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A Genre Reborn and a Singer Transformed: A New Mariza Brings a Smile to the World

Charlie Chaplin's "Smile" was never supposed to end up on the latest album by Portugal's musical grande dame. **Mariza**, a fado powerhouse, and Brazilian pianist Ivan Lins were just clowning around, having some fun with the sweet song that's been covered by everybody from Barbra Streisand and Diana Ross to Judy Garland and even Michael Jackson. That is, until they realized producer Javier Limón had been secretly recording them. When she looked up and saw tears in his eyes, she wondered what she had done. "I thought we broke something, I thought we did something wrong!" she exclaims. Sung with the kind of beautiful melancholy that only a fadista can bring, it instead ends up as a bonus track on the North American release of **Terra (4Q / World Connection)**, a musical proclamation that Mariza has come into her own. *Terra* will be released Stateside on January 27, 2009, to coincide with an extensive three-month 47 city tour of North America.

Mariza calls "Smile" a gift, a "present for the kindness people have given to me through all this time, trying to understand me. It's my way of saying 'Thank you.'" And audiences have certainly enjoyed watching her transform. If her debut album *Fado em Mim* was an effort to establish her knowledge of the fado tradition, having grown up in her father's fado house in Lisbon, her second release *Fado Curvo* allowed her to put her own stamp on the tradition while demonstrating that there are more ways than one to move artistically from point A to point B. Her next release, *Transparente*, a more intimate, classically-inspired take on fado, expressed Mariza as a more experienced and sophisticated artist.



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Sample Track 1:
"Beigo de Saudade"
from Terra

Sample Track 2:
"Smile" from Terra

Since then Mariza has continued to wow audiences with her powerful talent as a live performer, recording the album *Concerto Em Lisboa* to a hometown audience of several thousand right next to that most visual icon of fado—the sea. She has also traveled the world, selling out concert halls, from Carnegie Hall and Disney Concert Hall to London's Royal Albert Hall and the Sydney Opera House, and winning awards, including a BBC World Music Award and 2008 Latin Grammy nomination.

Now a mature performer, Mariza's *Terra* showcases the new voice of Portugal, a voice comfortable enough with Portuguese music to have some fun with it. On the one hand, *Terra* is firmly planted in tradition; tracks like "Já Me Deixou" and "Rosa Branca" rejuvenate well-worn, beloved songs of the past, and "Recurso" demonstrates her lifelong commitment to fado, having discovered this hand-written, never-published poem by David Mourão-Ferreira in a fado museum.

On the other hand, nourished by her traditional roots, Mariza branches out in new directions. The first clue of this was her choice of Javier Limón, a Grammy-nominated Spanish *flamenco* guitarist/producer (known for his work with Paco de Lucia, Bebo & Cigala, and Buika), as producer for *Terra*. At first leery of having somebody with such a different musical background working with her on her new album, Mariza invited him to Portugal to play in a *taverna*. It was then that it hit her: "Right then I knew he was the right one for this. With him, everything was music, *for* music."

Collaboration with other musicians yielded musical fruits on the tracks of *Terra* as well. "Fronteira," a lively song discussing the real and imagined borders between Portugal and Spain, features a folkloric Portuguese rhythm from the north that is made to sound gently Cuban through the playing of Chucho Valdes, the Cuban pianist and bandleader more known for his jazz stylings, and with a battery of Portuguese percussion played by Spanish master El Piraña. "Alma de Vento" was created in the highly unconventional manner of having a guitar line first sent to her by Dominic Miller, an Argentinian-born, London-raised musician who now plays with Sting, around which she had to find the right lyrics.

Perhaps the most memorable musical melding on the album happens in the *morna* "Beijo de Saudade." The poem was written in misery in 1958 by one of the greatest Cape Verdean poets, B.leza, who had married a fado star, moved to Portugal, and found himself dying in a hospital bed where he saw the sea—and his tiny, faraway home island—through the window.

Joining her on the track is Tito Paris, a Cape Verdean icon, living in Lisbon who has worked before with Mariza and Cesaria Evora, among others, and who blends African influences into the Portuguese musical landscape. Half Mozambican herself, Mariza finds the collaboration on *Terra* deeply personal as well, saying that "Tito is putting the African part that is missing in me, and I'm putting the Portuguese part that is missing in him." Along with an elegant

muted trumpet, the track is loaded with enough fado-worthy longing to create a timeless masterpiece.

Iberian splendor is captured in the track "Pequenas Verdades," a sweet tune written for Mariza by Limón himself. Wanting to retain the original Spanish flavor, they brought in Concha Buika—known simply as Buika—a meteorically rising Afro-Spanish flamenco singer.

It's easy to put a star like Mariza into a musical box. Fado, the beguiling music that helped catapult her onto the global soundscape also taunts her like a jealous lover never wanting to be neglected for too long, a curious and passionate relationship she recounts on the track "Mihn'Alma." Yet the transformed Mariza firmly stands her ground. With a new musical family surrounding her and the voice of experience and tradition behind her, she reaches out to give Portugal a new sound.

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