

Ricardo Dias Gomes

A biography

*“Between the snake's belly and the ground,
between the closing door and the fleeing finger,
between the end of the day and the fall of night:
there is the music of Ricardo Dias Gomes.”*

Arto Lindsay

Caetano Veloso's bandmate collaborates with Arto Lindsay on new album *Aa* - its bold, experimental sound heralds an artist following in their hallowed footsteps

Gomes was born 1980 in Rio de Janeiro into a musical family – his father is jazz trumpeter Guilherme Dias Gomes who played and recorded with Grammy-winning Brazilian pop-rock musician Ivan Lins, his uncle Alfredo Dias Gomes, a skilled rock drummer who played and recorded with the legendary Hermeto Pascoal, whilst his aunt Denise Emmer is a classical cello player and founder of one of Brazil's most respected chamber orchestras Camerata Dias Gomes.

Aged 10 piano was the gateway to Gomes' exploration of music and as a teenager he built a studio in his bedroom using his father's unused music equipment whilst taking classical then jazz lessons. Gomes went on to gain a bachelor degree in music arrangement at Rio de Janeiro's federal university until, at the age of 20, he became tired of the cerebral approach of his studies. Keen to develop a more visceral and physical way of performing Gomes chose bass and spent his early twenties experimenting. By the mid nineties he was known on the Rio circuit for his adventurous style of bass-playing thanks to collaborations with local musicians Lucas Santtana and Nina Becker, before he joined with friends to form Do Amor in 2005. Do Amor released three critically acclaimed albums: *Do Amor* (2007), *Piracema* (2013) and *Fodido Demais* (2015) which cemented the band's position as trailblazers within the Latin American indie scene and saw them perform across Brazil as well as London, Barcelona (Primavera) and Portugal (Mexefest).

It was in 2006 whilst recording Do Amor's debut album that Gomes received an offer he couldn't refuse: Brazilian music icon and Tropicalia founding-father Caetano Veloso invited him to work with him on a daring new project. Alongside his Do Amor band mate Marcelo Callado and their friend Pedro Sa Gomes became a member of Veloso's Banda Cê. Over the next decade Banda Cê worked with Veloso to forge a unique experimental, post-tropicalia sound that saw him reach a creative zenith equal to his acclaimed 60s and early 70s recordings, garnering extraordinary international acclaim with albums *Cê* (2006), *Zii and Zie* (2009) and *Abraço* (2012). All three albums were released by Nonesuch and have the imprint of Ricardo and Banda Cê firmly weaved into their spiky, post-punk fabric. Ricardo undertook a number of world tours with Caetano and Banda Cê: *“Being close to Caetano for a decade was the most inspiring artistic experience,”* he said, *“the courage and the honesty so present in his songs and performances had a huge impact on my solo career”*.

Winter 2015, and following the last Caetano tour Gomes was ready for a new challenge: *“I rented a room in a studio and dived into a routine of solitude, playing and experimenting with sounds and composing new music.”* The intimate and experimental flavour of this new material was a journey back to Gomes’ teenage years of home studio experimentation. Later that year Gomes recorded *-11*, playing all the instruments himself and relying solely on his instincts in terms of the direction to take: *“-11 is characterised by a confrontation with my past and an acceptance of my self-limitations”*.

Ricardo self-released *-11* at the tail end of 2015 to acclaim by tastemakers from London to New York, Chicago to Milan. *The Wire* waxed lyrical with a full page review saying *-11* “recalls other rough and ready highly personal solo debut albums by Laetitia Sadier and Money Mark”, as RVNG picked the LP up for US distribution claiming: “intimacy is conveyed through a hushed human voice, meticulously controlled drone, and a dedicated finger-picking of the guitar and plucking of key(s).”

Italian news weekly *Internazionale* marked *-11* as one of the “ten albums you missed in 2016” describing it “as an original album of psychedelic tropical folk different from any other record you may have heard this year” and *-11* made it into Peter Margasak of the Chicago Reader’s top 30 albums of the year as he praised the album’s “weirdly hermetic sound world, alternating between tender, introspective ballads, rude electronic grooves, and dissonant ambience”.

During autumn 2016 Gomes toured *-11* in the US playing ESS in Chicago, Union Pool in NY, The Music Gallery in Toronto, and opening for the Dead C in Philadelphia. Following the tour Gomes began work on *Aa*, conceived in the stream of positive energy channelled unexpectedly by *-11*.

With *Aa* Gomes ditched the “lonely experimentalism” of *-11* in favour of collaborations: Caetano Veloso’s son, Moreno played percussion on *Tela Parada*; Joana Queiroz, clarinet on *1 2 3 Nenés* and guitar work came from Pedro Sá on *Paranormal* and leftfield Brazilian legend Arto Lindsay on *Fogo Chama*. *“With Aa I wanted to capture the epiphany I felt while performing on stage”*, says Gomes, *“yet recording these tracks wasn't always pleasant - I remember tough days in the studio where I felt raw and exposed. I'm proud of the results though - arrangements while still minimal are more colourful, bass heavy, lyrics utterly honest”*

Lindsay was a guiding force on *Aa*, encouraging Gomes to take a step further in the experimentation of sound and composition. *“Whilst making Aa I became close to Arto - he was an important friend to exchange musical and life experiences with. He helped me realise that most importantly of all music needs to be honest.”*

Aa was finished in early 2017: soon after Gomes relocated to Lisbon where he collaborated with US singer-songwriter Jesse Harris, playing bass and keyboards on Harris’s forthcoming album (to be released late 2018), and on an as yet unreleased collaboration with Will Graefe and Jeremy Gustin from Star Rover, as well as soundtracks for Brazilian theatre and cinema.