

Vinilemania.net A LATIN JAZZ HANGOUT IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE



Vinilemania.net, Pietro Carbognani.

What do Verdi, Toscanini, Prosciutto, Parmesan cheese, Napoleon's second wife, and a Latin jazz Internet radio have in common? They all sprouted from Parma, a city of 170,000 inhabitants, located on the north of Italy, half-way between Milan and Bologna, at the boot's center top when looking on the map. From his home in this city of castles and violets, Pietro Carbognani, 40, webcasts Vinilemania's "Latin jazz and salsa without frontiers."

Four years ago, Carbognani, an accountant in a private hospital's billing department, "just listened to Italian music, but without any passion."

Things began to change when he dated an Italian woman, a fan of Salsa mania, a craze that has taken over Europe for the past ten years. Although he didn't like to dance, he learned to salsa and joined her to clubs where Italian bands played Latin music.

"Then I heard the real thing," Carbognani says, "Hector Lavoe, Cheo Feliciano, Joe Cuba, Fania. I fell in love with that salsa, the one from 1965 to 1975. I couldn't get enough of it. I bought 150 LP's from a DJ, and then kept on buying more."

Among those records were some by Ray Barretto, Eddie Palmieri, Charlie Palmieri, Tito Puente, Celia Cruz, Orquesta Revé, Joe Arroyo, and Willie Colón.

"My ears got refined," Carbognani says. "I didn't want to listen to anything else."

From salsa he moved on to Latin jazz. By then he was smitten. But he got frustrated by the high prices of CDs in Italy, and refused to download for free.

"I hate downloading," Carbognani says. "It's the death of the CD and the reason why the music industry is now in crisis."

Plus, for Carbognani, part of the pleasure in listening to a record is to spend time with its cover, read the liner notes, look at the pictures.

In June 2005, with only five CDs (The Best of Ray Barretto, Concorde Picante's four-CD Anniversary set, and one by each, Tito Puente, Poncho Sanchez, and Cal Tjader) Carbognani started an adventure: building a website, learning in the process with the sole help of Microsoft FrontPage. He came up with the idea of requesting CDs in exchange of promotion.

At first, Carbognani would go to CD Baby and choose his favorites among the new arrivals in Latin jazz, salsa, mambo, flamenco, and Brazilian. Then he contacted the artists and introduced them to his website/web-radio.

Today it's the artists, promoters, and record labels who contact Carbognani. The downside: he gets so many CDs he can't listen to each more than once or twice. However, he does listen to every CD before he plays it on his site.

"My site is a tribute to the musicians," Carbognani says. "It doesn't matter whether they're more or less famous. They can be sure that their CDs are in the hands of someone who loves music."

He called his website Vinilemania, "to honor the old LP."

Thanks to a newsletter that reaches more people and places each week, Vinilemania now plays artists from various parts of the US, Canada, Europe, South America, South Africa and Israel. Some of Los Angeles musicians playing on Vinilemania are Jose Rizo's Jazz on the Latin Side All-Stars, Sal Cracchiolo and Melanie Jackson, Brasil, Brazil, Katia Moraes, Francisco Aguabella, Danilo Lozano, The Estrada Brothers, Robert Incelli, AC Timba Jazz, Henry Mora, Mike

Barone, The Echo Park Project, Bobby Matos, Susie Hansen, and Poncho Sanchez.

The site offers broader horizons for musicians, but also for fans and real connoisseurs, by bringing superb music from around the globe. Some examples: German pianist/arranger Sebastian Schunke (his Latin-jazz orchestra's CD *Mouvement* is a gem), Russian composer/conductor Oleg Tumanov (whose *Rio-Havana* features pianist Chucho Valdes and singer Leny Andrade), and the New York-based Argentines: bassist/composer/arranger Pedro Giraudo (his latest *Desconsuelo* is a dazzling tango jazz big band fusion), and new-kid-in-town vocalist Sofia Koutsovitis (her debut *Ojalá* is worth checking out).

On the website, one can click on any of the channels (Latin jazz, bossa-nova, Italian jazz, salsa), or on the tiny CD images. These are linked to the artists' pictures and CDs. The artists' pictures are linked to their websites, and the CDs to CD Baby. Under the CD

pictures, there are links to the songs. There are also links to news, reviews, interviews, and video-clips.

Carbognani converts CD tracks into Windows Media Audio files, and loads them onto the professional player. It takes him two hours per CD.

"The radio is non-commercial," Carbognani says. "And I do it in my own time. I give to it all the creativity I can't give to my day job."

He now offers musicians four optional packages, ranging between 25 and 100 dollars, in exchange for longer exposure on the website's home page. But again, they're optional.

Moved by pleasure, passion, and belief in the music, Carbognani considers himself fortunate for having everything he needs, including a new loving woman (a Hungarian belly dancer) and a son on the way.

"One thing I'm certain," he says. "He will be a musician."

You may visit www.vinilemania.net 24/7.

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