



Curatorial > INTERRUPTIONS

This section consists of a line of programmes that explore the complex map of sound art from different points of view in the form of a curatorial series.

With **INTERRUPTIONS** we make the most of the vast musical knowledge of the artists and curators involved in the **Ràdio Web MACBA** project in a series of 'breaks' or interruptions of our Curatorial programming. In *à-la-carte-music* format, our regular curators have *carte blanche* to create a purely musical experience with only one proviso: the thread that runs through each session must be original and surprising. This latest episode looks at the history of Italian library music.

Curated by **Raül G. Pratginestós**

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Raül G. Pratginestós (Barcelona, 1972) is just as famous for his sets as DJ Zero as for his indefatigable record collecting. Obsessed with vinyl-as-object since he was a child, he has spent a considerable part of his life acquiring, accumulating, listening to, collecting, selling, playing, publishing and talking and writing about records spanning the most diverse styles, periods and origins, as a rule in large format (LPs and maxi-singles). He is guided in this task by an enthusiasm for a mixed bag of seemingly unconnected genres (from contemporary to rock, jazz, techno, disco and exotic music, as well as soundtracks and "library music") and musical experimentation in all its aspects, from the birth of vinyl in 1949 up until the present.

INTERRUPTIONS #17

Vietata la vendita. Sonorizzazioni e commenti sonori: library music made in Italy

This mix is a comprehensive introduction and a tribute to the legacy of Italian library music.

01. Summary

Italians have always had a unique way of mixing music and drama, a special sensibility that accounts for the dominant role of music in the history of Italian film to the extent that many of the most highly admired soundtrack composers (Ennio Morricone, Nino Rota, Bruno Nicolai, Piero Piccioni and innumerable others) are Italian. It's no wonder then that Italy, which had its own major international film industry during the fifties and sixties, generated an enormous demand for music for films of the most diverse genres (from neo-realist or psychological dramas to spaghetti-westerns, *peplum*, *gialli*, *spy movies*, *poliziotteschi*, comedies and erotic films) and engendered a parallel music industry with composers from the most disparate fields (from jazz to 'serious' music). This prominent sub-industry was the backdrop to the fascinating and still relatively unknown world of library music 'Made in Italy'. A scene with very particular traits that is stirring up increasing interest in the strange parallel world of 'library music'.

Driving this interest is the high quality and originality of the tracks on many Italian library music records, which were often composed and performed by some of the best musicians of the time (Piero Umiliani, Sandro Brugnolini, the Santucci-Scoppa duo, Alessandro Alessandrini, etc.). These records were often soundtracks recovered from genuine cult films or sometimes from unknown television productions, although we also find many specifically produced original compositions that explore a series of recurring motifs, interests and obsessions of the time. Another popular practice was the recycling of material from 'serious' and experimental music, just as many soundtracks were recycled: music reused and taken out of its original context, transformed into high-quality products that contrast with their European counterparts. And we don't just mean the quality of the music, but also of the actual objects – aside from the excellent pressing, the quality of the printing and design of the covers was also excellent. While 'library' records often hide behind anodyne generic covers (the most famous would be KPM's 1000 series), in the Italian case there was no shortage of enigmatic or extravagant multicoloured artwork printed on high grade cardboard. This is easily explained if we consider that many of the labels were managed directly or in close collaboration with the musicians themselves, such as for example Sermi Cable, Gemelli DiVersi, Meridiana, Omicron / Liuto and La Cometa Edizioni Musical, which published soundtracks as well as library music records that musicians often used as a calling card. As such, most of these records circulated within a very small scene in the music or audiovisual industries.

Ironically, it was the big record labels such as RCA Italiana (with the Sottofondi Musicali and Musiche di Autori Italiani Contemporanei series) and Fonit Cetra that paved the way in the late fifties. Their records mixed specifically commissioned compositions with material from (now forgotten) soundtracks. They were mainly classical and dramatic works, with a touch of jazz (particularly orchestral jazz) by way of composers such as Piero Umiliani, Puccio Roelens, Mario Migliardi and Luigi Zito. There are also early works by composers like Bruno Nicolai, Gianni Ferrio and Romolo Grano – often in a style that is totally unlike that which would later make them famous – sharing space with tracks by leading figures from the film industry of the time, such as Mario Nascimbene for example.

The gradual stylistic broadening of Italian film in the sixties generated an



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immense musical variety that adapted the trends of the time (from jazz to beat and bossa nova) within a movement that is now usually referred to as 'Italian sound' (for want of a better name). This generic, ambiguous term refers to a vague but recognisable sound that encompasses the work of a large group of composers (Morricone, Nicolai, De Masi, Ferrio, Orlandi, Piccioni, Umiliani, Alessandrini). It is principally characterised by a particular approach to arrangements pioneered by the Morricone-Nicolai duo, based on progressive development, minimum instrumentation, the use of the female voice (often the legendary singer Edda Dell'Orso) as one instrument among many, and other singular elements.

A further distinctive feature was the incorporation of elements and techniques from the avant-garde world, one of the many refreshing, innovative elements introduced by Morricone, who was a core member of the Gruppo di Improvvisazione di Nuova Consonanza. And so, Italian film music entered its golden age in the late sixties, as a singular hybrid of the most disparate influences: from jazz in all its forms to the trends of the time (psychedelia, bossa nova, soul) and experimental and avant-garde music. And what's more, all these influences often converged in a single soundtrack.

This grandeur and interests were reflected in the innumerable library music labels that sprung up in Italy during this period. Some were linked to music publishing houses (Leonardi, Nazionalmusic o Sermi Cable) or major Italian record companies (RCA Italiana, Fonit Cetra, Vedette); others like Meridiana (Mario Nascimbene) and the emblematic conglomerate Omicron/Liuto/Sound Workshop (Piero Umiliani) were run by the composers themselves. Many swamped the production suites of television networks, radio stations and production companies with an avalanche of titles that vied with each other for originality and quality. They were signed by musicians of all kinds, from jazzmen like Umiliani, Brugnolini and the Santucci-Scoppa duo, to veteran band leaders like Armando Sciascia, electronic music pioneers (Pietro Grossi), prominent 'serious' musicians (Gelmetti, Marinuzzi Jr., E. Macchi) and numerous composers who are now remembered precisely for their contributions to this obscure musical universe (Sorgini, Luciani, Zito, Fabor, Barigozzi). And we cannot fail to mention another particularity that is very much a part of library music, Italian style: the strong presence of women (Nora Orlandi, Daniela Casa, Serenella Marega, M. Teresa Luciani), or the exploration of a series of recurring themes that reflected the interests, obsessions and concerns of the period in relation to the tensions of modern life.

One particularly popular theme was industrialisation or automation, which was also featured in many Italian films (the desolate industrial landscapes portrayed by Antonioni in *Deserto Rosso*, for example). Tracks such as *Nel mondo del lavoro* (R. De Filippi), *Ritmo dell'Industria* (Alessandrini), *Meccanizzazione* (O. De Filippi), *Mondo Operaio* (Santucci-Scoppa), *Lavoro e tempo libero* (Sorgini), *Industria n.1* (G. Iacoucci), *Lavoro* (Scoen) and *Industria 2000* (Di Jarrell) – obsessive, repetitive music that is often jazz-based but can also include electronic and abstract sounds. Electronics is another common denominator of a whole series of tracks that revolve around technology: *Informatica* (Corfull, Miglioli), *Cybernetica* (Peymont), *Scienza & tecnologia* (Raskovich), *Elettronica e tecnica spaziale* (Gisteri), *Eletto Musica n. 1* and *n. 2* (P. Grossi).

New takes on social and political themes were also popular: *Problemi d'Oggi* (Zalla), *Disagio sociale* (Ruscigan), *Inchiesta giudiziaria* (Braen-Raskovich), *Aspetti sociali* (Awake), *Reportages musicali n. 1* and *2* (De Luca-Brugnolini), *Dimensione uomo* (Alessandrini and others), *Povertà* (Scoen), *Droga* (S. Chimenti), and *Ecologia* (Scoen), for example. Once again, jazz, abstract sounds, and psychedelic and free music reflect the bewilderment and restless spirit of contemporary man. Compositions that sought to add a soundtrack to the more introspective aspects of human nature also deserve a special mention, such as *Specchio di una psiche* (R. De Filippi) and *Neuro tensivo* (Macchi), with their dark, alienating, almost contemporary sounds. Along similar conceptual and musical, we find a handful of war-themed albums: *L'Uomo e la guerra* (Ferrara), *Guerra e distruzione* (Umiliani), and *Guerra di cielo di mare di terra* (Fotriafa) – austere, dramatic, tense, generally percussion-led music. And we find similar instrumentation in a series of albums that address the problems of Third World countries, such as the legendary *Accade a...* (Arawak), *Terzo*



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Mondo (Elvio Monti) and *Situazioni al Terzo Mondo* (A. R. Luciani): exotic music and sounds that were new at the time, from psychedelic rock and black music.

In this recording scene there was also room for two of the great themes of the Italian films of the time – crime and terror –, in recordings such as *In Chiave di paura 1* and *2* (De Luca), *Elettrogialli* (Gelmetti, Luciani), *Rhythms in Suspense* (Marinuzzi Jr.), *Nucleo centrale investigativo* (Macchi) and *Terrore e suspense n. 2* (Peymont). Meanwhile, classical antiquity was the source of inspiration for the three volumes of the series *Rievocazioni storiche* released on the Cooper label, *Antica miscellanea n. 1* and *n. 2* (Renosto), *Arie antiche* (Sorgini), *Antico mondo greco-romano* (Gisteri-Santany) and *Il mondo dei romani* (Umiliani), which featured epic music, idealised musical reconstructions and unlikely electronic abstractions. And rounding off this curious thematic overview, there were also records dedicated to contemporary art (*Pittura contemporánea, Galleria d'Arte*), to the world of childhood (*TV dei ragazzi, Insiemeistica, Il mondo dei bambini*), outer space (*Astrofisica, Selinunte, Visioni di vita spaziale*), nature (*L'acqua, Fauna marina*) and spirituality (*Misticismo, Mysticae*).

Just as intriguing as the tracks and music compiled on these records is the lack of information that is available on them now. In the midst of the digital era, we do not know who really composed many of these pieces (they were often released under pseudonyms), and the history of the recording sessions, the labels, the chronologies and the catalogues are all full of enigmas. For the moment, Italian library music offers more mysteries than answers. Many of these titles fall directly into the 'non-googleable' category (that is, they don't even show up in a Google search), and we often only know of their existence when a copy pops up in an online auction. They appear more often on wish lists than on lists of existing collections (physical or virtual). They are pieces lost in a musical universe, awaiting in-depth research. It is poetic justice, then, that Profondità is the title of an (extremely sought-after and controversial) LP of library music published in Italy.

02. Playlist

Augusto Camponeschi, 'Fixe spatial' (*Un volto per Adamo*, Orly)
 Guglielmo Pappararo & Vittorio Montis, 'Jonosfera' (*April Orchestra 16*, RCA)
 The Fine Machine, 'God is infinite' (*Habitat*, Cam)
 Piero Umiliani, 'Approdo lunare' (*L'uomo nello spazio*, Omicron)
 Lamartine, 'Skylab' (*Cronache dal mondo*, RCA)
 Piero Umiliani, 'Delenda cartago' (*Il mondo dei romani*, Omicron)
 Giuliano Sorgini, 'Dorico' (*Arie antiche*, LEO Records)
 Piero Umiliani, 'Musici' (*Il mondo dei romani*, Omicron)
 Arawak, 'Acquarium' (*Background music n.4*, Titian)
 Amedeo Tommasi, 'Protozoi' (*L'uomo e la natura*, Nereide)
 Armando Sciascia, 'Mare nostalgico' (*Sea fantasy*, Vedette records)
 Bruno Nicolai, 'Tonnara' (*Civiltà del mediterraneo*, EDI-PAN)
 Giuliano Giunti, 'Baleneria' (*Il mare*, Ayna)
 Franco Bonfanti & Giancarlo Barigozzi, 'Vela 6' (*Vele sul mare*, Abramo Allione)
 Francesco De Masi, 'Riflessi nella laguna' (*L'Italia vista dal cielo*, SR records)
 Franco Bonfanti & Giancarlo Barigozzi, 'Circolo vizioso' (*Vele sul mare*, Abramo Allione)
 Di Jarrell, 'Mondo industriale' (*April Orchestra 5*, RCA)
 Oronzo De Filippi, 'Chimica industriale' (*Meccanizzazione*, Leo Records)
 Raskovich, 'Laboratorio artigiano' (*Varie atmosfere da interni*, Full Records)
 Braen, 'Pulsazioni meccaniche' (*Scienza e biologia*, Chic)
 Oronzo De Filippi, 'Raffineria' (*Meccanizzazione*, Leo Records)
 Alessandro Alessandrini, 'Inseguimento all'aperto' (*Panorami e effetti*, Spring)
 Luigi Zito & Vittorio Nadalin, 'Autodromo' (*Branzi vari per sonorizzazione*, Ediphon)
 Gino Marinuzzi Jr., 'Battaglia dei ritmi' (*Rhythms in suspense*, SR records)
 I marc 4, 'Trama nella metropoli' (*S/T*, Nelson)
 Arnaldo Graziosi & I Panamera, 'Pomeriggio – The' (*Supersonori n.2*, Pinciana)
 Luigi Zito, 'Neuropatia' (*Telemusica n.4*, Lupus records)
 The Fine Machine, 'Shut paranoia' (*Habitat*, Cam)
 Luigi Zito & Vittorio Nadalin, 'Ansie secondo' (*Musica del nostro tempo-tensioni drammatiche e psichiche*, ediphon, 1971)



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Giampiero Boneschi, 'Perplexità' (*Elettrorama*, Music scene)
Marino Marini, 'Scanzonato zoo' (*Scanzonato zoo*, Panda)
Minus, 'Quaqua charleston' (*Minus creations*, RODI)
Luigi Zito, 'Valzer grottesco' (*Telemusica n.6*, Lupus records)
Minus, 'Pettegolezzi' (*Minus creations*, RODI)

03. Related links

Raül G. Pratginestós on Ràdio Web MACBA: OBJETO SEMI-IDENTIFICADO NO PAIS DO FUTURO Tropicália and post-tropicalismo in Brasil (1967-1976)
http://rwm.macba.cat/en/specials/tropicalia_2/capsula

Fauni Gena (Raül G. Pratginestós' label) at Discogs
<http://www.discogs.com/label/498195-Fauni-Gena>

MEMORABILIA. COLLECTING SOUNDS WITH... Jonny Trunk. Part II
Jonny Trunk picks his fifteen favourite tracks from the fifteen best library music companies in his collection.
http://rwm.macba.cat/en/research/memorabilia_jonny_trunk_collection/capsula

04. Credits

Curated and produced by Raül G. Pratginestós.

05. Copyright note

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