

LATINA

Q&A Meet Proud Paulista Luísa Taubkin Maita

By Grace Bastidas | 05/24/2010



joão wainer

Singer-songwriter **Luísa Taubkin Maita** was born in São Paulo, a gritty city that inspired many of the songs on her sultry debut album, **Lero-Lero** (out July 27; Cumbancha), which is influenced by everything from pop and jazz to samba and bossa nova. Raised in an ethnically mixed home—her dad is of Syrian Muslim roots and her mom is of European Jewish heritage—the 28-year-old singer has a soulful voice that I'm sure we'll be hearing a lot of in the coming months. I recently had a chance to get to know her and here's what she had to say:

How would you describe your sound?

My music is very influenced by samba and Afro-Brazilian music. It's urban music from São Paulo. And though I'm influenced by traditional samba, I've changed it to suit my style.

When did you first realize you wanted to sing?

I've been singing since I was a child. My parents are both musicians and it came to me naturally. I started singing with my dad [Amado Maita] as a child. When I was 17 years old, I decided to do it professionally and began singing in bars in São Paulo. A year before I had been working with my uncle Benjamin Taubkin, who has a record label.



Lero-Lero is the name of the lead single and the album itself; what does that mean?

Lero-lero signifies an informal conversation. The song "Lero-Lero" was inspired by two guys from the ghetto on the outskirts of São Paulo. It was the last song we composed for the album. For the album, I wanted to transfer that conversation between two friends into a conversation between the public and myself.

What kind of traditional Brazilian instruments are included in the album?

A lot of percussion and the cavaquinho, which is like a ukulele and is used in samba. The acoustic guitar also features in every song.

Who are some of your musical influences?

I come from a family of musicians and they influenced me the most, as well as classic Brazilian artists like Antonio Carlos Jobim, Naná Vasconcelos and Milton Nascimento ,and American artists like Michael Jackson and Prince. I identify a lot with R&B music, which is very similar to Afro-Brazilian music.

The city of São Paulo seems to be a big topic in your music, why is that?

I love São Paulo. It's not a city that you fall in love with at first sight but it's very vibrant. It's the motor of Brazil. Yet it's quite dirty, unlike Rio, which is a beautiful city. Sao Paulo is a big, gray city. You have to live here to find the beauty. And it's electric; it has something very inspirational.

What inspires you to write?

Sometimes I'm more introspective. It stems from moments that I live through. I can have an idea when I'm walking in the city and finish it when I get home. For example, when the song "Fulaninha" came to me I was reading a Mafalda comic book and my brother was telling me about doubts he had about his career. The song [which is about the struggles to realize your dreams] has a comical side and yet an important message.

Did your dad or uncle give you any advice when you decided to become a professional musician?

They said it's very difficult! Just do it if you have to do it.

When are you coming to the U.S.?

We're working on that!

Check out the video for "Lero-Lero" below:

[Luísa Maita - Lero-Lero from Cumbancha on Vimeo.](#)

