

Brazil's Sounds: Niterói Grunge

Contributed by Daniella Thompson
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Where does inspiration come from? Luís Capucho dredges his from the dark depths of his soul, and it emerges in songs that are street-smart, soiled, disturbing, literate, overlaid with banality and detachment, and often quite funny.

Then there's the matter of Capucho's voice. World-weary, exclamatory, with shades of Lou Reed and Bob Dylan, and redolent of grunge grease and alienation.

Just the voice to sing-talk of the bas-fonds of life: vampiric desires, irresistible incubi, fleeting homoerotic conquests, insanity, death, and various other living nightmares that skulk along the seamier margins of so-called "respectable" society.

Luís Capucho, irremediable poète maudit.

The inspiration was always there. The voice wasn't. A decisive event changed both Luís Capucho's life and his work. An HIV carrier, in 1996 he contracted toxoplasmosis that wreaked havoc with his compromised immune system.

He suffered convulsions, followed by a coma that lasted two months. The sequelae were a loss of motor coordination and severely impaired speech. Confined to a wheelchair as he was, it's taken years of therapy and iron discipline to learn to walk, speak, and write again.

Says Capucho now:

I had thought that music was over for me. But then, after having stopped, I picked up the guitar again, and the first chords began coming out. It was no longer the same guitar I used to play. Now it was rough, harder and dirtier.

Gone were the subtlety, delicacy, those aspects of music. And this combined with the volcanic voice that I acquired, uncoordinated, a Neptune's voice.

Fellow niteroiense Paulo Baiano, who produced Capucho's debut disc *Lua Singela*, remembers the previous Luís:

I've known him since the late 1970s, when I got to know [Marcos] Sacramento. Luís was the youngest of the group, all of us from Niterói.

We made some shows together at the beginning of our respective careers, appearing at the SESC auditorium in Niterói with the embryo of what would later become the group *Cão Sem Dono*.

This was around 1982. Luís was already creating some crazy songs, but he wasn't yet the savage bard he would later become.

Later, Luis became rather strange, with a huge ego, but without a doubt a genius in songwriting, a great poet, who translated in his songs and poetry a certain marginal side of human relations.

But hearing his pre-HIV recordings today, I perceive that Luís' artistic persona wasn't fully realized: the songs already contained all the characteristics of his gauche, outsider esthetic, but his voice didn't. It didn't translate his universe well.

The Luís of that time seemed to me like a clone of Caetano Veloso, with his high, delicate, androgynous little voice, singing those things that were both lyrical and heavy...

I feel that Luís needed to pass through all the ordeals he went through to reinvent himself as a person, as an artist, and as a musician.

Luís composed a completely new repertoire of songs that were adapted to his new limitations as a guitarist. These songs are the basis of the CD *Lua Singela*.

Luís reinvented his voice—now low, cavernous, rough, but always in tune. A voice much more attuned to the message he wants to convey in his songs.

Following much treatment and therapy—to which Luís dedicates himself in a disciplined, almost compulsive manner—he now sings and plays better than ever.

Luís Capucho had to pass through the inferno to acquire the consistency and the truth that he brings to all of us in his unique work.

According to Capucho, it was Baiano's idea to record the disc.

"I returned to composing and called some friends to make a show. They agreed. I saw that it wasn't so bad. Paulo Baiano saw the show with a very strange expression. And one day at Sacramento's house, where he had a studio, Paulo said:

"Shall we make a disc here?"

And that's how we began. We called our friends to fill in what my guitar and his keyboard couldn't cover.

This disc has great significance for me, for having been able to restart where I had stopped. Even though it was a restart on different terms, the direction is the same. I'm a very lucky guy! I only need to be heard... "

Listen to audio samples from *Lua Singela* and read Luís Capucho's song lyrics. For the Portuguese-literate, the essay *O estranho mundo de Luís Capucho* by Marcelo Secron Bessa is highly recommended for gaining insight into Capucho's work.

Luís Capucho: *Lua Singela*
(Astronauta Discos cd 004/dist. Tratore; 2003) 44:34 min.

Produced & arranged by Paulo Baiano

01. *Lua Singela* (Luís Capucho)
02. *Fonemas* (Luís Capucho/Marcos Sacramento)
03. *Bichinhos* (Luís Capucho)
04. *Bengalinha* (Luís Capucho/Mathilda Kóvak)
05. *Ponto Máximo* (Luís Capucho/Marcos Sacramento)
06. *Maluca* (Luís Capucho)
07. *Vai Querer?* (Luís Capucho/Suely Mesquita)
08. *Sucesso com Sexo* (Luís Capucho/Mathilda Kóvak)
09. *Íncubos* (Luís Capucho/Marcos Sacramento)
10. *Algo Assim* (Mathilda Kóvak/Luís Capucho)
11. *A Vida é Livre* (Luís Capucho)
12. *Máquina de Escrever* (Luís Capucho/Mathilda Kóvak)

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