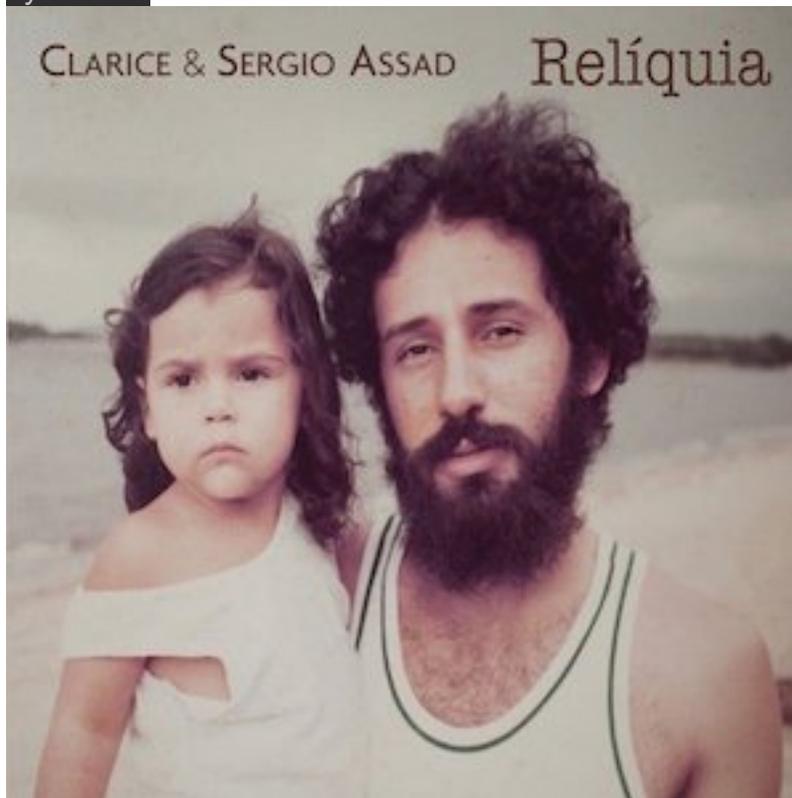


Clarice & Sérgio Assad 'Relíquia' CD/DIG (Adventure Music) 5/5

by ukvibe



This album got me thinking about the significance of family relationships in music. Am I the only one who thinks there must be something in the fact that there are quite so many familial connections in popular Brazilian music? The offspring of hugely successful artists like Antonio Carlos Jobim, João Gilberto, Dorival Caymmi and Luiz Gonzaga have followed in their illustrious parent's footsteps. There are also sibling links, take for example Caetano Veloso/Maria Bethânia, Quarteto Em Cy, Chico Buarque/Miúcha (who was also married to João Gilberto with whom she had Bebel Gilberto). Whatever the reasons for this, and I'm sure there are different stories to tell, I'm sure that nurture is an important factor. This sense seems to be validated by "Relíquia", a magical album written and performed by Clarice and her father Sérgio as a "homage" to the musical legacy of their family. This idea is established before a single note has been played, by the evocative portrait on the front cover of a young Clarice staring off into the distance, either unaware of the attention of the camera or doing her defiant best to feign disinterest whilst her father tries to capture the perfect moment with his daughter.

Sérgio is one of the most eminent classical guitarists around today, regularly performing with his younger brother Odair, with whom he has won two Latin Grammys. His repertoire spans music from Brazil and elsewhere in South America as well as Jazz and Classical genres. Clarice's musical path has taken a similar direction, with a string of jazz/brazilian albums behind her, as well as writing, performing and arranging classical

music, working most recently as the resident arranger for the New Century Chamber Orchestra.

The music crafted for this album is at times spellbinding, an exquisite blend of Jazz, Choro, Bossa Nova and Classical. It's uncomplicated, by which I mean it's elemental rather than lacking twists and turns. Essentially it's father and daughter and a couple of instruments. Making good music can be that simple at times. Okay, maybe I make this sound a little too simple; there are supporting musicians on some of the tracks but the sound and inspirations come from Clarice and her father.

Clarice sings and/or scats on five of the compositions. Her style is intimate, emotional, her phrasing and emphasis perfect. If you are looking for a point of reference then Joyce would be a good start, although Clarice's timbres have stronger inflections of Jazz. Her use of scat and other vocalisation techniques, influenced by her aunt, singer/songwriter Badi Assad, adds different and interesting textures. Sérgio's guitar playing is enchanting, creating wonderfully colourful and detailed melodies, conveyed with nuance, virtuosic subtlety and grace. Together there is an easy, unforced chemistry, not so much father – daughter, but a meeting of equals.

There are a couple of up-tempo numbers, the opener "Cidade", and the lively "Capoeira", which builds with the same speed, power and intensity as a jogo de Capoeira. Mainly though this is an album of sensitivity, sentimental without being cloying, of gentle songs that are most rewarding when you can give them your full attention, not on a packed train on the way to work or whilst mowing the lawn. The highlight for me is "Ventos". It's a stirring, wonderfully evocative piece featuring Clarice on piano and wordless, inventive vocals. It's at once uplifting and flighty, before switching, as wind does, into something more ominous, and then just as quickly switching back again. I've listened to this album a lot over the past couple of weeks and this tune still has the power to stop me in my tracks.

The concepts of family and legacy are specifically addressed in two solo compositions written in the choro style, the self-explanatory "Song For My Father" featuring Clarice on the piano, and "Jorginho do Bandolim", written by Sergio for his father, but in truth the whole album reverberates with sentiments of familial affection.

Too late I found out that Clarice was playing at The Pheasantry in Chelsea. Until she comes to the UK again I'll have to content myself with as well-rounded and consistently strong album as I've heard this year.

[Andy Hazell](#)