## Chicago Tribune

## $\underset{\text{April }3,\ 2014}{\underline{A\&E}}$

## Luisa Maita's bossa nova is soft in a noisy world



Luisa Maita (Joao Wainer / March 25, 2014)

By Aaron Cohen, Special to the Tribune

Brazilian singer Luisa Maita's soft delivery could be a reaction to the intense volume of her hometown, the sprawling metropolis of Sao Paulo. She has more than one feeling about this city and that subtle complexity comes across through her music.

"Sao Paulo is the opposite of Brazil in some ways," Maita said before her sound check at New York's Jazz at Lincoln Center. "It's a hard city, no nature. It's a big, big city and it's a noisy city. But the aesthetic of Sao Paulo is so interesting. It's like you are in a city of the future — in a bad way. At the same time, you feel so alive there."

Maita sings a new form of bossa nova, which is usually associated with artists from the more bucolic Rio De Janeiro (although Maita points out that some crucial samba composers, like Adoniran Barbosa, were from Sao Paulo). Growing up in the '80s and '90s, she connected to jazz and the Brazilian music of her parents' generation, but on her 2010 disc, "Lero-Lero" (Cumbancha), she also embraced contemporary electronic effects. Subsequent tours of the United States brought her closer to hiphop, which Maita says she's featuring on her upcoming recording.

"It's good to have deep roots and not be superficial," Maita said. "I don't want to do something too traditional, or too modern, but mixed together to do something different."

Those roots stem from Maita's family. Her father, Amado Maita, was a singer-guitarist and, she says, "the best drummer in Sao Paulo." While he was underappreciated during his lifetime, his 1972 album, "Samba De Amigo," has become a widely sought collector's item.

"I lived in a musical environment where everybody thinks about music all day, every day," Maita said. "So I don't know how to be different from that. When I listen to my music, I feel my father very much. I have something from his voice, but I can't explain exactly what it is."

Knowing the music business, Maita's father was wary when his teenage daughter began writing and performing songs professionally. His attitude changed soon enough.

"When I started to play, he said, 'Be careful, this career is very difficult.' But when he saw that I was more persistent, he worried less. I studied a lot and when he saw me on stage, he liked it very much."

Maita said her mother Myriam Taubkin's Jewish background also helped her establish another cultural foundation, especially since her grandmother from Poland was also a singer. Considering that lengthy historic tradition, the early '60s music of Antonio Carlos Jobim and Joao Gilberto was not so remote.

Alongside these influences, Maita also enjoyed going to clubs with her friends and listening to funk and pop.

"Everything that has some sense of inspiration is good music. It doesn't depend on generations. I've always liked pop music, whether it was Bjork or Kanye West."

While Maita began to make a name for herself as a vocalist in the group Urbanda about 10 years ago, she received attention when such popular Brazilian singers as Virginia Rosa and Mariana Aydar began covering her songs. Her infusion of different national rhythms within her sharp composing throughout "Lero-Lero" shows why her work has been in such demand. But she also has a distinctive way of phrasing, such as the way her voice conveys tension on the anxious love song, "Ai Vem Ele."

Guitarist/co-producer Rodrigo Campos helped arrange these songs, and Maita points to him as one reason why she does not want to claim too much credit for a musical renaissance in her city.

"Right now, there's a great generation of musicians in Sao Paulo mixing up all of these traditions. I'm just a part of all of that."

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When: 9 p.m. Saturday

Where: Mayne Stage, 1328 W. Morse Ave.

Tickets: \$20-\$30 (18+); 773-381-4554 or **maynestage.com** 

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