

Brazilian Music: Essência, Two Decades Like a River

Contributed by Gilson P. Borges
Monday, 29 January 2007

The Goianian (from the Brazilian midwestern state of Goiás) musical scenery faced a very good surprise last December 4: a concert to release the CD "Quatro Ventos" (Four Winds), by a quartet called Essência (Essence).

The CD was produced by Luiz Chaffin, a guitar virtuoso who also played in the concert. The singer and composer João Caetano also took part on it, by singing songs such as "Tá na Terra" (It's on the Soil), "Ajutório" (Aid) and "Meu Coração" (My Heart), all composed by him and Otávio Daher.

Essência is Alberto Cabral (vocals and guitar), David Izacc (vocals), Reny Cruvinel (vocals and guitar), and Romero Fonseca (vocals, flute and harmonica). It was born around 1985, and was originally formed by Reny Cruvinel, Romero Fonseca, Deuler Andrade, and Adalberto Alves.

Reny Cruvinel explains that the name of the group comes from a song by Cláudio Nucci called "Acontecência" (a made up word that would mean "happening"), one of his favorite songs at that time. All members of the band suggested something, but "Essência" was the chosen name.

In 1989, after a series of concerts in the states of Goiás, Mato Grosso and São Paulo, the quartet recorded its first long play, also called Essência.

Some time later, Adalberto and Deuler decided to leave the band, and the quartet became a trio: Reny Cruvinel, Romero Fonseca and Alberto Cabral.

Around 2001, they decided to become a quartet again. So, a musician called David Izacc was invited to join them.

Essência's songs were initially inspired by singers and composers from the state of Minas Gerais, who belonged to the famous "Clube da Esquina" (Corner Club). Among them we can point out names such as Milton Nascimento, Lô Borges and Beto Guedes. That influence is strongly present in their work, as we can see in the song below, from their first album:

Emoções Gerais

(Deuler Andrade)

Maria-fumaça

Viajando até o sol

Vai cortando os vales

Onde canta o rouxinol

As velhas cidades

Têm poesias do coração

Sons que vêm no vento

Trazendo uma canção

Êh, Minas

Me alegro o teu canto

Cante mais

Êh, êh, Minas

De emoções gerais

Na Serra da Saudade

Eu encontro recordações

De um tempo em que se ouvia

Travessias e canções

Eu vivo nas estradas

Vou cantando pras multidões

Belezas dessa terra

Que envolve os corações

General Emotions/ Feelings from Minas Gerais

(Deuler Andrade)

A steam locomotive
Traveling to the sun
Goes crossing the valleys
Where the nightingale sings
The old cities
Have poetry in their hearts
Sounds blown by the wind
Bringing a song

Eh, Minas
Your song makes me happy
Sing it more
Eh, eh, Minas
Of strong feelings

In the Serra da Saudade
I can find memories
Of a time when we could hear
Journeys and songs
I live on the roads
Singing to the crowds
Beauties of this country
That embrace their hearts

At another time in their careers, the quartet explored the Brazilian Northeastern rhythms, including the music of Lenine, and even jazz.

On the whole, their songs remind us the best of bands such as Boca Livre, 14 Bis, Quarteto em Cy, MPB-4 etc.

The CD "Quatro Ventos" brings 12 songs, as listed below:

- 1 - Ginga (Swing) - (Reny Cruvinel/ Carlos Brandão/ Chaul).
- 2 - Alegre Menina (Happy Girl) - (Dori Caymmi/ Jorge Amado).
- 3 - Varal (Clothes Line) - (David Izacc).
- 4 - Linha Amarela (Yellow Line) - (Gustavo Veiga/ Du Oliveira/ Itamar Pires).
- 5 - Venha Até Minha Casa (Come to My Home) - (Filó Machado/ Judith de Souza).
- 6 - Rio de Mim (A River from Me, or I Laugh at Myself) - (Reny Cruvinel/ Romero Fonseca).
- 7 - Calmaria (Calmness) - (David Izacc).
- 8 - Coração Retirante (Migrant Heart) - (Gustavo Veiga/ Carlos Brandão/ Chaul).
- 9 - Romanza (Romanza) - (Alberto Cabral/ Welson Moreira).
- 10 - Águas Passadas (Bygone Waters) - (Fred Martins/ Marcelo Diniz).
- 11 - Ajutório (Aid) - (João Caetano/ Otávio Daher).
- 12 - Quatrocentos Watts (Four Hundred Watts) - (Deuler Andrade/ Carlos Brandão).

The best lyrics are present in the song "Rio de Mim", which brings a double meaning: "A River from Me" or "I Laugh at Myself". It was inspired in a book called "Poemas da Margem Esquerda do Rio de Dentro", by Gilson Cavalcante:

Rio de Mim

(Reny Cruvinel/ Romero Fonseca)

Segue como o rio

Que procura desaguar

Margeante o meu destino, rio de mim

Rio acima, rio abaixo

Nascente dos meus olhos, o mar

Segue como a estrada

Que procura onde chegar

A levantar poeira, pó, chão de mim

Horizonte a se perder

Caminhos dos meus olhos, sertão

Venho dessas águas
Que navegam o sentimento
E passam por mim, um rio sem fim
Venho dessa estrada
E carrego novos sonhos
Dos homens de bem
Um ser tão sem fim

Abro o coração, zomba, meu amor
E rio de mim: é paixão
E rio de mim: é canção

Segue como o rio...
Enchente dos meus olhos, amor.

A River from Me/ I Laugh at Myself
(Reny Cruvinel/ Romero Fonseca)

It flows like the river
That tries to drain
Alongside my fate, a river from me/ I laugh at myself
Up river, down river
Rising from my eyes, the sea
It flows like a road
That looks for a destination
Rising dust, powder, ground from me
Huge horizon
Path to my eyes, hinterland

I come from those waters
Which navigate the feeling
And go through me, an endless river
I come from that road
And carry new dreams
Dreamed by good men
A so endless being/ an endless hinterland

I open my heart, mock me, my love
And a river from me/ I laugh at myself: it's passion
And a river from me/ I laugh at myself: it's a song

It flows like the river...
Flooding my eyes, love.

Gilson P. Borges is a teacher in Goiânia, Brazil. You can reach him at gilson_borges@hotmail.com.