

MAURIZIO GIAMMARCO

Profile of a career

Maurizio Giammarco, saxophonist, composer, arranger, teacher, was born in 1952 in Pavia, where his father was temporarily working, but grew up in Rome, where the family moved after a few displacements and then settled permanently. As a young boy he memorized every note of a Duke Ellington record and of Gershwin's Rhapsody In Blue, the only records at home to arouse any interest. Thus he began to cultivate his passion for Jazz, thanks to the gradual purchase of records and listening to live concerts (his first was Duke again, in 1966, at the roman theatre Sistina). His growing and then overwhelming passion, which started from classic jazz and Armstrong, took him, at fourteen, to play the saxophone.

At the end of the Sixties he joined a nucleus of musicians in the roman area of Montesacro. This nucleus will then merge into the band **Blue Morning**, among the first Italian progressive rock groups oriented towards jazz (rock has been meanwhile approached for obvious generational reasons). Among the band musicians there were Billy Ward (a pianist already with the Folkstudio Singers and probably the first one to use the Fender Rhodes piano in Italy), the percussionist Alfredo Minotti, and guitarist Roberto Ciotti, who later will become the most acclamate italian bluesman. The last two played in the 1972 debut album of the same name.

This is the moment when he definitively decided to be a musician, also for his assiduous attendance at the Folkstudio (at that time the only legendary meeting point of the roman underground) which quickly introduced him into the roman free jazz circle, headed by saxophonist Mario Schiano, and later took him to attend the experimental Jazz course held by Giorgio Gaslini at the roman Santa Cecilia Conservatory (1973) along with other young lions of the roman jazz scene (as the late Massimo Urbani and Danilo Terenzi). These years of great excitement and artistic militancy saw the birth of the first small but historic self-organized jazz festivals, the first jazz performances and recordings, some harmony studies with composer Gino Marinuzzi, and the first experiences of original music with **Suonosfera** (1974: with Tony Ackerman, Eugenio Colombo, Michele Iannaccone, Nicola Raffone, Alvisè Sacchi) a very interesting experimental group, whose transversality was unfortunately never documented.

After these first experiences, feeling the urgent need to deepen his musical knowledge (at that time there was no type of jazz school), Maurizio went to the USA in 1975 (second of several trips to that country: he was already there in 1972 to follow an exceptional Newport Jazz Festival for the first time in New York) where he studied at the **Creative Music Studio** of Karl Berger in Woodstock, and perfected his technique with the legendary saxophone teacher **Joe Allard** in New York, where he spend every evening listening the jazz scene. Back home he was among the founders of the Music School of Testaccio, and started to perform in festivals (Sanremo, Pescara in 1976) as the leader of a **Quartet** with Tommaso Vittorini on sax, Enzo Pietropaoli and Roberto Gatto; a group later expanded to a **Quintet** with the addition of Giancarlo Maurino on alto sax and a very young Danilo Rea on piano (1977-78).

The late Seventies are very important because full of important and transversal meetings. While, as a sideman, he was involved in important experiments of progressive folk with the **Canzoniere Del Lazio** and later with Pasquale Minieri's **Carnascialia** (1976-79), at the same time Maurizio played with many important jazz musicians such as **Chet Baker**, **Enrico Pieranunzi**, **Tommaso Vittorini's Grande Elenco Musicisti**, and **Lester Bowie**. The latter, during another New York full immersion, invited him to play in his **Sho-Nuff 60 Pieces Orchestra** in two memorable concerts held at Harlem's Symphony Space on February 17, 1979. The only European on the spot, he played alongside the cream of the AACM: Art Ensemble of Chicago in full force, Philip Wilson, David Murray, Jack De Johnette, Anthony Braxton, Olu Dara, Julius Hemphill and all the others .

The Eighties began very well thanks to a collaboration with Chet, with whom he recorded and performed in Europe, and thanks to the birth of his first **Trio** (first of many that will come to follow) with Furio Di Castri and full time friend and partner Roberto Gatto. At the same time he collaborates with Giovanni Tommaso (also frequented during the Seventies) entering his **New Perigeo**, and began a professional activity as a sideman in pop tours and television.

From 1983 onwards Maurizio focuses more and more on his projects, starting a period of great productivity, thanks to the strong artistic exchange that binds a nucleus of excellent musicians and friends, inseparable companions of many adventures to come, with which he is working. In that year he recorded his first record as a leader: **Precisione della notte**, with Di Castri, Gatto and Danilo Rea. From that seminal work follow the central experience of the whole decade: the quintet **Lingomania**, active from 1984 to 1989 with different changes of staff (in various periods: trumpeter Flavio Boltro, guitarist Umberto Fiorentino, bassists Di Castri and Pietropaoli, pianists Sabatini and Rea, and drummers Gatto and D'Anna) which in a luster was voted best Italian group by the **Musica Jazz** referendum of 1984, '85, '87 and by Guitar Club referendum in 1988 and '89. Very important in these years it's also a work with the **Orchestra of the Opera di Cagliari** ('86): a symphonic unit for which Maurizio arranges some Enrico Rava tunes. One of two concerts realized is also attended by saxophonist Dave Liebman, already a reference figure for Maurizio, who has

the opportunity to know in depth later invite in future concerts. Furthermore, in 1988 Maurizio makes an important record with Peter Erskine, Marc Johnson and Danilo Rea on piano (Hornitology).

The dissolution of Lingomania opens the difficult decade of the nineties (also for personal reasons). However, many experiences, both as a leader and freelance, alternate during this period. Needs to be remembered a trio with Paolino Dalla Porta and Manu Roche ('89, '90), that then merged in the Day After Band with the addition of guitarist Dario Lapenna (1991-92, listenable on the important CD **Saurian Lexicon**); the Heart Quartet with Mauro Grossi, Piero Leveratto and Andrea Melani, who from 1993 to 1997 represented the most important and continuous work of the decade; another Trio with Dario Deidda and Amedeo Ariano; a particular project in quintet with Paolo Fresu and a string section dedicated to Neapolitan music: **Naples in Jazz**. Finally, in 1999, another great **Quartet** was born together with the great american pianist **Phil Markowitz** (together with bassist Piero Leveratto and drummer Fabrizio Sferra) responsible for a very important recording ("7 plus 8") that expresses a contemporary jazz definitely cultured and refined, due to the two leaders' compositions. The subsequent projects bring Maurizio more and more to the heart of his artistic identity, towards a more conscious elaboration of his musical experience. Thus, at the beginning of 2000, the **Megatones** quintet was born (where the leader concentrates the sum of all his compositional aspirations moving towards sound horizons of transversal originality), and the **Tricycles** trio (with Daro Deidda and John Arnold), where electronics and loops support the fundamentally extemporaneous planning of concerts. At the beginning of the decade there is also a short but very satisfying association with the bass virtuoso **Miroslav Vitous**. Continue also for years, even if sporadically, the adventurous multimedia performances with the friend "sound" sculptor Claudio Palmieri (**Hardware-Saxsculture**), as well the performances of Solo Sax, performed in spaces such as the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art and Palazzo Delle Esposizioni in Rome.

In 2005 Maurizio was invited by the Fondazione Musica Per Roma to direct the **Parco Della Musica Jazz Orchestra (PMJO)**, an orchestra that will reside at the Auditorium of Rome in the next five years, playing inside and outside the venue and also abroad (Spain, France, Germany, Argentina, Netherlands). The PMJO had a considerable number of orchestral projects in place (see details in the other part of the site), with dozens of ad hoc arrangements, and dozens of international collaborations with the likes of Martial Solal, Kenny Wheeler, Uri Caine, Maria Schneider, Bill Holman, Karl Berger, Mike Stern, David Fiuczynski, Nuen Lee, Bob Brookmeyer, Mike Gibbs, George Lewis, Riccardo Del Fra and others. The PMJO, among various recordings, produced the important double CD **Open On Sunday**.

Since 2011 Maurizio has intensified his teaching activity collaborating with some conservatories but above all with the Siena Jazz Foundation and the Saint Louis Music School of Rome. In the same year he recorded **Light and Shades**, a beautiful record with Vic Juris, Jay Anderson and Adam Nussbaum. In 2017 a reunion of **Lingomania** recorded the Cd **Lingosphere**. Current projects see Giammarco involved at the head of the **Syncotribe** trio, with Luca Mannutza and Enrico Morello, who can be heard in the Cd **So To Speak** (2015) and of the quintet **Halfplugged Syncotribe**, which recorded the Cd **Only Human** in 2020.

Here is a partial list of musicians with whom Giammarco has played and/or recorded. Trumpet players: Chet Baker, Lester Bowie, Kenny Wheeler, Jon Faddis, Conte Candoli, Franco Ambrosetti, Enrico Rava, Paolo Fresu, Fabrizio Bosso, Tom Harrell, Alex Sipiagin. Drummers: Aldo Romano, Manhu Roche, Marvin Smith, Ron Vincent, Peter Erskine, Billy Cobham, Daniel Humair, Joe La Barbera, Danny Gottlieb, Sangoma Everett, Kim Plainfield, Adam Nussbaum, Bill Stewart, Gene Jackson, Greg Hutchinson. Bassists: Marc Dresser, Harvie Swartz, Marc Johnson, Dean Johnson, Peter Washington, Riccardo Del Fra, Lincoln Goines, Jay Anderson, Paolino Dalla Porta, Miroslav Vitous. Pianists: Phil Markowitz, Art Lande, Phil De Greg, George Gruntz, Mike Melillo. Guitarists: Joe Diorio, Mike Stern, David Fiuczynski, Nuen Lee, Vic Juris. And furthermore Dave Liebman, Phil Woods, Toots Thielemans, Joe Bowie and basically every important Italian musician.

Maurizio Giammarco has performed in many major international festivals in Italy and in foreign countries as well (Umbria Jazz, Paris, Montpellier, Le Mans, Maastricht, North Carolina, Malta), and has made tours in Germany, Belgium, France, Africa, India, Turkey, Norway and United States. He has participated as a soloist in records, television programs and pop music tours (Fiorella Mannoia from '99 to 2004, Mina, Cocciantè, Nada, Avanzi Sound Machine). He has carried out various teaching activities and has worked on record and concert productions. He composed music for theater (Daniele Formica, Renato Carpentieri, Massimo Lanzetta), dance (Roberta Garrison), films (Nudo di Donna, Giocare D'azzardo, Fuori Dal Giorno) and CD ROMS (the RAI production L'Alba della Repubblica has won the British BIM'99 prize for best educational CD ROM). He was one of the promoters of the AMJ, the National Association of Jazz Musicians, holding the position of vice president in '93 and president in '94; and was artistic director of the summer review Termoli Jazz Podium for six editions (2000.2006). His name appears in the **Biographical Encyclopedia Of Jazz** by Leonard Feather and Ira Gitler. He is also the author of a book on Sonny Rollins, published in 1997 and written in tribute to one of his greatest and perennial sources of inspiration; and a book of his compositions and transcriptions published by Carish.