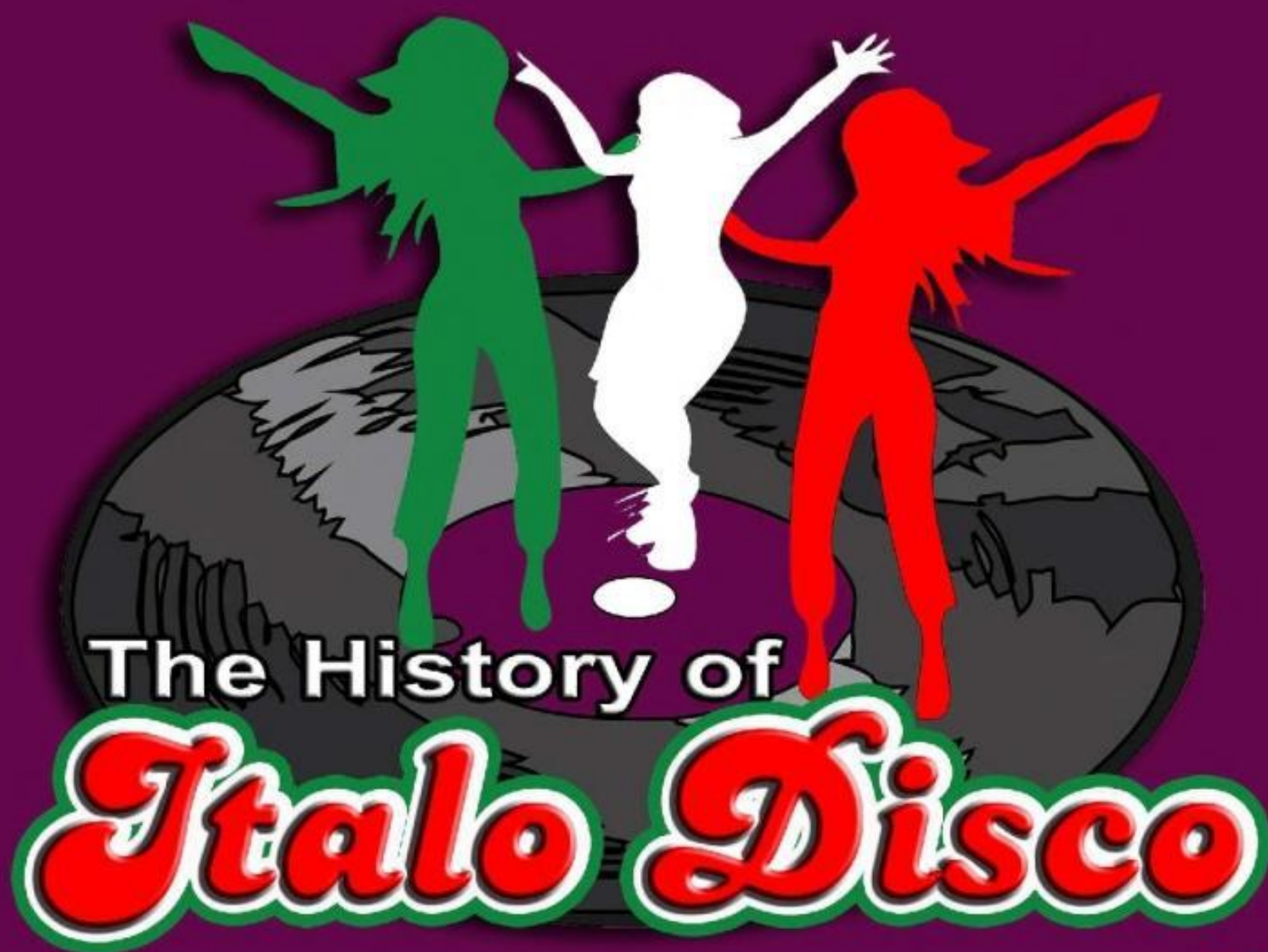


Francesco Cataldo Verrina



ITALIAN DOMINANCE ON THE DANCE CULTURE OF 80'S



THE HISTORY OF ITALO DISCO
ITALIAN DOMINANCE ON THE DANCE CULTURE OF 80'S
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AUTHOR

Francesco Cataldo Verrina

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www.italodiscostory.it

www.advnews.com/edizioni

info@advnews.com

www.advnews.com

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catchphrases continue to be recurring, especially in summer. By itself the research has no scientific value: it's a study of sector made in a playful way: you need to offer patients alternative arguments and see what happens. The result is not so important but is aimed at stimulate discussion. For several weeks we did some interviews, not only with patients but also with people that we have met on the street. We asked them if they knew some of titles of the 80's or if they wanted to indicate some songs of that era between those which remembered better. There were those who remembered those years because he had lived or who did know this music to the children. Then it emerged that the lightness of this music - in an age where everything that happens is heavy, from the chaos of the political crisis to the labor - can be received in a certain way. Also this music aggregates, because it affects multiple generations».

The psychologist has also compiled a ranking of the best-loved tunes in Italy: «Vamos a la playa» of Righeira (voted by 23% of the sample), «La Dolce Vita» by Ryan Paris (15%), «People from Ibiza» of Sandy Marton (12%) and «I like Chopin» by Gazebo (9%).

That's what, outside of Italy or out of the thought of so many Italian DJs, producers and supporters, Italo disco may be. Perhaps, however, reading the book, including curiosity, declarations and statements of various kind, each reader may come to different conclusions.

The Publisher

INTRODUCTION

When I thought to write this book devoted to Italo Disco, I had already committed, as many people, the mistake of watching the phenomenon from the top down, with presumption of the people who still think it was only a lyophilized product with an expiry that had formed for drying the most noble and genuine American Disco Music, linked to the sweat and suffering of the Afro-Americans, which in first instance it had brought the «black people» out the ghetto, making them participate fully in the lavish banquet of American dream, and freeing them from sad self-pity of soul-music and from segregant slavery of the race records. In my previous essay, DISCO MUSIC - THE WHOLE WORLD'S DANCING, I was given only a few reference to most famous producers, forerunners of Italian dance as Malavasi, Simonetti and La Bionda Brothers, and dedicated a short chapter with some representative independent labels as Goody Music, Banana Records and Full Time.

After I had given the book for printing, I began to have first afterthoughts: without the Italo Disco, treated in a detailed manner, the book would certainly seemed incomplete. So what can I do? The ways were two: or publish a second edition with a section dedicated to Italian dance, or rearrange the data, notes, and ideas and make a specific publication in its own right, perhaps with the presumption of giving Italo disco a consistency of genre, at least of musical real style, self-contained with respect to other expressive forms of Euro disco, more predictable, less distinguishable, less original and more characterized.

But simply with THE HISTORY OF ITALO DISCO, I just decided to do outings, a species of repentance not on Damascus road but on Mecenate Street, especially when I started to think about the many times that I went to DISCO MAGIC. However it has not been difficult to come back to on my steps, and, perhaps droppingly fabulous some previous argument not very orthodox on Ita-

lian forge of dance. In the end, I had privilege of experiencing the great epic of the disco clubs of 80's and to benefit of phenomenon in real time, not on hearsay. I was a twenty year old or so, when Italo disco dominated the European scene and the international dance charts, also I had the pleasure to be a DJ, to work in radio and to collaborate with some musical newspaper. For the most part, I loved and played this kind of music.

Deposits also in my favor the fact that some considerations contained in this volume come in part from short essays that I have already published in the form of articles, starting from the end of the 90's, of which there are still a few traces, fragment, or clone on the web. Averting my gaze from my computer and looking back, I see that on the shelves of my library there are hundreds vinyl of Italian dance, some very rare. It also stems from a careful reflection on Italian musical publishing in the age of the Internet. Indeed, on the youth music of last fifty years they have been poured barrels of ink, paint cans and buckets of molasses, in particular on all those musical phenomena, artists and some genres conveyable on the long line of demarcation drawn from rock of the 60's. Below the lowest common denominator «Rock», sometimes in pop sense, they were drawn up encyclopedias, capable of condensing historical characters, legendary groups, but also meteors, stars for a season, simply to do a «heap» and with risk to fall into pedantry elaborating a long list end in itself and far from exhaustive.

Especially in the 70's, a certain type of «culture», for the most part, with the center of gravity moved to alternative and antagonist left, has distilled a discrete essays, albeit not always objective, where music was linked at some issues related to youth universe: drugs, sex, cultural events, intellectual and protest cinema. Since the eighties, with the fragmentation of pop-rock scene in many sub-cultures and due to a proliferation of genres, it began to throw on the market publications referred to a single phenomenon or artist of consolidated fame, some based on the analy-

zes and historical revaluations, other ready to ride the wave of success and to chase and praising the idol of the moment.

Let's start from definition that the dictionary provides about term disco music: disco(theque) «disco» and music «music»; «Disco Music», a kind of light music of the second half of the seventies of the 20° century, based mainly on the reduction to a minimum of words and melody, replaced components by the regularity iterated in rhythm and drum».

Without fear of contradiction, we can say that all musical expressions linked to world of dance and disco-clubs were always awarded in a concise manner, if not wholly ignored. Regarding disco-music of 70s it has been written much after the event, but about Italian dance of the following decade it would seem that it has been stretched a heavy veil of silence, despite the interest in every part of the world.

Nevertheless this is very difficult in this jungle of paper where we often are in the presence of real clones: think of the many books on The Beatles, The Doors, U2, The Rolling Stones, Madonna, Michael Jackson and so on which add nothing unusual, since the viewing angle is always the same, practically the nostalgic exaltation for the good old times.

At least in Italy anyone who writes music, for instinct and generational identification, is led to confront everything that happened in the «fabulous 60's» or so. Instead of producing books on music, which can to some extent instill doubt, questioning certain phenomena, in recent times, it prefers to publish books similar to the fanzines with garish colors and polychrome tints able to seduce fans, roadies and suffragettes only.

To all of this it also must be added the many specialist magazines which, despite the constraint of the topical, have made a significant contribution to the historical understanding of certain phenomena, following the conduct and the evolution in real time. Even if not all, but many of these newspapers changed over time in relation to the events and characters that the youth music ex-

pressed in that period, also they take shape in the graphic expression on the basis of treated phenomena. Some of them have not been able withstand the challenge of the times in perennial mutation and end up disappearing from the newsstands; others, remaining faithful to their archetypal idea, are able to survive by reconciling the old and the new with utter impartiality while taking advantage of technological developments. It's also true that the technology, and especially the urgent competition on the internet, they are a strong incitement to keep in line with the times in both graphics and in the narrowness of the contents, but very similar in the failure of an approach most problematic or countercurrent.

After a wide circle of the horizon and a nourished consultation, (about a thousand publications) between basic and ancient editions or modern and colorful sticker music albums, I realized that there was a «vulnus», at least an editorial empty about that, in a manner somewhat reductive, we define «Italo-disco-dance», or more prosaically «spaghetti-dance».

Also as Mauro Malavasi recalls, when he went to the Power Studio in New York for the finishing of his tracks, the Americans called it the «Fellini-Music», epithet certainly more noble, but surely misleading, because at the end of the 70's the Americans knew of the old Italian idiom just a few words: Fellini, pizza, spaghetti, Mastroianni, mandolino, mafia, Cinecittà, gondola, as well as in good part of the European countries.

I can't think what would have happened if someone had called it «disco-mafia». In the end, even the caloric appellative of «macaroni-dance» when is not used in a targeted and discriminatory by brainy local critics to belittle the phenomenon tout-court, but is used abroad to give the phenomenon a precise geographical position, without that there's the slightest intention to interfere with its artistic content, it could easily be accepted.

Anyhow a good portion of a typical Germanic musical production, halfway between dance and experimental rock avant-garde,

is commonly cited as «krauti-kock» or «krauti-music», without that the Germans have made burst the third world war. Nobody can deny the fact that Italians are eaters of spaghetti and macaroni, while Germans pass to be guzzlers of sauerkraut and potatoes. From here, the desire to produce a «very personal distilled» of my weak thought, through a squeezing of the concepts: as a winepress would with the marc to get to the heart of the wine, or what it will be. Each concept sifted and filtered through to my thirty years of activity and experience as a DJ, radio announcer, writer of essays and musical reviews and articles, as well as stubborn collector of vinyl records and disengaged author of pop songs.

I'm convinced that generally people most informed and prepared, but also able to tackle the life and its many bumps, not only the songs, are those who read more. In this regard, I hope that this fragmentary history of Italian dance of the 70's and 80's can at least open a debate on the importance or less of a phenomenon that from a commercial point of view expressed a considerable degree of penetration in the Italian, European and international market for almost a decade.

The narrowness of sources and various problems exposed in this premise, they would've had me desist from the idea, but I preferred to make a trip to the memory and write everything that, in my life, I often experienced directly and sometimes touched with hand, in particular the radio programs and interviews to the characters of those years, my evenings or summer seasons as DJ in the disco clubs of the 80's, that they could never quite apart from a big dose of vinyl made in Italy.

As it happens in philosophy attempting a study and an analysis of Italo disco, in the initial phase, we start by seeing nothing. The first step was to remove the «darkness» that hung over. The ancient philosophers said «clarum per obscurius» («clarity through maximum of darkness»), with intent of providing a clear view,

se pages, to give a precise location time space to the phenomenon.

But here we would like to clarify that Italo disco was export goods, sometimes valuable, but it made on import materials, at least the original matrices were American. Just to say the traditional Italian dance compositions were still linked about folk music or tarantellas, more on accordions than on synthetic keyboards, more on tambourines than on electronic drums, more on flying acoustic guitars than on slap bass.

Once Mauro Malvasi, in an attempt to belittle what he had produced in that period, said: «*Do disco music in Italy, it was how to put the moustache to Mona Lisa*». All the youth music consumption is part of a discourse of art such as production (serial) and not of art as an expression, but at the time of the facts, Italians managed to do a beard, mustache and hair Mona Lisa and the market. Suffice to say that «I Like Chopin» of Gazebo, with original editions, compilations and remixes on various labels, has sold twelve million copies throughout the civilized world, also you add many illegal downloads that may not be quantifiable. The Italo disco was an earthquake able to shake the wrists and muddy the blood mixing it with the bile, also to some tycoons of American discographic multinationals.

First and foremost, it must be said that there's not a net watershed, but it's important to make a distinction between «Italo-disco-music» and «Italo-disco-dance». Technically it means little or nothing, but it can be a determining factor to sort the various elements in an arc of precise time, ranging from the second half of the seventies to the eighties and beyond, at least until 1988, the year of the global explosion of house-music, that shifted the axis of the interest of DJ-producers and discographic operators toward different musical coordinates. In spite of this, Italians are rehabilitated soon through a compositional style very particular and readily identifiable that some insiders wanted immediately

to call «Italian Piano House». To understand, let's think of the continental successes of Black Box or FPI Project.

In any case, the definition «Italo-disco-music» describes well the Italian productions of the seventies, while «italo-disco-dance» those of the following decade. There are also some slight differences from the stylistic and representative point of view. We take it for granted that in Italy the tradition of the dance music was linked to the dancing halls, «musicarelli», tarantellas and celebrations in the farmyard or in the town square, and not to the tradition Soul-R&B as it happened in the USA. It's understood that disco-music manufactured on the Italian soil in the 70's had used a typically American format. Conversely, in a second step, Italian style had followed coordinates of certain models matrix Anglo-Saxon and Central European. The elaborate creative of Italian dance-makers however responded to the fees very precise rhythmic pattern soft and enveloping, incisive melodies and fast-setting. Particularly with arrival of the first samplers, sequencers, and electronic keyboards the axis had shifted toward a certain Germanic style, rather than from a path traced by the English New-Romantic, attributable to the musical current that was defined as «British-Invasion», most commonly in the early years of the decade. In the first instance some British formations as Soft Cell by Marc Almond («Tainted Love»), Fiction Factory («Feels Like Heaven»), OMD (with «Enola Gay») Visage by Steve Strange (authors of «Fade To Gray»), secondly the American producer Bobby Orlando gave a great assist to Italo dance of the 80's with its high-energy-funk productions such as Divine with «Shoot Your Shot» and Flirts with «Passion»

Also in Italy, from second half of the 70's, there had been some skillful investigator of sounds, capable of combining electronic music and aesthetic image: the project Krisma, initially Chrisma from the merger of the initial syllables of the names of protagonists, was born from an idea by Maurizio Arcieri who gave life to singular music-concept together with his partner Christina Mo-

ser. The two companions of life proceeded recklessly on a ground of unusual sounds related to a marked electronic of avant-garde with original musical choices, conceding much space to a visual appearance, often excessive, rather than obvious importance for the look and a flashy clothing. In 1978, the tandem gave the prints the first album, «Chinese Restaurant», produced by Vangelis and his brother Nico, and with the single «Lola» collected a discrete European success. In 1979 arrival «Hibernation» always produced by Vangelis, and in 1980 «Cathode Mama» which materialized their turn toward electro-pop, point of reference of Italo dance of the 80's. And it's precisely in this period that Krisma were reached by commercial success with «Many kisses». Krisma were among the forerunners of video-clip, realizing well in advance what will be the enormous power of music on TV for the years to follow.



KRISMA

Another distinctive element of italo disco seemingly insignificant regards the presence of «women» generally used as choristers or as choreographic contour on TV appearances. The old disco mu-

futable statistics are not sufficient to better understand certain situations. We must also consider the resizing or the excessive mediatic support of events, genres, characters and records too often overstated by critics and advisers in various capacities. Everything was done for pure «ideological» membership or mere «generational» identification. Perhaps the arcane mystery is all contained into the word: «commercial» which for decades has scared everybody who have wrote about musical topics.



Another critical element that has always received the reluctance of some critics, probably it stems from the fact that dance music shuns away from almost of all the live performance (with a few rare exceptions), by entrusting its success to the circuit of clubs, where the DJ offers to the public a music mix, creating a sonorous carpet without solution of continuity and certainly coldest than the atmosphere of a concert.

The quality of music should not be however judged from the way people consume it: in a disco-club for dancing or in a theater for a live concert. Usually the pompous and politically incorrect criticism doesn't see almost never a sign of the changing times.

While the Italo disco was left in the ghetto or ignored, in those early eighties, even Vasco Rossi and Zucchero Fornaciari were deleted from Sanremo's Festival and discarded by the scheduling of many radio.

In addition these critics have always considered disco-music, in the broadest sense of the term, not as a true phenomenon enough to be considered like the pop-music, but as processed of series tied to a particular ability of DJs, producers, arrangers and studio musicians, even if this could be only partially true.



Just to name a few, there are personages linked to Italo disco such as Gazebo, Ryan Paris, Carrara, P. Lion, Ago, George Aaron, Savage, Tom Hooker, Albert One, Linda Jo Rizzo, Martinelli, Righeira, Den Harrow whom are still in activity, and are hired in every part of the world for performances at various levels. It happened even with the «Funk», let alone the Italo disco that is a surrogate of Euro-disco, derived from the American disco-funk.

Several times we tried to give a rational explanation why the «Funk» has never found a place of respect in the music world that counts, in the broadest sense of the term and as derivative of the R&B.

To better understand what we are, it seems ever wonder why to many artists, attributable to this genre, it has never been recognized an important place, except for rare exceptions, in the history of the «modern popular music» and a certificate of social phenomenon at the same time.

The same question could be placed in reference to certain respected artists and appreciated producers of Italo-disco-dance who we will know in the pages to follow. Many artisans and protagonists of Italo dance tell us that they remained disoriented and even embarrassed to see their songs in top positions of the charts of many countries such as France, Germany, Spain and the same England (this market has always been difficult for Italians). Their own songs and those of other colleagues were always in a more forward position than sacred monsters like Rolling Stones, Michael Jackson or Madonna. From the story of many protagonists of that time, it's understood that it was a moment really exciting and contagious euphoria even for Italian record market, traditionally relegated to the national perimeter.

Cultured music, serious music, engaged music, rather than frivolous music, ephemeral music, and easy songs are the many faces of a single protean phenomenon. Let's think how many people sell and have sold millions of records, but they are ashamed to approach the adjective «commercial». Everything that is not «commercial», thus suitable to the free movement of products, it's not, nor would have been unthinkable at least in our capitalist system. We were witnesses of epochs, less suspicious, when entire generations of young people were deceived by those who professed, through music, ideas for change, civil and social commitment. These false prophets of change are then disappeared in the Eden of privileges and luxury with the swag. From the 50's

onwards nothing has happened that was not conveyed by the record industry, by skillful producers and crafty promoters.

We also emphasize the presence of many sinister figures or mercenaries that have always made money on the shoulders of the boundless musical empire: nothing happened by chance. Therefore in this chaotic jungle of genres, styles, and subcultures, we don't see untouchable saints and deities: the theory of relativity becomes as timely as ever, if it's applied to the environment of music. Not always, but often, we have witnessed the codification of obvious and the festival of clichés about disco-music, Italo-disco or Euro-disco, especially in the latter years when music dematerialized itself becoming a ghost without soul and body, made of impalpable elements called «files»: MP3 or MP4. Since the «dance cultures» (and Italo-disco nor is part of law) went out from the hidden wine cellars of the suburbs, all phenomena, linked to mass culture, the disco-clubs and the consumption of leisure came to the fore. Between the late seventies and early eighties, the disco music before, and everything that ensued after, it was a paradigm of reference for a lot of artists from other latitudes of music, an inescapable model with which to measure themselves inside music market that had become more demanding, chaotic and undifferentiated. At that time it was enough that various genres came in contact to defile themselves or melt to cold becoming something new. Inside the rock had already happened, thus with the Punk before and with the New-wave after. Into the world of discoclubs, linked to tradition Soul-R&B, with the disco-music before and with the Euro-disco and Italo-dance after the same mechanism was developed in a second time. Certainly, initial freshness and the «underground» component ended up as soon as possible with the dozing expedencies of market laws. Also the rock had done the same in all its connotations. Thus, in particular for the strong impact in merchant terms, but not only, disco-music managed to influence a whole era.

Perhaps, it's no exaggeration to say that for many years even the italo-disco-dance influenced the choice of discotheques, the programming of many private radio stations and the consumption of leisure time, as well as the way to dress and dance of millions young people in Italy, in Europe and in the world. Italo culture imposed many artists, singers, unusual look and innovative DJs carriers of effective techniques for mixing and entertainment.

The boss of the Baby Records, Feddy Naggiar, makes interesting considerations: *«The Italian dance was nothing else that an Italian melody sung in English but produced and recorded with completely different technique, a bit like it was the Munich Sound of Moroder and Bellotte. For us it was a way to go quickly in Europe. It was also designed from the outset for the international market. Nothing was done at case: anything we were producing was conceived and had to hit the market in a certain way. With Gazebo are been in the studio a month and a half to arrange and mix «I like Chopin». And we have sold what we sold throughout Europe. (...) We have been those who opened the market, and this lasted ten or twelve years. We have been lucky because at that moment, in the 1977 and 1978, we had no competition. We had more difficulties in Italy, where because of popular music we had to write lyrics with an intelligible content, but that has not disturbed the way we do abroad».*

It must be said that many of the tracks, become «cult» inside of Italo disco, were designed with different purposes. Here is emblematic words of Pietro Paolo Pelandi (P.Lion) about «Happy Children» his planetary hit: *«The song is born from a specimen funky, then with the help of my producer David Zambezi, who had also worked with Scotch and many others, it has been changed in a version dance very different than original; the lyrics have been written in a night and not were nothing in particular, I spoke about children, money, and our world that in 1984 we wanted to see a little more clean».*

During the television program «The Sound of Spaghetti Dance», also Fred Ventura is anxious to do some clarifications: *«I started to produce individual dance, which were not exactly what I wanted to. In reality, it was very difficult, more than twenty years, impose on older people with a certain amount of experience, which had as a starting point especially the world of dance. They had a culture dance and were all old DJs who had worked in dance clubs with the disco music products of 70's that, merged with my attitude post-new-wave, gave life in some respects to this type of Italo disco a little melancholic, which led me, however, a lot of luck. Although I did not have certain exploits in the charts, my records are released in many countries and I worked more or less worldwide...»*



In 1980 it happened something unusual, it was published a record pivoted on the Caribbean dance rhythm, which included a ballad of love and adventure, while from Japan came the game Pac-Man which conquered the youth and at the same time imposed a new craze; Reagan was elected as US president, John Len-

non fell by the hand of a crazy murderer and Led Zeppelin dissolved the band.

For Italy it was a year full of complications: political problems, rampant corruption, and scandals to everything flattens, terrorism, mafia and mysteries. Italians attended astonished at some of the most painful tragedies of republican history as the slaughters of Ustica and Bologna and Irpinia's earthquake. But it was not only the earth to move: The football's scandal betting gave a jolt to the ancient game of the soccer, so that football players lost their virginity (by then will never be the same), while in Turin it takes place the historic «March of the Forty thousand», where employees, workers and citizens, for the first once, flocked all united in protest against the layoffs announced by Fiat. While a new private television station, Channel 5, was born; Umberto Eco published «The Name of The Rose» and at the San Siro Stadium (in Milan) Bob Marley held an unforgettable concert. Thus, while the world was in turmoil, seemingly out of place a strange song recited: *«a great lounge, twenty-three mestizo daughters dance like crazy, house of pleasures for foreigners ... Maracaibo, sea force 9 ...»*.

The authoress was a certain Luisa Colombo and she seemed to have no care of those bulky events. In truth the song, written in 1975, was not recorded until 1980. The lyrics, about a hypothetical love story between a trafficker of weapons (and sex) and Fidel (Miguel) Castro, was considered too inconvenient by record companies of the time. Among other things, in its interpretation, Lu' Colombo had shifted the focus of the word «Maracaibo» from «A» to «I» of the diphthong. The exact pronunciation would be «Maracàibo and not Maracaìbo». For a few months nothing happens, however with the arrival of following year the radio will begin to play it at full blast. Many DJs had already tested during the parties of St. Sylvester's night, the accomplice the output disco-mix 12 inch, on the other hand the disco-clubs will do the rest, if not more. In a few months, until the summer 1981 and beyond,

«Maracaibo» by Lu' Colombo became the track most danced and required on Italian dance-floors, many European and Latin American countries, and then inserted in the soundtrack of the film «Vacanze di Natale» by Vanzina Brothers. Today «Maracaibo» is an evergreen translated in many languages. In 1983, the same Lu' Colombo won «Il disco per l'estate» (an Italian summer music contest) with «Dance All Nite», where a part of the title was in English, but the lyrics were still strictly performed in Italian. And this is the key to understand some things of whom we'll talk in the following pages.

From 1981 forward, Italo disco will change course, acquiring a new awareness and a greater security: you would have been able to produce dance music, regardless of the style, the forced use of British idiom, and the recruitment of American vocalists.

We are witnessing a sort of a return to the past. As we shall see later the «aboriginal people» of Italo disco (it should be understood as «ab origin») had recourse to the English language to carve out a space in the discotheque. From that moment onwards, apart from the use of English language which will be unavoidable, such as picking to open the main door of worldwide charts, our dance makers were convinced that you could produce in Italy music destined to dance floors with musicians, arrangers and Italian singers, without trips of hope and pilgrimages, wanderers for European and American recording studios. So much so that from some modest and improvised recording studios small pearls of sonic creativity began to emerge, and intended to write the history of Italo dance. The «genius loci» (local genius) was striking again, not thanks to great technical means, media or considerable sums of money, but on basis of the more spontaneous Italian genius.

There are two types of Italo disco: on a side true best sellers that have sold millions copies, such as the previously mentioned Gazebo of «I Like Chopin», representative of more «commercial» component, but this is absolutely not reductive: commercial is

just synonymous with popular; on the other side that which we could define Italo-dance-cult, a small army of names somewhat eccentric, and mostly unknown to the masses, but they are true objects of cult such as Cellophane Brain, Camarro, Digital Game, Mr. Flagio, Charlie, Casco, Mito, Sphinx, Dharma Alexander Robotnik and many more. The DJs of half of Europe and vinyl collectors at various levels would be proud to have records of the names listed above.

**MECCANO**

Of course, few people remember name of Walter Bassani the founder, composer and producer of Meccano. The debut of Walter in music world had happened in the early 80's with the project Klapto and «Mister Game», cult-song which achieved a huge success in Germany, Holland and the Scandinavian countries. With the subsequent tune Meccano who alternated dance tracks sung in both Italian and English, even the awards of American and Japanese charts will arrive. For genetic defect, Italians always look the grass in neighbor's garden because it seems their most high and well cared for.



RYAN PARIS

So also with Italo disco the Italians have cast our gaze beyond the fence, thinking that certain English or German products were better, while groups like the Pet Shop Boys have never denied the inspiring charge and toll that they should pay Italian dance style. On the contrary we have hidden Italo disco for long decades, covering it as the dust under the carpet, while abroad it continued to proliferate for parthenogenesis regenerating itself every sea-

son, subduing adepts and admirers in various ways. So much so that in recent years a genuine «Italo renaissance» has overwhelmed as a river in full dance floors of Northern Europe with theme evenings, hunting for the vinyl most rare, recovery of musical instruments and audio media. Some recording studios have returned to use vintage equipment, analogue mixers, multitrack recorders to reels, valve microphones and old keyboards, in order to obtain a sound more soft, velvety, but full-bodied and natural at the same time.

Pierluigi Giombini, (Gazebo, Ryan Paris, Gary low) true alchemist of Italo disco, in an interview, there was held to make a clarification: *«Behind the production of the 80's there was always a true musician and not only the DJ producer, it's enough to think that did not exist yet computers and samplers, therefore you'd want to know how to write music and to arrange a song, you'd also be able to play very well and be able to program the synths. This is not to say that today anyone can produce a master of quality; indeed, it's always very difficult create something that has a good sound, and that works well, but who says that the hits of the 80's are the Djs productions only, says something truly absurd! At the time I had to record live on the tape also the various parts of synthesizers, the sequencers were just entered on the scene, but I still not getting them. In short, I repeat, you'd have to know how to play and write the arrangement. If then the songs don't plays well, you'd redo everything from scratch and a week of studio was paid a lot of money».*

Also Francesco Puccioni, aka Mike Francis, who died prematurely in 2009 was a musician of value and talent. Born in Florence, when he was 14 years old, after having studied piano and guitar, Mike form his first band with a group of classmates who met at the Institute of American Studies in Rome (from here its natural predisposition for singing in English).

After these youth experiences, Mike Francis began to approach the dance, composing together for Al Festa «Miss Manhattan» for the project Metropole, considered a cult-track for fans of genre disco-funk. A curiosity: to the drafting of lyrics collaborated Enrica Bonaccorti, not new to these operations; same Enrica Bonaccorti, diva TV, also authoress of the words in Domenico Modugno's classic hit, «La lontananza».



MIKE FRANCIS

The first impact with nascent world of the Italian disco-music had given excellent fruit in merchant terms, but had guaranteed to young Mike Francis an agreement with a very small roman label, Best Records, with which he had published the first single. The distribution was reduced and the means were modest, but the musical preparation of the author immediately arises; especially the warm enveloping tone of voice and the soft rhythmic patterns quilted by an elegant touch piano brought the song to be one of the favorite in many clubs and inserted in the airplay of the local radio. Excellent pronunciation, and valid English lyrics, with the artistic support of Peter and Paul Micioni.

The following year, we are in 1982, Mike realizes his first album, of whom «Survivor» is an unparalleled success, so as to achieve the uptown of charts in almost entire Euro Zone. It's important report the collaboration and the duet with Amii Stewart, for which composes «Friends». Worthy of note also the subsequent Spanish version of «Survivor» interpreted always in duet with Belen Thomas. The other gem of its repertoire is certainly «Together», that with «Survivor», remains the highest peak in the context of its productions aimed at clubs. Mike Francis was the connecting link between italo disco first manner, when Italians were trying to invent a «genre» still not well defined, and the American disco-music with soul-jazz veins. Of course, musical caliber and the thickness of the artistic character led him to become a sophisticated entertainer, author, performer and songwriter in the traditional sense, rather than a qualified dance-maker.

His interest in composing soundtracks and not only that, but especially the idea of having to/want to sing in Italian collaborating with important lyricists like Mogol and Pasquale Panella, pushed him definitively toward hunting territories and sonic exploration which they have nothing to do with dance music. There is an artist who should not be completely forgotten. Thanks to his innate ability to move lightly on the scene, he was able to give Italo disco a very theatrical caliber, especially in live performance. The career of Miko Mission began at a young age, performing as a singer in a comedy represented by Alessandria, «Gelindo», at age seven. At age fourteen, Miko formed his first band I Passi Per La Musica, later renamed Oscars. The group participated in several singing competitions including Flip for San Remo held in Venice-Lido. Miko won the competition and went on to sign a contract with Ariston Records in 1964. Adopting the stage name Don Miko, he debuted with «Gente... che ragazza» and later «Non hai più niente per me», which became a summer hit. In 1965 he entered the Sanremo Music Festival with the song «E poi verrà l'Autunno», in couple with Timi Yuro, failing to access the final. In 70s

he recorded some songs with the name Pier Bozzetti, achieving good critical reviews. In 1975 he came back to Sanremo Festival, credited as Miko, with the song "Signora Mia". Bozzetti reached the peak of his popularity during the 1980s under the stage name Miko Mission with Italo disco hits like «How Old Are You?».



MIKO MISSION

THE BLANK GENERATION AND THE CREATIVE VOID

Italo Disco's culture belongs to that generation too young to have been able to raise the barricades of the 60's. These young people were born with the «Zecchino d'Oro», but grew while the Italian ballad singers flowed back by regressing toward a rather chewy rigmarole of repetitive and nauseating laps to C major, arranged on hermetic and delirious lyrics. This youth was forced to grow up in a hurry to ensure a better future than of their fathers, while the policy of ideologies flowed into violence and terrorism, and Sanremo's Festival was losing every prerogative to be the only ambassador of Italy singing in the world.

Some representatives of this generation without ideologies had tried even to imitate some American rockers, but for the most part without success. On the contrary many of these guys dived into the regenerating maw of disco music. Thus while they inhaled, breathed and absorbed all poisonous fumes of the «Saturday Night Fever», are been immunized by becoming immortal and impenetrable to heavy doses of venom launched by the old revolutionaries of the 68 on anyone who dared say and spread the disco-music philosophy.

Exalted even the advent of private radio stations and the birth of hundreds of dance-clubs, many guys, born between the end of the 50's and early of the 60's, preferred more the job of DJ than the craft of rocker. They opted for dance productions, rather than to attempt to climb to Sanremo's Festival. As well as many people today try the artistic path of Hip-Hop, pushed by the favorable current of the Web, which facilitates contacts and immediate relationships.

Roberto Turatti confessed: «*Virtually, at those times, I don't climbed ever to a disco, I don't liked disco music I was a rocker! The discotheques? But please! One day a friend have told me: but are you never come at the disco? But, no! I will never come in those places! In other words, an evening I was dragged into a club, I*

derivation R&B. Also in Italy, during the summer 1977, «Jammin'» by Bob Marley and The Wailers was one of the tracks more danced. Wanting to paraphrase Oscar Wilde, we could say that disco-funk and reggae were divided by the barrier not of a language but of a common origin. In particular, the rhythmic pattern greatly differed: the reggae in upbeat, disco-funk in beat. In general the Anglo-Jamaicans lyrics were engorged of mystical and political-religious content, while those of the Afro-Americans artists contained mere invocations to the dance or the fun. In the essence and in the meaning this Jamaican style represented the «dance» in its most immediate and physical tribalism. Moreover Reggae had generated another genre called Ska, as a local version of the North-American rhythm & blues. From 1976 onwards the rock imploded in Europe, particularly in England. The punk made his fleeting appearance while a fracture line was drawn between the previous world (of the music) and the new youth universe based on a total contestation. They were separated, inexorably and unconditionally: from a part the rock music to the privileges and the ideological weakness, from other part the rebel music of the rudeness self-destructive.

To tell the truth the Punk was one of the many subgenres of rock, based on a violent approach, rough and direct, but also a short phenomenon of social custom that has marked in deep several forms of artistic expression; a vehicle for the promotion for social and political instances, sometimes too extremist and certainly utopian; a form of individual rebellion and self-destructive, through which exorcise some frustrations, as well as depending on the cases, a strict style of life, a way to entertain or become someone and for some years, a precious jewel for the benefit of astute producers and record companies.

Punk burst onto the scene, brandishing weapons of the revolt through contained essentially aesthetic: snazzy clothes, hairstyles impossible, and brooches from nurses, spitting out on the crowd and utilizing sado-masochistic instruments, and typical symbols

of unrestricted violence. The music, and perhaps the rock in its true essence, remained by far from the other party: many groups are burned in the small space of a single, only one album to the maximum. Most of members of the Punk movement were not able to play properly an instrument, they sang badly and performed worse. At the bottom the punk was only so much noise. Despite anger and energy, the Punk had nothing to do with inventiveness and creativity. Everything that came out from the Punk has been the New-wave that managed to rise to the role of true musical genre, distancing himself from previous style in the short span of a few seasons.

New-wave was not just the calm after the storm, but a storm after a hurricane of short intensity and duration. Very quickly new-wave would have shown its romantic and «danceable» appearance, while the physicality and the aesthetic aspect soon began to dominate on the more closely artistic and musical component. Throngs of adolescents, fake players of keyboard and interpreters with androgynous vocalism began to spell into four quarters their sentimental suffering, making the triumphal entry in discotheques all over the world, at the same time American disco music had regenerated itself in the crossover-funk, while Euro-disco had ceded the scepter of command to the Italian dance music.

In fact Italians were able to grasp the ball to the leap, exceeding and wandering in forced overproduction. On Italian ground, where the heroic deeds of commanders and mercenaries were consumed, where impregnable vestiges were hoisted, where, over the centuries, the art has reached its maximum expression, the art of getting had always been a virtue, especially that Italian ability to make a virtue of necessity. Would we ever been able to avoid this cheerful and very tantalizing mixture of electronic, rhythm, and melody to jack swift, called Italo-disco-music?

Many detractors and critics have defined this dance style, and perhaps wrongly, «spaghetti dance», especially when the phenomenon took uncontrollable and unruly dimensions. In our sunny

peninsula, surrounded by sea and by the mysteries, as well as homeland of saints, poets and navigators, filmmakers, ballad singers and musicians, clever lobbyists and funny guys. In Italy we have always had shrewd entrepreneurs with remade teeth, shirt unbuttoned till navel with chest hair in evidence and a golden ring to pinkie finger mafia style. From the first rumblings many people had understood that the disco phenomenon could have been Italianized, monetized and recessed, except then be ashamed or disregard their work. Paul Mazzolini (Gazebo) says: *«Many people have lived to smear this phenomenon, but I know some famed musicians and arrangers, who have at least produced just a record of this genre tend to feel ashamed about a bit, even if a good part of their royalties come from those songs».*



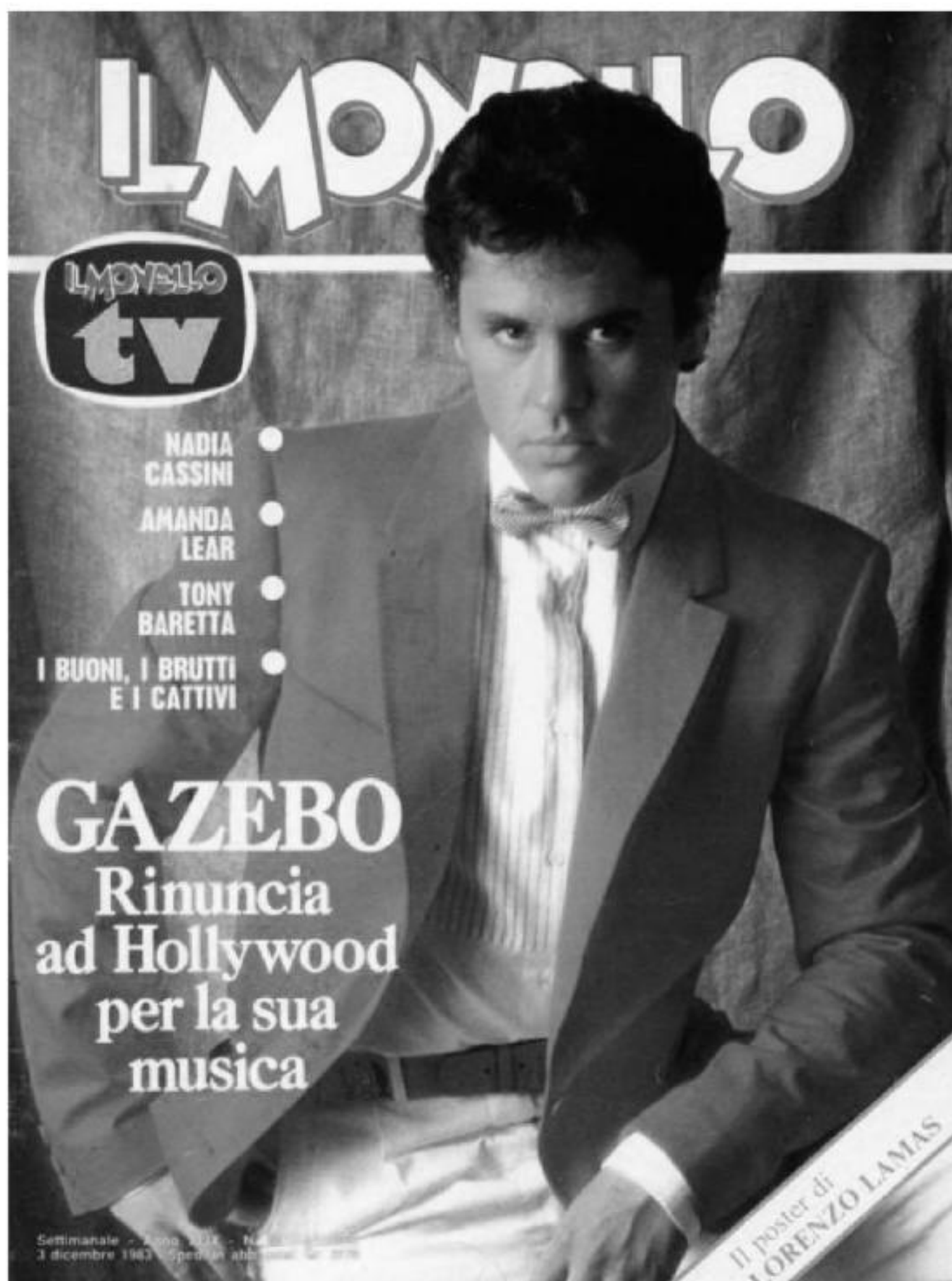
GAZEBO

Thus, in the end of the 70's, while the travel of disco-music made in the USA had become unstoppable, some people began to ask by where was jumped out this new sound which had taken easy

they were constituted by musicians in full rule and with «the badge on their chest».

Unlike on the slope Euro-Italo-Disco, in many circumstances, artists were constructed «in vitro» or if you prefer in an aseptic laboratory. Sometimes the image was more important than the content. In many cases the frontman was just a stuntman and not the one who sang. At the bottom, Italo disco producers did amuse Europe and the world of disco-clubs with a sonic «concept» that we could define «otherwise funk».





HOW AND WHEN THE DISCO MUSIC ARRIVES IN ITALY

Like all western countries, dominated by capitalism and consumerism, Italy was quite sensitive to the phenomenon «disco», by funneling most of the products made in the USA toward the dance-floors. In order to be good allies of the USA, Italians decided to place on «native soil», in addition to the military bases also musical bases that were linked to a sort of «Atlantic Pact» of fun. Apart from England, where everything was simpler for obvious reasons of linguistic-cultural affinity, the axis of the American disco-music found fertile ground first in Germany and later in Italy and France. Well as soon as certain distillates of Italian «disco-thought» began to be accepted beyond the Pillars of Hercules. For example as you could ever forget «1,2,3,4 Gimme Some More» by D.D.Sound, project behind which were hiding La Bionda Brothers, or «Baby I Love You» by Easy Going, short but intense phenomenon calved from prolific mind of Claudio Simonetti already proponent of Goblin.



CLAUDIO SIMONETTI

But perhaps it would be interesting to proceed gradually. If it's true that the disco-clubs of the 70's have been phantasmagoric heirs of the whisky-a-go-go of the 60's, compared to those first

easy listening. Every country has had their favorite stars and assorted types of dance-clubbers, however some names (for example Donna Summer, Bee Gees, Boney M, Barry White, Grace Jones and Roberta Kelly) could count on an international notoriety. In Italy the first signs occurred around 1973 with the surprise hits of Stevie Wonder, Timmy Thomas, Deodato, Temptations and Chi-Lites. Later it was the turn of Barry White, Love Unlimited, Ike & Tina Turner. The music industry found in clubs a new and effective promotional channel as an alternative to worn-out TV programs, a fatal funnel for which thin neck passed few and not always deserving «singers of human suffering». Generally, the public TV was using always the same rigid and slicked artists from the great musical circus of the 60s, and so on.

In 1975, there was talk of disco music in the trade press, thanks to the success of characters hitherto completely unknown as Carl Douglas, George McCrae, Hues Corporation, Carol Douglas, Van McCoy, KC & The Sunshine Band. Then they began to assert the dive: the first was Gloria Gaynor and Donna Summer, but especially the latter, enveloped in an aura of legend (and according to critics) was produced in vitro by Giorgio Moroder, skilled Italian manufacturer moved in Monaco of Bavaria. Many ignored the artistic figure of Donna Summer, considering just a sex symbol unable to overload crowds of spectators with its lewd movements.

In 1976 we report among the best sellers in Italy Barry White, Donna Summer, Gloria Gaynor, Roberta Kelly, Silver Convention, Ritchie Family, Esther Phillips, Van McCoy and Deodato. Already the following year brought major changes: Stevie Wonder, Donna Summer, Roberta Kelly, Ritchie Family were joined by an array of new warriors of the dance-floor like Cerrone, Boney M, Giorgio (Moroder, producer just mentioned), Amanda Lear, Grace Jones, DD Sound, Santa Esmeralda, Belle Epoque, Salsoul Orchestra and so on. Then 1978 was the year of Bee Gees, who with songs taken from the soundtrack of film «Saturday Night Fever» became the absolute protagonists of disco music on a global level. A little

later other players strongly emerged: Sheila & B. Devotion, Asha Puthli, Andrea True Connection, Baciotti, Bionic Boogie, Lipstique and Taste of Honey.



LUTHER VANDROSS

An interesting feature of the disco music was that, within this genre the traditional submission (pop-rock) of the European continent to the British and the US productions was overcome by packaging products in fast-setting. Germans, French and Italians (think of the planetary success of La Bionda Brothers) proved equally, if not more skilled of Americans or British. On Italian side, La Bionda Brothers came to the forefront with the project D.D. Sound, while some good producers as Celso Valli and Mauro Malavasi went beyond the multitude of productions by the bagful of that period, just remember the hits of Change, Peter Jacques Band and Macho. Musician and producer of the most active of Italian disco scene (and beyond), in the late 70s and early 80s, for a long time Mauro Malavasi was synonymous with success and for many DJs his name meant that it could buy records sea-

led. Having a back-ground related to classical studies, initially Mauro had the bright idea to try a jazz band, but in 1978 under the thrust from the friend Marzio, aka Macho, he decided to produce an old song of the Spencer Davis Group «I'm a man», processing it in dance version, that song entered of law in disco history, especially for its unusual sonority. With Jacques Fred Petrus he fund the label Goody Music, which for many years gave the prints successful groups and artists as Peter Jacques Band, B.B&Q Band, Change (with Luther Vandross as vocalist), Hypnotic Tango, Cube, Revanche, Rudy, and many others. Italy was immediately willing to accept even all those artists that from rock they rushed into the maw of the disco music: Rod Stewart with «Da Ya Think I'm Sexy», The Rolling Stones with «Miss You» and «Emotional Rescue», Kiss with «I Was Made For Living You» and the Knack with «My Sharona».



TAFKY & TRACY SPENCER

That the disco had very little to offer on a cultural level it's a foregone conclusion, it confirms, in fact, the same volubility of fans of

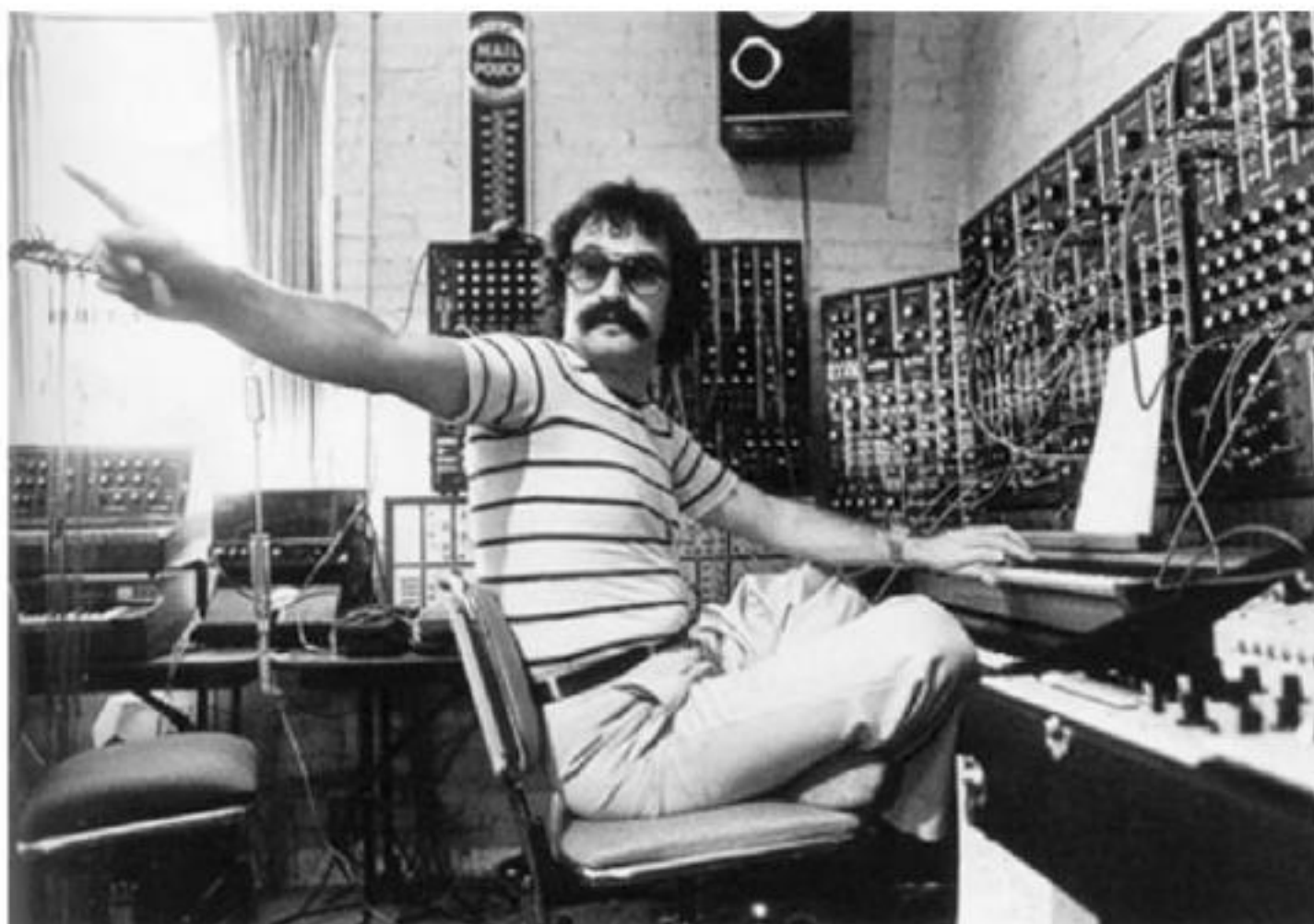
the genre, ready to move their preferences from an artist to another in a few months, sometimes weeks, just because what was offered them was only a epidermal sensation. On the other hand the general public was what it was looking for, asking occasions of evasion only, without pretending by music the messages or the spiritual elevation, to maximum the aesthetic and perishable pleasure that only true lovers know to draw from the sublime art of collective dance.

So the sale was very fast and the songs did not last long as the money won at slot-machines. Even if the disco phenomenon had the task to create a most vast consumption of music (particularly in a country like Italy where the record industry was always in a terrible and serious recessive crisis), the disco-music not succeeded in impressing strong cultural connotations and educational between the young consumers of danceable vinyl. Anyhow as we already explained, it was not in prerogatives of the producers of dance music. The disco-thought remained, but deliberately, always at the skin level, by expressing especially an outward behavior related to the way of dressing or posturing.

Let's think about the «travoltian» archetype: Tony Manero protagonist of the «Fever» who buys a new shirt to show off in nightclub.

1,2,3,4 GIME SOME MORE: THE TIGER AND THE BANANA

The greatest Italian dance-maker for excellence, but only for birth, responds to the name of Giorgio Moroder, artist of intercontinental carats and fame. However we must be fiscal in the cataloging, then we say that, despite being Italian, Giorgio can to be considered a Germanic dance producer, linked to that particular subgenre of disco music of the 70's called Munich-Sound referable in Monaco of Bavaria, his adoptive homeland, fertile musical ground, and undisputed capital of Euro-disco.



GIORGIO MORODER

In truth, Giorgio Moroder may not be minimally considered an exponent of Italo disco, it would be unfair and simplistic. Italian disco music has been and continues to be a cult phenomenon, albeit wide success, but Giorgio is an ecumenical character, apart from his parentheses dance, he enters in law into the Olympus of universal producers, like Quincy Jones or Nile Rodgers. His soundtracks are cybernetic symphonies. If Mozart had been one of his

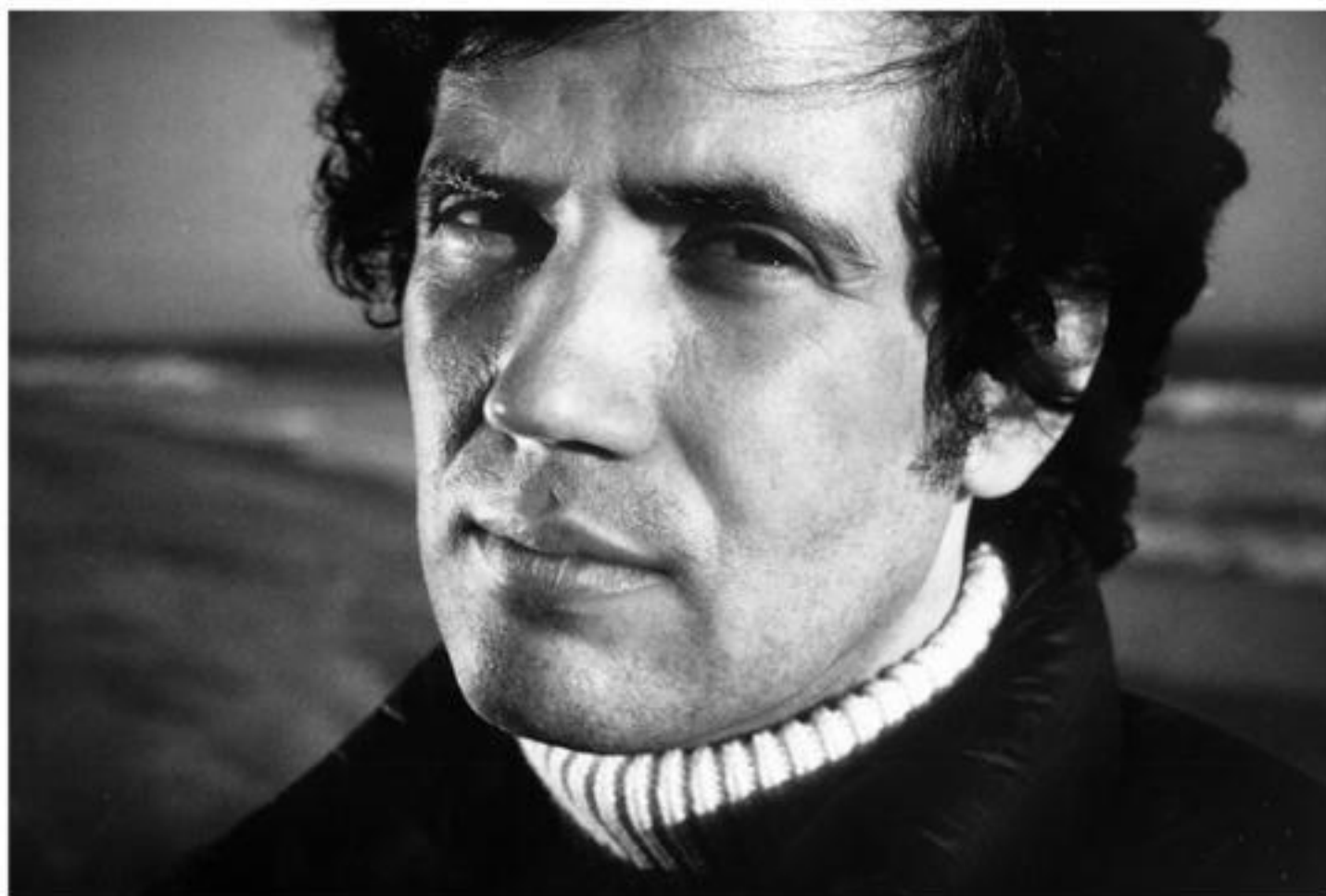
contemporary, he would probably have done the same, indeed Mozart would have asked him for a collaboration, despite the sworn enemies of disco-music have always considered him a visionary, fasting pentagram and inventor of soft and disposable porn-disco-star. The activity of Moroder linked to disco-music, has constituted an ideal bridge between the USA and the West Germany, last bastion before the «iron curtain», still occupied (we say silently manned) by American troops and underpinned by NATO bases. Thanks also to the «cold war», therefore, if the genius of Moroder's lamp had the opportunity to emerge, placing himself at the service of dance music.



DONNA SUMMER & GIORGIO MORODER

The massive presence of American black people, especially military and officials, had encouraged a rapid spread of disco music of soul-funk matrix, first in Germany where, as a result, it was spread rapidly in every corner of Europe. All of the artistic references were Americans and Germans: his main jewel, Donna Summer, collaborators, vocalists and musicians in various capacities. There was an American producer, «deus-ex-machina» (ma-

ster father) of Casablanca, Neil Bogart who launched on a planetary level Donna Summer and all products branded «Giorgio». Without fear of contradiction we can say that between Giorgio Moroder and Italo disco there's not even a report of distant relationship. To those who have continued to persevere in this mistake, we recommend «to install the spikes on some other turntables». Italo Disco's detractors, but of dance music in general, specifically attribute to him a certain «responsibility» linked to the fact that he has imposed as typical compositional model the use of electronic synth, keyboards, moog and vocoder, marching rhythms in the goose-step performed with Teutonic frown and melodic lines just hinted, but hypnotic and obsessive, by becoming a sort of yardstick to all Italian producers who, albeit more modestly, they followed his style and imitated certain Munich's mannerisms, such as the indiscriminate use of long instrumental suites.



LUCIO BATTISTI

The Italian disco music scene was extremely poor. At the beginning Italy was a country with a simple attitude to import sound

destined for dance floors and, as it happened to the pop/rock music. The time spent copious before someone arrived to elaborate some creations adapted to international music market. In mostly singers, who made Italian dance music, they produced initially catchy songs and rhythmic or soft songs which, although being played at the disco, they were not considered really disco music tracks. Italian singers or musicians sinned of provincialism and they went crazy at the first sign of a positive response of the public, while their aspirations prematurely became cosmopolitan. The international recording market was traveling on other rails, thus after vain and unsuccessful attempts, many Italian composers decided to reshape the raw material, and almost unconsciously begins to transform the ugly duckling into magnificent swan. But before coming to that product that we decided to call Italo disco, many sleepless nights passed without a glimmer of light was visible at the end of the tunnel.

Lucio Battisti's case was symptomatic although he embodied the figure of the artist musically more «revolutionary and innovative» and with more prerogatives to go beyond the «Pillars of Hercules». In any case, «Images», the album containing his greatest hits revisited in English for the foreign market, was received in the most total indifference. The exit was accompanied by a significant advertising battage, and characterized with a long stay of Lucio in the USA in order to grasp the typical mood of that place and to improve English pronunciation.

In 1977, even Adriano Celentano, sniffing the favorable wind, played an international card making an entire album sung in English, which contained six tracks aimed at the dance where Celentano mimicked the American disco-music. From the sonic point of view the album was conceived well, but Adriano's awful pronunciation and his vaguely parodistic attitude didn't allow the album to overcome the curtain of distrust on foreign market. Here are the titles: «When Love», «Yes, I Do», «Wartime Melodies», «Somebody Save Me», «You Can Be Happy», «Kiss Me

Goodbye». Just to be the usual «celentanata» such as the title, very trite and didactic, stemmed from the word «discotheque», crippled and placed almost on the contrary as an anagram. Aside from a few timid response in France, «Tecadisk» went unnoticed in Italy and, of course it's not counted among the most representative pages of Celentano's long discography.



ADRIANO CELENTANO

The Italian producers didn't have the mentality to create real dance music products or pop-rock songs that really had an international taste. In contrast to the few daredevils who wrestled with professionalism and foresight, the results were not long in coming. But before that the Italian market found valid rope to rappel into the lucrative «St. Patrick's well» of disco music, many seasons passed, through frustrations and publications of modest commercial impact.

From the beginning against the disco music there was - as already explained - a sort of «political-cultural» prevention and an obvious snobbishly attitude, especially in certain environments of the radical left. Roberto D'Agostino (today acclaimed for the gossip of Dagospia, but in the past renowned image maker, music

critic and attentive observer of youth ferments) tells which at end of the 70's, in Rome, those who frequented the disco-clubs, they were branded as fascist. At the bottom, same Battisti was accused to be fascist, you want to for his sympathies toward American market; you want to for his limited political commitment, and not very interested in the events of a certain highbrow left. One of the first builders of italo disco together with Mauro Malavasi, Jacques Fred Petrus brings with his words a further clarification about what we have just said: *«At the beginning the disco-music has been snubbed by all: by critics, from record companies who were skeptical and the young people who preferred the genre pop-rock. Then it became important because the disco clubs, and as a result, the private radio stations have been a good advertising vehicle and an effective vector of penetration. Young people went to dance and hear for hours and hours this type of music. Since we knew the market and the most effective means of promotion, when in Milan the first private radio was born, we just rested, sponsoring programs of disco music. Other broadcasters are born inspired by existing ones... so much so that entire country was covered and flooded by programs of disco music, so the public has begun to know it and appreciate it. A kind of pure fun like the disco music found a suitable medium, because young people show interest less and less to the problems of society. The lyrics of songwriters and rock groups talking about things that did not interest anyone, anymore. When young people listen to a song or goes to a concert, they want to have fun and to forget everyday problems».*

This fragment is part of an interview with monthly New Sound, toward the end of the 70's and it was a testimony in real time of the ostracism suffered by dance music in Italy. Tough attitude also perpetrated the damage of the Italo dance of the years that followed, despite, even inside, the market had already responded positively to the call of some phenomena, expressing economic data of all respect. Italo disco is not the banal fairy-tale that tell

certain improvised bloggers or some fearless DJs in their fifties, who at that time never played it, indeed they abhorred this kind of music, but today they leave carry pleasantly from the flow/reflux of its current only to ride a return wave. There's not an underground of Italo disco, there's nothing of underground, conceptual or alternative: everything has been developed in the light of sun, except for some loose cannon of Italo-wave, as Gaz Nevada, accidentally finished on dance-floor by becoming object of worship for collectors of vinyl of the 80's. There are no disco-clubs or DJs that can boast a birthright or an umbilical link with italo disco, perhaps the Altro Mondo Studio of Rimini, which is the image of Italo disco, how the Odyssey 2001 of New York is the image of American disco music, but for reasons of movie set only. A Rimini in 1983 was filmed «Jocks» which possessed all the characteristics to be a sort of celebration of the clubbing world during the Italo-disco era. The movie was directed by Riccardo Sesani and starring Russell Russell in the title role opposite Tom Hooker. Russell had already been part of Easy Going as a solo singer from their third LP «Casanova». The soundtrack of «Jocks» included a handful of typical songs of period that were related mainly to artists who were part of Full Time team.

After having evacuated the race field by some projecting load, we begin to dispel the myth of those artists, analyzed in the following pages, who try to attribute to themselves a primogeniture of Italo disco. The first Italian songwriter, who tried to get dancing in national discoclubs and those across the world using the English idiom, was Alberto Anelli. He got a good result at the first shot. Especially he had what we can prosaically define electrocution not to Damascus Road but in Las Vegas Street. Strong of a long, even if modest career as a melodic singer behind and with many singles published between the sixties and seventies, also like author of countless songs on behalf of third parties as «L'importante è finire» by Mina, Alberto Anelli had a decent voice, good musical ideas and the «physique du role» to become a sort

of Elvis the Pelvis or a local Johnny Hallyday, but probably in those years sector italo-Presley was already very inflated. After several releases with modest results in terms of sales, he had great intuition: to sing in English using a nickname easy to remember, probably inspired by planet-wide success of the television series «Sandokan» which, at that time, depopulated on the small screen. For instance, new positioning on the market gave him quickly enrollment to the annals of music chronicles and history of music charts with the roaring and fierce pseudonym of El Tigre.



Launched in 1975 by «Alto Gradimento», historic radio-show of Arbore and Boncompagni, «Baby» was characterised as a calibrated example of easy-pop-funk with a strongly melodic plant. The tune was intoned with voice like Johnny-Elvis-Hallyday-Presley, even physically Anelli was a cross between the two. The song got

red to continue its activities as an author and organizer of competitions for young talents.



In the same period another character, Paolo Zavallone AKA El Passador, hovered to the charts, by exploding the young ether of private Italian radio he dragged swarms of dancers on the dance-floor, first with «Non Stop», main theme of the eponymous TV show, and then with «Amada Mia, Amore Mio». El Pasador sang with stentorian voice in a sort of «spanglish», through the bellows and onomatopoeic sounds, in particular in «Non Stop», while in «Amada Mia, Amore Mio» he improvised the Spanish model like «Pedro, me cala la palpebra». The musical rhythm pseudo-Caribbean and melodic Latin plant were very appealing, so as to echo the first American productions of the Salsoul Records, of course, with an Italian taste and without sought orchestrations. Apart from these two tunes, all other productions of El Passador were unsuccessful.

Indeed, at least until 1976, disco music produced in Italy was mostly designed for internal market. In rare cases such as Armando Trovajoli with «Sesso Matto» a main theme of the soundtrack of the movie with the same name and directed by Dino Risi. This theme was reissued in the USA as a single 12 inch by the West Records, becoming a cult track among the DJs of the «Big Apple».

However something starts to emerge, progressively more targeted to European consumers. In Milan at the recording studios Variable and Double, it began to be made tracks more suitable to the international market such as «Gombo» by Firebal in 1977, or even in 1978 «Dies Irae» by Venus Band with Patrick Barbero production. Barbero knew how to anticipate some interest in the spatial sound and electronic music typical of a certain component of Italian disco for years to come.

Simultaneously, many singers who in the past they were dedicated to other genres, in that period they changed route: the most striking example was that of Alan Sorrenti, who abandoned torments of rock progressive and while maintaining the Italian idiom, in 1977 he distilled new genre for the night people with «Figli delle stelle» and «Donna Luna». Previously Marcella Bella had won the virtual trophy of first disco song sung in Italian with «Nessuno mai» in 1974. Revived in an enthralling English version, in 1976 «Rumore» by Raffaella Carrà breaks through the wall of distrust of British Charts, similarly «A far l'amore comincia tu» always of Raffaella Carrà and «Rumore» translated in English as «Do It, Do It Again»; «Sun I Love You» of Claudia Cardinali in 1977 or «Eva Eva Eva» of the trio Donna Donna Donna, produced by Shel Shapiro still in 1977; «Tu» in 1978 and «Gloria» by Umberto Tozzi, 1979, the latter sung in English, in 1982, by Laura Branigan, who made it a catchphrase for the HI-NRG disco lovers. There was also the clumsy attempt to redo the look to some singer from the various singing events of RAI as «Canzonissima». The case of Marisa Sacchetto is very paradigmatic. She tried the international card supported by productions of Giuseppe (Beppe). In the same period Cantarelli wrote and arranged songs for Mina. Not by chance, the launch into universe of dance for Marisa Sacchetto it happened through PDU Records the personal label of «Tigress from Cremona». Just for information we report the titles of her songs: «Golden Sunset», «What now my Love» and «Hunting for my heart». Marisa Sacchetto's reference style was the

Spanish disco-music Bacarà style, very low cost and modeled on some American stereotypes.

To be honest, even about Alan Sorrenti who became, perhaps in spite of himself, an icon of disco music sung in Italian, it would be necessary to clarify, especially because the album «Figli delle stelle» should be considered the record more American ever made by an Italian, at least until that moment. Not everyone knows that album was recorded between New York and Los Angeles. Alan Sorrenti came from two successful seasons within a genre more «engaged», linked to the world of engaging songwriters and the progressive rock. Many meteors of that generation will soon disappear. Only this quirky songwriter, half Neapolitan and half English, will be able to survive the musical trend of the moment, becoming in its way a sort of icon of Italian disco music. He had found his personal West Coast between Amalfi and Positano, together with an emigrated Texan, Shawn Phillips. All the devotees the imported records knew that Alan Sorrenti had learned how to memory the lesson of a Californian singer, Tim Buckley. Others did not accept his vocal experiments, those tones forced and fencing, perhaps even out of tune. Alan Sorrenti was a character to discover. Indeed some seasons later he will be «on the top», and all those who had criticized him, they had to swallow every word.

EMI offered him an interesting agreement, thus «Aria» was born; the year after «Come un vecchio incensiere all'alba di un villaggio deserto», while Alan Sorrenti began to work with British prestigious musicians, in order to create a better international image and reputation. After a sabbatical year, or pause for reflection, feeling strong and secure of a record company ready to invest on him, he decided to go in United States to provide what should be the follow-up of «Aria» in which there was nothing to dance, at least in original intentions.

The fate wished that the ethereal and whispering Alan Sorrenti found in the studio a handful of session-men and producers who

at the beginning, and this change with the shameless opening disco music had already been widely object of controversies and criticisms among fans. Second because despite concern of Robert Stigwood (Bee Gees), and despite the product packaged in America with all necessary ingredients for success, Alan was still trying to achieve his international stature, for now only potential (not enough a first place in France). Third, because if he had become a big also abroad, Alan would have done it with those musical elements typical of disco, where anonymity prevailed on the personages and the organizational structures were a thousand times more important than the artist, where everything was so bonded to a sort of big roulette: the croupier, while some artists were playing, often had been the captains of record industry and singers were just numbers.

The sixth LP of singer was a very good product intended at the discotheques, not only in line with general trends of the moment, but also in particular with those derived from the lesson of Bee Gees, who seemed to be really behind the angle: sound more agile and imaginative, abundant of choirs, in agreement with a long taste of dance that was no longer the mechanical repetition of same gestures, but a set of movements more airy.

To be exact, this album was the answer to Euro-disco sound of Moroder, Cerrone, Kraftwerk and Rockets. Sorrenti was far from Euro-disco, in spite of its origin. His album was all American, divided between the two coasts, eastern and western, and halfway between two capitals of international music, New York and Los Angeles. The influence of these cities was so crucial in the work of Alan, so much so that the album was titled «LA & NY», initials that were precisely for city of angels and city of skyscrapers, while the two sides were strictly separated by two different experiences. In both sides there had been only American instrumentalists, joined by the voice of the proprietor of the album, more than ever oriented «falsetto» a method of voice production used by male singers, especially in the disco-tracks to sing notes higher

than their normal range. Also the various producers who had alternated the direction of the album, and even the authors of many parts were all Americans. Known names within the sound recording studios and industry of disco music, including elements of Chic in Newyorker portion of the album.

The first recorded side was linked to «Los Angeles». The music beds were entirely made to Dawnbreaker Studio of San Fernando and the voices to Garden Rake, always with Jay Graydon's production, which had also played guitars and synthesizers. Among other instrumentalists there was Mike Porcaro, third brother of the two at that time held bench in the charts with «Hold the line»; also there was a wide section of horns and arches in three of the four titles, among which stood out in opening the single «Tu sei l'unica donna per me», a song catchy and tasty even if lacking of a phrasing winning music as «Figli delle stelle». The other two songs in Italian were «Per sempre tu» and «Provaci». (For international versions of the LP they will be translated in English). In the lyrics, functional to the metric of the language of music, there was really nothing to discover. The main theme was love: «*Give me your love /not begging / tell me that you need me ...*»; Or: «*it's so sweet I love / together with you on the sand / in this night of stars / all it seems to me magic ...*»; and again: «*Life is like a game / for each there is a chance / I love always arrives on time and tonight is my night*». In English lyrics the applicants phrases are even shorter, the usual invitations-slogan to dance or to love: «*look out*», «*dance dance dance, take and chance*», «*love fever, fever, fever, fever*», and so forth.

These, just mentioned, were the songs of B side, the portion conceived in New York. The other side included, as we said, a single track English, «Dancing in my heart» an example of disco music above average for its freshness. On Newyorker side, the second part was all English, produced by Lance Quinn and Brad Baker, and written by Marty Celay, T. J. Bernfield, J. Gregory and other names linked to Bernie Edwards and Nile Rodgers productions.

The Power Station studio was becoming a flag of the new disco style, and in the same New York there also was Media sound, in Philadelphia the (old) Sigma Sound, and of course in Miami, Florida, the Criteria.

Among the musicians who formed the sound smooth and unmistakable of this new school, the percussionist Sammy Figueroa, the trombonist Barry Rogers, the director of the arches, the «concert master» Gene Orloff, and, of course, the voice of Diva Gray, one of the Chic, also appeared in album «C'est chic» with «Le Freak». Other two names were certainly not new as a rhythm section: bassist Will Lee and drummer Richard Crooks. Thus, while the side of L.A. was still closely linked to «Figli delle stelle», the part of N.Y. was already projected toward a picture of Alan perfectly inserted in the atmosphere of disco music in Bay Ridge, where John Travolta drove his ragtag team of first followers and where to hear Nik Cohn, author of the subject of «Saturday Night Fever», who said: «*The disco music was the real music of the people*». Both «Look out» and «Take a chance» would have been able to emerge from an album of Chic (the first) and Bee Gees (the second), without absolutely deface, and concluding «Love fever» that it would seem just a little bit deviated from the typical standards of the time.

The building was therefore built brick by brick to accommodate millions of fans; no more than the tens of thousands as it was within Italian restricted perimeter. Now it was necessary to see if numbers of Alan, in the great lottery of disco music, would be released on the wheel of LA or NY. So it came to pass, but in many of us there was much regret because Sorrenti does not harbor the international limelight, practically nothing of Italian, nothing that belonged to our artistic production and to our culture.

After a stormy start, there will be many Italian singers who will try to ingratiate favors of frequenters of the dance-floors: Donatella Rettore with «Splendido Splendente», Ivano Fossati with «La mia banda suona il Rock», Pino D'angio with «Ma quale idea»,

depicting two men in full style gay macho men, that project winked the eye to masses dressed with leather who frequented the American gay disco-clubs or northern European of the time, perhaps only for «captatio benevolentiae» (get sympathy): among the first to advocate and support the disco music, the homosexuals played a decisive role in the success of many tunes intended for the dance-floor.



EASY GOING

The resourcefulness of Mauro Malavasi and his partner Giovan Battista Marini was echoed the unstoppable activity of Banana Records that was born by will of the record producer Giancarlo Meo and the musician Claudio Simonetti who had already given some decisive attack to market. With training from classical musician and a present linked to the rock world as a component of the Goblin (just to mention the many soundtracks written for Dario Argento's films: over all «Profondo Rosso», Deep Red), Claudio wanted to compete with new sonic substance, called disco-music. The two musicians had thought to stake everything on

provocation, starting from the name of the first product. Easy Going took their mark on loan from a known Roman disco club popular among the gay of capital. Also the components of group were recruited in the clubs, they were Paolo Micioni (Paul), resident DJ, and two sizable dancers, Francisco and Octavio. In making the cover art of their first disc, the photographer Arpad Kertesz had trodden further hand, choosing the image of the mosaic which adorned the entrance of the Banana's offices: two statuesque nudes gladiatorial rolled up a in a sort of Greek Roman wrestling. «Baby I Love You» was an immediate success, following those who were the canons of disco music during the Seventies, based on horns, percussion, bass, a rudimentary vocorder and an ironic closing: the bellowing of a cow that many exchanged for an orgasmic cry.

The race continues and with the production of Vivien Vee attempt the great leap, also managing to bypass the difficult wall of American market. Made with the same musical ingredients used for Easy Going's album and printed in the characteristic red vinyl, «Give me A Break» sold over one hundred thousand copies in the USA. Segment from the album namesake, and «Remember» in 1980, the single «Give Me a Break» received warm welcome to some gay-disco-clubs in USA, so much so that Friulian singer had the honor of performing, in the same year, at the Saint of Manhattan, most famous disco gay of era. Vivien Vee was born in Trieste, May 2, 1960 as Viviana Andreattini, at the age of 18 she moved to Rome where she began his collaboration with Claudio Simonetti and Giancarlo Meo. Vivien Vee represent one of the first attempts, perhaps the only managed to impose a female disco-music of clear Italian brand. Initially the project worked with a discrete distribution even abroad. The experience of Vivien Vee was not, however, of short duration, but according to average of the period, only three albums: «Vivien Vee» 1979, «Give Me A Break» even in 1979, and the futile attempt to relaunch in 1983 with «With Vivien Vee», the same year in which, devoured by de-

sire to appear, she tried one last sortie by appearing on Playmen, magazine only for men. In this way, she definitively laid a heavy tombstone on her fleeting career.



VIVIEN VEE

It was with the project Easy Going, however, that Italian disco entered more explicitly in iconography and in gay imagination. The group developed on an idea of Claudio Simonetti and Giancarlo Meo, who - as already mentioned - was abolished in as lead-singer Paolo Micioni, resident DJ at the «disco gay» Easy Going, which had just opened its doors in Rome at the 9 Purification street, behind Barberini Square. Two dancers, alongside Paul Micioni for live performances, were immediately selected. They were Fran-

but the tunes certainly were in line with the dance production of that period. The next album «Fear» was much more explicit and direct in the lyrics. The second LP was published in 1979 and recorded in Rome, New York (for mixdown) and Philadelphia (for finishing the orchestral parts). In the song «The Strip You» a boy confesses his homosexuality to a woman, while in «Fear», the title-track, a boy discovers his own homosexuality while courting a girl. In 1980, the dancer Russell Russell takes over from Paul Micioni as front-man of the group, while in new album «Casanova» and in particular in the single «A Gay Time Latin Lover» they talk about a Latin lover of a gay era, but maybe in this case, the ambiguity is desired or studied with merchant calculation: the loaf of the disco gay was paying so much in terms of consensus and approval.

From that moment began a frantic swirl of new productions: Walter Martino, David Zed, The Mask Craabs, Capricorn, Russell Spellman. Since Simonetti and partner led into the market a significant amount of singles and albums and not always successful, soon they understood how much the life of the independent record label was expensive and fraught with pitfalls, and then to support the costs of production they ended for accomplish songs also of other labels and projects on behalf of third parties: «Gioca Jouer» for Claudio Cecchetto and «Walkman» for Kasso, but we are already in the Eighties.

Here's how Claudio Simonetti recalls the epic of italo-disco: «*The period of the 'dance' was definitely the more happy and creative in my career. After dissolution of the Goblin and the encounter with the producer Giancarlo Meo, I totally dedicated myself to disco music, but with all arrangements made by true musicians. We were at the beginning of the 80's and people now wanted to have fun and shake off the difficult moment of the Seventies. The decade of 80s was, musically speaking, entirely dedicated to entertainment and dance in the discotheque. Then also new musical genres that had set aside the rock of the 70's thanks to new*

groups, such as Duran Duran, Depeche Mode, Spandau Ballet and great pop artists of caliber of Michael Jackson and Madonna. Especially they a little changed the connotations to the figure of rock-star of the previous years. The 80s brought the electronics with real instruments, experimenting new sounds, in short, it was a decade of great change in modern music». For the record, are reported also some minor artists such as Number One Ensemble with «Back to heaven» or «Gipsy» and Barbados Climax of Alan Taylor, author of a planetary success as «California USA» dated 1978, while a special nomination goes to the first labels specialized in Italo disco music as Panarecord, F1 Team, Radio Records, Discotto and Best Records. Countless productions attempted to ride the unstoppable wave Italo disco. Among many frenetic strolling players who tried to make their way on stage, emerged also those names that then will prove essential for the evolution of music on the four quarters during the following decades.

Many producers began, for example, to churn out dance tracks, often recorded in the USA to have an international touch, and maybe exploit on the place the voices of best shift workers available. Among these Celso Valli craftsman of the second album of Macho of 1980 and the project Tantra, with the single «The Hills of Katmandu» in 1979, a genuine distillate of propulsive energy formed from a marked use of synthesizers it is diluted by a hypnotic sonic mysticism, that enchanted the charts of half the world, especially those of San Francisco and the surrounding area, where it became a record-cult in the circuits of the gay locally community. Particularly attentive to the electronic sounds, «The Hills of Katmandu» became a classic in the programming of the Trocadero Disco in San Francisco, and especially in the version remix made by guru of the American HI-NRG, Patrick Cowley.

How can we not mention Kano, the project created around the figure of Glen White a DJ-singer Anglo-Caribbean, by a trio of talented musicians who brought heavy funk influences, vocoder,

rudimentary synthesizers, and penetrating break-beats. It was the year of grace 1980, when with «I'm Ready» Luciano Ninzatti, Stefano Pulga and Matteo Bonsanto reached the uptown of black chart of best American singles, leaving to posterity an important building block and a fertile ground on which many people would cultivated, harvested and sampled, fundamental to future development of hip-hop and house-music. Born in the Caribbean, he moved with his family to London at the age of eight years. At the age of sixteen Glen begins to sing with his first band, Heart'n'Soul, with which he arrives in Italy for a few music events.



KANO (GLENN EDRITCH WHITE)

At the age of nineteen part for Lille, in France, where for six months he performs with the «Soul from Fishers», which also attempt to make known in Italy, but the group dissolved, while Glen decided to remain in our country, since he was hired in the cast of «Hair», the lucky musical that for a year and a half turned to the

various Italian theaters. In the cast there were also Teo Teocoli, Renato Zero, Loredana Bertè, Ronnie Jones and many others.

Toward end of the 70s, Glenn White encounters Stefano Pulga, Luciano Ninzatti and Matteo Bonsanto, thus the adventure begins under the banner of trademark «Kano», healthy carrier of a burst of individual success, among which «Another Life», «Queen of Witches», «It's a War» and three albums such as, «New York Cake» in 1980, «Another Life» in 1982 and the «Greatest Hits» in 1984. For our enterprising producers was not difficult soars on multitude thanks to a Glen White equipped with a powerful voice, postponing the expressive characteristics typical of Motown Sound and the most classic Soul R'n'B, on the strength of a remarkable stage presence and a formidable capacity to entertainer. It is fair to say that Kano, as other Full Time productions were narrow, if relegated into a stereotype and closed within the perimeter of Italian dance.

Risking a comparison, we can assert that Kano has been an Italo disco production as well as the Canadian Gino Soccio has been an US disco music product.

Maybe Freddy Naggiar's words could come to our aid. The demiurge of the Baby Records, which for its production had indicated a compositional road more «easy», linear and respectful of solutions of Italian harmonic tradition, said: *«We have always sold melody because all the other countries not produced it, the Germans, but their stuff was impossible. The British, the music, we were producing in that period, does not really understand it, they were too far forward. We were dressing the melody in a certain way, we were dressing with an Italian taste, and the Italian taste is higher than the taste of anyone. And in fact abroad «I like Chopin» was considered a refined product. I have spent a lifetime trying to make others understand that Italy was not just pizza, spaghetti, mandolino and mozzarella. But that Italy was also Armani, Versace, and this kind of people».*

In those years many names of Italo disco were often be traced to the same team record company or the same team of authors and producers, who had published under various names, remaining behind the scenes; who had to develop all the work in recording studios together with obscure shift workers and unknown ghost-singers, while girls-image and handsome models, with lofty names of art, were hired from time to time, depending on the need, to represent the project in television shows or for a hosted in discotheque, where they sang only in playback.



MOON RAY (COMANCHERO)

It's absolutely not forgotten unite tandem formed by Aldo Martinnelli, composer, instrumentalist, singer, arranger, producer and Simona Zanini, lyrics author, main voice and choirs. Their sound

was so recognizable from the outset and it was born from perfect harmonious balance between voice of Simona and the processed sound of keyboards of Aldo. There are many their dance-floor-filler that, at the time, dominated in disco-clubs and in radio programming across Europe, including Martinelli with «Cinderella» Moon Ray «Comanchero», Doctor's Cat with «Feel The Drive» and Topo & Roby with «Walk On The Ice». Even the first success of Radiorama, «Chance to Desire» brings at the bottom of page the signature of the united authorial couple and the song is sung by the same Simona Zanini.





CLAUDIO CECCHETTO, SANDY MATON, TAFFY AND TRACY SPENCER

ITALO DISCO: WARRIORS AND SOUND EXPLORERS

Impossible to forget a dance-floor-filler as «Shine on Dance». Thirty years ago this enveloping sound carpet, signed by Alberto «King» Carrara and punctuated by embroidery melodic, it dragged young troops on dance-floors in every part of the world. At 16 years old, in his city, Bergamo, Albert was already a famous DJ. The first single «Disco King» in 1983 was a real exploit, which opened the main door of Euro-Charts. The following year, the same fate befell «Shine on dance» which won the Festivalbar. Carrara has exhibited in half of the world; he has participated in four Festivalbar, selling over 3 million records and winning several gold record throughout Europe. If someone teases him about the events Italo disco, he remains very calm and cordially says: *«But I don't live in memories. Music is my life, I could not do other».*



ALBERTO CARRARA

Without fear of contradiction, also Federico di Bonaventura, AKA Fred Ventura could be considered one of the most valid repre-

sentatives of the variegated universe of the «made in Italy» with sonic and danceable purposes. The musical career of Fred Ventura part from 1979, first as a drummer in various punk-bands and new wave groups, finally as a vocalist of the State of the Art, group of the underground Milan scene of early 70s.



FRED VENTURA

After leaving the State of the Art, maybe because most attracted by the evolution of the electronic music of European matrix, Fred begins the solo career by writing and singing songs dance-oriented, just at the moment in which Italo disco phenomenon exploded everywhere. Fred publishes on its own behalf a burst of successful singles, including «Zeit /Hollywood Party» in 1984, «The Years (Go By)» in 1985, «Wind Of Change» and «Leave me alone» in 1986, an album entitled «East & West», two singles with the

hundred thousand copies all over the world: Scandinavian, Canada, Japan, Switzerland, Korea, Argentina, Germany, Austria, Poland, Australia, Russia, and then, other hits came as «Fire», «ABCD», «Bad World». Sometimes it can happen to listen to some old Radiorama's tracks played by radio all over the world. In Japan, last year, I heard many Radiorama's tracks played by a radio station in Tokyo». The Radiorama's activity begins in 1985 with the single «Chance to Desire», written by Aldo Martinelli and Simona Zanini, as we already said, but produced by Paolo Gemma and Marco Bresciani. Marco was the first male front man of duo. Since the subsequent single «Desire», Simona Zanini joined Mauro Farina, who also took on the control of the music management together with Giuliano Crivellente. Almost by magic, with a habit very widespread at the time, many players take turns to represent their external image on stage and on covers of the maxi-singles over the years. It is worth mentioning some of the most successful singles: «Chance to Desire» and «Desire» in 1985, «Hey hey», «Aliens» and «Vampires» 1986 and «Yeti» in 1987. There are the words of Mauro Farina: «I would have a lot of time to explain the feelings and experiences of that time, by the way I can tell you that at the beginning of the 80's a big «movement» was born in Italy, especially in the North. Many clubs were opened and people started going to the discotheques to listen and dance that new kind of music which people like me, Crivellente and others, was producing... I like to call that period «The golden age». It has been a huge and unforgettable period with artists like Den Harrow, Radiorama, Albert One, Aleph, Fred Ventura, Joe Yellow (...) we really loved to write so many songs. At that time Giuliano Crivellente and I used play our ideas on an old piano (Giuliano) and guitar (me). We really loved to spend many hours composing new refrains, verses etc (...) Radiorama surely has been one of my most sold projects. I started to produce them with Giuliano Crivellente, Paolo Gemma & Marco Bresciani, around 1985.»

In those years another determinant name was The Scotch who defiled the discotheques with an original cough, infecting the dance-floors all over Europe, particularly in Germany, where, in 2007, their phlegmy «Disco Band», will be sampled from The Scooters, a local techno group, and included in «Lass Unz Tanzen». Vince Lancini (vocals), Fabio Margutti (keyboards) and Franz Rome (drum-machines) had with the dance a ratio much enjoyed, ironic and from holiday flavor, so much so that even the other hit, «Mirage» was resumed in 2004 by Paps'n'Skar, becoming for a second time a summer hit, after being chosen as voice-over narration for the advertising of a note telephone company.



THE SCOTCH

Italo disco projects were countless, but often recurring voices were always the same, especially for those productions that the record companies inventing in studio.

Among the most «exploited» ghost-vocalist we could remember Clara Moroni, Dora Carofiglio, Alessandra Gatti, Elena Ferretti,

Jimmy McFoy, Marcello Catalan, Mauro Farina, Roberto Zanetti, Silvio Pozzoli, Simona Zanini, Tom Hooker, Stefania Dal Pino, Ivana Spagna and Chuk Rolando.



DORA CARFOGLIO (NOVECENTO)

About Chuck Rolando, ghost-singer in the first phase project Den Harrow, we must remember the Passengers, a disco-band who managed to build a bridge between the late seventies and early eighties. Almost a natural transition, from disco music to Italo disco music. The Passengers were famous in the first half of the 80's. The group was formed by Gesualdo «Kim» Arena, Chuck Rolando, Elwanda Contreras and Mary Shay Collen. Their biggest hits are «He's Speedy like Gonzales» in 1979, and in 1980 a personal version of «The Lion Sleeps Tonight» a classic pop song rearranged in disco version. Mauro Farina says: *«Simona Zanini is a very nice person but I think she stopped working on music busi-*

ther single «Japanese War Game», under the Koto name, which became another hit. In 1985, Koto released «Visitors». In an interview with Maiola, he confirmed that it was his favourite Koto song. The track contains a sample from Michael Jackson's 1984 hit «Thriller». The following year, he released another single, titled «Jabdah». Fueled by a music video, the song became a big hit, charting in Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Around this time, critics coined the term «spacesynth», which combines elements of Italo disco and Space disco. «Visitors» and «Jabdah» are considered part of the genre. In 1987, a megamix was released, combining elements of their previous four singles.



KEN LASZLO

Ken Laszlo got a major breakthrough with his first release, «Hey Hey Guy», in 1984 and then continued to spoil the fans with several hits in the 80's. The Album from 1987, which also contained hits as «Tonight», «Don't Cry», «Glasses Man» and «1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8», is one of the most successful Italo Disco albums in history and sold a million copies worldwide.

Ken Laszlo, or Gianni Coraini which is his real name, also provided vocals for several other Italo projects such as Ricky Maltese, Ric Fellini, Jaco and so on. He has been constantly active since the 80's, under his own name or in collaboration with other artists, and this year he sang a duet with Swedish band ItaLove on their track «Disco Queen». Ken Laszlo has performed live in Europe on several occasions the last years, so be prepared for an entertaining show filled with hits.

ALBERT ONE...THE BIG ONE!

Very interesting it's the case of Alberto Carpani, who for his physique was affectionately called «Albertone», but as Italo disco artist he became Albert One. He makes the first appearance on the disco music scene in the second half of the 70s like DJ. Thanks to his work in dance clubs, he comes in contact with the world of broadcasting. Precisely at beginning of the 80's, in the one of a major Italian radio, he mature the idea of waging his recording activity with the complicity of some friends and colleagues. Initially like producer on behalf of third parties, almost wanting to explore the soil, then exiting at discovered in first person and it was immediately a great success with «No More Lies».



ALBERT ONE

Since 1982, it will be a total idyll with the dance-floor and the European dance-chart, thanks to the contribution of two prolific producers, Turatti and Chiericato. Among of the most significant publications we have to report, in the 1984, «Theme From FU-

RYO / Take It such as Clock On 5 (in co-production with Raffaele Fiume) and «Turbo Diesel», in the 1985 «Lady 'O» (with Raffaele Fiume) and «Heart On Fire, and to follow, in the 1986, «For Your Love» and «Secrets», along with countless other productions, up to the present day. It's not difficult to see Albert One, still busy as performer in various clips on YouTube, while he entertains enthusiast arrays of Italo disco fans in every country of Northern Europe.

Q. Hello Albert One, meanwhile almost a question of ritual. What memories have you of the eighties, when the Italo disco dominated the charts in Europe and worldwide? What kind of atmosphere have you breathed? Is it true that hospitality reserved for you, anywhere, in Europe and in the world was equal to the accorded reception for the most renowned pop star?

A. *The memories are among the most beautiful of my life, along with my wedding day. These were important moments, both for us and for all the people. Although I must admit that even today, when we go abroad, we receive the warmest welcomes. I just returned from Sweden where both me and Fred Ventura and Brian Ice we sang at a festival which was held at the National Palace in Stockholm. For example, Fred Ventura, a few days ago he was with Diana West in Amsterdam, I am leaving for London, also Fred and I will go to Hungary, then I will back to Finland. We are always around the world. Unfortunately, with great regret, I must say that one of the few places, where Italo disco does not work anymore, it's Italy. I repeat, we receive warm receptions all over the world. I was recently in Mexico, Fred Ventura, Ken Laszlo and Gazebo even in the U.S. where I will go next year. So nothing happens only in Italy, because Italians are xenophilous.*

Q. Let's start, however, from the beginning, how did you come to the discography? Maybe in childhood you did not ever think becoming a singer? I know that you started working as a DJ and radio host. Above all, it would be nice if you could talk about your

beginnings in the world of music, and by whom have you been introduced in the nascent universe of Italo disco?

A. I started out, first, as an orchestra, playing with a band, then in 1975 I started like DJ in a club, so I went into the lap of private radio stations, where I continued until the early eighties, I believe 1982. So I got to work even with some major radio stations which later became the network of today and there was born the idea of the first record. Since the success came quickly, I continued without stopping. Obviously I have stopped operating the radio, because there was no time to reconcile the two. In recent years, I got the satisfaction of playing with a group, which will reclaim all the songs of the 80's strictly live, without sequencer or computer, so this is a double pleasure for me.



ALBERT ONE

Q. In those years there was a certain pioneering and you went to record in small studios on behalf of small independent labels, perhaps with a certain ostracism, if not disturbance, on the part of

the majors. Probably, at beginning, you were not even aware of doing something that would later become important? When did you come the first time in a recording studio, and where?

R. *At recording studio in Milan called GRS Studio, yes, in 1983, I went there to make the first serious work. And after «Turbo Diesel», world-wide success, the agreement with one of the major record companies in Europe, Baby Records that decided to put under contract Gazebo, Den Harrow and, of course, Albert One, because the Italian dance began to work in every part of the world. I would add that «Turbo Diesel» was a popular-national success which people could sing by going to go shopping at the supermarket, rather than in a disco.*



ALBERT ONE, GOLDEN RECORD

Q. What kind of feeling did you feel to see your name in the hot zones of the charts all over the world, perhaps even exceed the international music giants?

A. *It was a great satisfaction! Also because, as I said before, corresponded to the reputation of excellent earnings. Then it was all reported. Today be at the top of the charts, it does not mean de-*

finitely earn a lot of money. At that time the success and fame also corresponded to an interesting economic level. The music is not fun, but serious work, then it must be lived with all the criteria of a real job.

Q. Above all, you're a musician, an author and real singer, do you think your long artistic life over time is due to the fact that you were not just an image-man? At that time there were many fake artists that represented only outwardly many of the record products of those years?

A. *I think so, yes, I think that the moment was favorable to me and others like me. Someone was fake, as indeed there are now many groups that pretend play. Obviously, it's very helpful to be yourself, because if you tell lies, you get caught sooner or later.*

Q. While in the 80's, Italo disco conquered the clubs and young people across the world, gaining significant market share in Italy the «genre» was a bit snubbed, particularly by the critics. Above all, as already mentioned, big record companies, wrongly, have never believed. Have you ever wondered why?

A. *Why they were idiots! One of the few enlightened record manager was Freddy Naggiar, the boss of Baby Records, which was not a multinational company, but the biggest private label in the world. Freddy believed, first, in Albano and Romina, Toto Cutugno, Ricchie and Poveri, Rondò Veneziano, and then - as I said – when he realized the importance of dance, he brought in his team Gazebo, Den Harrow and Albert One. Naggiar sensed immediately that the dance was reaching important numbers to exploit and to ride. In a second step also multinationals came, but very late on the roadmap. Then the majors snubbed us, but I think it was their biggest mistake.*

Q. In addition to the many clubs, I know you performed in front of thousands of people in huge spaces that usually are reserved for the most renowned musical genres. Where and when it happened, especially what's the country where are you still popular?

A. The places are so many, but not only I, but all those who have managed to keep alive their artistic image and their sound, so Gazebo, Savage, Sandy Marton, P.Lion and a few others. I have a large following in Latin America, thanks to some top hits in the charts with «Turbo Diesel», «For Your Love» and «Sing a Song», then in all of continental Europe, the countries of Eastern Europe. Honestly, I can't complain. Except in Italy, but in Italy if you look around there is nothing to anyone, because Festivalbar, Superclassifica Show, Discoring, Pop Corn or no longer exist for anyone, not just those that are still producing dance music or for those who did Italo disco.



ALBERT ONE AND GAZEBO

Q. Some people say that, in those years, Italo disco environment is not homogeneous, a little frayed, especially it's told that between the insiders snaked a lot of envy, and that all relationships ended abruptly for reasons of royalties or the jealousy by part of the producers toward the front man of project. This was definitely one of the limits, what do you think about?

A. Here in Italy there are not areas where there are no grudges or rivalries. Think of the political situations that we see in circula-

tion, they are really a disgrace and they reflect a mindset that it's typically Italian.

Q. Now a difficult question, which provides an answer not politically correct. What do you think about of the current dance producers? Many of them are improvised, sketchy and, for the most part, completely ignorant of music, but skilled in the sampling of old records and the use of new technologies?

A. *Did you say producers, if I understood well? Why do they still exist? In Italy there are not any more, in fact in the world charts are no longer Italian productions, with a few exceptions. As you said, everything is a copy and paste, a sample of this and that. I'm from a different school of thought, I come from an era when things were made with a different policy. Today, there aren't more authors, because you would not do this job for life. As the ancients said: «Homo sine pecunia est imago mortis» (The man without money is the image of death). Today, everything is free to download, no one buys anything and then the media such as vinyl and CD's are almost gone. In the songs of the 80s there was a maniacal attention in the sounds, in drafts, in the melodies that it would be unthinkable today.*

Q. The time has passed, but I know that you're still very active on many fronts. What's in the future of Albert One? Tell us something about your most recent artistic life!

A. *In addition to shows, according to the format STYLE 80s, which I do regularly with some DJs that play music from the Eighties and I sing my songs, then we have a super group called «Jay Factor Band» or «Jay Factor Café» based in Perugia. The group is made up of old DJs who perform all over the world, even with my old hits, they use vinyl only. Finally going to get out my new record with a video-clip. The new project is expected to come out before summer, but for the moment it's top-secret!*

In 2015, Albert One has released its new single, «Face to Face», which has already become a cult.

worked as a DJ at the historic Piper of Rome, also that had been the first in Italy to mix with two turntables. To be honest, the scenery of Discoring gave the idea of a dance floor filled with young people aged between fifteen and twenty years.

Thanks to its winning formula, the format of the program was purchased and also reintroduced in other European countries. In booming of «Travolta fever», the edition more successful was hosted by Claudio Cecchetto with the opening song entrusted to «Body To Body» of Gepy & Gepy. Here is the memory of Claudio Cecchetto who thanks to this program, became the Italian DJ more admired and paid: *«Antonello Falqui, RAI manager, called me at phone. They were convoking the radio DJs reported by various record labels for the specimens of Discoring. I have to thank Freddy Naggia of Baby Records for saying my name on that occasion»*.

In fact, before Discoring, the RAI-TV had attempted a other experiments, which, however, they have had not the same luck: Piccolo Slam went on the air in 1977 and saw the conduction of Sammy Barbot and Stefania Rotolo by launching the records and the singers of the time; also worth mentioning the program «10 Hertz», 1978, a double midweek late-afternoon of the duration of 20 minutes. The program was hosted by Gianni Morandi with the same mixture of charts, guests and new releases. Discoring and other programs contributed not a little waken the concept of «presenting music in TV», and in those years, particularly in the '70s and '80s it was something highly innovative, contributing greatly to bring the young people towards disco music.

As already mentioned, the same scenographic set proposed a sort of simulated discotheque effect or «virtual disco», by stimulating desire to dance and consumption of disco music. In the meantime, even the private radio stations grew, while the local TV began to propose similar format: vee-jays, charts, music, and special guests. One for all, «Pop Corn» by Canale 5. While Italo disco expanded, Videomusic and MTV began to launch their pro-

grams on the air, so that the music became really something to be able to «watch», as well as listen to and dance. On the long wave of the British invasion, many Italian dance artists began to find them inspiration through compelling video-clips, which ended in television programming all over the world, eager to contend with this new type of consumption of music, linked to the image and very welcome to young people.

LA BIONDA BROTHERS OF ITALY IN THE WORLD

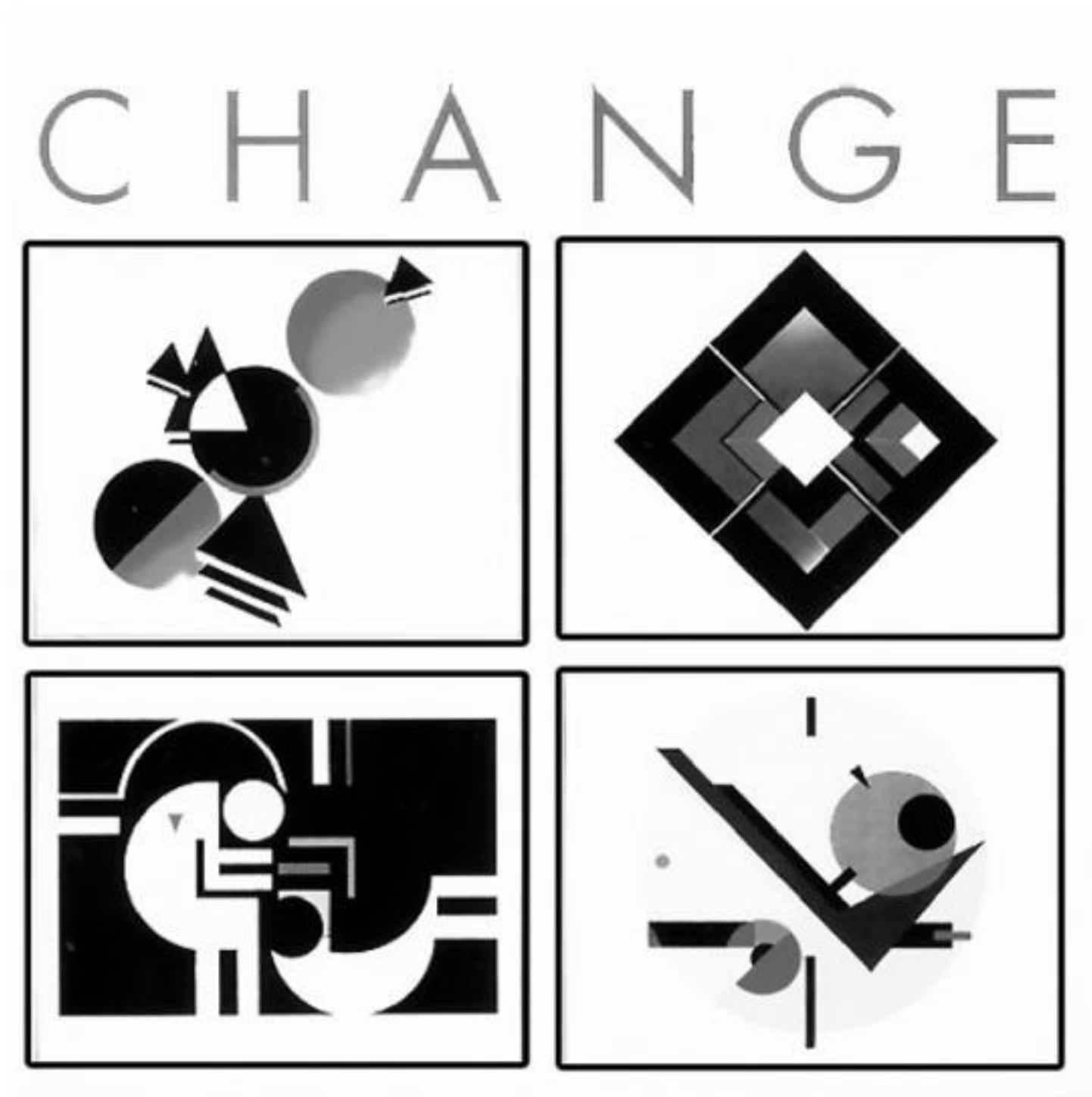
Even in the field of dance music, as well as it had happened in the context of Western movies, in a first moment, Italian artists were able to give an original interpretation of phenomenon with wisdom, balance and mastery.



LA BIONDA BROTHERS

For importance D.D. Sound and La Bionda are representative of Italian disco music as Sergio Leone was emblematic of the classic Spaghetti Western movies. La Bionda Brothers, Carmelo and Michelangelo, born respectively in Ramacca (CT) February 2, 1949 and August 25, 1952. Sicilian by birth, but citizens of the world artistically speaking, they were the first to achieve some hits intended for the dance floors, both with the brand La Bionda, project that spanned several styles and musically more articulated, that under the banner of D.D. Sound that it was essentially modeled in the wake of stylistic elements linked to disco-dance of the period. La Bionda Brothers knew how to ride the tidal wave

rangements, the loveliness of the voices and the calibrated accuracy of rhythmic. These and other elements gave birth to a setting with a formal stylistic elaborate and great artistic caliber. Sounds already tested, always at the prolific forge Full Time with «You Make Me Do It» of Ago in 1981.





GEORGE AARON

GOODY MUSIC AND FULL TIME, CROSSED DESTINIES

In the last years of the decade, from Milan to Rome, passing for Bologna, Italy was swarming with producers and labels, ready to ride the long wave of disco music, now rampant and protagonist of the vinyl market. Many people were involved in this practice, in this new «gambling» (often the improvisation reigned sovereign), but a lucky few «players» succeeded in their goal; in particular, the Italian disco music assaulted international charts with an army of clones, adventurers but also musicians of great class, following the coordinates drawn by some record labels.

At the end of the seventies, in Milan, Jacques Fred Petrus founded the Goody Music, first Italian label capable of distilling a very valid model of disco music, with the intent to make it a product for export. Managing Director of the new label was Franco Donato, a Calabrian entrepreneur passionate about music and highly respected in the Italian record environment (he will later be elected president of the AFI (Italian Phonographic Association)). In those years the offices of the record company, at 51 of Via Friuli, were frequented by the young brother of Franco, Claudio, who soon remains fascinated by the difficult, but exciting profession of record producer. When, in 1980, the megalomaniac madness of Petrus began to undermine the gains and business of the Goody Music, Franco Donato gave up the post of Director and, together with his brother, stood the Full Time Records, also noting the record shops specialized in dance music import and linked to the group Goody Music. Everything was gone from the happy intuition of an enterprising records importer, who moved from Guadeloupe to Milan to work.

It was the end of the seventies and the enormous amount of time, that lapses between the publication of the records in America and the arrival in Italy, had favored the flourish of the import shops. Pushed by a pinch of unscrupulousness Jacques Fred Petrus had opened, in Milan and Rome, the «Goody Music», on the

false line of the «Sam Goody» in New York. This is a fragment of an old interview, where Petrus tells his version of the facts: *«When I was young, I was a records collector, I bought all the latest releases of R'nB and Soul, so I used my experience as a DJ at Good Mood of Milan, then it really was a valid club, while I realized that I could not make this type of work for the whole life. I had begun to import records from America, where I had found a specialist firm in disco music. Initially the quantities were minimal, two packages per week, also because I lacked the capital to invest. The records were sufficient for us and a few other Djs friends, trade was restricted to some disco-clubs (Nepentha, Charly Max...) then it was extended. I had begun to sell the records even a few fans of the clubs, they were very snobbish to have the latest American releases in their own homes, exclusive records that only a few DJs knew. A few months after I created a company, the Goody Music, that first began to sell disco music records. In Italy there were already two importers, Carù and Ronchini of Parma, which, however, had never been interested in the dance genre, because too difficult area: you had to be always know everything about and to know the taste and the music needs of DJs, you had to choose and import the few valid products in a magmatic market. The interest of the clubs, which at that time began to play an important role toward this initiative was notable because the DJs did not have to rely more Italian record companies, but they could schedule the same records of the mythical American DJs».*

The DJs began to contend for «the night market» through imported records, for a sort of exclusive and original proposal. Seen, therefore, the good performance of the business, Petrus decided to also create his personal label, the Goody Music Records. The fortune seemed be propitious to the brave Petrus, and then the meeting and the subsequent sodality with Mauro Malavasi, who fresh of conservatory, proved decisive. Petrus, practically, ordered to Mauro Malavasi a song every three months, that the

ran and many others. Of course, it was for me an indescribable emotion, also because it must imagine my young age!

Q. While in those early 80's, Italo disco captivated the clubs and the young people of half the world, acquiring significant market shares, but in Italy the «genre» was almost criminalized, especially by the critics. Above all the big recording companies, wrongly, there have never believed. Have you ever wondered why?

A. *I believe that this is due to the xenophile Italian culture. While we sold many records in Italy and in the world, the typical and melodic Italian music, so-called «light music» fell day after day into the abyss.*

Q. Apart in many important clubs, I know that you have performed in front of thousands of people in huge spaces that, usually, are reserved to musical genres most noble. Where and when this happened? What memories have you of those events?

A. *I have exhibited at the Festival Bar also doing the Festival Tour with stages in Messina, Isole and the final evening in Verona for a total of 100,000 spectators during the three nights. Then others, including a very important disco-club in Düsseldorf, which was a stage of my tour in Germany. In this room before and after my performance there were George Mc Crae and Delegation not to mention other great locations like Pasha Teatry in Madrid, Accantra Mar in Lisbon, the Charletie Stadium in Paris and other palasport etc... To sing on some important antlers with Samantha Fox, Mc Miker G. and DJ Sven, John Hallyday... you don't ever forget!*

Q. Some people say that, in these years, Italo disco environment was not homogeneous, a little ragged, especially it's told that between the insiders snaked a certain envy, and that the reports could be quickly interrupted for reasons of royalties or jealousy by part of the producers against the front man of the project. This was certainly a limit, what do you think about?

A. *It's precisely so! Also because there was no regulation or expert lawyers who were able to protect and safeguard the*

THE FIRST METAMORPHOSIS

During the seventies and the eighties various vicissitudes brought Italian disco-music on colorful carousel of the success, where glaring consolidations are alternated with sudden financial collapses, by showing the fragility of a mentality little inclined to the affairs by unstructured organizations, albeit within into a creative artistic context, but also effective and successful.



JOCELYN AND AGO

Today many DJs are more concerned to fill the dance floor and gain an attendance, that to understand the exact scope of the phenomenon. It's to the delight of those who regret the eighties that you review youngsters struggling with the Japanese animation cartoons or struggling with the Commodore 64. Here are served on the market an endless series of compilations quick grip: always the same with the usual suspects, a forty songs inserted in the worst logical sequences, almost ignoring previously the «consecutio temporum» (logical consequence) of the music

from the difficult «mess tin» and the atavistic hunger of the Italian singers of human pains, who had preceded them and who were born in evocative perfect places for cinema neorealist as Cellino San Marco, Fiumara Calabria and Monghidoro.

Each of those «enfants prodige» conceived precisely the job as a video game, where the winning words appeared to be speed, inspiration and communicative.



SANDY MARTON

Our «Heroes» were able to mix, with cunning and naturalness at the same time, the haughtiness of aristocrat dandy and the charm of a protagonist divus in a novel of appendix, the love for the electronic sounds and the cult for classical authors. The press of the era reported a typical day of Sandy Marton in the island of Ibiza: *«Simple, I begin at eight. Of course, de la tarde! You must be at the «Mar y Sol» to drink an aperitif and then to eat at the port of Ibiza. After dinner you will be returned to the «Mar y Sol» to organise the evening and to pull up at two in the night...»*. Impossible for anyone, especially for young women, to escape the charm beached and holiday of the blond Sandy Marton, «cechettiiana» creature for excellence, whose real name is Alexander Marton, born in Zagreb on October 4, 1959, who embodies the

among those who read the credits on the cover and had an ear fairly fine and able to feel it. I was from a another world of music, the American West Coast, and probably this has brought an originality in my use of the voice in this genre so different, which however has worked.

Q. What feeling did you feel in seeing your name on the peaks of stormy charts all over the world, perhaps overcome certain nobles of the English or American music?

A. *Have hits is not essential, but helps, so be it. Especially living in an indirect manner the success, as I have done, they were just the charts to feed my satisfaction and to give me a great energy.*

Q. Before I spoke of duration in time that was one of the limitations of Italo disco: too many strolling players from overwork, disposable, on the contrary you're a real singer. Do you think that the time duration of the trade mark Martinelli is due to the fact that it's a project based on real artistic contents and not only aesthetic? Furthermore, you have lent your voice to some virtual projects created in the laboratory.

A. *The success of our productions was due to the value of the song, the melody, the arrangements, and the voices and not followed a fashion. In fact we were not similar to others. And it wasn't centered on a character; of aesthetic there was nothing, nothing of ephemeral. For this Martinelli brand would probably not «expires». I have given the voice in most of the projects to signature Martinelli-Zanini: Martinelli, Moon Ray (Raggio di Luna), Doctor's Cat, Topo & Roby and also to others such as the first productions of Radiorama.*

Q. While in those early 80s, Italo disco captivated the discotheques and the young people of half of the world, gaining significant market shares, in Italy the genre was snubbed, particularly by the critics. Above all - as already mentioned - the big recording organizations, wrongly, have never really believed in it. Especially in our country is hard to have the recognition it deserves. What do you think about?

A. It was a genre was born among those who play the records in a discotheque and who was dancing, had skipped a footnote of the filter of major record companies, being promoted basically by the wholesalers and the DJs, probably not recognized adequately titrated by the critics. The wrong of the big companies was: don't understand it; the wrong of the labels and wholesalers was: don't know manage in the long term. And yet it was one of the few genres of music born in Italy to be exported with success.

Q. While the 80s continues to be the culture ground of all the current Euro-dance, the music evolves or envelops, depends on the tastes, especially the needs of consumers change abruptly. What are you doing these days? Tell us something of your more recently artistic life.

A. After being passed by the other part of the mixer in the 90's, as a producer and music publishers, and then again, during the years 2000, to the commercial part as an importer of music from abroad, I returned to work with Aldo Martinelli, strong from fans who demand our productions through social networks. Once again, as then, success comes from the «base», from the people! We will perform with our classic hits, but will continue to produce new songs.

(guitar, drums, bass, keyboards, etc.) that never could reproduce the perfection of sounds obtained in the studio, to which the frequenters the dance floors are accustomed, risking the effect of parish ballroom.



STEFANO ZANDRI

The notes disclosed of the record company and the management recounted a certain Den Harrow, whose baptismal name was Manuel Stefano Carry, born June 4, 1962 in Boston, Massachusetts (USA) and then moved in Italy to the age of 4 or 5 years old. This would have justified his modest knowledge of the English language. In reality Den Harrow, was born as Stefano Zandri in Nova Milanese. In the 80s tell of being born in the United States could develop a strong attraction on the international music market of English tongue, but everything, as communicative strategy and marketing plan, did not bat an eyelid. Stefano was the son of an architect and, as a result of the separation of parents, grows with the mother, together with a brother and a sister.

G. G. NEAR - Living in a Rom
G.J. Lunghi - Acapulco Nights
GARY LOW - You are a Danger
GARY LOW - I Want You
GARY LOW - La Colegiala
GARY LOW - Non Stop Searching
GATSBY - Love Sign
GAZEBO - Masterpiece
GAZEBO - I Like Chopin
GAZEBO - Lunatic
GAZEBO - Telephone Mama
GAZ NEVADA - IC Love Affaire
GAZNEVADA - Living In the Jungle
GEORGE AARON - Fear
GEORGE AARON - Heaven
GEORGE AARON - Just For You
GEORGE AARON - She's A Devil
GEORGE AARON - Silly Reason
GEORGE GAY - Life
GHECKO - Firelight
GIUSY RAVIZZA - Light
GIUSY RAVIZZA - Save the fire
GOTCHA - You're wrong
GRANT MILLER - California Train
GRANT MILLER - Colder than ice
GRANT MILLER - Doctor for My Heart
GRANT MILLER - Red for Love
GRANT MILLER - Wings of Love
GREEN ICE - Gigolo
HARRY' O - Noa Noa
HÉLICON - You... See
HÉLICON - Pretty Jane
HUMPHREY - Devil love
HYPNOSIS - Automatic Piano