

Yes We Can. Yes He Can. Jovanotti's Glocal Music

Letizia Airos Soria (February 09, 2009)



Why Jovanotti? Why introduce Lorenzo Cherubini, a.k.a. Lorenzo Jovanotti, to a younger (and not so young) generation of Italian-Americans (and not only Italian-Americans)? Why introduce him to the whole world? First of all, his music is enthralling in its apparent simplicity, and second, Italy's image in the music industry must constantly be kept up-to-date. But we aren't here in the guise of music critics or even fans.

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Let's consider Jovanotti in the context of recent events. To summarize a recent story that appeared on ANSA: Students from the Marconi Science High school in Milan spent the morning with Jovanotti and MTV cameras to talk about the project *Tocca a noi* (It's Up to Us) which aims to create a bill of legal initiatives conceived and designed by young people. About 300,000 young people voted and 37% chose the topic School and University. Once the proposed law is drafted, 50,000 signatures are required before the proposal can be presented to Parliament. Lorenzo discussed it with the students and recounted his experience at the inauguration ceremony of U.S. president Barack Obama. "I'm not here to back anyone but to make everyone understand that we can change things." According to the singer, "We're in a country where we struggle to think about being able to change anything - it's a loss not only for politics but for society as well."

We don't want to suggest that Jovanotti can change Italian politics; we only begin with this anecdote to demonstrate his positive and energetic attitude. He is an artist whose music produces positive energy: few have been able to convey and spread the message of "Yes We Can" as many Italians would like.

We think that this is at the heart of Lorenzo Cherubini's many causes, including music. A loyal Internet user, his stance is revolutionary at a time when the Italian recording industry is terrified by the spread of MP3s. We remember him giving interviews wearing a baseball cap with a "Napster" logo on it, and screaming in Italy that music will not die because of the Web. On his site, before many others did so, he put the principle of "free downloading" into effect by making unreleased songs available for downloading. Lorenzo comments on this: "The worst case is that free downloading will prevent us from building a second villa with a swimming pool!"

His blog, which he manages himself, is just the latest in what it means to be an artist-user of the Web.

There's still a lot to say about "why Lorenzo Cherubini," but we can't possibly say everything in this article, and certainly not about his commitment to social causes. His records are dedicated to a range of humanitarian organizations such as Greenpeace and Emergency and a percentage of his royalties are donated to these causes. Last but not list, he recently produced a DVD dedicated to the memory of the Shoah. The work, realized in collaboration with [Ligabue](#) [3], [Luciana Littizzetto](#) [4], [Moni Ovadia](#) [5] and other famous Italian artists and literates, will be distributed throughout Italian schools.

Being present at the live telephone interview that Marina Melchionda conducted with Jovanotti for *i-Italy*, we decided to share our impressions.

"Hi, Marina!" After I handed Jovanotti over to her, the conversation continued for about ten minutes with such sincerity that we had never before witnessed with "stars" of a similar caliber. She is a young Italian-American and he is a legend for many of her Italian contemporaries. All of this took place between two continents. It was apparent that Lorenzo has a tremendous desire to give. We felt the charisma that few people in the entertainment world know how to express without creating distance. We could feel the man, the artist, the father, the young man who grew up while staying close to young people, as well as the Italian who talks about Obama after experiencing the phenomena first hand. And he does this with the awareness of wanting to convey a similar message with his music. We defined him as a global singer in the title of the interview, but the musical influences present in his songs are only part of his global identity.

"I was influenced by the [Beastie Boys](#) [6], [Public Enemy](#) [7], and the [Talking Heads](#) [8] who are all from New York. And also [Run-DMC](#) [9], a hip-hop group from Queens. I love the Latin sound from Harlem, funk that was influenced by Puerto Rican rhythms and black music" he said during our interview.



As [Eduardo Bennato](#) [10](another Italian music great who should be more well-known here in the U.S.) wrote, even if “they are only pop songs (canzonette),” Jovanotti’s music arrives through ipods and radio and crosses the existence and hopes of an Italy that believes, of an Italy that “mashes up” the world’s music – and that still maintains its identity. Yes we can. Yes he can. Jovanotti’s music has every reason to positively declare to the world that Italy is not afraid of being local and global.

(Translated by Giulia Prestia)

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