

KENIA

Brazilian Jazz • Bossa Nova • Samba • Choro

BIOGRAPHY

The vocalist who single-handedly defined the essence of heavenly, pop accented Brazilian jazz in the 1980s and '90s returns with an album that surpasses all expectations. With the release of *Simply Kenia*, the singer, known simply as Kenia, confidently reasserts her position as one of the reigning queens of contemporary Brazilian music.

Simply Kenia is a captivating blend of venerable choro works and samba and bossa nova-accented tracks that represent the best of the contemporary MPB (Música Popular Brasileira) tradition. Add several handpicked favorites from the American ballad songbook and there's little doubt that it all adds up to the most well-rounded and stylistically authentic album of Kenia's career and a program that's perfect for her trademark seductive style, amber-toned voice and impeccable phrasing. Backing Kenia on *Simply* are a group of seasoned Brazilian jazz musicians who rank among the most celebrated of their time, including keyboardist César Camargo Mariano, guitarist Romero Lubambo, drummer Teo Lima, and bassist Leo Traversa.

The artist was born Kenia Acidly into a family of Italian origins in the city of Nova Iguaçu, a distant working class suburb of Rio de Janeiro. When she was six, Kenia's family moved to Copacabana. Later, she lived in Niterói, Rio's sister city across Guanabara Bay, and chic Leblon, one of the city's most upscale neighborhoods. Each stop along the way provided opportunities to explore the local cultural peculiarities that go into making Rio and its neighboring environs one of the world's most exotic locales.

An interest in music came early; she studied piano and learned to play the guitar by ear. Singing however, became her path to success in music world. Influenced by such Brazilian greats as the late Elis Regina, she also began listening to such North American artists as Sarah Vaughn, Carmen McRea and George Benson. And her choice of music to interpret came not from the bossa nova of the

1960s but from the talents of the generation of composers that followed and put the Brazilian sound on the world map once again.

After her arrival in the U.S. in 1980, Kenia's talents were quickly recognized by such leading music producers as Creed Taylor, who signed her to accompany Brazilian jazz trumpeter Claudio Roditi on his debut release *Red on Red*. She also played a key role in Taylor's *The Devil's Toothpick*, a music film that documented the ritualistic dance and music styles associated with the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé religion. And she launched her own successful solo recording career, producing four popular and critically acclaimed albums for the MCA and Denon labels between 1987 and 1991 that helped define the emerging "Smooth Jazz" radio format of the day. The success of these ventures established Kenia as one of the most popular and successful U.S. based Brazilian musicians since the heyday of Sergio Mendes and Brazil '66.

It's been a decade since Kenia's name graced the cover of a new CD release—far too long, her most ardent fans would quickly say. But she makes up for lost time on *Simply Kenia*. Her magic touch is not only still alive, it's more potent than ever. Simply put, *Simply* is Kenia, through and through.



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BIOGRAPHY — PAGE 1

The voice is back. Kenia, who single-handedly defined the essence of heavenly, pop accented Brazilian jazz in the 1980s and '90s, returns with an album that surpasses all expectations. With the release of *Simply Kenia*, the singer confidently reasserts her position as one of the reigning queens of Brazilian music.

Simply Kenia will quickly be embraced by Brazilian music aficionados as a timeless classic of the sound that has seduced the world for over half a century. It is a captivating blend of venerable choro works, samba and bossa nova-accented tracks that represent the best of the contemporary MPB (Música Popular Brasileira) tradition, and handpicked favorites from the American ballad songbook. There's little doubt that it all adds up to the most well-rounded and stylistically authentic album of Kenia's career.

Noted for seeking perfection at every stage of a production, the singer turned to some of the most celebrated Brazilian musicians of our time to accompany her on the session's 15 tracks. César Camargo Mariano, the legendary keyboardist, composer and arranger renowned for his pioneering role in the Brazilian jazz fusion movement and his work with his late wife, fabled singer Elis Regina, plays a central role as a keyboard stylist and orchestrator. Guitarist Romero Lubambo, who over the past two decades has become the most widely recorded Brazilian string master in the U.S., adds his seasoned and highly intuitive rhythmic comping and soloing on acoustic guitar and the small Brazilian cavaquinho. Drummer Teo Lima and bassist Leo Traversa, two well traveled pros, round out the rhythm section. Kenia's son Lucas Ashby adds pandeiro licks on one track, and special guest Jorjão da Silva provides percussive fireworks and a Brazilian style rap on composer Gonzaguinha's "Deix a Dilson Vamos Nelson."

Always in search of ways to make her recordings even better, while on a recent trip to Rio to visit her family, Kenia invited veteran percussionist Armando Marçal to add his signature rhythmic flavors to *Simply Kenia*. Marçal recorded four tracks at Jaula do Leão, pianist Ricardo Leão's Rio studio, replacing previously recorded electronic percussion and making a significant contribution to the "Made-in-Brazil" sound Kenia demanded for the project.

The album is also noteworthy as Kenia's first foray as a vocalist into the world of choro, an elemental, pre-samba Brazilian style that was the rage in Rio in the early 20th Century and has recently undergone a long overdue renaissance. To make her mark on this referential genre, she chose "Lamentos," a landmark composition by the father of choro, saxophonist Pixinguinha, with lyrics by Jobim's primary collaborator, Vinícius de Moraes. "I love what is happening with the choro revival," she notes. "For the past couple of years, I've become very interested in learning more about this great music and performing it."

Simply Kenia features 15 tracks that are custom tailored for Kenia's trademark seductive style, amber-toned voice and impeccable phrasing. Reflecting her affection for Brazil's best tunesmiths, the singer includes works by such renowned composers as Pixinguinha, João Bosco, Gonzaguinha and Jair De Oliveira. She transforms Djavan's "Avião" into "Being Cool," with English lyrics by Lorraine Feather. Her take on two timeless North American standards, Willie Nelson's "Crazy" and Matt Dennis' immortal "Angel Eyes," defines romantic balladry at its most sensuous. As a special bonus, "Crazy" is rendered in English, Portuguese and Spanish versions.

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BIOGRAPHY — PAGE 2

The artist's life began uneventfully enough when she was born Kenia Acidly into a family of Italian origins in the non-descript city of Nova Iguaçu, a distant working class suburb of Rio de Janeiro. It was at the dawn of the bossa nova revolution. João Gilberto's voice and guitar were on the radio and Antônio Carlos Jobim's songs were everywhere. When she was six, Kenia's family moved to Copacabana, the storied beach-fronting neighborhood in the heart of Rio. In her teens, she also lived in Niterói, Rio's sister city across Guanabara Bay and the hometown of Sergio Mendes, and chic Leblon, one of Rio's most upscale neighborhoods. Each stop along the way provided opportunities to explore the local cultural peculiarities that go into making Rio and its neighboring environs one of the world's most exotic locales.

Exposure to the Carioca (as natives of Rio are known) lifestyle naturally spurred an interest in music. "When I was growing up, I studied piano, but unfortunately never took it very seriously," Kenia recalls today. "It was what young ladies were supposed to do, but I was a little rebel in the making! And, as with most Cariocas growing up in the 60's during the bossa nova era, I played guitar by ear for many years, until I got intimidated by the great musicians I met along the way."

Singing, however, proved to be a natural talent, and Kenia was at an impressionable age just when many of Brazil's best vocalists of the time were becoming stars, providing instant and ongoing inspiration. "Elis Regina and Jair Rodrigues were amazing to watch and listen to," she recalls of two of the era's most dynamic vocal talents. "I always watched their TV show *Dois na Bossa*. Also, in the early 70's we used to have those fabulous music festivals, where we were introduced to such amazing new talents as Edu Lobo, Milton Nascimento and Chico Buarque. By the late 70's and early 80's I was madly in love with the music of Djavan and Ivan Lins. At the same time, through my friend, the late Durval Ferreira, a great composer, I was introduced to the beautiful voices of Sarah Vaughn and Carmen McRea. And, my sister Tânia also introduced to George Benson, whose songs still resonate with me."

It didn't take long after she arrived in the U.S. in 1980 that Kenia made an impact on the Brazilian jazz scene. In 1984, she was featured on *Red on Red*, the U.S. debut by

a fellow Carioca, trumpet star Claudio Roditi. Produced by recording industry legend Creed Taylor, the album established Kenia as the new Brazilian voice in the U.S. market and opened the door for festival bookings and guest appearances with a wide range of artists, including James Taylor, Justo Almario and Jonathan Butler. She also launched her solo recording career, producing four popular and critically acclaimed albums for the MCA and Denon labels between 1987 and 1991. The albums were noted for their winning mixture of tracks by such diverse North American composers as Stevie Wonder ("Creepin'") and Harold Arlen ("Somewhere Over The Rainbow") as well as the latest creations by Brazil's best contemporary songwriters, including Djavan ("Flor De Lis"), Toninho Horta ("Distant Horizon"). Their catchy arrangements, slick production values and heartfelt performances made the releases a perfect match for the emerging Adult Contemporary Jazz ("Smooth Jazz") format on FM radio. Kenia not only become one of the new broadcasting genre's biggest stars; she also established herself as one of the most popular and successful U.S. based Brazilian musicians since the heyday of Sergio Mendes and Brazil '66.

Other artistic triumphs were to quickly follow. In 1992, she lent her composing skills and voice to the soundtrack of *The Devil's Toothpick*, a music film produced by Creed Taylor documenting the ritualistic dance and music styles associated with the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé religion—the cultural centerpiece of life in Salvador, the capital of the Brazilian state of Bahia. Shot on location in this steamy tropical port city, the production also featured guitarist Lubambo, saxophonist Donald Harrison, and Brazil's current Minister of Culture, singer Gilberto Gil. In 1997, Kenia launched her own label, Mooka Records, with a particularly ambitious effort; *Project Ivan Lins*, a tribute to the one of Brazil's most prolific and popular contemporary songwriters, featuring Lins himself as a special guest.

It's been a decade since Kenia's name graced the cover of a new CD release—far too long, her most ardent fans would quickly say. But she makes up for lost time on *Simply Kenia*. Her magic touch is not only still alive, it's more potent than ever. Simply put, *Simply* is Kenia, through and through.

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REVIEWS

JazzTimes

David Zych

Kenia, a consummate vocal talent who can deliver a song as well as anyone I've heard. Her voice is strong, her phrasing excellent, her delivery totally polished. And she makes you move!

The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust

Janis Burley Wilson

Kenia is a talented performer, with great stage presence and a gift for engaging the audience. Her knowledge and passion for Brazilian music and art is evident in her stage performances, and she educates her audience with every song.

Brazzil Magazine

Jorge da Silva

When I first became interested in Brazilian music nearly ten years ago now, there wasn't really that much out there for me to explore, but among the Astrud Gilberto reissues and Stan Getz classics, I came across Kenia's first two albums by accident. The brightly colored artwork of Initial Thrill caught my eye and her singing captured my imagination.

The Daily News McKeesport

Dana Black

One thing that can be said about Kenia is that she is a natural. Very much at home on stage, she made everything she did seem easy, which is a sure sign of expertise.

The Latin beat that drove almost all of her music brought life and spirit to her show and left the audience wanting to hear more.

Albuquerque Journal

Susannah McCorkle

The overall effect that her singing and backup ensembles create is one of thrilling intimacy. Once you listen to the album, you will probably want to hear her in concert.

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Simply Kenia	Mooka Records	2007
Project: Ivan Lins	Mooka Records	1997
Love Lives On	Denon Records	1991
What You're Looking For	Denon Records	1990
Distant Horizon	MCA Records	1988
Initial Thrill	MCA Records	1987

SPECIAL GUEST APPEARANCES

Claudio Roditi	Red on Red
Joe Negri	Children's Project
MCG Jazz	New Home <i>(various artists compilation CD)</i>
James Taylor	That's Why I'm Here
The Devil's Toothpick	Original Soundtrack
Jonathan Butler	Jonathan Butler
Justo Almaro	To The Max
Salsamba	Brasilia
Salsamba	The Traveler

JAZZ FESTIVALS / SHOWCASES

York Jazz Festival	York, PA	July 2002
Mellon Jazz Festival	Harrisburg, PA	June 2000
Arts Festival	Pittsburgh, PA	July 1999 <i>(with Orchesta Tropical)</i>
Rehoboth Beach Jazz Festival	Rehoboth, DE	October 1993
Music at Gretna	Mount Gretna, PA	September 1993
Berks Jazz Festival	Reading, PA	March 1993
Mellon Jazz Festival	Pittsburgh, PA	June 1992
Syracuse Jazz Festival	Syracuse, NY	June 1992
Warsaw Jazz Festival	Warsaw, Poland	November 1991
Animal Crackers Jazz Festival	Madison, WI	July 1991

BROADCAST APPEARANCES

The Edge	WRUP	Pittsburgh, PA October 2004
The Morning Show	KDKA TV	Pittsburgh, PA June 2004
Live from Studio A	WQED TV	Pittsburgh, PA October 2002
On Q	WQED TV	Pittsburgh, PA September 2001
Bruce Krane Show	PCTV TV	Pittsburgh, PA May 2001
Pimienta / Maria Conchita Alonzo <i>(Broadcast to 18 Spanish-speaking countries)</i>		Mexico City, Mexico June 1992
Warsaw Jazz Festival	Channel 1	Poland November 1991
Sem Censura	TVE	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil August 1991
Gente do Rio	TVRIO	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil April 1987
Brazil / New York	WNYC	New York, NY June 1985

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