



EXCLUSIVE: Italian Jazz Sensation Dario Chiazzolino Talks About His Love For African Music And His Upcoming Album 'Red Cloud'



It would not be far fetched if one calls sensational award winning jazz artist Dario Chiazzolino, "one of the best".

Chiazzolino is a phenomenal player who has performed all over the world with the best in jazz music.

He began his jazz career as a child in Turin, Italy and has shared the stage with great jazz artists like "Yellow Jackets, Billy Cobham, Bob Mintzer, Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez, Andy Sheppard, Dominique Di Piazza, Jason Rebello, among others".

Billboard (USA) described Chiazzolino's music as an "unrivaled mastery and technique of the instrument", and limns his stage performances to have "powerful emotive impact".

We were able to score an exclusive interview with Mr Chiazzolino; and we got to talk about his love for African music, his style of jazz and a preview of what to anticipate from his new album **Red Cloud**, premiering this march.

Wendiva: Hello Dario, thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us. I am Wendiva Blaze from 360Nobs. I'm sure you had a ton of things to do yet here we are.

I think jazz is classy, one reserved specially for a caliber of people. Please tell us a little about your music style.

Dario: My musical background is very diverse. At the beginning I was attracted to rock music and I loved the distorted guitar sound and all the famous rock bands featuring long and loud guitar solos.

Later jazz came to me and it was a love at first sight.

Until I discovered jazz I was used to improvise without knowing what it really was. I piked up my guitar and started playing with total freedom with the aim of creating melodic lines or simply sound paths. It was always a spontaneous process. It's hard for me to describe with words what my music style is.

I can say that it is a natural reflection of what I love the most in music. Playing an instrument is like singing. You have your own voice and your own way of producing a sound, a note. My guitar voice is strongly connected with my phrasing. I build my own way of improvising over the years and I think it is a combination of many music influences.

Criticism is used to consider me as a modern jazz guitarist. It is probably correct. I listened to a lot of music in the past but at certain point I detached myself from it and I took my own way.



Wendiva: As a teenager, your influences were jazz icons such as Charles Parker, Bill Evans and Clifford Brown. As an adult, who has helped redefine your style of jazz along the years?

Dario: I would say that African music has been such a great inspiration for me. I have been listening to African artists for many years. What I love the most is the way African musicians feel the rhythm.

By the way jazz was born by the encounter between European and African culture and music. And that said, it seems clear that it could only emerge something really special. I love classical music too, specifically I adore Bach and Chopin.

I think my style is constantly evolving, and of course it is in close connection my experiences. I am strongly convinced that a musician style is well defined if you really take your own path. What you love the most and what excites you the most in music could potentially become your way of making music.

Wendiva: Who is Bob Mintzer, he seems to be a constant presence in your songs?

Dario: Bob is one of the most important saxophonists in the world of jazz. We worked together on a project called Principles Sound and we recorded an album in Los Angeles a few years ago. He has been such an important presence during my career. I love his playing and the way he makes arrangements with his orchestra. He is a super musician. The album we made together is entitled Lost in the Jungle and in certain sense it is related to World and African music as well.

Wendiva: Who introduced you to Jazz?

Dario: It happened very naturally but actually there was no musician who introduced me to Jazz.

I started performing jazz music very early. My first experiences were primarily in Turin, the city where I was born and raised. I was used to play with Italian musicians who were much more older than me. Later my network expanded so I started performing abroad, specifically in Europe and USA.

I think that every musician I played with gave me the opportunity to learn something new and to grow up as a musician.

So all of them are equally important to me in a certain sense.

Wendiva: What are the various styles of jazz music and which represent your songs best?

Dario: Jazz is a big word which include a lot of things. I would prefer considering jazz simply like a music where musicians are free to improvise and where improvisation represents the main and central focus.

Since its birth, jazz has experienced several evolution. You know, just think of how many currents jazz include. Just to mention a few of them: dixieland, stride jazz, mainstream, be bop, hard bop, cool jazz, modal jazz, free jazz, jazz rock, fusion. To well describe my music I think that I can use the word contemporary jazz.

This definition actually does not reveal any particular since the word “modern” is related to a music which deviates from the past and looks forward in the future. What my music really is – depends on my experiences, not only as a musician but above all as a human being.

Artists have the task to transform their feelings in music and share their music with audience.

Wendiva: Now, let us talk about your album ‘Red Cloud’, which is premiering at the end of February. What is to be expected from you this time?

Dario: Well, this album represents an important moment for me and my career. It’s a concept album – or rather this is how criticism like to define it.

I tried to describe with music all human states of mind. Sometimes we are happy and joyful, sometimes we are angry, upset or depressed. Every song that I composed bears the name of an atmospheric phenomenon.

I created a connection between human feelings and “sky moods” with my compositions. So music is at times aggressive and hard, at times calm and lyric. I tried to combine these two different aspects of my musicality. I recorded nine tracks with different musical arrangements. Some tunes are performed in quartet, other songs in trio or even in guitar solo.

It was a fascinating experiment for me and now I really hope audience can appreciate my artist effort.

Of course I made use of three extraordinary musicians. They really gave my music deepness and thickness. I am talking about pianist Antonio Faraò, bassist Dominique Di Piazza and drummer Manhu Roche.



Wendiva: Your song Pearl of Mozambique with Bob Mintzer has a very nice African kinda of vibe to it; will your fans especially those in Africa get to hear such unique style of songs in the new album?

Dario: The song Pearl of Mozambique is a rendition of the song Lost in the Jungle. They are both included in the same album that I recorded with Yellow Jackets members Bob Mintzer, Russell Ferrante and Jimmy Hayslip. This piece is a real tribute to Africa.

The merit of this particular arrangement goes to the producer of this album Pino D'Eri – as well as the owner of label Tukool Records – and to Umberto Ferrara, sound engineer of all of my musical projects. They had the ability to transform a jazz-world music song into a real sound track which has the power to virtually carry you into the heart of Mozambique. That's why we called it Pearl of Mozambique.

My new album actually includes a large use of rhythm which I inherited from African music. Polyrhythm for example is one of the main ingredients of Red Cloud.

Wendiva: Jazz audience is usually mature. How will you get the interest of young jazz lovers?

Dario: It's true. Jazz audience is often mature but it's not a rule and however it depends on where you play. Having had the chance to perform in the USA I would say that this statement is completely reversed. Probably it depends on the fact that jazz music was born and evolved in the USA.

In addition Americans perfectly know their traditional song book which is the basic repertoire of every jazz musician. But it's surprising how many young people come to hear jazz music. New York City jazz clubs are often sold out and it's amazing to see that most of people are young.

I strongly believe that jazz music will become increasingly more and more popular than we expect. By the way jazz was an entertainment music in its early days.

Wendiva: If you weren't doing music, what would you be doing?

Dario: that's a good question. Actually I have never thought that I could do anything else. This might make you laugh, if I weren't a guitarist I would be a pianist.

Wendiva: At 31, you seem to have done well for yourself, did you ever feel like giving up along the way?

Dario: Being musician is hard. Most of people don't even know how complicated it is. And musician's life is an up and down circle and it's totally unpredictable as well.

I have never had the feeling for choosing to be a musician. It happened naturally. I think I have a mission in my life: writing my music and sharing it with audience. Having said that – I have never felt like giving up along the way.



Music is part of my inner space. It never cheated on me. It's much more than a job.

Wendiva: How hard was it for you to break through?

Dario: I have to say that it took time. If your goal is to be successful you have to work very hard. Being a musician is not only a question of playing a musical instrument or composing songs. You have to visualize what you can really do with music. It needs to be very clear-headed.

I must say that I have been fortunate since I knew that I was going to be a musician very early. This allowed me to start working professionally when I was no more than a child. But it's a continued research and evolution.

I have never had the feeling of completing my mission. My real success is to continue to do make music until the end of my days.

Wendiva: What three experiences are your most memorable so far on your journey as a jazz artist?

Dario: Well, performing with the legendary jazz fusion band Yellow Jackets has been probably one of my biggest satisfactions. When I was a teenager I was used to listen to Yellow Jackets records. Their playing and the sound they were able to create were absolutely astonishing. They are one of the most important bands in the jazz history.

It's easy to guess how I felt the first time that I performed with them. I was super excited and pleased. Another nice moment that means a lot to me was when I was awarded as Best Guitarist of the Umbria Jazz Festival. I was 20 and it represented a strong confirmation for me that I was really going in the right direction.

To conclude my answer I'll mention a third memorable experience not as specific situation that I lived but a short list of artists who I have had the privilege to perform with over the last 10 years: Billy Cobham, Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez, Andy Sheppard, Dave Liebman and William Kennedy.

Wendiva: What advice would be the most important you could give anyone yearning to be a jazz artist?

Dario: One of the first things is to love what you do. Love and passion are the key. Of course I must say that being talented is equally important. When I say talent I mean that kind of natural inclination which allows you to do something effortless, whatever it is.

You have to cultivate your talent, since it is just a potential. If you want to express your predisposition you need to have courage and dedication.

Another thing which I consider fundamentally important – wishing to address to jazz musicians – is that you need to develop your own voice on your instrument, your own way of visualizing music and your own path.



Wendiva: Have you ever performed to an audience who could not relate with your music? If yes, how did you get through?

Dario: Yes it happened. During my career I have had the chance to perform in several musical environments. When you play in Jazz Festivals or Jazz Clubs you feel like home. For some reason you are in the most comfortable place where performing jazz and people of course expect it.

It is interesting and more challenging when you perform for an audience that maybe is not in the habit of hearing jazz music. The first time I performed for a non jazz oriented audience I was a little bit scared and I didn't know how to face that situation. I thought, maybe I could make some adjustments to the repertoire in order to make it easier and more accessible.

But a few minutes before performing I said to my self, no it's not fair, I don't have to change anything, let's play what we are. I have to say that it worked. Sometimes it is a prejudice to think that jazz is too much complicated and so hard to understand.

I think it's a matter of how musicians convey their emotions with music.

No matter which style of music you play. Maybe audience might not know where your phrasing comes from or what chord changes you improvise over, but they can perfectly feel your joy and passion. This is a universal language. There is no need to be a music expert or a musician to be listening to a sophisticated concert.

It needs to be connected with human feelings. That's what I learned over the years: when I perform I want to express my whole self, with no limitation. Musicians are like open channels.

You need to be able to convey your energy through your music music.

Wendiva: Finally, why the sudden interest in the African market?

Dario: Well – the thing is that African music really strikes me. My rhythm vision as musicians is based on a deep passion for this music. I found such an amazing inspiration in African artists and African music.

It gave me a strong boost. Joy, lyricism, poetry and lightness are just a few ingredients. I think all musicians should incorporate a piece of Africa in their own musical vocabulary.

Wendiva: Thank you for your time Dario, it has been a revealing interview and Jazz lovers will find your personality as well as your music refreshing and unique.

It's obvious Mr Chiazzolino endeavors to involve his audience in every creative process he takes when making his music. This implies an equality between Dario's passion for jazz and love for the fans appreciation of his art.

Chiazzolino endeavors to compose beautiful music for every jazz lover and if the Red Cloud album is like any of his previous works, then Jazz fans all over the world will be honored to have him. Just as we are.

