

In the Shadow of No Towers

Natasha Lardera (September 09, 2011)



Sorrow, confusion and rage are all familiar feelings to those who witnessed the attacks of 9/11, 2001. Comics writer Art Spiegelman told his story and inspired Italian musician Marco Cappelli for the creation of a multi-media project that puts together, images, music and narration. John Turturro makes the perfect voice, while an Italian version is also presented with actor Enzo Salomone

Back in 2004 the comic artist, Pulitzer prize winner and New York City resident Art Spiegelman drew the comic board book [In the Shadow of No Towers](#) [2], his way to reclaim himself from the post traumatic stress disorder he suffered after the September 11th attacks. In its pages, Spiegelman presents a highly personalized, political, and confessional diary, chronicling his experience on that day and its aftermath.



His family lived in Tribeca and his daughter was in a school located at Ground Zero that morning. The story follows Spiegelman's search for his daughter in the chaos, combined with his feelings of dislocation, grief, anxiety, and outrage over the horror of the attacks.

Italian musician and producer [Marco Cappelli](#) [3] decided to set Spiegelman's story to music as a multi-media event scored for a narrator with guitars, live electronics, and drums. The music fuses rock, jazz, and contemporary classical music. The narrator assumes the voice of Spiegelman, as well as other characters, accompanying visuals comprised of a moving collage of Spiegelman's actual cartoons. John Turturro makes the perfect voice for Spiegelman's New Yorker viewpoint, while an alternative Italian version is also presented with actor Enzo Salomone as the narrator. All this is presented in a DVD that is an impressive piece of multimedia art.

In an interview given to [The Jazsession.com](#) [4], Marco Cappelli talks about the origins of this project. "About four years ago I was in Palermo and I was just browsing in a bookstore, a bookstore I always went to just to spend some time. I saw Spiegelman's graphic novel, *In the Shadow of No Towers* but at first I did not make the connection, I mean I was familiar with *Maus* but I did not know it was by the same author. I was really impressed by the topic but mostly by the author's point of view, considering what a sensitive subject September 11 is. The way the book is assembled inspired me musically. There are ten tables and each table has more than one layer of narration that overlaps the others. So just by leafing through its pages I got inspired for its score. Also, when I was a teenager in Italy there was a show on TV that I loved and it immediately came to my mind. The title of it was [Supergulp!](#) [5] It brought comics to TV, meaning that the comic strips were actually filmed and a voice over narration read the bubbles. I thought this was perfect for Spiegelman's graphic novel. So along with my wife, the graphic artist Maria Isabel Gouverneur, and her colleague, video artist Anne Rothschild, we started experimenting. We then went to meet Spiegelman and he welcomed the idea. I don't think he realized at the beginning what we were going to do, honestly we didn't really know either. He was very direct with us when he said 'Most likely I will not like what you'll do with this stuff because I don't like anything, I don't even like what I do sometimes. So here is the graphic material of the book, do whatever you want with it and let me know when you're done.' He always has great comments."

The team was then able to put together a multi-media project comprised of images, live music and voice over narration. "We wanted to have live performances where a video would show the content of the book accompanied by music and voice over narration," Marco continues, "The first performance was done in Italy as we got funding from a local festival. As there was the possibility of doing more shows we thought that recording the music in the studio was the best idea. I worked on the score with two friends, Daniele Ledda, keyboards and live electronics, and Roberto Pellegrini, drums and percussion (the group was called Syntax Error)."

The music and the narration are in a crescendo in order to create a dramatic effect that never lacks a bit of irony, the irony that also appears in Spiegelman's writing. The author saw a live performance done in Manhattan a couple of years ago. He attended the event with his entire family. During the show Marco looked at the table where they were sitting but it was empty. He was really afraid of having disappointed the writer. He later had the chance to speak to him and be told that he had run after his daughter who had been really moved by the music. "Music can really bring out feelings and emotions, I don't think my book gives such powerful emotions."

Indeed the video addresses the topic in a sensitive way, but as you watch it you feel closer and closer to its story emotionally as it is easy to relate to it, especially the part about parents frantically looking for their daughter in a school right at the feet of the towers.

"I shied away from touching this topic as it is so close to so many," Marco continues, "It is always difficult to express an opinion about all this. So many people, especially in Europe and in leftist political parties, have doubts, questions, theories, criticisms and ideas on how something of that magnitude could happen in the United States without any sort of prevention. Spiegelman's point of view is very close to mine, and his idea is that it's not important to know the truth. The truth will come out in a century or so, when some report will be disclosed and none of us will be around to know. Whatever the cause was, the Government at the time decided to use what happened to

accomplish their own agenda.”

There will be a premier screening of [Mode](#) [6]’s just released DVD to commemorate the tenth anniversary of 9/11, In the Shadow of No Towers, at [The Stone](#) [7], on September 22 at 10.30 PM.

JOHN TURTURRO (English version)
ENZO SALOMONE (Italian version)
Music composed and performed by
SINTAX ERROR: Marco Cappelli - guitars, music box and live electronics / Daniele Ledda - piano,
keyboards and live electronics / Roberto Pellegrini - drums and percussion
Video Art
ANNE ROTHSHILD
Graphic Art
MARIA ISABEL GOUVERNEUR
Produced by
MARCO CAPPELLI
Executive Producer
BRIAN BRANDT, Mode Records NYC
IN THE SHADOW OF NO TOWERS ©2004 by Art Spiegelman
originally published by Pantheon Books, a division of Random House, Inc, New York

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- [1] <http://iitaly.org/files/marco-cappelli-art-spiegelman-john-turturro-shadow-no-towers-1>
- [2] <http://www.randomhouse.com/pantheon/graphicnovels/towers.html>
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