

Co-writing in New York for Virginio

Letizia Airos with Mila Tenaglia (March 27, 2015)



We went, together with Roberto Mancinelli, to visit Virginio during a co-writing session in a New York studio. The young singer and songwriter is attending a writing camp together with authors like Jesse Harris, Andy Maerz, Dimitri Elrich. "Roberto has managed to involve authors who have put their experience at our disposal, and the end result was a harmonious collaboration" the artist says.

Midtown. Italian music is in the air. And it's fresh air...notes, lyrics and a great voice. And we're not talking about a concert this time, but something different and maybe more fascinating.

I spent some time with Roberto Mancinelli (Sony ATV consultant, Italian Portfolio USA) and Virginio, young author and singer, in a recording studio. And what happened? Thanks to this co-writing camp banding together American and Italian experience a new song came to life before our eyes.

It was a challenge" Virginio says. "It is thanks to Roberto that I could come here and co-write with American authors. I didn't just want to export music, but rather create a song here in NY."

Roberto Mancinelli adds that: "An Italian collaboration with international authors isn't something new, but usually it's not a direct collaboration."



Typically the duets are created by sending the voices back and forth between two countries. But when you are in a studio with other artists the dynamics are different. You share emotions and feelings."

I observed Virgilio working in the recording studio. Singing over and over again. Singing a tune with someone else, writing, joking, humming, reflecting together. Looking in each others' eyes. Drinking coffee, a lot of it. It seemed as if they'd known each other all their lives, even though they'd just met. It's the magic of music, that mutual understanding I've always envied musicians for. In this case it wasn't even a concert but a creative moment happening right before my eyes.

"We started from nothing" Virginio says "We had no structure nor roles. We started playing our instruments and the songs came to life."

Roberto has managed to involve authors who have put their experience at our disposal, and the end result was a harmonious collaboration"; without the creative will of these artists nothing would have come out of it. Each one brings their experience, their own make up. We are what we have lost and what we have lived through."

Virginio is gently determined. He already, although young, has important history in Italy; but when he talks he does it with dreamy eyes. He struggles to believe this is really happening.

"I worked with Jesse Harris (winner of 2 Grammy Awards and more than 22 million albums sold with Norah Jones), Andy Marvel (over 35 millions albums sold with Celine Dion), Dimitri Ehrlich (millions of albums sold with Moby and Westlife)..."

"Jesse Harris - Roberto adds - has become our friend. He has a great sensitivity, I was almost sure the the two of them would work well together. He was promoting an album in Mexico, but he managed to fit us in; and we created a brand new song in his home, where he has a studio"

Roberto Mancinelli has seen Virginio grow as an artist.

"We met when I was working as artistic director for Sony TV Italia. I was employing authors. I've been following him since, and he wasn't just a songwriter, he also has a great voice."

"I participated to Sanremo Giovani - Virginio tells us - and later I felt the need to write, hence the meeting with Roberto. I have published many albums since then, and I've been wanting to come to America for a long time"

Roberto Mancinelli: "The time had come to be more adventurous in my professional life, so I came here to develop talents that have international potential. He is the first one. That said in Italy we don't have too many like him. The empathy that erupted between him and Marvel, for instance, has led him to stay longer so they could keep on writing together. A camp is good when there is artistic and human empathy. When this happens it's great, if it doesn't you may end up with nothing

.

The challenge of camps is choosing people with similar humanity and work ethics. You recognize a talented person also from his/her ability to adapt, understand the new environment and still be able to give the best. Many Italian authors struggle to come here to create. Co-writing is fantastic, it's the result of mixing talent, experience and humility".

Roberto is satisfied:" We have debunked the myth of the American that doesn't want to hear about you unless you have sold 200 million copies. If you have talent and are open minded you can make it".

I'm curious to know what happens to these songs. Virginio: "This is about writing, it's an experiment performed without having a recipient in mind".



Roberto Mancinelli: "We are working on the schedule of his album. We don't know yet if the songs written in America will be included. A piece that may not be right for your album may be perfect for someone else's". The job of the musical editor is to create songs, in his case we are lucky as we have a singer and songwriter. But the vast majority of the artists contracted by Sony are just authors. So going back to your question, the answer is that these songs could come out very soon, if for example Fiorella Mannoia falls in love with them and decides to include them in her next album; or she might like them but opt to leave them for later.

This work, that we call song plugging, often brings us to leave some songs aside for years, and not because they're not good. When they eventually come out they can be great successes.

For example, Renato Zero's piece "I Migliori Anni della nostra Vita", by Maurizio Fabrizio, wasn't published for 12-13 years. The beauty and success of the song show that it was a great piece, but that it hadn't found its right fit yet. The job of the musical editor is also to understand where, who and when. Unfortunately, but maybe also fortunately, this is not an automated process.

Furthermore, one may think they have 'a marvellous piece' and then they go to the recording studio, they try it, sing it, listen to it and somehow it doesn't sound that good anymore.

What's the difference with Italy?

Technically the greatest difference is the speed. Here in the the States, if you work from 3 to 6 , at six you have a finished product... this doesn't always happen in Italy."

But is it an advantage or a disadvantage? Roberto: "For me as an editor is a great advantage. As a pro in this sector, I like to go out and entertain myself with the people I work with, but only after having produced something...

Here in America we have found very pragmatic people, we always end up with a piece. Even if not complete, you have a piece in your mail, I appreciate all of this".

After saying goodbye I walk down the Midtown streets, Virginio's voice seems to still be resounding in the air, and that newborn tune lingers in my mind. I'm humming it as I stroll around New York. And one thing I'm sure of... we'll hear it again.

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