

CUCA ROSETA | BIOGRAPHY

Cuca Roseta: Soul, destiny and truth

In these difficult and sceptical days, it's almost dangerous to believe in predestinations and other phenomena that depend more on the spirit than on the senses. But then we talk to people like **Cuca Roseta**, who suddenly, in a half-smile half-sigh, sweetly confirms: "I think I was born for this". "This", should be understood, is her life. "This" is fado.

And it is this absolute sincerity, almost on the verge of disregard, that leaves us perplexed, almost scandalized. This natural acceptance of a fate, visible in Cuca's dark eyes, is also the sign that what she says is genuine and heartfelt. And on top of that, she is right.

Luckily for us, the first step of that destiny is now recorded in her own name: *Cuca Roseta's* debut album shows the truth of who sings those words. Because fado has this mystery: it doesn't let you lie.

We'll get to that. Let's dwell a little on the days of Isabel "Cuca" Roseta, to realise that words as worn out as they are essential - when writing about fado - sometimes make perfect sense. Words like "destiny" or "soul", for example.

The truth is that nothing in **Cuca Roseta's** life foretold that fado would one day choose her. There were no fado singers in her family and the most commonly heard musical genre in her house was erudite music. Until, at the age of 18, she went to a fado house. First clash, first small invasion in **Cuca Roseta's** soul: although fado didn't completely seduce her, she began to need it for life: "I went to fado houses more for the emotional side, it was very intense", she recalls. Without knowing it, it was already too late: fado had definitely chosen her.

She began to sing, timidly. Once, a special listener noticed in her voice the truth that she was beginning to learn to utter. It was **Carlos Zel**, who insisted: "You have to learn more fados". She promised she would.

But life has this habit of getting in the way of our plans and suddenly Cuca belongs to a pop band that with just a small repertoire made its mark on the urban scene - **Tiago Bettencourt's** *Toranja*. Those were exciting times, a successful adventure. But there was a void, always a void...

Already with a degree in Psychology, she decides to take part in a fado competition in Oporto. She learnt eight themes. However, Cuca's greatest prize came in the form of an unshakeable certainty: "This is what I want to do", she thought at the time. And determined, she went in search of what was destined for her.

It was a year wandering around Lisbon, singing and learning, constantly learning. She became a regular presence in the places where fado was happening, she spoke to musicians, other fado singers. "There was a world of things to learn, which had to do with poetry, with emotion". She met **Ana Moura**, who encouraged her to continue. And one night she is introduced by Nobre Costa to **João Braga**, known for his taste and vision for launching new fado singers at his shows.

"What are you doing in three days?", the fado singer asked a very impressed **Cuca Roseta**.

"Nothing," she replied.

"Great. Then you'll be in a show with me, for RTP."

Did someone speak of destiny?

Then followed the cycle of **Clube de Fado. Mário Pacheco**, guitarist and owner of the venue, has a special sensitivity for new voices. He liked the new fado singer who quickly joined the prestigious cast. During this time, she knew how to absorb every second of fado available to her. And it was on one of those nights, when she shouldn't have been there, that what justifies these lines happened. Thus, without plans or hopes. The night when, absolutely by chance, luck or mystery, Cuca Roseta met the Argentine **Gustavo Santaolalla**: musician, producer, recognised soundtrack composer (with Oscars for the music of *Babel* and *Brokeback Mountain*). That stubborn destiny, in which Cuca increasingly believes. She says, as if reviewing that night for the first time, paused but definitive: "I believe in destiny. And everything happened to me in a simple way, caught me almost distracted".

Upon hearing her sing, **Santaolalla**, after his dazzlement, immediately said he wanted to record with her. Cuca, wisely, was surprised - because she had no idea who the stranger, who just made such an offer, was. Someone finally identified the Argentinean, Cuca apologizes for not having any idea who the producer was. Santaolalla replies: "It does not matter who I am. What matters is that I saw a star in you". And he left.

The days went by, and Gustavo continued to call and to insist that Cuca should get to know the musical project that the producer had created for her. Meanwhile, other publishers, knowing of the producer's interest, began to surround **Cuca Roseta**, who refused everything with the strength that comes from the certainty of passion. "My relationship with Gustavo was really a musical love affair", she would later confess. And so, what had to happen, happened. The record *Cuca Roseta* was about to be born.

All the fado singers who make their way in fado houses go through a terrible ordeal when they have to face the loneliness of the studio. The girl who took part in *Fados* by **Carlos Saura** or sang for **Benedict XVI** during the Pope's visit to Portugal, managed to give it her all, benefiting from the incredible atmosphere provided by Gustavo Santaolalla. And she confirms: "I didn't feel the loneliness of being there to record, I gave myself up to the emotion". The result is a beautiful debut album, with a repertoire that includes some classics ("*Rua do Capelão*", "*Avé Maria Fadista*" or "*Marcha de Santo António*"), other fados put into music (the magnificent "*Porque Voltas De Que Lei*", lyrics by Amália with the collaboration of the producer himself and of the *tanguero* Cristobal Repetto; or "*Maré Viva*", a poem by Rosa Lobato Faria translated into Spanish by Santaolalla), and above all, the affirmation of **Cuca Roseta** as a lyricist in her own right. Excellent examples are "*Homem Português*" and "*Nos Teus Braços*", where Cuca also signs the music. This "autonomy" of talent makes her even closer to what she sings.

As perfect musical accomplices, Mário Pacheco on guitar, Pedro Pinhal on fado guitar and Rodrigo Serrão on bass. And at the command of everything, the extraordinary sensibility of Gustavo Santaolalla, giving space, time and voice to Cuca to fulfil what she feels and finally show it to the world, because the soul is universal.

Perhaps these are difficult days, in which reality overwhelms us more than we would like. But the soul resists, the soul persists. The almost mystical strength that comes out of **Cuca Roseta**, her faith, her communion with what she feels and with the nature that surrounds her can offer hope of redemption of everything through beauty. When one insists on destiny, she smiles again and again disarms us: "I simply want to sing". And she gets up, joins the musicians waiting for her and her very finely tuned voice joins that of the Portuguese guitar, and we let ourselves be carried along this path of absolute truth.

And this is how her first album under her own name comes out to the public: **Cuca Roseta**, produced by **Gustavo Santaolalla**, which reaches the Gold Award and is talked about in all the national and international media, with all the best references and critics. Thus, is born the beginning of a brilliant career which quickly placed her in the front line of the best Fado interpreters of the present time.

Success would obviously involve the presence in the most distinct stages and festivals. Presence, and as the consensual choice for headliner of the biggest events of National and International Fado among which stand out the *Cool Jazz Fest* in Cascais, the *1st Fado Festival of Madrid*, the *1st Fado Festival of Portimão*. On an international level **Cuca Roseta** is once again in the limelight and displays her voice in concerts in cities all over the world, including *Rio de Janeiro*, *New York*, *Abu Dhabi*, *Tbilisi (Georgia)*, *Paris*, *Barcelona* and *London*. **Cuca Roseta** is thus affirmed, according to critics, as "the new voice of Fado. A voice that everyone wants to hear".

After an inexhaustible tour, she finishes this cycle with a great concert at *Teatro Tivoli*, where she invites **Carlos do Carmo**, **Pedro Abrunhosa** and **André Sardet**.

We reach the year 2012, a year in which she prepares and records her second album, this time with a name and a story, where the fado singer searches the depths of her soul, of her roots.

After a first album celebrated and worked on by a planetary producer - **Gustavo Santaollala** - with the weight of truth that fado demands and she delivers - **Cuca Roseta** goes even further.

Isabel "Cuca" Roseta, takes a step forward in the history of Fado. Owner of a thousand and one talents, she decides to write and compose most of the themes for her next album and hides in an intense creative process full of passion. She stepped out of her comfort and, with almost anachronistic courage, decided to it give everything she had: her own lyrics and music, in an almost counter-cyclical album, almost as a singer-songwriter.

"Raiz", the name of **Cuca Roseta's** second album, is almost self-explanatory. Almost, because Cuca respects the tradition or the origin of what she sings, but she wants more. She seeks and finds herself, and it is this solitary adventure that seduces and captivates us. This is how a record made almost exclusively of originals emerges. In favour of us all, thus enabled to listen to her.

This level of commitment could not have companions: it required accomplices, partners on a par with the soul that she wanted to deliver. From the excellent musicians to the occasional partnerships (**Tozé Brito**, **André Sardet**, **Pedro Lima** or a surprising lyricist discovered in **Chef José Avillez**), everything on this record breathes confidence and respect for what is meant to be said. The "root" of Cuca's art is shared but without losing an inch of its authenticity.

It would probably be enough for many, after a successful album, to have the courage to go ahead with a record of originals. But **Cuca Roseta** did that and more: in absolute combat with the ashen days we are living in, she offers a hopeful and universal Portugal in her music. Melancholy is certainly there; but the hope that comes from **Raiz** - and therefore from **Cuca Roseta** - is much welcome.

In this root, and not by chance, all themes are designated by "fado". Except one: the *Marcha da Esperança*. And it is so easy to understand why: listening to everything in this "**Raiz**" we hear the heart and emotions of who made it. I can't imagine a greater ambition for an artist and even less for those who want to listen to her.

The album is presented and released in May 2013 at the *Jerónimos Monastery*, associated with the symbolism of strength and courage of the aforementioned monument. Here too **Cuca Roseta** affirms her courage and dedication to Fado.

The album achieves a new success, this time even more surprising. With this step forward, **Cuca Roseta** distinguishes herself from all other Fado singers and hereby reinforces her independent path. The path with which she lives day by day, in search of her music, her soul and all the emotions she wants to convey to those who listen to her. **Cuca Roseta's** music is now more original, more respected and alive. It has a body and soul of its own.

Cuca Roseta's career continues, side by side with her artistic creation: ever further, ever more intense.

After the release of "**Raiz**", she goes on an extensive tour across Portugal, with major concerts in *Lisbon, Oporto, Festival Med in Loulé, Aveiro, Ilhavo, Tróia, Castelo Rodrigo, Condeixa, Coimbra, Espinho, Areia Branca, Vila Real, Lamego* among many other cities. In the international scene she returns to many of the countries where she had already performed and shows her voice in new cities and festivals such as in *São Paulo (Brazil), Bruges (Belgium), Arzila (Morocco)*.

In this new cycle, this second album, **Cuca Roseta** is increasingly a hallmark voice of Fado, arising numerous invitations for partnerships and duets. In this same year of 2013, she sings thus with some of the biggest and most remarkable international artists : **Julio Iglésias, Djavan and Silvia Perez Cruz**. The path and affirmation of **Cuca Roseta** could not be better.

And 2015 arrives, the year in which Cuca Roseta asserts herself once and for all, as one of the most surprising and striking voices of Fado. A year of conquest, affirmation and countless successes. This year she edits "Riu" by the hand of the acclaimed and distinguished brazilian producer Nelson Motta, who has boosted the careers of Bethânia, Marisa Monte, Elis Regina, Ed Motta among many others.

"Riu" is a surprising record, aimed at the world and in which the producer makes a point of affirming it as a record of "world fado", a fado that the whole world wants to listen to. "Riu" brings all the sonorities closest to fado - and all those that contributed to its birth - where we can clearly feel the influences of flamenco, samba, arabic music or even jazz.

"Riu" is such a surprising and fascinating album that could only have as allies some of the biggest "heavyweights" of world music. Cuca shares her own compositions with names like Bryan Adams, Djavan, Jorge Drexler, Pedro Joia, among many others.

The album, which went "platinum" and received the best reviews and the highest praise from the press, led Cuca Roseta to tour the country and the four corners of the world with the "Riu" tour, having performed over 120 concerts in just one year.

After so much success, such recognition and so many concerts, 2016 ended in the best way, with Cuca Roseta arriving at the Coliseum in Lisbon and Oporto, where she was warmly received with two sold-out venues. It is in this venue that she discreetly unveils much of the path of her next album, to be released in the first half of 2017. Cuca Roseta wants to do more, show more and prove that music, creativity and dreams have no limits.

2017 arrives. And at the end of it, after more than 100 concerts, she releases "**Luz**", her most recent work. A record whose title is like an allusion to the lamp that lights her way, to an inner light that brings her enough comfort and security to make this album a new moment of revelation for Cuca Roseta, the one that goes further in defining what her fado is. The affirmative strength that "Luz" brings, the security and peace that exists in her choices, and an elegance in her singing that has never before been felt in such a declared way. Cuca Roseta brings together in this work composers such as Pedro da Silva Martins, Carolina Deslandes, Jorge Fernando, Mário Pacheco, among many others. The fado singer once again conquers the public's enthusiasm and performances in Portugal and in the world are recurrent, with an increasing international prominence.

Another year has passed, and another surprise unveiled. At the end of 2018, Cuca Roseta edits a Christmas record, one of her greatest wishes and dreams as an artist. The record, totally off of fado, is a temporary and deliberate deviation, which just like Christmas, has its time. In it she brings together a large part of the most classic Christmas repertoire, with a brilliant Jazz trio and national choirs. To commemorate this, Cuca Roseta decides to perform 3 concerts in the most important churches in Lisbon, Coimbra and Oporto, allocating all the proceeds to a charity institution. The fado singer believes that this record will be timeless, as well as new contributions that she intends to add with each passing year.

With the year 2020 arriving, with the pandemic haunting the culture, Cuca Roseta dared to launch an album, this time as a tribute to Amália Rodrigues, celebrating the centenary year of the birth of Fado's greatest reference. The same album was edited in May 2020, being more a commemorative album rather than a career record. Cuca Roseta felt that she lacked to edit repertoire such as this one, which she sang so many times and which served as inspiration and direction in the first steps of her own fado. The same album had a resounding acceptance among the public and her love for Amália Rodrigues was often sung.

At the end of the year 2020, Cuca Roseta decides to proceed with another surprise. A secret that was kept and being worked on for over two years. Cuca releases on her own birthday her new album "MEU". A record that the fado singer writes and composes all the themes for. Even in a year of pandemic, with many restrictions on culture, the new album "Meu" had a great impact on the public and the press. It was a very long artistic leap for Cuca Roseta which has yielded enormous results.

The well-deserved recognition as a singer-songwriter and an album that has toured the country and the world in concerts in traditional format and others with orchestras. Cuca will, for now, follow her path with the most recent album "Meu" that has enchanted all her public.

The fado singer also shares a love for other arts. She is a taekondo black belt and has a huge passion for dancing and painting. She is also an ambassador for various Portuguese brands.

As for Fado, again, the secret is the same, because for Cuca Roseta it couldn't be any other: a surprising, opportune and stunning truth in its pure state.