

## MATUTO

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In 2002, **Clay Ross** embarked on a musical odyssey that brought him closer to home. The South Carolina native moved to New York to pursue a jazz career and several years later found himself in Recife, Brazil studying the region's folkloric music. Along the way he rediscovered the straightforward songs of his native South.

The guitarist and singer titled his Ropeadope Records debut **Matuto**, after a Brazilian slang reference to a man from the backcountry. Described as »Weird and Wonderful... Unorthodox and Delightful« by *Jazz Times Magazine*, the set allows Ross to carve a niche in a musical tradition created on another continent. He performs North American folk songs like »Home Sweet Home« and Blind Willie Johnson's »John the Revelator« over South American rhythms Maracatu, Forró, and Coco typical of the northeastern region of Brazil.

In recording the album, Ross called upon the talents of NYC's most sought-after musicians, including master accordionist **Rob Curto**. Born in New York, Curto is widely regarded as forró's foremost ambassador in the States. An early devotee of North American swing music, bebop piano, funk, rock, and blues, he has combined these influences with his mastery of their Brazilian counterparts forró, chorinho, samba, maracatu, and frevo to produce stunning new results. He spent years living and playing in Brazil, completely absorbing and interpreting the country's musical traditions. Curto was a member of the original scene that established forró, the dance music of northeastern Brazil, as an official dance craze in downtown New York.

Ross and Curto began exploring a shared musical vision and set about combining their individual repertoires into an extensive library of Pan-American influences. Focusing their talents, resources, and experience Ross and Curto set out to establish Matuto as a band.

In February of 2009 they received a prestigious Fulbright Grant and completed a six-week residency in Recife, Brazil. There, with drummer **Richie Barshay** (*Herbie Hancock Quartet*) and bassist **Edward Perez**, the band thrilled audiences at the *Garanhuns Jazz Festival* and the massive *Rec Beat Festival*, finding equal comfort along side jazz and blues legends, folk music traditionalists, and indie rock experimentalists. They also lead educational workshops in underserved communities and performed public concerts in theaters and auditoriums across the city. Later that year they headlined *the American Folk Festival* in Bangor, ME and the *Montmagny World Accordion Festival* in Canada.

Employing renowned musicians across NYC's diverse jazz, roots, and world music scenes, Matuto features violin, guitar, accordion, bass, drums, and various Brazilian percussion instruments: the alfaia (a large, wooden, rope-tuned bass drum), the pandeiro (a Brazilian tambourine), the berimbau (a single-string on a bow struck with a small stick), and the agogô (a pair of small, pitched metal bells).

Currently working on a new album, Ross and Curto have produced a compilation disc of their respective best. This compilation reflects the inspiring live show that the band has developed in the last year. Appalachian fiddle tunes bounce with a Northeastern Brazilian lilt while the one string Berimbau resonates with a strangely effective blues riff. Curto spins long chromatic melodies over intricate arrangements and infectiously funky folkloric rhythms. Like a true southern preacher, Ross delivers colorfully satirical lyrics reminiscent of David Byrne, Tom Ze, and Caetano Veloso.

With an honest love for roots music, genuine Brazilian styles, and improvisational experimentation, Matuto creates a unique and inspired sound from the heart of New York City's diverse musical culture.

## MATUTO - The Band



### **Clay Ross** - Vocals, Percussion, Guitar

Like a true southern preacher, Clay Ross delivers colorfully satirical lyrics reminiscent of David Byrne, Tom Ze, and Caetano Veloso. A virtuosic guitarist, his unique style combines the flatpicking prowess of bluegrass legend Tony Rice with the sonic depth of jazz master Bill Frisell, plucking three chord folk melodies or sophisticated Brazilian Choros with equal ease.

### **Rob Curto** - Vocals, Percussion, Accordion

Rob Curto is widely regarded as forró's foremost ambassador in the States. An early devotee of North American swing music, bebop piano, funk, rock, and blues, he has combined these influences with his mastery of their Brazilian counterparts forró, chorinho, samba, maracatu, and frevo to produce stunning new results. He spent years living and playing in Brazil, completely absorbing and interpreting the country's musical traditions.

### **Zé Mauricio** - Zabumba, Tamborime, Drums, Percussion, Pandiero, Gonge, Drums, Caixa, berimbau, Alfia, Agogo

Ze Mauricio grew up immersed in the percussive traditions of his homeland. He is an original member of "Cyro Baptista's Beat the Donkey" and performs with an eclectic blend of NYC bands. He is a master of the Pandiero (Brazilian Tamborine) and his vast palate of percussion sounds give Matuto a deep swinging dance groove.

### **Richie Barshay** - Percussion

Most noted for his work with the Herbie Hancock Quartet, Richie Barshay has established himself as a prominent musical voice of his generation and is regarded as "a player to watch" by JazzTimes magazine. On tour and on recordings, his eclectic resume so far includes Hancock, Chick Corea, Esperanza Spalding, Lee Konitz, The Klezmatics, Fred Hersch, Kenny Werner, Natalie Merchant, David Krakauer, Fred Wesley, Claudia Acuña and Pete Seeger among others.

### **Skip Ward** - Bass

Bassist Skip Ward recently received a Grammy award for his work on actor/banjoist Steve Martin's bluegrass album. He studied with the great Jaco Pastorius, and has performed with Tony Trischka, Bela Fleck, Phoebe Snow, Cyndi Lauper, and Cassandra Wilson among others.

### **Rob Hecht** - Vocal, Percussion, Fiddle

Rob Hecht is the winner of the 2009 Rocky Grass Fiddle Competition. A native of Bloomington, Illinois, he has studied violin with some of the greatest in Bluegrass music including Mark O' Connor and Darol Anger. He has developed a playing style that bridges the gaps between jazz, classical, and folk.

[www.matutomusic.com](http://www.matutomusic.com)

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