

Amalia Baraona: I Love Croatian Designers, Blitva with Lignje

By Danni Matijaca, 24 Jul 2015, 16:47 PM [Entertainment](#)



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Young, talented and above all passionate, renowned jazz singer Amalia Baraona, a Croatian bride, opened up to TCN about her influences, splitting her time between Portugal and Croatia, and of course future music plans.

1. You were born in Cascais, beautiful tourist town just an hour from Lisbon, lived all over the world and finally decided to call Croatia your home. Your life partner is Croatian however, was that the reason to move to Croatia or is there a secret connection between you and our country?

I recently realised that my living all over the world divides my life in 4 slices like a tasty birthday cake: 1 quarter in Portugal, 1 quarter in Brazil, 1 quarter in Belgium and 1 in the Balkans between Albania, Croatia and Macedonia! What first brought me to the Balkans was not the music but my work for the European Commission. However, my initial connection with your beautiful country was music, as throughout my years in Albania I sang a number of times in Dubrovnik before relocating to Zagreb in 2009. Meeting my partner in life and in music, my husband Dinko Stipaničev, transformed this connection in a lifetime love story with Croatia!



2. Since you are from Portugal, and on top of everything you were named Amalia, one would expect Fado to be your first choice in terms of a musical genre. What turned you to jazz and Bossa and how much did your time spent in Brazil influence your musical path?

Indeed! I lost count of how many times I saw surprised faces when a Portuguese called Amália starts singing Bossa Nova!! I moved to Brazil when I was 9 years old and that is where I spent my formative years. Almost all my friends from a very young age seemed to play some instrument like guitar, flute,

cavaquinho, and getting together on the weekends or in the evening to sing was what we did for fun! Bossa came naturally into my life like the air I breathed. Jazz came later, upon my return to Europe, in particular when I moved to Belgium in 1991. I saw the best jazz concerts of my life in Brussels, and those were definitely the years that awakened my love for jazz, when I also realised how intertwined jazz and Bossa became, how much they "flirt" with each other...!



3. Critics are praising your immense talent, incredible range and above all great soul. One of the comments that stuck with me was that you “inhabit every jazz standard as if it were yours”. How hard is it to meet their expectations which were set pretty high from the very beginning of your career?

I am very grateful to the critics who have praised my work so far, but I never think about anyone's expectations to tell you the truth. I often say that I don't sing for a living, but I live for singing. I try to remain truthful to my love for music and to the pleasure of sharing it with my fellow musicians and with the public who follows my work. I still have a world of sounds and emotions to discover and to express and I am continuously learning by listening. As to making every tune my own, the Master João Gilberto used to say that Bossa is not a genre; it's a way of singing. I guess that I have my own Bossa way of expressing the standards I sing!

4. I've had the pleasure of seeing you perform both at the Cascais Jazz Club and here in Zagreb. Is there a difference in how the audience receives you here considering the language

barrier or is music truly a universal language?

Cascais Jazz Club is definitely one of my favourite places on earth to sing. Maria Viana, an outstanding singer and one of the pillars of jazz in Portugal, manages the Club with so much passion that the audience feels like they are a part of it and they are extremely respectful of the artists who perform there. But going back to your question, music is most definitely truly a universal language!! Even if it weren't, I love talking to the public and sharing Bossa Nova stories and I have felt that people relate to that very much! Some years ago I had a show about the history of Bossa Nova where we displayed photos of the Bossa Nova people and places, told stories and sang the songs and it was extremely rewarding doing it in Zagreb and seeing the public discovering Bossa beyond the "Girl from Ipanema" and other well-known standards. Knowing the story behind the song brings the attention of the listener closer to what you are singing.

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5. It's been 5 years since your album *Mulheres* was released with songs written for women but originally sung by men, *Menescantando* was out in 2012 with an amazing collaboration with the legendary Roberto Menescal, one of the creators of the Bossa Nova movement...every album has its little twist. Before I ask when can we expect your next album, what was it like to work with such a music icon (Roberto Menescal)?

It was magic! 3 years later it is still hard to believe that this happened! Roberto Menescal is a man of a rare generosity, integrity and joy for life and music. He is as you say, a Legend. And yet, he trusted and supported an unknown singer living in Croatia who wanted to record some of his work. It was the start of "*Menescantando*", which culminated with his guesting in two tracks of the album. I keep preciously all our correspondence, in particular the message where he tells me that "...if we dream about our wishes, they become true". So I keep dreaming about my wish to perform with him, hoping that one day it will come true...!

6. You owe us an answer – is the new album in the works and when will it see the light of day?

Yes! There is a new album in the works since last year and it should be released in September by the Italian label Four edition, who published "Mulheres" back in 2010. The "little twist" this time...? The new album, "3 Mundus", gathers musicians from the 3 Worlds that I love: classical, jazz and Brazilian. This project brings together exceptional musicians who honoured me by being a part of this new adventure: Petrit Çeku (Kosovo/Croatia), Toni Kitanovski (Macedonia), Dinko Stipaničev (Croatia) and Gent Rushi (Albania). The main instrument is the guitar, the repertoire covers a wide range of Brazilian music from classical to popular, Bossa to samba, and the arrangements were done by each of the musicians according to the influences of their own musical world and sensibility towards Brazilian music.

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7. What are your plans for the summer? Do you even get the chance to explore Croatia when you're not performing and if so, what are your favourite cities and secret hideaways?

This summer I will rest and renew my energy, with only one performance at Cascais Jazz Club with Dinko in early September. I always enjoyed immensely performing in Croatia during summer, being able to sing and take pleasure in the beauty of the Croatian coast at the same time! I particularly liked the summer of 2012 when we played in the accompanying events of the Valamar Festival in the lovely city of Poreč, and the following year in Opatija singing in the Jazz Boat during the Liburnia Jazz Festival. Bol is also one of my favourite places. There are too many beautiful places to list!

8. What would be your 5 favourite things about Croatia?

- 1) Zagreb is top of the list! I love Zagreb, especially in Christmas and in spring;
- 2) Croatian designers, in particular for clothes and jewellery;
- 3) Eating "lignje sa blitvom" on Fridays for lunch!
- 4) Croatian wine, in particular Istrian;
- 5) The natural beauty of Croatia, be it the blue coast or the green natural parks.