

CARMEN SOUZA

Carmen Souza was born in Lisbon (81) within a Christian family of Cape Verdeans. Very early she experienced the “Sodade” feeling of missing someone with the long absence of her father due to his work at sea. She grew up in a mixed language environment of Creole, the Cape Verde dialect her parents spoke at home, and Portuguese, always surrounded by the Cape Verdean way of life.

In her teens she sang professionally in a Lusophone Gospel Choir. Being a strongly spiritual person, Carmen always saw music as her mission and felt privileged to have the opportunity to express herself through it, working hard every day to deserve that opportunity. Musicians like Luis Morais, Theo Pas'cal, Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Nina Simone, Joe Zawinul, Herbie Hancock, Keith Jarrett, Bill Evans, Miles Davis, Horace Silver, etc, are definitely those that truly inspire her evolution and search for a unique personal style.

Theo Pas'cal, her producer and mentor and one of the best bass players in Portugal, discovered her talent and introduced Carmen to Jazz and other contemporary sounds that markedly influenced her musical development.

In 2003, Carmen began working with Theo on the compositions that would be included on her debut album *Ess ê nha Cabo Verde*. Carmen wanted to create a new sound, in her ancestor's dialect Creole, that would mix traditional African and Cape Verde rhythms like *Batuke*, *Morna*, *Cola djon*, and others, with her jazz contemporary influences, in a totally intimate and acoustic vibe, different from the traditional festive environment of Cape Verdean sounds.

Ess ê nha Cabo Verde, was released two years later in 2005 to critical acclaim and led to her international breakthrough performance at the WOMAD at Reading Festival of the same year.

In “*Verdade*” her second album, which She co-produces and features on Wurlitzer and guitar, released in 2008, Carmen Souza signs an exciting and melodically vibrant repertoire in Creole that once again received amazing reviews from the International Press worldwide.

After 2 critically acclaimed albums, Carmen Souza returns in 2010 with the impressive “*Protegid*” (Protected) that blends perfectly with elegance and sophistication the African and Cape Verdean traditional rhythms with Contemporary Jazz and Afro-Latin. Once again the two composers, Carmen Souza and Theo Pas'cal, present an album that pushes even more the limits of what constitutes the Cape Verdean music, World Music and Jazz. Carmen co-produces, plays guitar, Rhodes and signs 11 out of the 12 lyrics of the album.

In *Protegid*, Carmen Souza singular vocal approach and courageous musical choices have earned her pairing with singers like Billie Holiday, Nina Simone, Cleo Laine, Eartha Kitt, Marie Daulne. Her Unique talent as a singer, composer and musician sets her apart from the female crowded Cape Verdean scene and progressively she is consolidating her own space in the World Music/Jazz music.

This new album received outstanding reviews from all over the World and the Press recognizes that something new is being developed in her music. World Music Central consider the album: “a landmark that will prompt you to embrace and at the same time rethink everything you know and love about the sounds of Cape Verde”, NPR says: “opens a window to another world entirely” and The Independent declares: “the poetic voice is as original as the musical one”.

Protegid received a nomination for the German Record Critic's Award, enters the World Music Charts Europe in April and was included in the list of pre-nominated albums for the Grammy Award for Best Contemporary World

Music album . A new edition of Verdade, her second album re-issued in 2010 by Galileo, also enters the WMCE in August and by the end of the year Protegid was included in several lists of “Best World Music Album 2010”.

Carmen Souza have been touring extensively around the World since 2005 and in 2010 she played at big stages like The North Sea Jazz Festival(NL), London African Music Festival(UK) or the Leverkusener Jazztage Festival(DE). In Leverkusener, Carmen Souza, headlines a double bill with Mariza with an amazing performance later broadcasted by WDR/3SAT German TV.

Other concerts were also broadcasted around the world by major TV/Radio Channels like CBC(CA), RDP/RTP(PT), RADIO6(NL), etc, and her uniqueness is recognized by Ethnomusicologists Gerhard Kubik and Fernando Arenas. A closer look into Carmen Souza groundbreaking work was published in a new book called “Beyond Independence: Globalization, Postcolonialism, and the Cultures of Lusophone Africa” by Fernando Arenas released by the University of Minnesota (USA).

Carmen Souza starts 2011 with a special performance on Italian national television RAI UNO, Concerto Dell Epifania, broadcasted to millions in Italy on the Jan 6, a religious holiday and went on a long tour to sold out big venues and Festivals and mesmerize audiences and Press in Uk, Brazil, Turkey, Netherlands, Germany, Cape Verde, Latvia, Ireland, Portugal, Finland, Italy, USA, Canada...

Special mention to her first Official North American Tour with 14 dates in several states receiving opening honours at San Francisco Jazz Festival, Monterey Jazz Festival and also performing at Montreal Jazz Festival. Carmen´s Monterey Jazz Festival concert was web broadcasted live, by the first time in the Festival history and transmitted direct by NPR.

Another year highlight was Carmen Souza first concerts in Cape Verde with full coverage in all national press. The concerts receive great reviews from Press and Audience and all recognized her special and unique place in the Cape Verdean music culture.

"In a single song, she delves into the warm and melodic registers of the great jazz divas, only to flee into more contemporary terrain immediately thereafter...the singer cloaks Cape Verdean music in new garb, this distancing herself from what is currently being done by other female Cape Verdean singers...another path for the evolution and renovation of morna or funaná, giving them a new breadth and life." A Semana-Cape Verde

Early this year Carmen Souza & Theo Pas'cal released a special live Duo performance recorded in London " LONDON ACOUSTIC SET". This was her first live record and the naked versions of her songs from previous albums received again rave reviews from both the Jazz and World communities. 50% of the sales from this album are donated to SOS Children Villages in Cape Verde and Unicef Brazil.

In September Carmen Souza 4th Album KACHUPADA was released in France and Germany. In France the album entered directly to the official sells Chart for World Music and went number 1 on the Amazon.fr Songwriters bestselling list.

KACHUPADA received maximum note at Télérama magazine (French most important musical reviewer) and was supported by Vibrations and Sojazz magazines beside other excellent reviews and playlist on national radio RFI. Carmen Souza was also Cover of the Cap Magellan Magazine, the biggest lusophone magazine in France.

In Germany she released the album with a 13 date tour supported by Jazzthetik Magazine and the album was featured as Cd of the week in Major Radios and highlighted by National TV.

After the goodbye of the biggest Cape Verdean, Cesária Évora, Carmen Souza was named has one of the new generation singers to continue the successful path of the Cape Verdean music.

Undoubtedly, Carmen Souza have become a true world music force and one of Europe's most in-demand jazz singers, as someone said: "Carmen Souza does not have to decide whether her music is Jazz or 'World Music'. Her style is just as unique as convincing and her Cape Vaerdean roots as evident as her desire to create a new language under the label of 'World Jazz'.