

# **THE MUSICAL BLOG**

interview to:

Sandro Pasqual

Bruno Italiano

Enrico Crivellaro

The musical blog is a Fabio Raghiero's blog

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## **Sandro Pasqual**

*Sandro Pasqual has got a diploma in cello and has graduated in modern history. He's an expert on music economics and he's taking an active part in the divulgation of the main problems that torment the professional musicians. He has published several articles and volumes, such as a manual of music economics entitled "Make music". He writes for the monthly "Music Paper", the bimonthly "World Music Magazine" and he's a partner of the broadcaster "Classic Radio". He teaches "Entertainment Law" at the Conservatory of Ferrara.*

**Hi Sandro. Thank You for having allowed me a little time for this interview. I've just read your book and I loved it because it has been written for all people, also for the non-musicians, as you call them. How did you start to write it? And why? Did you find difficulties on its publication or have you already got an editor?**

According to the recent reform of the Conservatory, even the classical musicians can complete their course of studies with a biennial specialized degree. Besides music, they must study other complementary matters such as "Entertainment Law". When I was called to teach this matter I realized that the first problem was how to find an intermediate language between the sophistry of law and bureaucracy and what the musicians really need. The editor Gianni Rugginenti who is very solicitous to the music needs asked me to publish my notes for students into the manual "Make music". The aim of the book is to permit a double reading. As a manual is useful for those who are searching for immediate answers about the specific problems of the professional musicians (but they also regard the fans). As a lesson for those who want to test their strength against the three fields of music that I conventionally identify with genius, business and market.

**You are also one of the promoters of "Note legali" that makes internet a successful source. The association is young but it has already achieved important goals. This is because when it was born you had precise ideas about the services you could offer. What is the future? Have you got other projects in mind or unfulfilled dreams? How can this association improve the music panorama?**

You must talk with the very active man Andrea Marco Ricci, the president of the association, who will be very happy to answer to all questions. As an enthusiastic member of the association I dare say that there are two important aspects explaining the presence of the association. The first consists of passing from an amateur beginning to music to a more expert and professional level. Our society is convinced that the musicians are satisfied only by their love for music and so that they can't have other rights. Unfortunately people usually thinks that the musician doesn't live by his work. By the slogan of "Note legali" that is "we know your worth" we want to render explicit the economic intent of the association. The second is that we think that politicians, managers and business men are mostly indifferent to the world of music. That's why we need persons to "cross the bridge" between music and politics. This people live daily the needs of music and musicians, and at the same time they speak the same language of politicians, managers and business men and they can translate it.

**That's a straight answer. I also declare the freedom of music but inside a specific, clear and recognized rule. On this subject let's talk about an important theme for both, probably for opposite reasons, the author's rights. Dutch SIAE has already recognized the Creative Commons licences (<http://linux-club.org/node/2484>). This means two things. The first is that the partners of the association will have major freedom of decision on their rights. The second is that these new half-free licenses are becoming more important. What do you think about it and what are the**

## **probabilities of some changes in Italy?**

My answer will be very long, so that I must simplify my thought. I think that music must move economically in two or three directions, that of market laws or state finances (or as a third hypothesis both the directions). I beg the pardon of whom doesn't think like me but I don't want to consider the hypothesis of a music world made only by amateur musicians (as in the old societies).

In these last days the state finances have been very important for the survival of some music fields. But it's quite hard that politics will continue in this direction. We must follow the choice of the market laws - a market in which the audience must be expert on "music listening" - . Even if the "Creative Commons" licenses are considered as an incomplete and not generalized answer to the absence of rules, they represent a progress towards other impracticable schemes of "cultural anarchy" recently supported. But I'm afraid that the attention on these new horizons must be too concentrated on particular aspects (commercial music, internet distribution) that cannot represent the whole world of music.

**The C.C. were born even to cross the world of editors/producers that has taken away from the artists and has made a market from itself. Probably the artists let themselves to be bought. The C.C. don't want to be only a renounce of all rights, but of a part of them. The author can choose the licences to grant. Why don't we acknowledge them inside the SIAE?**

I'm quite agree with this experiment, but I always recommend not to precipitate things. The aim is to change "a certain way to do the editor/producer" and not to question the importance and the benefits of the great editors that must be necessary for the music. This point is stressed in my book several times in order to avoid a disastrous mistake. As you tell (this is my secret dream, the objective I want to reach) the problem could be solved with a major participation by the artists, they must stop to be passive or puppet in people's hands. That's why on one hand I'm suspicious of "Creative Commons". They are technically a way of distribution, but in my global view of music that considers everyday life, every segments of population and every way of communication their effectiveness is limited. We need other actions to transform our society. But on the other hand I'm quite happy because the Creative Commons have established a system of rules (as Linux has already done) in which we can and must make progress. The Creative Commons can solve a little part in the direction of rights on Internet for an author who enter the SIAE. He's free to manage the direction of the rights on Internet.

## **Bruno Italiano**

*Bruno Italiano is the author and promoter of Gremus. He's also a writer, an educator and a musician. He's interested in education with particular attention to the aspects concerning arts, communication, social relations, and to the management and marketing techniques concerning the artistic and show training. He's also an orchestra conductor and music divulger. He's the director of the artistic training and production centre "Musica in Lemine".*

**Hi Bruno. First of all thank you for having allowed me a little time for this interview. I have known you for some times visiting your blog. I've soon understood that "Gremus" is an high-quality blog, one of the most interesting and useful Italian musical blogs on Internet. Why did you create it? What are the aims?**

First of all thank you for your gratifying compliments. The ambitious plan of Gremus is to make music and musical culture as a common good, receiving the spirit of human knowledge that moves the Web 2.0. Almost by chance, near music I've added social and cultural themes that have allowed people to understand an important phenomenon. It's necessary to be broad-minded to meet other audience, to divulge and let be known our art and thought. The human knowledge cannot be divided in sections or in a book of one subject. Moreover, music has never been an exclusive expression. It has always flourished even in the religious, political, social and historical contaminations.

**You found the web power as I did. Today should a musician visit internet towards a blog (as a vivid and elastic site) or a classic and "static" web site? How much do the musicians believe on Internet opportunities?**

It depends on what you expect to obtain by the web. A popular musician can choose to create a static site adding winning drawings, e-commerce and forum systems in contact with his public. For a novice the aim should be to climb rapidly the "rank" of search engines and the best way to do that is to create a dynamic site, the blog. Obviously the musicians must feed their blogs every day and update them with new contents, ideas or comments. Internet doesn't offer concrete and predictable possibilities but it allows every musicians to sound out and test a new level of communication. In this period the communication is essential for those who want to take part in the social life, so Internet must extend the field of communication making it global and across the cultures. Internet is a powerful media for the distribution of music and its universal importance. I think that musicians will not have any chance. Internet will take great part of their life.

**You talked about expert musicians who probably want to create a static web-site and musicians in search of success who should create a more dynamic one. I think that this division is economically correct, but I'm quite worried about it. Is this the way of an expert musician "to rest on his laurels"? If the musician reaches a good result with a dynamic site in which he presents music, thoughts etc... why should he give up that way? Probably because he wants to capitalize what he has done and work less! How should people who has followed him till that moment take it? Should this, beyond the real changes of opinion, be a betrayal? Let me explain in a better way... how much pleasant should be if we find a musical blog about expert musicians like Guccini or Dalla, that exploit in a detailed way the power of Internet?**

A dynamic site is useful both for the amateur and the expert musician mainly because it creates a direct contact with the public. The popular artist ignores such an experience because through his popularity he can sell his experience, his "know how", his stories and his advice. He can do that by writing books, making interviews or TV programmes etc. I'm going to say something provocative. Web 2.0, the sharable knowledge is an

extraordinary way of communication but only for those people who cannot access to a more popular and direct media levels. Who can access at those levels, hardly renounces. The power of those levels that distribute direct income to whom sell his art or his knowledge is decreasing more and more. So it will happen that also the stars should take part of the shared web.

**So... at the end we always think of nothing but making money, do we? What do you really think humanly speaking? Let's think only about music. What are the artists driving at? Why should an artist break off his relations with fans under less direct ways of communication and on behalf of making even more money?**

The history of art and the mankind can answer this question. If Bach, Mozart, Verdi or Pavarotti made music without thinking of having money, should they offer to mankind the same music as they did? All these musicians made art for living. Let's not demonize the art-money combination. The artists were driven very often by necessity to overdo themselves.

**I beg your pardon. I think I put it very badly. I agree that money is very important. When I talk about "making money" I mean pursuing it at all costs. I mean that particular moment in which the artist forgets why he does something only thinking at making money. Art becomes a way not the end of making money.**

We must analyze the situation from an ethic view. This means that an artist is considered first of all a man with its values. I don't like very much the ethical generalizations because I think that the most strenuous moralists are often the most intolerant. Even Mozart used to seek rich customers and was subject to their wishes. All the musicians used to move in aristocratic salons instead of taverns. Even Beethoven preached freedom but lived on private income and donations given by the aristocratic fled the revolutionary Paris. Verdi created "The Lombards on the first Crusade" with a sense of the Risorgimento and he dedicated the score to Maria Luigia, the Duchess of Parma, ex-wife of Napoleon. Verdi was to describe that period of operas and dedications as his "galley years". History is full of that curiosity. I have chosen to be a musician and a writer for a living. I based my choice on values far from the pursuit of money. But if one day someone comes and tells me that he would buy Gremus for a pretty penny, well... I will probably stop and think about it.

**Mmmm... I can't imagine you without your site. By the way... let's talk about the author's rights. One time they didn't exist but there were musicians like Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin, Debussy, Vivaldi, Scarlatti and many others. When the author's rights were born, there were Lucio Battisti, the Beatles and The Rolling Stones, drug, sex and rock' n roll. What kind of legislation should be for the future?**

The first musician who was recognized as an artist was Giuseppe Verdi. Before him the musician used to sell his score to a private customer or an editor without enjoying the author's rights. Verdi, as an expert financier as he was, realized that he could earn more not on the sell of the scores but on their use. Then came the age of disks, and the musicians earned more on the sold copies and radio passages. The system was perfect but the problem was that the disks cost too much to the final customer. The coming of Internet has broken off the system based on the copies' rights. The work of the author was little by little depreciated not only as regards music but also literature, screenplay, photography and video. The good artist should live with nothing. I dare say that the system of author's rights should be adapted to this new background to function again. This is impossible, I think! The author's rights are practically dead. There is nobody who protect it with incisiveness. What should be done? I think that the author must return to produce to order, inventing additional services like production or professional advice and creating their own networks to contact directly the public and acting without

intermediaries or brokers. The author must seek its public by his own, and he must be paid by them. Internet will soon become the heart of the “peer to peer” value. Internet has broken the author’s rights but it has given an alternative. It will not be easy, but for now I can’t see better ways.

## **Enrico Crivellaro**

**Enrico, you've been playing the blues all over the world for quite some time now. With your own bands, but also as a sideman for many great musicians. You are well known also because you embody a dream, something that can be reached thanks to determination and talent. It is time to make an assessment...what are you proud of, and what is that you aren't pleased about?**

Thank you for the question, and for using the word "dream". In fact, I believe that life is made of dreams, and that the steps towards the unknown that we make in order to fulfill our aspirations are the juice of life. We can decide to live our life in a more conventional way, or we can decide to try our luck and pursue a lifestyle that is somewhat alternative. The latter vision entails major gambles, for instance the risk of spending years investing in something that eventually doesn't bear any fruits. A more "normal" lifestyle probably doesn't involve as many risks, nonetheless it brings about as many difficulties, and I have a great deal of respect for those who, unlike me, have chosen this other road. Having said this, since I was a kid my desire was to be fully involved in the music world, and I knew that playing the guitar in a band wasn't enough—I had to understand more of the cultural substratum in which music is embedded. Music cannot be detached from culture, history and society, and these are the components that determine the birth and the development of distinctive musical genres in different geographical areas. Because of this, and given that I was a Blues lover since my teen years, at some point I felt that it was necessary for me to pack my things and go to the United States, in order to understand more about the Blues by becoming familiar with its cultural bedrock.

I can probably answer your question by saying that what I am most proud of, looking back at what has happened in these years, is the courage that I displayed when I got on that plane without knowing what I would have done, where I would have ended up living, when and if I would have returned home. The trip, which no doubt started with a huge dose of recklessness, has turned into my life's most poignant adventure, and is not yet over. In the meantime the trip has become more of a metaphysical journey. I definitely had the chance to learn extensively about American culture and about the kind of music that I loved, but especially I started a journey towards my inner self, discovering resources that I didn't know I had, facing ideas, beliefs and points of view that were new to me, learning to appreciate not only music, but rather people. I developed the mindset of recognizing the value of diversity as the source of cultural fertility, and as the basis for new ideas and new music. Jazz wouldn't have been born without the cultural cross-pollination that came about in America, just like Bossa Nova wouldn't exist without the Brazilian melting pot. The key to understanding music, and to making new music, lies in appreciating cultural diversity—not in being suspicious of it.

I could speak for hours about things I am proud of (having played with many of my idols, my studies and my degrees, the recordings I've made, etc), and also about the difficult times (the sacrifices, being myself the stranger/immigrant, working in a niche musical genre, the crisis of recorded music, and so on), yet if I am to assess what has happened during these years, I can only be grateful to the courage that I had when I made the decision of chasing my dream. Even though aspirations change over time, the habit of always taking the bull by the horns, of facing up to the challenge when we are faced with risky decisions, is the mental trait that I acquired from my first trip to the roots of Blues music.

**You appear on several CD's, you are a true showman, you have a few CD's under your name and recently you have started a record label that promotes excellent musicians from different areas of the world. Which one is your real dimension, and especially which is the dimension of a bluesman nowadays? Does it make sense to still talk about the "bluesman"?**

I am a big music lover, and I try not to confine myself to one single dimension. The musical universe is made up of two main worlds, the artistic and the business ones. Both of them comprise many faces, which sooner or later professional musicians end up exploring to a large extent. I have always been attracted by the artistic side, and I have never been comfortable on the business side. I like to go and listen to a good band, I like to play, I like to record and produce, while I simply can't stand many of the professional musician's tasks—like selling CD's, talking about money, and self-promotion. I am not good at all at these jobs, and I think they do undermine the integrity of musicians, who end up doing commerce instead of art. To me being a musician means, simply, making music. This can be done in many ways—live, in the studio, and by producing other artists and helping them give their best. I never changed my mind, what's important to me is the emotional side of music, and whatever I do I want this to come out. A concert, a solo, a record, a song must move the listeners. This is my conviction, which permeates everything I do with music. After all, I have one single point of view—I try to make the best, most emotional music I can with the resources I have.

Regarding the figure of the bluesman in 2007, the situation is quite multifaceted. Although it is a niche genre, and is not as commercial as other genres, the Blues has a large and international audience. I travel a lot and I meet many hard-core blues fans in Canada, in Brazil, in Australia, in Belgium, in Malaysia and even in the Caribbean. Just to mention some random places...but it is like this all over the world. Blues fans may not be millions in each country, but when you put them all together and sum up the numbers you realize that a bluesman has a much more sizeable audience than any Italian popstar, who is limited by the language to an Italian-only audience, or almost. Paradoxically someone like Magic Slim, who performs at festivals and in clubs all over the world, has a bigger market than Vasco Rossi, who sells out stadiums, but only in Italy. A modern bluesman should realize this, and operate with an international mindset. He or she may never play in huge stadiums (although people like Buddy Guy or B.B. King do!), but will will perform worldwide in a more-than-respectable circuit of clubs and festivals. There are several Italian jazz musicians, among them Paolo Fresu, Stefano Bollani, Stefano Di Battista, who have been able to rise above the local scene and join with full dignity the international circuit, even recording for Blue Note. In the Italian blues scene this has happened only in very rare cases, however nowadays I see several musicians who have the skills to achieve international recognition, just like several colleagues from Denmark, Holland, France and Belgium have already done.

**Back to Italy. How are things here, comparing them with the situation abroad? Are things worse, like everybody is saying, or are they not that bad after all?**

I don't mean to be at all cost judgmental, but I must recognize that the state of affairs is much nicer in other countries. Particularly in Anglo-Saxon areas, but also in many other countries. A few months ago I was lucky enough to play in Puerto Escondido, Mexico—such a wonderful place. The owner of the club where we were performing came to me saying “it's so nice when you guys are here. I would love to have live music every night, unfortunately we don't have enough bands around here and I need to get a DJ”. Nice anecdote, isn't it!

There are multiple causes for the Italian anomaly. Many clubs are outdated, there's no circuit of radios that promote independent music, indie labels have almost disappeared, the management and distribution of royalties through SIAE does not help musicians nor promoters. Besides, for some reason the notion that live music is a business has never been imported into Italy. Anywhere in the world the band is used to draw patrons to a club, and ultimately to make the venue increase the profit. It just takes a trip to Dublin, Singapore, Cape Town...anywhere in the world, clubs with live music are filled with customers who often pay hefty cover charges, whereas clubs with no music are definitely

not as active and lively. In Italy, conversely, live music is considered a useless cost, an extra expense with no return. As a result, Italian musicians—who are underpaid, forced to do music on the side, with low self-esteem, and who find themselves in an environment that doesn't allow for exchange of ideas and growth—become mediocre when compared to their Northern-European, American and Asian colleagues. Mediocrity has, in general, been affecting the Italian music scene, and obviously this doesn't help those who want to make music their profession. Being a professional musician, outside of Italy, is a full-time job. Italy unfortunately has slipped towards an amateur scenario, in which the fee for a live gig is the sole source of income for the musician. This doesn't allow to make a living off music—in fact, money is generally somewhere else, not in fees for live gigs. For instance, when we tour Australia it is quite common that in the afternoon, before every concert, we appear on a national radio show. Radio and TV appearances help the musicians, both at the economic level via the royalties that are accrued, and at the image/status level. In turn this helps the radios, which certainly do not lack music, interviews and shows of the highest caliber, it helps clubs and promoters, and at the end of the day it helps nurturing a knowledgeable and up-to-date audience. This synergy is what Italy lacks, and regrettably so far I can't see any signs that things will get better.

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