

# THE BEST SINGER IN JAZZ? Luciana Souza: Duos III, The Book of Chet

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By [George W. Harris](#)



She's been out of the music scene for a spell getting married and starting a family in LA, but vocalist Luciana Souza has come back with a vengeance, with two new releases that put her right back on the top of the list of the most important singers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The moods of these two discs are similar—quiet, subdued and reflective. But the means to this end are delivered on completely divergent platters: a collection of Brazilian duets with various simpatico guitarists, and a tribute to the late, great and tortured romantic Chet Baker.

Duos III plays to one of Ms. Souza's strengths: an ability to enunciate with alarming clarity and intimacy. You can detect the parting of her lips on soft and delicate pieces as she goes Pas de deux with guitarists Toninho Horta, Romero Lubambo or Marco Pereira. She can deliver a percussive joyfulness on wordless pieces such as "Tim Tim Por Tim Tim" that sounds like a tambourine with an infectious giggle, while she's also developed this new ability to hold a note ever so much longer than you'd expect, as on "Dindi," creating a vulnerability that is audibly palpable. The stringed support of the three gents is as well fitting as a collection of spices sprinkled over roasted peppers. Bossa standards and some originals all sound at home in the cozy confines of this disc you'll want to play over and over.

For her Chet Baker anthology, Ms. Souza employs the talents of Larry Koonse/g, David Piltch/ and Jay Bellerose/dr, three gents who keep the mood sepia toned and almost film nourish. The wistful cum desultory side of Baker's songbook is emphasized here. No hopefulness of "Let's Get Lost" here: more of the "Thrill is Gone" side of romantic relationships. The Blue Period mood throughout this disc highlights once again Souza's ability to hold a note like a last grasp of someone's hand before letting it go, as on "I Don't Stand a Ghost of a Chance With You." Her "what was I thinking last night" portrayal of "I fall In Love Too Easily" oozes regret that will make you want to stay away from sharp objects, as Koonse's melancholy guitar shines prisms of light that bring out pensive moods. Important music from an essential singer.