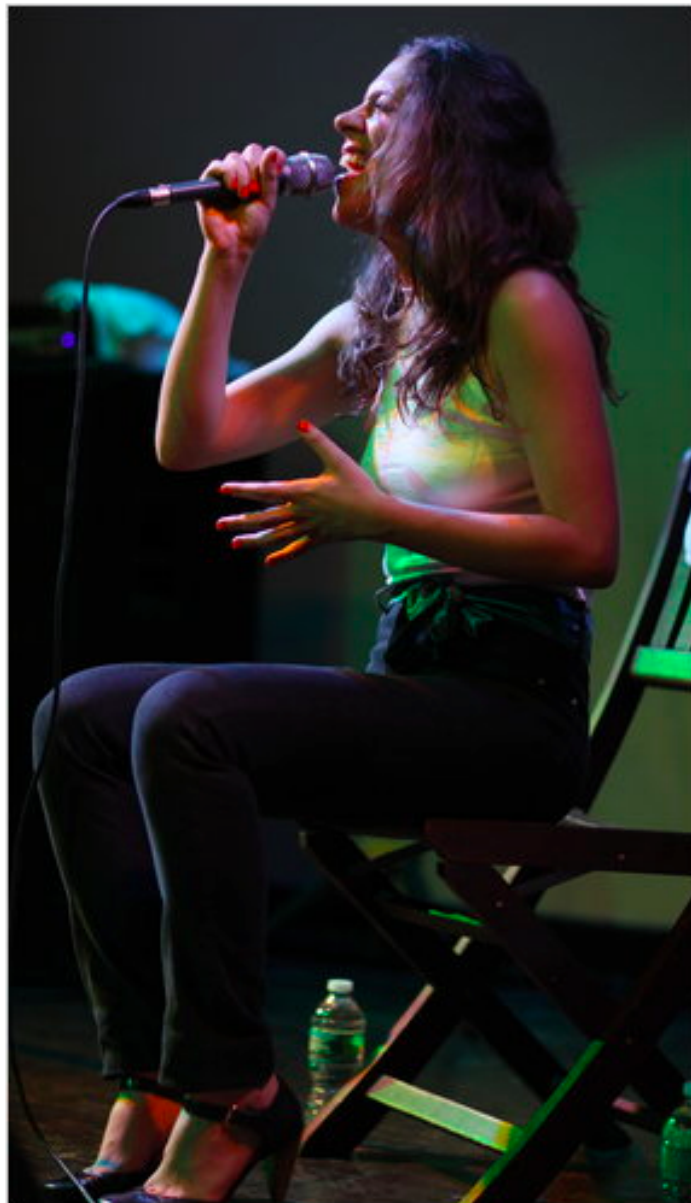


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## Slow-Motion Fusion, Direct From São Paulo

By **JON PARELES**



Michelle V. Agins/The New York Times



There was a determined stillness to the set by the Brazilian songwriter **Luísa Maita** at S.O.B.'s on Wednesday night, as she made her United States debut. She brought songs from her lissome album "**Lero-Lero**" (**Cumbancha**).

Some were ballads and some rode danceable rhythms from her country and beyond: bossa nova, samba, jazz, Brazilianized funk and rock. Yet she moved in slow motion onstage, often gazing straight ahead, with one arm perhaps describing a leisurely arc. She looked not aloof but entranced, a good match for a voice that sailed above her band, concentrated on the long line of her melodies.

Ms. Maita, who is from São Paulo and was named after a bossa nova, is part of a generation of Brazilian songwriters, like Céu and Cibelle, who are merging Brazilian pop with international club culture, particularly downtempo rhythms that were already infused with Brazilian music. (Her tour coincides with the release of an album of club-style remixes of the songs from "Lero-Lero.") Looking beyond Brazil, Ms. Maita introduced new songs that she has written with English lyrics; one was called "In Your Language."

Ms. Maita's fusion is particularly lean and elegant, both on her album and onstage; she has a deft understatement akin to that of the Canadian songwriter Feist. She performed at S.O.B.'s backed by guitar, bass and drums, with her drummer occasionally adding modest recorded tracks with percussion and electronic effects.

The bass and acoustic-sounding guitar were entwined in counterpoint — one song was oddly reminiscent of the English progressive-folk group Pentangle — while the drummer often used brushes. Those arrangements left plenty of open space below Ms. Maita's airy voice, room for contemplation. Patterns were set up, and then the band built almost conspiratorial crescendos down below, while her voice hovered as if untouched by the gathering tension until she finally let it sweep her up.

She was singing about love, yearning and relationships that leave things unsaid, pondering comforts that might easily turn out to be elusive, and about the larger hopes of Brazilians. And her music held the same sense of tentative hope and longing, of desire waiting to be fulfilled.

She ended her set with "Fulaninha" (roughly, "Jane Doe"); its earthier rhythm, a baião, had the crowd clapping along. Her voice grew brighter and sharper, more forthright, as she sang about a woman leaving town for bigger things: "Fear crept in slowly, but her desire to dream just took over." And finally, deliberately, she was dancing.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/06/arts/music/06maita.html>