



Paula Maya releases her sixth studio album, 'Iluminar' Set to embark on a Brazilian tour this month. By Liz Lopez

Keyboardist and singer/songwriter Paula Maya has been an Austin resident since 2011 and in that period has placed in the top ten of the Austin Music Awards World Music category (2013-2015). She was also a featured artist last summer at the 5th annual Women in Latin Music showcase hosted by the Austin Latino Music Association (ALMA). The full time musician is set to release her sixth studio album, "Iluminar," on May 4. Prior to embarking on a Brazilian tour in late May, a hometown record

release party is set for Thursday, May 7, at the One-2-One bar at 7 p.m.

Maya initially arrived in town under the radar, but it wasn't long before she was noticed. I was told by several musicians who'd performed as guests in her band about her and they enthusiastically responded, "you should meet her." I took that opportunity and learned of her recording history and work in Seattle, as well as her aspirations and determination to produce another CD. It took all of 2014 to do so.

"I am so proud of my new CD," Maya told me recently. "It is completely different. For one, I produced the record. That meant I made the final decision on everything. Also, it is all produced in-house; all made in Austin." "Iluminar" was recorded at her label studio, Yellow House Records, in South Austin with Lefty and Robert Wyatt, mastered by Nick Landis at Terra Nova, and manufactured by Matt Eskey's Any and All Media.

Maya liked the idea of doing the production locally. "One, I know how talented Austin is in every sense of the word. Two, I like being involved in the community. Three, when you can get support, it is better. I compared prices going out of state and found that it was the same price. Why not go local?"

As music producer of "Iluminar," Maya received support from every direction. "I had a meeting with Alex Vallejo at the Austin Music Foundation (Creative Media Center/Director). He was instrumental in kicking my ass – to keep going (on the production) while it was fresh!" She added that Vallejo was great in helping her keep on schedule.

"Iluminar" is deeply inspired by and heavily influenced by her roots (she is originally from Rio de Janeiro), as well as Austin. Maya went to Brazil to visit her old friends and family in 2011 after a cold, short stay in Connecticut, and after attending SXSW. Her re-connection with her Brazilian roots at a deeper level, couple with her new love of Austin and her partner were all inspiration to perform and record her new songs. "This is 90 percent in Portuguese and has eight songs; one is instrumental, five are completely in Portuguese, one is bilingual Portuguese/English and one is all in English."

Singing and recording in Portuguese is a first for her and the focus of "Iluminar" is on Brazilian music, jazz and world inspired rhythms. Her precious releases featured a mix of pop, rock, classical and electronica. "(Iluminar) is the first CD I can send to Brazil for shows – it has several Brazilian rhythms." This is also her first time to return to perform in Brazil in seven years. "I want to play for Brazilians – I think they will like my music, as they want to hear the new stuff."

When asked what would be her "favorite" of the compositions, she became thoughtful and quiet. "'Baião de Cabo Frio.' It is an interesting story related to my family. Cabo Frio is a beach town, one which my grandfather, Paulo Burle, helped make changes to develop it. We had a family compound then where we would spend three months there, with all my cousins/families. It has been sold off, little by little. I captured some of the memories (in this song)." She added that during a visit for her mother's 80th birthday, she sang and played it with only a keyboard. "The few people in my family who heard it cried. They cried, not just my generation, but the elders, too."

Iluminar, which means "to shine" in Portuguese, is definitely what she reflects with her Austin debut as a producer. Shine on! ~ Liz Lopez