire of 1970s Anglo-American fantasy illustration that Roger Dean and the Hipgnosis studio helped to consolidate (Alleyne, 2014), and Vargas (2023, p. 466) places the cover precisely in this lineage. For the cover to come out internationalized, it was not necessary for anyone to consult a specific model. It was enough that the technical repertoire of a Brazilian commercial illustrator in 1974 had already been shaped by the circulation of fantasy illustration. This is the stock of procedures at work, and hybridization, here, operates below the level of intention.

Two caveats are necessary. The first is that the accounts of the rejection and the redo come from the specialized press and from a blog, not from label documentation, and therefore remain, in this chapter, at evidence level 3 and are formulated as conditionals. The second concerns censorship. The album was banned and withdrawn from shops and radio stations by agents of the military dictatorship shortly after its release, and the available documentation attributes the ban to the track “Seu Waldir”, which the repressive apparatus interpreted as an incitement to homosexuality and an offence against morals and good customs (Rolling Stone Brasil, 2026). The idea, recurrent in the specialized literature, that censorship altered the cover illustration finds no support in the first-hand sources consulted, which attribute the change to the label's commercial decision. Attributing to censorship what was a market decision would conceal precisely the mechanism under study.

Table 2 organizes the accounts concerning Ave Sangria according to the links of the chain, indicating the agent and the level of evidence for each. The arrangement shows that, although the episode is the best documented in the corpus, all of its links rest on level 3 sources, which justifies the conditional formulation adopted.

**Table 2**

*Links in the Ave Sangria decision chain according to the accounts consulted.*

| Link              | What the accounts record                                                                                                                                                                                 | Agent                                                            | Source and level                                     |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Commission        | Original artwork commissioned from a cartoonist of the Recife scene. Who placed the commission is not specified                                                                                          | Not identified                                                   | Poeira Zine (2013).<br>Level 3                       |
| Initial execution | Gouache drawing of a woman metamorphosed into a bird, in a setting described as a Northeast seen through acid-psychedelic eyes                                                                           | Lailson de Holanda Cavalcanti                                    | Apólogo 11 (2009).<br>Level 3                        |
| Rejection         | Artwork rejected by the label, on grounds of cost                                                                                                                                                        | Record label                                                     | Poeira Zine (2013).<br>Level 3                       |
| New execution     | New image produced by the company's art department, without consulting the group. One source attributes the execution, in airbrush, to Sérgio Grecu's team and records that the band disliked the result | Label's art department.<br>Sérgio Grecu, according to one source | Poeira Zine (2013);<br>Apólogo 11 (2009).<br>Level 3 |
| Record            | Episode gathered by the press and by blogs decades after the release                                                                                                                                     | Specialized press and blogs                                      | Poeira Zine (2013);<br>Apólogo 11 (2009).<br>Level 3 |

Source: prepared by the author, based on Poeira Zine (2013) and Apólogo 11 (2009).

## WHAT THE AVE SANGRIA CASE ALLOWS US TO GENERALIZE

The Ave Sangria case is the only one in which industrial mediation could be observed in operation, and it therefore calls for a specific discussion of what can be drawn from it. First, the case works as a proof of possibility. It shows that, in the 1970s, a record label could reject artwork commissioned around a group, have it redone by its own department and release the record with the substitute image, and that the group could disagree with the result without being able to prevent it. It does not show that this was the norm, nor does it measure its frequency.

Second, the case allows hypotheses to be formulated about the conditions that favour this kind of mediation. The accounts mention the cost of the artwork as the label's argument, which suggests that expense control was a criterion in decisions about the image. They also indicate a geographical and institutional distance between the group, linked to the Recife scene, and a label based in the Southeast, whose art department produced the substitute image. And they point to the expectation of immediate legibility from an image that had to work in the shop window. These three conditions (cost, distance and legibility) do not exhaust the phenomenon, but they guide the search for comparable cases: records by regional bands released by large labels would be natural candidates for mediation of the same kind.

Third, the case shows the limits of what can be stated. The gap between the rejected image and the printed one does not reveal which of the two was closer to the band's project, and the account that the group disliked the result does not settle the question of what the group actually wanted. The sources record the dissatisfaction, but do not describe in detail the image the band would have preferred. Finally, the case shows that mediation is not, in itself, a negative fact. The label's art department produced an image that has become the one through which the record has circulated for decades. Recognizing industrial mediation, therefore, does not amount to discrediting the image, but to naming those who contributed to it.

## COMPARATIVE SYNTHESIS

Table 3 summarizes what the sources consulted allow us to state about each record, with the predominant level of evidence. The comparison shows that the four covers occupy different positions on the spectrum of documentation, and that this difference, more than any characteristic of the images, is what structures the result.

**Table 3**

*Decision chain of the four covers, according to the sources consulted.*

| Record                | Label and year                                  | Execution                                                                                                                                                       | Documented decisions                                                              | Predominant source and level                                                   |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Moto Perpétuo</i>  | Continental, 1974                               | Not identified in the sources consulted                                                                                                                         | None                                                                              | Critical reading of the image (Vargas, 2023). Level 4                          |
| <i>Terreno Baldio</i> | Pirata, 1976                                    | Beny Tchaicovsky                                                                                                                                                | Reference to Roger Dean described as direct. Commission and process not specified | Testimonies by the musicians, via master's thesis (Albuquerque, 2020). Level 2 |
| <i>Depois do Fim</i>  | Som/Arte, recorded in 1979 and released in 1983 | Eduardo Pereira (credits of the 1983 edition)                                                                                                                   | None. Hypothesis about the interval between recording and release                 | Database (Discogs, 2026). Level 1 for the execution and level 4 for the rest   |
| <i>Ave Sangria</i>    | Continental, 1974                               | Original artwork by Lailson de Holanda Cavalcanti. Printed version by the label's team (execution attributed by one source to Sérgio Grecu's team, in airbrush) | Rejection of the original artwork and redo without consulting the band            | Specialized press and blog (Poeira Zine, 2013; Apólogo 11, 2009). Level 3      |

Source: prepared by the author, based on Vargas (2023), Albuquerque (2020), Discogs (2026), Poeira Zine (2013) and Apólogo 11 (2009).

## DOCUMENTATION, CONFLICT AND THE VISIBILITY OF MEDIATION

The first finding is that the visibility of industrial mediation depends more on the state of the documentation than on the intensity of the mediation. The only case in which it appears in full, that of Ave Sangria, is also the only one in which there was conflict, and the conflict produced testimonies. Where the chain operated without friction, as may be assumed to have happened with a good many records, it left no trace. This calls for a twofold caution: not to take Ave Sangria as the rule, since its

documentation results from an exceptional circumstance, and not to conclude, from the absence of traces in the other cases, that mediation did not exist.

There is also a memory effect to be considered. Ave Sangria's album was rediscovered from the 2000s onwards and reissued in 2014 (Revista Continente, 2014), and the 2026 amnesty reinforced its documentary status (Rolling Stone Brasil, 2026). It is reasonable to suppose, as a hypothesis, that the press attention given to a belatedly consecrated record favoured the recording of episodes, such as the rejection of the original artwork, that would have gone unnoticed in less revisited records. If this is correct, the asymmetry between the cases stems not only from conflict but also from the subsequent trajectory of each work, and research on album covers should consider the history of reception as part of the history of the sources.

#### FOUR AUTHORSHIP SITUATIONS

The second finding concerns the vocabulary of authorship. The four cases show different situations that the term “author” tends to conceal. The first is indeterminate authorship, in *Moto Perpétuo*, where no agent is identified and the attribution to the group rests solely on the coherence between name and image. The second is credited authorship without a known project, in *Depois do Fim*, where a name appears in the credits, but nothing is known about the commission, the references or the band's participation.

The third is authorship that is deliberate in its result, in *Terreno Baldio*, where the reference to Roger Dean is recorded but the process that produced it is not. The fourth is institutional authorship, in *Ave Sangria*, where the final image is the work of a company team, after the originally commissioned artwork had been rejected. In Foucault's (1992) terms, each situation corresponds to a different assignment of the author-function, which falls now on the band, now on the illustrator, now on the company. In Becker's (2010) terms, each corresponds to a different configuration of cooperation among those who take part in the work.

Instead of one author per cover, it seems more productive to speak of agents per link and to record, for each link, the degree of documentation. The question “who signs?” thus unfolds into “who commissioned, who executed, who decided, and how do we know?”. This reformulation has a practical effect on interpretation: an iconological reading that attributes to the band a meaning produced by an art department may be interpreting the wrong intention.

The distinction also has a consequence for the notion of collective authorship. When a cover results from cooperation between band, illustrator and company, the division of responsibilities is not necessarily egalitarian, and conflict is an indicator of asymmetry. In the *Ave Sangria* case, the asymmetry is visible: those who had the power to reject and redo were neither those who had drawn the image nor those who appeared on the cover. In *Terreno Baldio*, by contrast, the testimonies suggest a coincidence between the group's orientation and the image, which does not eliminate the label's mediation, but merely renders it invisible. The relevant question is no longer who the author was, but how the power to decide was distributed among the participants.

## THE STOCK OF PROCEDURES AND CIRCULATION BETWEEN SYSTEMS OF GRAPHIC PRODUCTION

The third finding concerns the means by which the international repertoire enters the covers. In *Moto Perpétuo* and *Ave Sangria*, the international vector is technique: high-contrast photomontage in one case, airbrushing in the other. This suggests that, at least in covers produced within the company, the presence of the foreign repertoire need not pass through the musicians' listening or through a deliberate quotation. It passes through what the art department knew how to do and through what the illustration market of the period had already standardized.

If this is correct, the expression “influence of English progressive rock”, when applied to covers, should be used with care. What is called influence may be the circulation of procedures between systems of graphic production, carried out by someone who may never have heard the record the image seems to

quote. As Alleyne (2014) reminds us, the foreign model itself was produced in studios, and the relationship between a Brazilian cover and an English one may be, to a large extent, a relationship between art departments. *Terreno Baldio*, in which the quotation of Dean is deliberate, is the case that allows the difference to be measured, and it would be a mistake to take it as a model for the whole.

The stock of procedures, however, is not exclusively foreign. The case of *Depois do Fim* shows that the same person may have at hand, at the same time, a frame drawn from locally circulating devotional prints and a dark fantasy scene of international circulation, and that the fantasy convention also appears in another industrial medium, that of 1970s paperback covers. The hybridization seen on the cover may thus already occur within the stock of the person who executes it, without the need to presuppose a project of synthesis between the local and the foreign. This hypothesis complements, without replacing, the reading of hybridization developed in another work (Cortez, 2026): if the covers combine repertoires of diverse origins, it is worth knowing at which point in the chain the combination was made.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE GENRE

Claims about the visual identity of Brazilian progressive rock, and about its relationship with international rock, usually take the covers as expressions of the bands. When the cover was produced or redone by the company, this reading conflates two things: what the band wanted to be and what the label wanted to sell. The visual culture of the genre is, in part, a visual culture of the record labels, and the history told about it needs to name this agent.

This does not diminish the value of the images, nor the importance of the bands. On the contrary, it makes it possible to situate the covers at the point where music, market and graphic production met, and to describe more precisely the negotiations that produced them. It also protects historiography from causal explanations that attribute to an aesthetic intention what was, in part, the effect of costs, deadlines and the availability of procedures. For the teaching of popular music history, the four-link framework moreover

offers an exercise in the critical reading of industrial objects: before interpreting a cover, one must ask who produced it and how we know.

#### VERIFICATION PROTOCOL BY LINK

From a methodological standpoint, iconographic reading should be preceded by a check of the chain. Before attributing an intention to an image, one should ask whether there is a credit, whether there is testimony from whoever commissioned or executed it, whether there is any report of rejection or redo, and whether the image was produced for the moment of recording or for that of release. When the answers are lacking, the interpretation should be formulated as a reading of the printed image, without any claim to reconstruct a decision.

Table 4 indicates, for each record, the links that remain open and the sources that could close them. It constitutes a research agenda rather than a set of results: none of the sources listed was consulted for this chapter.

**Table 4**

*Verification protocol: open links and sources to be consulted.*

| Record                | Open links                                                                    | Sources to be consulted                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Moto Perpétuo</i>  | Commission, execution and approval                                            | Credits and insert of the original edition. Label archive and catalogue. Interviews with band members. Contemporary press.                                                                  |
| <i>Terreno Baldio</i> | Commissioning process and role of the label                                   | Interviews with illustrator Beny Tchaicovsky and with the musicians. Documentation of the Pirata label. Cross-checking with the testimonies gathered by Albuquerque (2020).                 |
| <i>Depois do Fim</i>  | Commission, visual references and role of the band in the 1983 release        | Physical edition and insert of 1983. Interviews with Eduardo Pereira and with the musicians. Documentation of the Som/Arte label.                                                           |
| <i>Ave Sangria</i>    | Confirmation of the rejection and redo, and authorship of the printed version | Label documentation. Interviews with Lailson de Holanda Cavalcanti, with Sérgio Grecu and with the band members. Cross-checking of the sources cited (Poeira Zine, 2013; Apólogo 11, 2009). |

Source: prepared by the author.

For the interview stage, a minimal set of questions is suggested, following the links of the chain:

- who requested the image, when and with what instructions, and whether there was a written or verbal brief, indicated references or supporting images;

- who executed it, with what technique and in how much time, and what budget was available and who set it;
- whether the image was shown to the band and to the label before printing, and whether there were requests for changes, rejections or redos, and by whom;
- what images, records or publications were at hand for whoever executed it, and whether the art department had a reference collection;
- how the result was received by the band and by the label, and what records of the process remain, such as letters, proofs, photographs or press notes.

The limitations of this study are evident. There are four covers, the sources on the rejection in the Ave Sangria case are journalistic, and there was no access to record label archives. Extending the corpus to other labels would make it possible to test whether the contrast between documented and undocumented chains holds on a larger scale, and whether each label's market position, currently unknown for Pirata and Som/Arte, alters the distribution of decision-making power.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter started from an apparently simple question, namely who signs the cover of a 1970s Brazilian progressive rock album, and showed that the answer depends on which link of the chain is examined and on the state of the sources. Returning to the objectives, the four covers were described and their decision chains reconstructed as far as the documentation consulted allows. The degree of documentation of each link was classified according to a four-level hierarchy, and the comparison between the cases identified distinct authorship situations and different pathways through which international repertoires entered the covers.

Among the main results, it stands out that one of the covers, that of Ave Sangria, has an almost entirely visible chain, and that in this case the label rejected the original artwork and had it redone without consulting the group. In another, that of Terreno Baldio, the foreign reference is recorded as deliberate,

although the process remains obscure. The other two, *Moto Perpétuo* and *Depois do Fim*, show what is left when there is only the image and, at most, a credit. The difference between the cases derives less from the images than from the sources, which calls for caution regarding any generalization about the intensity of industrial mediation.

Three contributions can be highlighted. The first is the four-link framework (commission, execution, approval or rejection, and record), which shifts the analysis from the author to the chain. The second is the distinction between four authorship situations (indeterminate, credited, deliberate and institutional), which the term “author” tends to collapse into one. The third is the notion of a stock of procedures, which helps to understand how international repertoires reach album covers without any deliberate quotation of a model, and which points to circulation between systems of graphic production, and not only between musicians.

Finally, the caveat regarding censorship illustrates the scope of the argument. Attributing a commercial decision to censorship would erase the very agent that matters most in this discussion. Understanding the covers of Brazilian progressive rock as products of record labels, as well as expressions of bands, does not diminish the value of these images. On the contrary, it makes it possible to situate them at the point where music, market and graphic production met.

One practical consequence concerns the description of records in catalogues, archives and databases. These tools usually record credits, but not decisions, and therefore tend to reinforce the attribution of the cover to a single name. Recording, in the description of each record, what is known about each link of the chain, with the corresponding level of evidence, would make visible what currently remains implicit and would facilitate the correction of attributions as new sources emerge.

As suggestions for future research, we point to the consultation of record label archives and catalogues, the verification of credits on the physical editions, interviews with art directors and illustrators who are still alive, the extension of the corpus to other labels and periods, and the application of the

verification protocol to genres other than progressive rock. An agenda of this kind remains to be carried out, and it is within it that the argument proposed here may be confirmed, corrected or refuted.

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