

ENGLISH  
SARA SERPA-PRESS REVIEWS

**ABOUT THE NEW ALBUM “PRAIA”**

**By Philip DiPietro, All About Jazz**

Sara Serpa is a vocalist wielding an instrument as favorably unadorned and pure as any in jazz. **She's the freshest vocalist on the scene at the moment**, not just because she's new to it at age 28. It's certainly not because of the way she delivers a lyric, since there usually aren't any. Being from Portugal is also irrelevant, for like much of the great jazz coming our way in the past few years from Lisbon, there is nothing overtly ethnic about the music; it's sensuous, transporting, sultry and warm. (...) A main reason is that with one recording in, she raises profound questions regarding the previous role of the vocalist in jazz. What's radical, is that it's not about the ridiculous chops or inhuman gymnastic training or trickery. She sings as an instrumentalist, as a member of an ensemble with a bold conception, moving seamlessly as would a saxophonist from melodist to soloist, or from a front line horn to an ensemble voice—not the star of some show. Serpa sounds as if she's talking right to you, even though she's singing, not just in terms of the intimacy quotient, but in terms of the actual sound of it—literally, she sounds as if she must sing whenever she speaks. (...) **Serpa has crafted the debut of 2008 by innovating in the way all jazz innovators have done before her— speaking, in this case singing, with her own voice”.**

**By Joao Moreira dos Santos (Jazz no Pais do Improviso)**

“Praia is a **challenging and original work** that it is worth listening to. **It reveals the beginning of Sara Serpa’s exploration of her great creative potential- Serpa is a singer that can go further and what we listen to now is just the tip of a big iceberg of talent.** Two things we know for sure: Serpa has all it needs to bring this talent to surface and is very well accompanied by guitarist Andre Matos. Matos, once again proved to be one of the greatest Portuguese guitarist of the moment, with his sound and phrasing. Matos has t what any musician wishes for: his unique and only voice.”

**By Manuel Jorge Veloso (O Sitio do Jazz)**

“ Going straight to the point, Praia is an album that I have enjoyed listening to with great pleasure. **Sara Serpa’s choice of expressing herself, technically and aesthetically, through wordless vocals, without vibrato, is specially demanding and brave, going beyond the traditional scat. Not only Serpa exposes keen flexibility, perfect intonation, harmonic ear, amazing range and use of extended techniques but also she proves to be a composer of great quality, being all the pieces recorded in this album of her own. (...).**

**By Nuno Catarino, Bodyspace.net**

“Sara Serpa belongs to a new generation of Portuguese jazz vocalists. (...) With this band has a background, **Serpa’s voice develops an original and ambitious wordless vocal work- it is this feature that distinguishes Sara from the current vocalists on the scene. Sara sings something close to scat (as we know of Ella Fitzgerald).** The only

exception is “Folhas” where finally we hear the vocalist in a fluid speech. (...). On this recording, one can hear the super special guest Greg Osby in “Hole in my Heart”. Andre Matos ‘s guitar is omnipresent and vital on the definition of this conceptual project of Sara Serpa. **Serpa owns an amazing vocal quality and with this album, demonstrating a rare audacity, taking risks fearlessly, without worrying about commercial factors.”**

### **ABOUT SARA SERPA’S CONTRIBUTION IN GREG OSBY’S “9 LEVELS”:**

By [Jacob Teichroew](#), [About.com](#)

“There is underlying joy on *9 Levels*, due mostly to three things: Greg Osby’s laughing improvisation style, **Sara Serpa’s smooth-as-glass voice**, and the conversational nature of the solos”

By **Peter Margasak**, **Chicago Reader**

“He hasn't released much since parting ways with Blue Note a couple years ago, but for the fine new *9 Levels* (...) he's assembled an unusual group with guitarist Nir Felder, drummer Hamir Atwal, bassist Joseph Lepore, pianist Adam Birnbaum, and a Portuguese singer, Sara Serpa, whom he discovered on MySpace. They handle his twisty postbop compositions with impressive fluidity and clarity, darting through precise arrangements marked by running contrapuntal commentary and taut unison figures--**Serpa is especially impressive, her wordless vocals locked to Osby's sax lines in perfect tune.** “

By **Mark F. Turner**, **All About Jazz**

“The sextet's sixth element is found in the unique vocals of singer Sara Serpa from Lisboa, Portugal. Her voice a finely tuned instrument, serious scattin' on "Truth," choral phrases on "Humility" or wordless touches like a painter's brushstrokes on canvass on the lovely abstract piece "Tolerance.”

### **ABOUT SARA SERPA’S CONTRIBUTION IN ANDRE MATOS’S “ROSA SHOCK”**

By **Phil DiPietro**, **All About Jazz**

“The most obvious difference between this and some of the other stellar TOAP dates, is the presence of a vocalist, **the remarkable Sara Serpa**. With four new releases hitting almost simultaneously—including a brilliant debut recording, **she makes an unexpected and deceptively simple bid to challenge nothing less than the very concept of the role of a jazz vocalist in a small ensemble. Serpa doesn't sing songs as much as she becomes part of them, using no lyrics, with a natural vocalese that cannot be called scatting.** Singing as any front-line member of the ensemble would play, she moves effortlessly from melodist to soloist to ensemble voice.(...) Because if Serpa's *Praia* and this recording by Matos are any indication, their dance should continue to be fruitful, surprising and enticing for years to come.”

**Raul Vaz Bernardo, O Expresso**

“What brings even more value to this recording is the presence of the vocalist Sara Serpa. Recently, Serpa has collaborated with Greg Osby, with whom she recorded his first record for his new label, Inner Circle Music. **Sara Serpa is a phenomenon of musicality. Her limpid, wordless and non-exhibitionist way of singing is natural and spontaneous, becoming part of the whole orchestral ensemble, without restraint.** Listen to “Rare Birds” and you will find the reason why Mr. Osby must have been surprised when he first heard her”.

**ABOUT LIVE PERFORMANCES**

**By Nate Chinen, New York Times**

Mr. Osby has a strong new album, “9 Levels,” on his own new label, Inner Circle. (Now available as a download at [innercirclemusic.net](http://innercirclemusic.net), it will soon be issued on CD.) The album features a close facsimile of the current band, with piano standing in for vibraphone; among its more distinctive sonic elements is Ms. Serpa, **a bright young Portuguese singer.** Through most of the set Ms. Serpa, who has her own Inner Circle release due out in the fall, sang in airtight unison with Mr. Osby: an impressive feat, given the leaps and syncopations of a tune like “Vertical Hold.” She showed even more composure on her own piece, “Praia,” which overlays a poplike structure with a slaloming melodic line.”

**By Franz A. Matzner, All About Jazz**

“While each player possesses enormous ability in his or her own right, it is **Serpa’s astonishing vocal ability that clearly forms the heart of Osby’s latest endeavor, and it was her stunningly unique approach that left the Kennedy Center’s audience breathless.** (...)Blending her voice with Osby’s alto in a wordless improvisation, Serpa seamlessly integrated her lines and solos together with Osby’s. Acting more as an additional frontline horn than a traditional vocalist, Serpa’s vocal style resists description and defies the task of identifying precursors or analogs. More than a modernized scat, Serpa has abandoned the syllabic conventions codified in earlier decades for a thoroughly contemporary form based on flowing lines, color, and texture, owing its closest relation perhaps to opera, with a bit of Luciana Souza, Bjork, and the only briefly recorded Deborah Day mixed.(...)As a first outing, the Osby Five’s performance can only be summarized as heraldic, and **Serpa a phenomena.** “

**By Paulo Barbosa, Jazz.pt**

" (...) **Sara Serpa was a good surprise, presenting one of the best concerts at Festa do Jazz.** Her compositions are very strong and the trio featuring Albert Sanz, Masa Kamaguchi and R.J. Miller played with an exciting sense of communion. Guitarist André Matos, always getting better on his improvisation skills, brought to the music an interesting color. **Serpa took high risks and proved to have an amazing control of her instrument,** making a successful use of few "out of tune" pitches as one more vocal effect. Kamaguchi demonstrated that he's one of the most virtuoso and musical double bass players of the moment."

### **Jazz.pt (Andre Matos's CD Release Concert)**

“Without ignoring the deserved merit to Matos's solos, **it was clear to everyone that the star of this project is vocalist Sara Serpa.** Along with her pleasant stage presence (always a very important factor) Serpa sang with her velvety voice, wordlessly, going beyond the already predictable scat.

### **By Siddhartha Mitter, Boston Globe**

#### **“She's unique beyond words”**

"When fully expressed, the human voice has such potential that instruments are crafted to imitate it, not the other way round. In fact, whole traditions of music honor the voice above all other instruments. Seen this way, a song can be a terribly limiting thing. Verses and refrains shackle inventiveness. Lyrics force subtle shadings of tone into foregone conclusions, constrained by language and vocabulary. That's just one way of looking at things, of course, but it's enough to have bred a stream of jazz musicians who use their voice to interpret mainly wordless compositions. It's a different technique than scatting: In wordless singing the voice harmonizes with the other instruments, improvises, maybe takes a solo. It's hard to do, and when done poorly, can be quite a drag. **Now a young singer and composer who has embraced the technique to great effect is emerging on the Boston scene. Sara Serpa was the featured guest of saxophone great Greg Osby during a recent Berklee residency.** Wednesday, she takes the stage at Ryles as the leader of her quintet. (...)"