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**FLY** GLOBAL MUSIC  
CULTURE

## LATIN AMERICA: REVIEWS

### LUÍSA MAITA - LERO- LERO

IT IS PROBABLY A COINCIDENCE THAT THE EUROPEAN RELEASE OF LUÍSA MAITA'S ALBUM CHIMES WITH THE OPENING OF SOUTHBANK CENTRE'S MULTI-ARTS CELEBRATION, FESTIVAL BRAZIL.



If not, it's a subtle way of indicating that the young diva from São Paulo is missing from the London line-up and should be performing alongside Gilberto Gil and Maria Bethânia.

Southbank Centre aside, there is no doubt that Brazil's emergence as an economic power has meant its cultural star is also rising. There is a huge variety of new music from Brazil making waves in the US and Europe, a fair chunk of which is by female artists like Bebel Gilberto and Céu. Luísa Maita is a newer voice and *Lero-Lero* ('Hey, what's up'), her new album on Cumbancha Discovery, is an intriguing listen. Initial impressions place this as a classic feel-good Brazilian record. Music rooted in samba and bossa nova, a sultry vocalist singing above a mellow groove: instantly likeable if unchallenging.

But get beyond the straight-up title track, which is a summer hit in the making, a more urban, complicated set of songs emerges. Maita - who hails from a musical family and has a mixed European, Jewish and Syrian Muslim heritage - deals with themes to suit modern Brazil: work, lifestyles, friendship and social issues. Then there is the music, which subtly disassembles traditional styles and re-sets them within a wider set of influences (electronic music, soul and funk). It is a clever trick and one not always easy to pin down.

'Desencabulada' ('Wanton') is a funky samba with a quirkily anthemic chorus that is underpinned by a peculiarly angular bass line, while 'Maria e Moleque' ('Maria and the Kid') is a story-song that twists and turns unexpectedly. (Maita's voice, which is clear and sultry but occasionally fails to ignite, is at its best on the latter number.) *Lero-Lero* is peppered with such leftfield twists and original arrangements. Sophisticated and diverse, this is definitely a record for the new Brazil.

Tim Woodall  
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