



# The Unplayable Sofa Guitar

There was once a sofa. Nothing could be simpler. The same sofa that to this day maintains its role as gravitational nucleus of Amp Studios, while it revolves around "Largo de São Domingos" in Viana do Castelo. Legend has it that quite a few well known people have seated, played, sang or slept in this sofa. But its name only enters our story the moment its owner, producer Paulo Miranda, had the idea of collecting musical sketches gathered from the people who "nested" in the sofa. People not as famous as those others above mentioned, beginners. All accounted for, fourteen musicians. When he finished gluing those pieces of music collected along the way, Paulo Miranda organized a dinner meeting so that everyone who intervened in the recording process could get to know each other and the record they had made. It had as many songs as there were musicians involved, it would be released on Independent Records and it bore in the title the sofa that identified the project – The Unplayable Sofa Guitar.

The Unplayable Sofa Guitar, the record, is an album of country-blues tones, even though, at times, only on a subterranean way, under the bubbling of the guitars, effects and collages. It's a pop-rock reflection of the horde of participants involved and the work of the producer in charge (cfr. This Mortal Coil). It became record of the month in FNAC stores during March 2002 and ended up on the 'best records of the year' list of "Blitz" newspaper. At this point Paulo Miranda didn't play the guitar. This record had emerged from the albums he had listened to at his parents' house during his childhood and out of sheer desire for change. He had been part of the punk band Frakturados, integrated Croix Sainte during the peak of "Rock Rendez-Vous" and founded the euro-pop Infinite-E in the 90s, by this time

already in Viana do Castelo, where his studio served as a stage for garage bands, philharmonic bands and folklore groups alike. The change, however, would turn out to be bigger than what the release of the first Unplayable Sofa Guitar record would hint at. During that same year, Miranda insists on recording what would become April, the debut album by Old Jerusalem, record of the year 2003 by "Blitz", 3rd best in "Público"'s poll... From then on his visibility in the media as a record producer and mixing engineer brings more people to the sofa: Old Jerusalem for a new record of the year in 2005 ("Twice the humbling sun", "Blitz" and "Público"), The Legendary Tiger Man, Mécanosphere, Norton, Alla Polacca, Alexandre Soares e Jorge Coelho, Lobster... Contrary to what Ivo Watts-Russell did, Paulo Miranda didn't recruit the new visitors. He learned how to play the guitar, transformed TUSG into a trio (comprising himself, Francisco "Old Jerusalem" Silva and Ana Figueiras, the voice that represented the first record in its live appearances) and passed the next two years bouncing between research and the internet, immersed in blues men stories from before WWII, rehashed musical anthologies, north American cattle call CDs and country-blues compilations.

Rocky grounds, Big Sky is released in March 2005 (Bor Land/Subotnick) and will also figure in that year's poll of records of the year in "Blitz". The second TUSG record is, first and foremost, a dive in the time line, it demands more attention, it's a cruder record; it dwells in sanguinary crime stories more than in the gospel tunes of the first album. But it's the old sound of these new songs that brings them closer to the listener and hints at that big sky over the rocky grounds. Enough producer clouds hover still over these songs,

but they are swept by guitar winds. There. A great band that wasn't and a guitar "un-played", aroused only to the job when the band came to existence as a trio; albums from the parents' record collection and the lives of musicians who lived a century ago on the other side of the ocean. One day Paulo Miranda told me something I already knew: "If you head to the top of Serra D'Arga, what you see there could be North Dakota". This year, Italian composer Ennio Morricone won an Oscar for his soundtrack work, which became in the minds of countless people around the world a synonym to western landscapes, prairies and canyons. He visited America, which is something The Unplayable Sofa Guitar have yet to do. But they have a great sofa from which to look at it.

Eduardo Sardinha

[www.sofaguitar.com](http://www.sofaguitar.com)  
[www.bor-land.com](http://www.bor-land.com)

## Discography

Rocky Grounds, Big Sky / Bor Land 2005  
The Unplayable Sofa Guitar / Independent Records 2002

## Line Up

Paulo M. / Guitar, Moog  
Ana F. / Guitar, Vox  
Francisco S. / Guitar, Banjo, Vox

## Origin

Viana do Castelo / Portugal

## Booking / Management

[sofaguitar@sofaguitar.com](mailto:sofaguitar@sofaguitar.com)