

→ BEGINNER'S GUIDE

ANA MOURA

Over six albums, the young singer has made *fado* sound contemporary while honouring its tradition. Gonçalo Frota tells this modern *fadista's* tale



When Ana Moura first set foot on the scene she was the lead singer for just another pop/rock band. During their live sets, she sometimes asked the musicians to indulge her and play a little *fado* for an encore. Later on, when they were recording their album (which remains unreleased), the producer would ask Moura to sing their pop songs with the same breathtaking spirit she put into the occasional *fado*. But she really couldn't do it. It was not in her nature. *Fado* always took her someplace else. She traded day for night and started

soaking up the teachings of singers such as Jorge Fernando, in ill-lit after-hours haunts where only *fadistas* and their close entourage are allowed in. This was the time, at the turn of the century, where she started performing at one of Lisbon's most revered *fado* restaurants, Senhor Vinho, run by Maria Fé – a launch pad not only for Ana Moura, but also for Mariza, António Zambujo and Aldina Duarte. However, there's something quite striking that Ana Moura has kept immaculate from those early years: the ability to sing a catchy melody and enter our lives without permission. That makes Moura's *fado* more pop than possibly any

other's. But there's absolutely no harm in that. This unique quality, married to her beautiful, well-tempered, low, mysterious, sensuous voice, comes close to explaining the source of her spell, one that has proven incredibly effective in captivating the Rolling Stones, Prince and Herbie Hancock. And that's no small accomplishment. She subsequently recorded both 'No Expectations' and a *fado*-meets-honky-tonk version of 'Brown Sugar' for *The Rolling Stones Project*, a quirky album of Stones covers put together jazz saxophonist Tim Ries. Prince is also a big fan of hers. He flew by private jet to Paris in 2009 expressly to

see her live at La Cigale, where he praised the spiritual warmth of her music. The following year, Prince played electric guitar accompaniment to Moura's take on 'Vou Dar de Beber à Dor' for an encore at a Portuguese summer rock festival, where they also performed a Portuguese version of Prince's 'Walk in Sand'.

This flirtation with pop/rock goes both ways and you can track it right back to her very beginnings. Since Moura's debut album, *Guarda-me o Vida na Mão*, she has always searched for a fresh and contemporary approach to the traditional *fado* repertoire. She was able to make a statement, by inviting young local singer-songwriters to write lyrics for her *fados*. By doing this with each record, she created her own style. She admitted in interviews that she wanted to sing like a 20-something and not an old revered *fado* legend; she aimed to win over an audience that could be her Friday-night mates, using words that meant something to today's world, and not just something from a dusted-off old poetry book. In a way, she only wanted her *fado* to be a little more like her.

Moura's first musical memories are of big family get-togethers where everyone sang or played guitar. She has recalled singing her first *fado* song, 'Cavalo Ruço' at the age of six. Her family favoured both *fado* and songs from Portuguese revolutionary authors – anti-fascist anthems that were essential in transporting traditional sounds from their rural nests to popular music. The country's folk music was a big part of the songs of José Afonso, José Mário Branco and Fausto Bordalo Dias, and the fact Moura convinced the ever so reclusive Dias to hand her an unreleased piece, 'E Viemos Nascidos do Mar', for her third album, *Para Além da Saudade*, was the greatest sign of her musical development. Along with an original penned by Amélia Muge, one of the biggest heirs of the aforementioned generation, it was a high point on the first defining album of her career, which went triple-platinum, selling more than 55,000 copies. Her art began to blossom via interesting repertoire choices, projecting a more honest and heartfelt image of what *fado* could be. And from then on, it turned into something utterly powerful and mesmerising.

Leva-me aos Fados (2009) was full of a new-found confidence. It was a departure album for Moura and Jorge Fernando, one of adding the firm hands of

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guitarist Custódio Castelo to the musical arrangements. It explored Moura's involvement with the Portuguese folk world a little further, by bringing back Amélia Muge and also by welcoming Gaiteiros de Lisboa – a folk-rock band who are the Portuguese equivalent of, say, Hedningarna – for the final theme. For the first time, Ana Moura risked including a song of her own, 'Que Dizer de Nós'.

After her successful world tours and collaborations with fans from the most surprising rock and funk origins, Moura's sixth album, *Desfado*, is the point of departure her career really needed. Parting ways with her previous producer Jorge Fernando, Moura and her musicians flew to Los Angeles and recorded with Larry Klein, who has produced albums for Joni Mitchell, Tracy Chapman, Melody Gardot and Madeleine Peyroux. He brought in jazz superstar Herbie Hancock, veteran of several classic Miles Davis albums, to lend his trademark jazz-funk electric piano to the album.

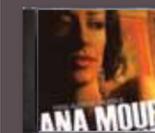
Desfado puts it all out in the open: her proximity to some of the best songwriters of her generation – Pedro da Silva Martins (Deolinda), António Zambujo, Márcia Santos and Miguel Araújo Jorge – and the outright confidence of her first international record, as demonstrated by the gorgeous cover of Joni Mitchell's 'A Case of You' and new tracks 'Thank You' and 'Dream of Fire'. It's one record guaranteed to please all: her younger Portuguese audience, with the informal, youthful compositions; the world stage with the English songs; and the hardcore *fado* fans with a couple of traditional recordings. If you put it all together, it is a pretty accurate picture of who Ana Moura is as a singer. **M**

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PODCAST Hear music from Ana Moura in this issue's podcast

DATE See the *Gig Guide* for Ana Moura's UK tour dates in April

ALBUM *Desfado* will be reviewed in the next issue (June 2013, #92), on sale April 26

BEST ALBUMS



Para Além da Saudade (World Village, 2007)
 No longer a girly *fadista* trying to make it, but instead a confident and fully-grown woman. She collaborates with Amélia Muge in the stunning 'O Fado da Procura', records a rare song by the influential Fausto Bordalo Dias and welcomes Rolling Stones' saxophonist Tim Ries. This is where it all begins.



Leva-me aos Fados (World Village, 2009)
 On the last of her Jorge Fernando productions, she takes a step further in bringing folk elements to her *fado* foundations. The final song 'Não É Um Fado Normal' (This is no Ordinary Fado) is the perfect ending for a record where she pulls off beautiful traditional performances but closes the curtain reminding everyone you can't put limits to her singing.



Desfado (Decca, 2012)
 No longer afraid of what her peers might think of her chosen path, Ana Moura shamelessly flirts with pop music, sings Joni Mitchell's 'A Case of You' and shows one of the possible ways for *fado* to develop. A turning point in her career.

BEST AVOIDED



Guarda-me a Vida na Mão (World Village, 2003)
 Not so much a matter of avoiding it as a question of making sure it stays the bottom item in the shopping list for Ana Moura's records. On her debut album she was still a long way from the *fado* goddess that was to be revealed, sounding rather innocent and naive.

LIKE ANA MOURA? THEN TRY...

A NAIFA



Não se Deitam Comigo Corações Obedientes (Antena Portuguesa, 2012)
 Not exactly a traditional *fado* act, A Naifa is a creation of former pop-rock musicians Luís Varatojo and João Aguardela, who put the *fado*-esque voice of Maria Antónia through its paces, with a Portuguese guitar, electric bass and drums, as she sumptuously delivers lyrics by contemporary poets.