

There is no other voice in Fado quite like Ana Moura. A voice that strolls freely through tradition but flirts elegantly with pop music, broadening the spectrum of Fado, so typical of Lisbon, in a very personal way. But what sets her apart is not only the low-pitched and sensual tone, so unique – Ana Moura instantaneously transforms any melody to which she lends her voice, into Fado. It's an immediate spark, an emotional explosion aimed ruthlessly to the listener's heart.

Fausto, José Afonso, Ruy Mingas, music from Angola and Fado. Those were the melodies that were sung in the evenings of the Moura family, in Coruche, when Ana Moura was but a little girl – she was born in another city of Ribatejo province, Santarém, in 1979 – and yet already very fond of music. Both parents sang, all her family on her mother's side sang and any family meeting would end with a singing match. Though they sang a bit of everything, Ana started feeling that, for some reason, she had a special fondness for Fado. At aged six she would sing her first Fado, "Cavalo Ruço" and hear her mother humming "O Xaile da Minha Mãe". When she became a teenager, Fado was left aside and she became interested in other genres more in line with her age and the preferences of her friends from high school.

It is with that curiosity for other types of music, in those teenage years - a time of discovery and rebellion - that Ana Moura arrived in Carcavelos, in the outskirts of Lisbon, aged 14, to finish high school. She came not to sing but to study, enrolling in Academia dos Amadores de Música. Here she formed her first band with some school friends. Although she would sing other genres, Ana's voice rapidly gains a natural Fado tone to it and so, even with a rock band, she managed to include a Fado or two in her repertoire – usually "Povo que Lavas no Rio" by Amália, who was by then her main influence as a singer.

Her experience with the cover band, Sexto Sentido, ended up leading to the production of a pop/rock album with musician Luís Oliveira by a Universal label. But the album was never finished. Destiny then played a role, taking Ana Moura to a bar in Carcavelos where she let herself go and sang a Fado. In the audience was guitar player António Parreira who, quite impressed, took her by the hand and introduced her to several Fado houses. Then, at a Christmas party for musicians and Fado singers, Ana Moura met the very people who would populate her nights from then on, and she is invited to sing. This time, it is Maria da Fé, co-owner of the prestigious Fado house Senhor Vinho, that is taken by her raw talent. Besides cheering her, Maria da Fé also invited her to sing at her Fado house.

It is indeed that nightlife in Senhor Vinho and other Fado houses that her singing matured. Previously, Ana Moura would sing Fado because of the natural trail of her voice, following her intuition. Now, after the advice of the more experienced – mainly Maria da Fé and Jorge Fernando – she has been given other reasons to sing, without killing her spontaneity.

That passion reveals itself in such a way that quickly took the attention of journalist Miguel Esteves Cardoso. Before her name was known by the record labels it was the journalism of Esteves Cardoso that amplified the talent of the new Fado singer, after he saw her in a TV show called Fados de Portugal. And it was after reading his inflamed article in *Independente* that Tozé Brito, general manager of Universal, went to Senhor Vinho to witness the voice he knew only from Sexto Sentido. It didn't take long before Tozé invited her to record her first album.

Jorge Fernando was invited to produce her debut album, *Guarda-me a Vida na Mão* (2003). Alongside the artistic direction, the musician is also responsible for six out of fifteen songs in the album, one of which is taken by Ana as her signature theme – “Sou do Fado, Sou Fadista” (I Belong to Fado, I am a Fado singer). The collaboration between the two extended to the follow-up albums. From the beginning, it was clear that Ana Moura's Fado had a rare wide range, featuring people like Ciganos d'Ouro and Pedro Jóia, and instruments like cajon and Flamenco guitar. But the essence remains untouched: tradition is of key importance. The reaction of the public and the critics to *Guarda-me a Vida na Mão* was unanimously enthusiastic and Ana Moura became an immediate feature in Portuguese concerts and, in time, also abroad.

Aconteceu, in 2004 was the logical sequence to her debut album. Being a double record it revealed the singer's extraordinary ambition and showed the amazing sureness on her chosen path: the natural marriage between the more traditional Fado and a very personal way of giving it an air of contemporaneity.

Ana Moura's career began to gain such momentum that she abandoned Senhor Vinho, in order to accommodate the invitations to sing abroad. She later joined the regular cast of another Fado house, Casa de Linhares – Bacalhau de Molho. Her success abroad took her to perform at the prestigious Carnegie Hall in New York in February of 2005.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the world, Tim Ries, The Rolling Stones' sax player, entered Tower Records in Tokyo, looking for Fado albums. His idea was to include a Fado singer in the second record of his Rolling Stones Project, inviting musicians of other genres to play some of the band's themes with himself. He bought three CDs at random selection, guided only by his instinct, and it was love at first hearing. For the project, Ana sang “Brown Sugar” and “No Expectations”. She later performed “No Expectations” live with the Stones at the Alvalade XXI stadium. From then on, in several occasions, the tours of Ana Moura and The Rolling Stones met. In one of these occasions, in San Francisco, Ries called Ana Moura and showed her a song he composed with her voice in mind. “Velho Anjo” would then be included in her next album, *Para Além da Saudade* (2005), after being given a more Fado approach by Jorge Fernando.

One of the special features of *Para Além da Saudade* was the rare participation of the musician Fausto in an album by another artist. Ana, having growing up listening to the performers' famous song *Por Este Rio Acima*, summoned up the courage to ask him to compose a new theme for her. Another special guest, composing specially for herself was Amélia Muge. The mixture of cultures was present in the form of a duet with famous Spanish singer Patxi Andión. Tim Ries, besides authoring of one of the songs, also played the sax in two tracks – “Velho Anjo” and “A Sós com a Noite”.

Thanks to the song “Os Búzios” by Jorge Fernando, the success of *Para Além da Saudade* reached new levels in Ana Moura’s career and eventually led to the privilege of singing in the two main venues in Portugal, the Lisbon and Oporto Coliseums. The album also won the Amália Rodrigues award.

After the huge success of *Para Além da Saudade* – which had spent 70 weeks at the top when the fourth album *Leva-me aos Fados* (2009) was released - quickly reaching platinum status. As usual it was produced by Jorge Fernando with lyrics by Tozé Brito, Manuela de Freitas, Mário Rainho and Nuno Miguel Guedes, as well as an original by José Mário Branco. The album has also another composition by Amélia Muge. “Não é um Fado Normal” (It’s Not a Regular Fado) features Gaiteiros de Lisboa and confirmed the singer’s unique path, expressed in the title itself.

In May 2009, after a phone conversation, Prince flew especially to Paris to witness Ana Moura’s charming performance at La Cigale. On the 18th of July 2010, Ana Moura once again took Fado to a great pop/rock concert, singing with Prince on the encore of his show at the Super Bock Super Rock festival. Together, they performed a Portuguese version of “Walk in Sand” and the traditional Fado “Vou Dar de Beber à Dor”.

In September 2010, Ana Moura accepted the invitation of Frankfurt Radio Bigband to sing in two concerts in the German city. In April 2011, by invitation, she once again sang with the jazz orchestra in her return to the Lisbon and Oporto coliseums. For Ana Moura it was the celebration of the year that saw her victory at the Portuguese Golden Globe awards, her ascension to the top of Billboard and Amazon and the nomination of Artist of the Year in the English magazine Songlines. Some months after, in August, she sang at the Back2Back festival in Rio de Janeiro, together with Gilberto Gil, performing “Fado Tropical” by Chico Buarque.

In 2012 Ana made a very special guest appearance in the tribute album to Caetano Veloso, with a version of “Janelas Abertas nº2”, produced by José Mário Branco, and prepared a revolution in her music. “Desfado”, Ana Moura’s 5th album of originals, was released in Portugal on the 12th of November and the album represents a turning point in her career, as it clearly denotes her pop influence, and was produced for an international market, but appealing to a new Portuguese audience as well. Ana presented her new repertoire with tremendous success at sold out venues all over Portugal.

This year “Desfado” is released in several countries. Ana Moura will continue her nationwide tour and begin her international one performing in Switzerland, Germany, France, Spain, USA, Canada, UK, Netherlands and Belgium, among other countries.

Ana’s roots are deeply embedded in Fado, but with her exceptional talent and uniqueness, the sky is the limit.

 www.anamoura.com.pt

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