

Bruno de Almeida, Listening to a film



Bruno de Almeida is 57 years old and has been a director for 32. Among his most notable works are “The Debt” (best short at the 1993 Cannes Film Festival, Critics Week) or the documentary “The Art of Amália” (2000). His new movie is actually an album – the first of three. Cinema Imaginado (vol. 1) features more than 30 musicians and revolves around the imagery of New York in the 1980s, where violence and creativity went hand in hand, to the sound of hip hop, funk and jazz.

JL: Having already an extensive career, what do you intend, with this project, to bring new to those who accompany you?

I've done a lot of movies, but this is my first record. I was in home confinement and had a lot of time available, so I wrote a series of songs, ideas that came from 30 years ago, when I had a small career as a musician and composer, in the 80s. It was the covid that made me rediscover files that I never had time to organize.

JL: A composer is usually asked to create a soundtrack specially dedicated to a film. In this case there was the opposite process...

I thought of stories of a period when I lived in New York, from 1985 to 2008: I imagined a *flâneur*, a writer who walks through the city's underground world. The music takes us back to those two decades before globalization, when the city was very creative. I thought about the images and then I wrote the music: a soundtrack for an imaginary film.

JL: Influences range from gangs, to 80s cops, to the hip hop movement...

When I arrived in New York, hip hop was exploding, as was graffiti, street art, jazz mixes with all kinds of sounds. Although I was never very connected to hip hop, it was impossible not to notice it, because it was the music that was heard in the streets. But the record is more influenced by the time I played in Graham Haynes' band [trumpeter who participates in the album]. It was a fusion of everything that was happening: jazz, hip hop, electronic music, etc.

JL: When I refer to hip hop, it's not the music itself, but the attitude and context in which it arises. What does an album with this imagery mean in 2022?

I don't know (laughs). It has to do with a period that has passed, it has biographical side and an imaginative side. If it were a film, it would be period: from a New York moving from a more dangerous city, but at the same time more creative, to a more bourgeois safer city; before graffiti went into museums and hip hop was a popular thing. The album has a lot to do with that rebellious spirit of the time.

JL: There is a common character to all the stories on the record. How do you characterize it?

It's a type of character that almost doesn't exist anymore, because it has to do with a time when it was very cheap to live in New York. It came from a mixture of acquaintances and friends in the artists' neighborhoods where I lived downtown. I imagined this character as a *flâneur* inspired by Bukowski or William Burroughs, those kind of fringe writers, observers who walk around at night: a kind of lady's man, but who's also a romantic, a cool type who just wants to be left alone, but has bad luck and something always happens to him.

JL: What can you reveal about the upcoming albums? Will they be on the path of jazz, bohemian life and neighborhoods?

It really is a sequel. The second record is almost done. It'll be less jazz, I'd say more "cinematic". When I have the three volumes ready, I'll make vinyl-box with a 'little booklet'.

Bruno de Almeida **Cinema Imaginado (vol. 1)**

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