

Moreno Veloso interviewed by Adrian Simon

**What's up man? In Brazil makin' music? Rehearsing a lot? Hanging out?**

Yeah I'm producing a lot in the studio. I'm helping people in France make some records. I'm quite busy right now.

**Who are you working with?**

Well right now I'm doing a new Gilberto Gil album. It's really great to work with him. He's such a fantastic singer, and guitar player, and composer. He's amazing. But I'm also helping two other singers in France to make records, they're not very well known but I'm working with them also. I just finished a new live DVD of my father's concert, which was good also.

**Man you're keeping busy**

Yeah I'm working a lot, but I miss performing and being on stage with friends, making music together.

**Do you still play with the members of the +2s when you perform?**

No we ended the +2 name in 2008/2009, because we spent 10 years in this formation (Me, Domenico (Lancelotti), and (Alexandre) Kassin), and everything we did we had to do together and that was becoming more difficult with time. Kassin was producing much more than I was, but I was working a lot too, and Domenico was working on theater. We were getting very busy outside the band, but we also play with many other talented friends so we just stopped the +2 thing and kept it open to play with our other friends. The difficult thing was, every time someone would ask me to play somewhere I *had* to bring Domenico and Kassin with me, and vice versa for both of them. I would get a call from Kassin saying he had a show offer and that Domenico and I had to be there with him. But we're still close friends and still play on each other's records occasionally.

**What mindset were you in making this record, and was it different than how you thought about making records in the past? Was there something new you wanted to accomplish?**

There are many similarities between this record and records we made 10 years or so ago. The spirit, the concentration, how we work on the sounds is very delicate. We're always having fun but at the same time it's not a crazy party, it's still very intimate, and we hoped the result would convey that care. And the spirit of it, the way we like to make music together, and the good feeling we had while we were making music; we tried to imprint it onto the tracks. I don't know if we've succeeded but we have always worked in that way.

But there are also differences. On the first album, we worked on a specific sound for that band, with Domenico playing the electronic stuff, in hopes of mixing the traditional Brazilian way of singing and guitar playing with a weird, electronic, new sound. Now, we're not thinking of that as much, just trying to make something we like and that's a new way of doing things for us. Before, we wanted to make it sound very new, but now we're not trying to do that, just trying to do music. I also went back to the place where I was born in Bahia; I was living there during the recording process with my family and my wife, and my kids. We spent a great time with my family there, and it was great to spend a few years in the city I was born in. It was very nice to be in Bahia, in Salvador. The recordings were mostly done in Rio, but in total there were 9 different studios, some in Japan, some in Salvador, some in New York. We just worked with friends, there were like 50 people involved in the record, and more than 30 musicians contribute some sound to it.

### **Is it important to you to have other people with you during the process?**

It's not just important. Without my friends I could not make anything. I'm very shy, I'm very lazy, I get insecure about how people feel when they hear our music. My friends are like fuel, they just make me work. On this record I worked with Pedro Sa, another friend, he's a guitar player that works with my father right now. The last three albums my father made, he and I produced them. We formed this partnership very easily. He came to me and said, "let's do another album, *your* album." I said I don't know, but he said, "No no let's do it! This is the time!" I was just living in Bahia when he came to me and he just drove me to make it. I cannot say I did everything. We made it together, we produced the album together and that was amazing--A gift from my friends. I've had a lot of fun with this album. Of course it's very emotional sometimes, but I still like it when I listen to it so I think, "Well that's ok, let's put it out."

### **Will you play many shows?**

Right now I don't have a band together. I spoke to some other people who are drummers and bassists, and they were ready to do it but we haven't really rehearsed yet. We plan to start playing in February or January.

### **I have to ask, because we're in somewhat similar situations, what was it like to grow up with Caetano as your dad?**

For me it was very nice to have him as my family. Not only because my parents and their parents are great people, but also because of the musical environment. I appreciated it a lot to grow up in such a musical environment. There were always friends of my parents, and friends of friends who were musicians who would play music at home, and I took part in those nights, trying to sing and compose. I wrote my first song at age 9 with my father. He recorded it and released it on his first

album in the US. In fact, David [Byrne] put it on the first Brazil Classics compilation. When I wrote that song, I just wanted to illustrate the energy I had at home. It was so nice to be at home with my parents, but of course, my father would travel a lot sometimes. I survived though. The worst thing was the press. When I was a kid I had nothing to say. I was doing nothing but studying in school and they kept trying to have an interview and take pictures and stuff. That was the only thing that was slightly annoying.

**It's annoying when you can tell someone is talking to you with an agenda.**

Yes exactly. I've spoken some to Sean Lennon about it also.

**It's a crazy way to grow up, but pretty wonderful. I definitely relate to growing up in a perpetual state of making and listening to music, but I think for me the main thing that I didn't realize was that being a musician was not a common professional choice. The thing is though, I've pretty much never had a second thought. When I was in high school people would ask me what I wanted to do, and I would say that I knew I would be a musician, and they would ask, "Aren't you going to try and get a real job?" It took me a while to understand what they meant; I just always thought there was basically no other option.**

I had a second thought. I went to University and studied physics. I worked in a lab on atomic physics. The musical part of my life is intense and deep. I breathe and live in it, music is something I really love and I've been happy to be around it my whole life, but math kind of came easily to me and I grew to love it. My mom said she was good at math when she was younger too. My musician friends had such a bad time in school, but it always made me happy. Not only math, but physics and chemistry too. When school finished, I couldn't stop doing that stuff, I just love science.

**That's kind of a surprising other passion to have. I feel like most musicians discover weed before getting too deep into physics.**

My father would always ask me what I was doing. He didn't quite get why I was interested in University, but he was happy I was studious. In a way, I always think of it when I'm in the studio. It helps with repairing old stuff, and fine-tuning equipment. I've always tinkered around with stuff.

**Do you think there's a connection between physics and your music for you?**

I don't know if there's that much of a connection, but I do think it helps to keep your mind open and in good shape. The day to day of physics is pretty different from music in almost every way though. However, life in the laboratory isn't too far from life in the studio, you need partners and teamwork to get stuff done.

Domenico and Kassin literally took me out of the University thing to go tour, but honestly I missed doing that stuff. In high school, my physics teacher was also a musician. He was a mentor to me, a figure that I was following because he also paired together these two disparate things I loved. He was doing both, but then chose science. I guess I was the opposite. I'm still in touch with him actually. My son is actually in the same class as his granddaughter, and his daughter is a singer and a musician too, and she teaches music to my daughter in a different school. AND the leader of my physics teacher's band was my first music teacher in my life.

When I was 9 I started thinking about playing guitar. One time I was in my uncle's house and my cousin was getting a guitar lesson, and I thought, "Oh my god I have to study that." I talked to the teacher, and he started coming to my house and became friends with my father, and went on to become pretty successful writing music books.

### **Finally, what are you listening to these days?**

Man, Sly and the Family Stone this morning. I have some friends in Brazil though who are about to put out their records, and I'm really impressed with them. One of Gilberto Gil's sons, he had 8 children, and three of them are my cousins, but one of the youngest is helping me to produce the new Gilberto Gil album. He has a band called Tono which just put out a record and it's amazing. I also like experimental stuff, there's a band called Balea that I like. A lot of people are putting out good records in Brazil right now, so just feeling some pride for my country.