

DAILY NEWS

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Latin Jazz icons Michel Camilo and Luciana Souza put new twists on the mellow genre

Camilo's new CD 'Mano A Mano' mixes American jazz with Latin grooves and European classical; Souza does American standards in 'The Book of Chet.'



Latin Jazz pianist Michel Camilo

INGRID HERTFELDER FOR NEW YORK DAILY NEWS



HANDOUT

Brazilian jazz singer Luciana Souza

Michel Camilo

Pianist and composer Michel Camilo says we're in a second golden age in Latin Jazz.

The first great era occurred from the 1930s through the 1950s, with "Chano Pozo, Mario Bauza, Juan Tizol with Duke Ellington, Ray Baretto playing with Charlie Parker, Candido, and Dizzy Gillespie, of course," says Camilo, 53, who lives in Bedford, N.Y. with his family.

For the last 40 or so years, Latin Jazz musicians have been experimenting with different forms and rhythms.

"We're exploring new beats and new claves," he says. "My generation extrapolated the 2-3 and 3-2 clave and started writing Latin Jazz in different meters."

This new sound can be found on the song "Rumba Pa'Ti" on his latest trio CD, "Mano A Mano." And Camilo and his rhythms arrive at the Lehman Center in the Bronx on Saturday, Sept. 15. Camilo's bravura style of performance and writing combines American jazz and Latin grooves with an underpinning of European classical. He moved to New York in 1979 after 12 years of studying classical music in his native Dominican Republic.

He continued his music and composition studies at Juilliard and the Mannes College of Music, paying for his education by performing in Bob Fosse's "Dancin'" on Broadway. Work with Tito Puente, Tania Maria and Paquito D'Rivera followed.

He's been touring the world for decades now. But his current musical team is the first time, he says, where "I've had a trio where I've replaced the drum set with Latin percussion." Congero Giovanni Hidalgo is the percussionist; Lincoln Goines the acoustic bassist.

"The beauty of this trio," Camilo says, "is that we share many years playing together."

[Luciana Souza](#)

Luciana Souza is doing double duty. A few weeks ago, the Brazilian songstress of jazz released two recordings: "The Book of Chet," in the understated style of trumpeter and singer Chet Baker, and "Duos III," the last of a trilogy featuring her mellifluous voice with Brazilian guitar masters.

"I hadn't made a record in a few years, and I had a lot more to say than one record," Souza says. On Wednesday, Sept. 12 at Joe's Pub she'll dive into both recordings with a trio of bass, drums and guitar.

The Chet Baker ballad recording is her first of American Songbook standards. Numbers such as "The Very Thought of You," "You Go To My Head," and "I Fall in Love Too Easily" are rendered like the etchings of aching beauty.

Twenty years ago, as a student at Berklee and the New England Conservatory, Souza was deep into building musical complexity. Now the mother of a four-year-old and wife of producer Larry Klein sounds like she's passionate about getting to the essential core of a song.

"I tried to remove all the junk we educated modern musicians put on modern songs — changing the meter, the harmony, the melody," she explains. "We reduced it to the basics." "Duos III" is more varied in tempo. The lilting Brazilian

verses evoke vibrant colors and wistful textures. She has previously recorded with two of the three guitarists, Romero Lubambo and Marco Pereira. This date was her first time with Toninho Horta.

Horta, 63, is one of the foremost Brazilian singer-composer-guitarists of his generation. He's a big influence on American guitarist Pat Metheny.

"I called Toninho," Souza says, "told him what tunes, and he said 'I'll do it. You just show up.' And when I did, it was the simplest, most delicious thing because it's like going up to somebody's house for coffee."

Lately Souza's been immersed in the world of motherhood. "The world is so loud, and you try to protect this little person because there's so much information, speed and velocity," she says. "I think I've been making slow and quiet records because that's what makes me comfortable now."

Greg Thomas is the host of "JazzPlus with Greg Thomas" on WVOX 1460 AM and online at wvox.com from 2-3 p.m. on Sundays.