

# Pitchfork

Luísa Maita

## *Fio da Memória*



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It's been six years since the Brazilian singer's debut. Now she returns with an album that both utilizes and breaks free of samba and bossa nova classicism with deep, downtempo beats.

In 2010, São Paulo's Luísa Maita released her debut album *Lero-Lero* and entered into the family business. Her mother, Myriam Taubkin, was a concert producer while her father, Amado Maita, released what's now considered a holy grail album back in 1972. *Lero-Lero* continued in her father's tradition with an album full of hushed acoustic sambas, which she later opened up to DJ reinterpretation from Fatboy Slim-approved producer Tejo to DJ/rupture. A follow-up was not soon forthcoming, not that Maita vanished from the spotlight completely. She covered Caetano Veloso and Elis Regina for a few tributes, lent vocals to fellow "samba sujo" singer Rodrigo Campos's debut album, and two of her songs from *Lero-Lero* were featured on the soundtrack to Richard Linklater's *Boyhood*. Her voice could also be heard both during the closing ceremonies of the London Olympics and on promos for the recent Rio Olympics.

Coming six years after Maita's debut, *Fio da Memória* proves that the wait wasn't in vain. Rather than delve deeper into samba and bossa nova classicism and let others update it with remixes, Maita and cohorts modernize the deep history of the music themselves. The result is a striking album full of spare but heavily percussive downtempo tracks that foreground the smokiness, subtlety, and empowerment in her voice. Maita's Portuguese barely rises about a purr on opener "Na Asa," but its message is clear. "If you want to be reborn/Your power is in your wings," she sings against a backdrop of a martial snare, finger snaps, and a deep, spacey bass drum.

For the most part, the drum programming, track-filtering, and sampler duties fall to producers Tejo and Zé Nigro. But while electronics propel most of the tracks, both are tasteful to never let it overwhelm the band itself, providing another rhythmic tick to the uptempo rumble of "Porão" and adding psychedelic trickles to the title track. Tejo gives a '90s trip-hop thump to "Volta," while a distant samba drum line gets tweaked and teased by Nigro into many layers for "Folia."

But Maita and her band are more than capable of conjuring a smoldering atmosphere on their own with live instrumentation, too. "Olé" seethes with stitches of guitar, bass, and cowbell, then flares to full fire as Maita whispers about finding liberation from an old love and freedom to love again: "I will stand up for myself...and I will find what is mine."

Maita's freedom from both her love of the past and the samba tradition is delectable. The underlying drum pattern on "Fio da Memória" is a samba, but Maita and her collaborators blur it in digital delay, synth fuzz, and processed drum hits, transforming that telltale pulse into something unfamiliar. "I wanted to revisit the Brazilian rhythms and other sounds that I have heard growing up from a contemporary, electronic and urban perspective," she said in the lead-up to the album. Her mesmerizing voice playfully toys with such sentimentality: "Your story was stolen/By someone who loved you too deeply and also wept." Rather than be heartbroken, she sounds gleeful to break from tradition.