

Astrud Gilberto Plus The James Last Orchestra (1990)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Samba Do Soho*
2. *I'm Nothin' Without You*
3. *Champagne and Caviar*
4. *Listen to Your Heart*
5. *Moon Rain*
6. *Caravan* [play](#)
7. *Amor E Som*
8. *Saci*
9. *Forgive Me* [play](#)
10. *With Love (When They Turn on the Light)*
11. *Agua de Beber*

This collaboration with James Last and his orchestra is Astrud Gilberto's finest moment, an absolutely wonderful piece of music. The lush, eclectic instrumentation is complemented by her singing, sometimes criticized as being pretty but plain, unrangy, and without depth. On this recording, she retains a subdued aura but certainly shows versatility, jazziness, and occasionally passion, if not intensity. But blending, not dominant, vocals are needed for this lovely music, and it is the instrumentation that is more captivating.

Two Brazilian Bossa Nova standards are included: the bright and cheerful "Samba do Soho" and the dry "Agua de Beber." But there is much more. The best song is the precious "Listen to Your Heart," an exquisitely textured composition by Ron Last. A radiant xylophone-driven motif is complemented by other beautiful instrumentation and very pretty male/female harmonic vocals, to fabulous effect, lovely and a bit haunting. Closely behind is "With Love (When They Turn on the Light)" (co-authors: James and Ron Last), similar in character. Other superb tracks are the dreamy "Moonrain," with its lush, sensuous string arrangements (and woodwinds), and

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Duke Ellington's "Caravan," in which Astrud keeps up well with a jazzy, sexy, syncopated beat with unusual accents, punctuated by horn solos, all in all giving the song a sort of mideastern flavor. In a similar mideastern vein is "Saci," with a little faster, more-normal-style jazz beat, excellent sax soloing, and one of two songs Astrud (here male accompanied) sings in Portugese.

Astrud includes some fine compositions of her own. "Champagne and Caviar" is lively, smugly romantic and relaxing, with pretty horn arrangements, following on the heels of the slower-paced "I'm Nothin' Without You," pensive but absolutely charming. "Amor E Som," the other track sung in Portugese, has a steady-driving jazzy beat. All these songs compare favorably with the classic Bossa Nova standards for which she is renowned for performing that were written by the Brazilian masters (OK, granted, Jobim and de Moraes co-wrote "I'm Nothin'," but it is among their best). In fact, the songs on this CD are much more enjoyable than "The Girl From Ipanema," and more interesting and varied, and prettier, than those on her compilation CDs. You will not regret getting this one--it is simply the best. ---Jinkyu

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