

The 63rd Festival of Sanremo: a Recap

Natasha Lardera (February 19, 2013)



The five-evening pop-song competition was a success; it captured an average audience of more than 11.9 million viewers, the best achieved since 2001. High praise for hosts Fabio Fazio and comedian Luciana Littizzetto (despite pre-fest fears they might impinge on the election campaign), the participating singers and special guests who gave a unique touch of quality to an otherwise stale format.

[Marco Mengoni](#) [2] has won the 63rd edition of [Sanremo](#) [3], Italy's leading music festival/competition, with his song "L'Essenziale," a modern love song. Mengoni, who was discovered by the talent show [X factor](#) [4], had already participated to the festival in 2010, and ended in the third place. He is a favorite of Italian audiences who appreciate his voice that is characterized by a soul tonality with pop rock accents. He has been applauded by [Mina](#) [5] and [Lucio Dalla](#) [6] described



him as “an extraordinary artist, one of the best in the last few years. He has an international personality and reminds me of Prince.” Mengoni himself has declared that his strongest influences are David Bowie, Michael Jackson and Renato Zero.

This year, the voting system at the festival was revolutionized. Indeed during the previous year the winner was nominated through televoting but this year a new element was added: the Giuria di Qualità, a jury made up of composer Nicola Piovani (the jury's president), dancer & actress Eleonora Abbagnato, journalist Stefano Bartezzaghi, musician Cecilia Chailly, dj Claudio Coccoluto, TV personality Serena Dandini, writer Paolo Giordano, producer Nicoletta Mantovani, pianist Rita Marcotulli and actor Neri Marcorè.

This year's winner was nominated 50% by the Jury and the other 50% by the audience. During the development of the festival, televoting influence will be lowered to 25% and the 25% left over will be decided by the points earned during the different days of the festival. Each singer had to present two songs, during the festival one of them would be eliminated and the artist continued with the one chosen song, up to the final.

The group [Elio e le Storie Tese](#) [7] came second with “La canzone mononota.” The “one note song” is everything but linear or monotonous. A note can change the tempo, the pathos, the singer, the interpretation, the story, the language of a song. The song is about itself, of how a note can be represented in all its different forms. The group, who is known for being irreverent and always original, last appeared at the festival seventeen years ago. Jokingly they had reserved for themselves the fourth spot, yet they also won the critic's award Mia Martini and the best musical arrangement.

The group [Modà](#) [8] ended up in third place with the song “Se si potesse non morire,” a piece that is rumored to have been stolen by a less famous singer. The similarities between this song and the song by Andrea Papazzoni, aka Andrea Noel, are quite striking so now the case is in the hands of the authorities.

Sanremo would not be Sanremo without any of these controversies. Something always happens. “Sanremo is strange,” [Fabio Fazio](#) [9], the show's host, confessed to Ansa, “the first and the final episodes are geological eras apart. Everything you have worked on in the previous months to be prepared is literally thrown out the window.” Fazio, who was accompanied on stage by his partner in crime, comedian [Luciana Littizzetto](#) [10], sums things up and considers his Sanremo a real success. “I wanted people to see that popular does not mean trivial.” So the Ariston Theater, the theater that has hosted the festival all these years, welcomed great performances of classic music, like “Va Pensiero,” and international stars, like Caetano Veloso, the best of contemporary pop music and Bollani, the satirical parodies of comedian Crozza and the political monologue by actor Claudio Bisio.

Italian media lauded Fazio and Littizzetto's light touch, irony and respectful approach, claiming they had revolutionised presentational styles which in the past ranged from starchy to corny and sometimes flirted with outright vulgarity. But in trying to point out a favorite moment, Fazio recalls the emotion of seen maestro [Harding](#) [11] conduct Wagner and Verdi on stage at only 37 years of age: “the important message is that passion for good music gives you a very interesting life.”

Fazio is happy with all the musical choices that were made: “We wanted to represent the contemporary musical scene. The winner embodies all that. The history of the festival teaches us that what really counts is the quality of music. We had 28 songs that were interpretations of the contemporaneity that is the distinctive trait of this edition of the festival. I strongly believe that the songs presented this year will live on.” [Mauro Pagani](#) [12], musician and artistic director of the festival said “the quality of the song writing was in average pretty high, Among the new talents I would have added ten additional spots. Some rejections were pretty unfair.”

Among the show's favorite moments there is the monologue by actor Claudio Bisio that started as an innocent, and at moments lame, monologue on Micky Mouse but evolved into a monologue where voters were accused of things politicians are usually accused of. Bisio was able to talk politics without any turmoil, differently from Crozza who, when first appeared as Silvio Berlusconi, was



heavily insulted and booed off stage. After the intervention of Fazio, the comedian was allowed to continue, but the monologue did not go as planned.

Many thought it was just too much and that the Sanremo stage should only deal with music and shut the door on politics. Needless to say, the number of viewers rose to 17 million during the monologue. (The five-evening pop-song competition and extravaganza captured an average audience of more than 11.9 million viewers, the best achieved since 2001). "I preferred to watch a soccer match," [Silvio Berlusconi](#) [13] said at the TV Show, Mattino 5, "I watched Juventus play against Celtic. I have already criticized the fact that Sanremo is taking place now (a short time before the elections). I have already said all there is to say."

Among the other guests of the festival [Andrea Bocelli](#) [14], whose career started at Sanremo, sang with his 18 year old son Amos, a couple of pop songs ("Love me tender" and "Quizas Quizas Quizas"); Brazilian singer Caetano Veloso sang "Come Prima" by Tony Dallara along on the notes played by Stefano Bollani; the ex premiere dame, Claudia Bruni; soccer superstar [Roberto Baggio](#) [15] who, after being interviewed by Fazio, read a personal letter written to the young generations of Italians who are jobless and unsatisfied with life. "Today I have white hair and many old scars. But my dreams remain the same," Baggio concluded, "Those who always try hard are those who are full of hope. Embrace your dreams and follow them. Every day heroes are those who always give it all." This thought is embodied by the winner of the festival himself, Marco Mengoni (24), who has fought hard to have his dream of becoming a singer and now as the winner of the festival he is an important player in the history of Italian music.

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