



"I would not have guessed that Marovatto would release such a radical record like Selvagem."

Jornal do Comercio

"Deep as the haiku."

O Globo

"Mariano Marovatto's trajectory as a singer-songwriter could be termed "exemplary" insofar as it closely mirrors shifts in mentality and behavior that have made their presence known and felt among a vast contingency of Brazilian millennials. From the soothing, bossa-nova-tinged sounds of debut album *Aquele Amor Nem me Fale* to the unnerving claustrophobia of sophomore effort *Praia* to the intimate, yet nothing less than sprawling in scope, offering that is *Selvagem*, Mariano's work speaks directly to a generation which took its time coming of age and which is finally maturing and trying to give an account of itself. For that, history is of the essence – looking back, past individual trauma, so far back as to sense ourselves as little more than subjects to historical forces far beyond our immediate comprehension. All this in a time of global and national political upheaval, a time in which – most tellingly – Anthropology is fast becoming as heroic a discipline as Philosophy and Sociology were in the 50s and 60s. History and otherness. At last, we turn to something other than ourselves in order to have a firmer grasp on the world.

Is *Selvagem* ("Savage") a folk album? If so, what exactly is its approach to "folk" music? Will we find in it the same pared-down, stripped-to-the-bones aesthetics of folk singers from the 60s and 70s? Does it signal a return to basics, a shying away from syrupy over-orchestration? Does it cater to a need to sober up speech and make it once again "meaningful", if not "essential"? Is it a coming to terms with history or a proposal for the future? Our guess would be both (or perhaps neither). The terse, texture-laden sonic landscapes featured in *Selvagem* could hardly be called "organic" (an approach that carried over from *Praia*). However, the songs that make up the album – Brazilian and Portuguese folk songs selected by Mariano after painstaking research – are, without a doubt, "folk" songs – they manage to be driving and angular even at their calmest, most-lullaby-esque; they all share the same structural forcefulness that seems to be the common denominator of all folk music; they are meant to be memorized, they are meant to be actively resorted to.

Arrangements that place us firmly in the here and now -- songs that harken back to a time when music was a communal activity more or less untouched by authorship. Work tunes & "acalantos", presented in such a way as to remind us we are still overburdened with work, we still need to be sung to sleep. Songs of celebration, songs of invocation that seem to both reach into and ricochet off of today's mystical void. Incidents and impressions set to music so that they may endure, proliferate; creatures and narratives striving for survival.

Another factor which should not go unmentioned, and which only adds to *Selvagem*'s heady mix of historical and individual reckoning: the songs selected by Mariano are somewhat obscure even by folk standards. Somehow, they have managed to evade most of our radars – they might ring familiar, as most folk songs often do, but the truth of the matter is that time was not as kind to them as it was to a host of similar chants which are part of Brazil's collective unconscious. This alone should give us a clue as to the essentially epic nature of Marovatto's *Selvagem* – the artist is transformed into historical actor, giving up direct self-expression in order to try and bridge the chasm between timeless past and deep futurity.

Selvagem digs deep, deeper than most research-based contemporary works would. In excavating these precious artifacts and handing them over to us, Mariano is aided by Pedro Sá, one of Brazil's most acclaimed guitarists and a staple of Caetano Veloso's post-1998 recordings, and Japanese artist Ami Yamasaki, whose haunting vocal contributions bring to mind images of dense, Herzog-ian jungles, bursting with life, death and all intermediary gradations. But few albums could be said to be as removed as this is from the trappings of *exotica*. *Selvagem* eschews the banality of world music in favor of a more austere, unsettling and authentic approach. *Selvagem* doesn't transport the listener to the past it so eerily references – rather, it places squarely in front of us the very impossibility to go back.

There can be no illusionism here. The time is unmistakeably now, it could not be otherwise. It mustn't. Mariano himself has gone on record stating that *Selvagem* is not about nostalgia, it is about resistance. No hypocritical longing for the natural world. No cheap sonic romance. With this in mind, it shouldn't surprise us that the opening chords of the hypnotic indigenous chant "Chamada de Aricuri" has a distinctive Nirvana-ish bent to them, or that Mariano's voice sounds as robotic in his rendition of Portuguese work song "Lá Cima Ao Castelo" as to make us think of Bruce Haack or Silver Apples. What could possibly allow for such combinations other than a savage mindset? The less tamed, the more apt it is to experiment – the more courageous, the more intuitive, the more inclined to understand the tacit requirements of a song, what it needs to live on.

In *Tristes Tropiques*, Lévi-Strauss tells us that, in the early 16th century, the Indians of Porto Rico, after capturing and killing off Europeans, used to mount guard about the corpses for days to see if they would decompose – and that in their suspicion that the beings they had defeated might, in fact, be Gods, they did "more honor to the human race" than the ruthless "conquistadores" who thought them nothing more than beasts of burden. Such is the savage mindset on which Mariano meditates throughout his third album – where civilization is reductive, classifying everything that escapes its own modes of living and representation as lesser, savagery finds otherworldly possibilities in everything our worldly experience (barely) contains.