

Oh The Things you Find Out in Conversation with Zucchero Fornaciari!

Natasha Lardera (March 05, 2014)



Zucchero, one of Europe's best-selling artists, has released his latest album, *La Sesión Cubana*, on February 18th via Manhattan Records and this spring he is touring the U.S. and Canada. In occasion of a presentation on PBS of his concert *Live in Havana-La Sesión Cubana*, recorded in 2012, he attended a conversation about his music and extraordinary career, led by Stefano Albertini, Director of Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimo, and Letizia Airos, editor in Chief of i-Italy... fun anecdotes abounded.

My friends' names are Federica, Lucia and Antonello; his friends' names are Bono, Andrea Bocelli and Joe Cocker. Quite a difference!

Adelmo Fornaciari, more commonly known by his stage name Zucchero "Sugar" Fornaciari, or simply Zucchero, who owes his nickname to his school teacher when he was a child, is an Italian rock singer whose music has spanned over five decades.

His music is largely inspired by American blues, gospel, soul and rock music, and alternates between ballads and more rhythmic boogie-like pieces. Over the course of his career, Zucchero has sold over

40 million albums around the world and won numerous awards, including two World Music Awards and six IFPI Europe Platinum Awards. He was also nominated for a 2007 Grammy Award in the Traditional R&B Vocal category for "You Are So Beautiful" the song he performed on alongside Sam Moore, Billy Preston, Eric Clapton and Robert Randolph. He has performed at The Royal Albert Hall in London, the Kremlin in Moscow, and Carnegie Hall in New York, and has recorded and toured with Eric Clapton, Andrea Bocelli, Luciano Pavarotti, Miles Davis, John Lee Hooker, Sting, and Solomon Burke to name just a few.

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In occasion of a presentation on PBS of his concert *Live in Havana-La Sesión Cubana*, recorded in 2012, and where he performs in English, Spanish and Italian, including some of his best known songs – "Baila (Sexy Thing)," *Così Celeste*," "Cuba Libre," "L'Urlo," "Everybody's Got to Learn Sometime" and a new Italian cover of the Spanish classic "Guantanamera," Zucchero attended a conversation about his music and extraordinary career, led by Stefano Albertini, Director of [Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimo](#) [2], and Letizia Airos, editor in Chief of [i-Italy](#) [3]. The event was the perfect opportunity to learn more about the star who joked about his uncertain beginnings in the Italian music business, laughed at funny anecdotes involving a hat that flew into the Grand Canyon (that cost him \$7500 to retrieve) and got a bit emotional when he recalled Pavarotti performing *Miserere* at the The Royal Albert Hall when he was already feeling sick ("he was very generous," Zucchero recollected).

Participants at the conversation have experienced Zucchero first hand, a man from Roncofiesi in Emilia Romagna, a region known for its excellent food, beautiful women, great singers (Lucio Dalla and Laura Pausini, for example) and a genuine lifestyle.

"The countryside where I grew up has been an inspiration for my songs," Zucchero explained in response to Albertini's comment that he is deeply rooted in his origins, "that was a place of strong contrast between the catholic faith and communist beliefs." In his home conversations on communism abounded but this did not prevent him from being an altar boy and playing the church's organ. The first meeting with music has been in a church for many musicians, Zucchero is not the first. Also in the years when he grew up, the music Italy listened to was very melodic, romantic, always talking about love (think Morandi and Pavone)... that did not affect Zucchero who looked elsewhere for inspiration, and mostly to foreign music (think Ray Charles and Otis Redding). It is a relief to hear that Diamante, Zucchero's grandmother, was such an influence on the boy who grew to become a superstar also thanks to his song titled after her. "I've always considered myself more a musician than a writer, so I asked De Gregori to write the lyrics. She never heard the song but she is part of it, as there is, at the very end, a recording of her voice yelling "Delmo vin a cà." She is calling me to her, and this has a double meaning," Zucchero said with emotion in his voice.

The insecurities that affected the singer to write *Diamante* disappeared when he wrote *Miserere*, one of his most successful pieces. "it was written in a moment of crisis, when I was depressed because I split with my wife. I was listening to Puccini to feel better, and reading Bukowsky just to prove myself that there was someone doing worse than me. I woke up one morning and wrote it in 10 minutes. Then I realized it needed something and that final ingredient happened to be Pavarotti's voice." The maestro was immediately intrigued by the proposition of bringing together pop and opera, but thought he was not going to be able to do it. It took Zucchero some convincing to do, until one day he found himself in Pavarotti's home, the maestro sitting on the couch, and directing him with a squeeze of his arm and a slight kick on the ankle."

You hear stories all the time of great collaborations starting in the most uncommon ways; some in a garage, others on a bar stool, theirs at the dining table. Call it a stereotype but what Italian does not get inspired by good food complemented by wine? "It's at the dinner table that we invented Pavarotti and Friends, charity concerts in his home town of Modena featuring international super stars such as Bon Jovi, Celine Dion, Andrea Bocelli, Eric Clapton and Sting. They were held annually for 12 years to raise money for several humanitarian causes." Concerts were held for War Child and victims of war and civil unrest in Bosnia, Guatemala, Kosovo and Iraq. According to Zucchero, Pavarotti was a genuine, humble, generous person who liked to play cards with his friends, speak dialect with Zucchero even at the most exclusive international soirees and eat good food. He had no



problem bringing prosciutto and salame along with him on tour.

Laughing at this was basically impossible for the audience, who sat enthralled for the entire conversation, curious to hear more about Bono and Miles Davis, about Zucchero ending last at Sanremo music festival with his song Donne, played with the Randy Jackson Band (that Randy Jackson, the one from America Idol!!) and about his 2012 concert in Cuba.

And what about the concert that will be held here in NYC at Madison Square Garden on April 23? In addition to finding out that renting MDG is “effing” expensive (that's why Zucchero and his band are stuck touring on an old fashioned tour bus) we know that Zucchero will be on stage with several of his friends: Elisa, Jovanotti, Chris Botti, Sam Moore, Dolores O'Riordan of The Cranberries and "Fher" Olvera of Mexican band Mana' among others.

Tour dates: <http://www.zucchero.it/americana-tour/> [4]

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