

# naïve

## press release

### Vinicius Cantuaria Cymbals

Release date January 21<sup>st</sup> 2008.

*"The doyen of Brazilian singer-songwriters - more melodic than Caetano Veloso, more consistent than Gilberto Gil and with more talent than Max de Castro, Otto and Patricia Marx put together"*  
**the Guardian,**

*'a gentle subversive'* **Metro**

Vinicius Cantuaria is one of the greatest living singer-songwriters, the ex-pat Brazilian's (he was born Amazonia but now lives in New York) gentle, elegiac, subtly subversive music placing him in a lineage that includes the great *Tom Jobim* (whose *Vino Sonhando* he covers on *Cymbals*) and *Caetano Veloso* (who recorded his song *Lua E Estrella*), but while his music has the subtle, sad beauty of the greatest bossa nova songs, it's has a darker hue. Listen closely and beneath the mellow lyricism you'll find a pricklier world as befits an artist who has collaborated with the likes of *David Byrne, Brian Eno, Bill Frissell* and *Arto Lindsay*.

His latest album *Cymbals* features long running collaborator, trumpeter **Michael Leonhart**, iconic pianist **Brad Mehldau**, saxophonist **David Binney**, cellist **Eric Friedlander**, guitarist **Marc Ribot**, percussionist **Marivaldo Dos Santos** and violinist **Jenny Scheinman**.

*'the lyrics show, that Silva, like all great pop, is about dreams and the bitter realisation that they probably won't come true'*  
**Word Magazine**

*'one of the harder-edged expats on the New York scene'* **Sunday Times**

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## Biography

**Vinicius Cantuária** was born in 1951 in Manaus in Amazonia, Brazil, and lived there until the age of seven when his family moved to Rio. He sings, writes, plays guitar and percussion and brings together many aspects of Brazilian music into his art. The best way of describing Cantuária's group would be "post-electronic acoustic" - a quintet made up of jazz bassist Pau Socolow, Michael Leohnart (the young trumpet player from Steely Dan) and the Brazilian percussionists Nanny Assis and Mauro Refosco. Mostly originals their repertoire also contains a few songs by Jobim and Gilberto Gil, who is one of Cantuária's major influences.

Cantuária's critically acclaimed albums have seen him collaborate with such singular artists as Laurie Anderson, David Byrne, Brian Eno, Bill Frisell and Arto Lindsay. Artists like Anderson, Frisell and Lindsay have a very similar sensibility; there are little imperfections in their music because they try to avoid clean sounds. But it never prevented them from delighting their listeners, whilst also confronting the sophisticates amongst them.

Cantuária loves musical contrasts ; he expresses an enthusiastic interest for DJ Spooky and the scratched rhythms of laptop blip-hop or duets with David Byrne and Marc Ribot, but the final result is always harmonious, light, fleet and musical. Just compare his version of 'O Nome Dela' (co-written with Arto Lindsay) with the one by the same Lindsay on his album *Prize*. The song has fabulous harmonies, a great hook and lyrics that are as simple as they are moving. Both cover versions are interesting and reveal the different aspects of Cantuária's playing, yet it is Cantuária's recent adaptation (on *Sol Na Cara*) that haunts the mind and provokes real emotion.

Cantuária's breakthrough disc in 1996 *Sol Na Cara* created a new sound even as it returned to the roots of Brazilian music. Drawing on mellow electronica and stylistic contributions of Ryuichi Sakamoto. This is the challenge that Bebel Gilberto, Moreno Veloso and Celso Fonseca all took up in what became known as nu-boosa.

From that moment on, Sakamoto became ever more absorbed in Brazilian music and frequently played piano in all the acoustic groups along with Paula and Jacques Morelenbaum. At the same time, Cantuária reduced his use of electronic sounds apart from a few guitar effects - maybe this was thanks to the influence of Bill Frisell with whom Cantuária plays in the Intercontinental Quartet. One of the most remarkable passages from Frisell's most recent album *The Intercontinentals* (Nonesuch) is Gilberto Gil's song 'Procissão', sung by Cantuária with strings and percussions. This song, whose intoxicating choruses are reminiscent of the Beatles', is emblematic of Cantuária's repertoire. He performed it at the Tonic in New York last March. This type of rough recording, made in a tiny club, really brings out his interpretation of the song. It is true that Cantuária can come across as being as shy and modest as Frisell, but there is a tougher and more macho side to him which can be heard on songs like 'Sanfona' (from The Verve's album *Tucumã*) and 'Normal' on his more recent album *Vinicius*.

The lyrics of 'Normal' (in Lindsay's English translation) give a foretaste of Cantuária's work as a composer: *'The boys of Bahia dance capoeira/And every morning, a hot soccer match on the sand/And the concrete poetry of the Sao Paulo boys/ Immigrants from the Northeast with their lunchpail of happiness. The carioca dancers, the boys of Gunabara/Beat their bass drum making the tin-can funk/And the Brazilians grew up and they'll get here/Here's Carlinhos*

*Brown, Bide, Luna e Marçal/Ivo Meireles/Chico Batera/Dom Um Romão/Nana Vazconcelos/Paulo Braga/Robertinho Silva...'*

This litany of Brazilian percussionists is amusing but strangely abstract, sung with varying rhythm against the background of the percussions of Paulo Braga and Cantuária himself, Jenny Scheinmann (who plays on the album *The Intercontinentals*) on violin and Peter Scherer on keyboards. Cantuária sings 'Airto Moreira' as a cry of joy and a warm tribute to his comrade and fellow countryman.

A reminder: Cantuária has spent most of his career doubling up as a drummer and percussionist - in his rock band O Terço during the 1970s with the support of Caetano Veloso's legendary group Tropicalia. He continues to play percussions in the company of the multi-instrumentalists of *The Intercontinentals* and feels great empathy for his fellow drummers as he proved it in 2000 with Arto Lindsay at the Café du Jazz. While Lindsay improvised a gentle bossa on his guitar, Cantuária, on acoustic guitar, remained in direct eye contact with the drummer and kept the drum groove going at the end of the song.

Cantuária has a studio in New York which he calls his "atelier", a place where he can go every day to play. He can write there or listen to old cassettes again. "Sometimes I plays *Pandeiro* for two days on end," he says, "I always work to have a good time." He could stay forever playing alternative chords to 'The Girl From Ipanema', perhaps the most famous song by his idol Antonio Carlos (Tom) Jobim. "I can feel songs in so many different ways," Cantuária asserts. He emphasises the importance of the acoustic guitar, which is the main element in his work. Every song is polished and written on the acoustic guitar, even if he uses an electric guitar for the final orchestration.

Vinicius has greater commercial success than his modesty might lead one to believe. A few years ago, Fabio Jr's cover of Cantuária's song 'So Voce' sold more than one million copies in Brazil. 'Lua e Estrela', the song Cantuária wrote for Caetano Veloso in 1981, has been his most recent success. He did in fact invite Veloso for the delicate 'Agua Rasa' on his 2001 album *Vinicius* (Transparent). Cantuária made several solo albums in the 80s and 90s prior to moving from Rio to New York in 1995 and to the international breakthrough of 'Solo Na Cara' the following year.

When you ask Cantuária to define contemporary music, his references are very popular. He speaks of the lasting freshness of British pop music: the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. "For me, contemporary music means things that sound like Jobim, Eno. If you listen to the music of the Eighties, like Duran Duran or Tears for Fears, it sounds old now because of the synthesisers. But 'Satisfaction' still sounds good. It's like buying a good old pair of traditional shoes - they'll last you for ten years," he says.

Is this the way we should talk about Cantuária's songs? Just like the shoes he talks about, his music has taken a traditional path, going at a steady pace and getting better with time. "I want to make beautiful music, play in little jazz clubs," says Cantuária. One of his keyword is "beautiful." He doesn't talk like the pop veteran with a million album sales to his name. "I try and remember all the things Miles Davis and Chet Baker gave us; their music and the harmonies are so gentle. Here are my 'Fab Four': Bill Evans, Miles Davis, Tom Jobim and Chet Baker."

