

INTERVIEW TO ANTONELLO CRESTI - SOLCHI SPERIMENTALI ITALIA

We're proud to present you the interview to **Antonello Cresti**, the author of **Solchi Sperimentali Italia**, recently published, that is already having a great success not only among the so called "other musics" passionates, within which are some of the genres that we usually talk about. **Solchi Sperimentali Italia** is a book which value is to invite to think about the primary role had by our country in the history of experimental music and in the development of music genres such as ambient and dark ambient, industrial music, noise and so on, but it's also a book which language is strongly innovative: a sort of Hypertext translated into a regular book, an experimental operation, a book that needs to be put in the personal shelf.

1) Hi Antonello! Could you introduce us **Solchi Sperimentali Italia**, your last book?

Solchi Sperimentali Italia is, in some way, the successor of **Solchi Sperimentali**, above all as far as its approach of making is concerned, considering my idea of experimentation, a word that i don't love particularly, as i prefer that of research music or, better, "other music", as it's defined in the book's subtitle. The idea isn't specifically to demarcate in a schematic way a precise musical genre, but to search to focus, in the most diagonal way possible, all those music genres, within the popular music of the last fifty years, that contain in themselves at least some germs of research aimed to destroy the experimentation's boundaries. **Solchi Sperimentali Italia**, maintaining this approach, tries to districate itself through fifty years of production related to the italian scene from the end of '60s until today. It talks about 300 artists, 170 of which are interviewed, and i think that, although the work doesn't want to look like an encyclopedia, it begins to portray the italian panorama in a quite reliable way.

2) Talking as a reviewer to another one, in the book you write about loads of artists and albums, and often the "influences" topic is talked about, and not only that. Sometimes, when i listen to an album i think about the "influences" topic, how it's possible to define a specific degree of influence that an artist has on another one? I ask you this as sometimes labels write about influences that maybe couldn't be find on those albums (or not clearly), maybe to stimulate the process of buying the album. What do you think about this?

I have to admit that it's a funny question, because this discourse upon the influences could be considered the obsession which all of us have to face. The artist who makes music, as well as we, the reviewers, that write about it, need to define, in some way, or to find linkages, as who wants to become a passionate fan of something could vaguely know in which direction an artist works. The funny thing is that, loads of times, this doesn't allow the listener to meet with the music producer, then, while a musician creates, composes and produces a song, often has in his own mind some influences, maybe he has in mind an artist that he likes or some kind of arrangement, but every person that will listen to this song will find a different linkage, that maybe, honestly, the artist hasn't imagined. On the one hand, this can constitute a weakness, as this obsession can be seen a bit as insignificant, but, on the other hand, anyone listens in the song what wants to listen to, maybe his influences (those of the listener) or what he listens to. If considered in a purposeful manner, this can only be an addition. Sometimes i've met artists to whose i've asked if that specific motif has been inspired by that specific song, making feel them unprepared because that linkage was only on my mind, causing them to listen again to that song.

3) Let's talk about different artists, as far as their approach is concerned, that usually produce more or less albums. An experimental artist who experiments in the prog genre, generally produces less albums than those produced by an artist who experiments in the power electronics genre, because who makes PE music is more interested on the act of creation, a compulsive act (as someone has explained me). In your analysis of particularly different works, do you use different tools and approaches, or do you use the same tools and approaches for every kind of music you listen to?

I try, in some way, to use the same approach, although knowing that we talk about very different music genres. As far as the overproduction typical of some expressive genres is concerned, I would add that, for example, in power electronics music, as well as in some other genres, there's even a large interest towards the object, while other artists don't have it in the same way. However, I try to make possible that, even in the differences, any brick could be functional in creating the widest fresco possible, and I take advantage of this question to explain the main reason behind the inclusion or the exclusion of some musicians, musicians that have afterwards asked me to explain them why. Although, for me, some exclusions have been painful, I have my own idea of narrative coherence, according to which every piece of the puzzle needs to be put together correctly. Obviously, the reader will have a different narrative coherence, this is obvious.

4) Let's still dig a bit in the power electronics field. In the interview to **lugula-thor**, I've been fascinated from what he said regarding the fact that the most the music is direct, without compromises, as the PE genre the most of the times is, the most the mechanism that unleashes our internal pulses and what we have inside of our mind is direct, input / output without particular mediations. It could be deduced that the contrary happens the most the music is structurally complex and its arrangements are "classic". Do you agree with this thing? What do you think about it?

I would rather ask myself about what does it mean to "be direct", I wouldn't say that there's a linkage between the work's complexity and the way in which it's more or less direct. Any work can alternatively communicate a feeling of artificiality, something false or, however, "built", or a form of deep authenticity, of emotion, and this won't depend on the musical genres. If it depended on music complexity, the last two **Mozart's** symphonies shouldn't be able to communicate directly something to the listener, then, rather, I would say that what has a matter is to communicate in a sincere way its own expressive, sonic world. This can happen within pop music, in an instrumental 11/8 composition, in the power electronics bombardments.

5) Let's start from the works of **Francesco Messina** to talk about ambient music in Italy. From what emerges in the book, our country has had a sort of paternity of the genre. Could you confirm me this? This thing seemed to me really interesting, as I think that there aren't loads of listeners who know how much important Italy is for this music.

I talked about it in a radio broadcast a couple of days ago. It seems exaggerated to me to talk about paternity of ambient music in Italy when, in England, existed a musician as **Brian Eno**, but I think, as said by Messina himself, that there were energies in the air when they were intercepted in several expressive and in determined geographical settings. The current Italian ambient music scene has a strong expressive strength that has nothing to envy to the other national scenes, and it's one of those settings in which I think that Italian musicians are showing their value for their personality and for their inspiration, as well as, between the late '70s and early '80s, Italian

industrial music, even having been created in England, was considered (and is still considered) one of the most interesting Italian scenes, demonstrating to have its own trademarks, and this is the good thing, as the miracle happens when in Italy non-derivative music is produced, music which has its own identity.

6) It's particularly interesting how some musicians talk about the processual dimension of the sound (I talk about the **Nova Musica Akusmatika** section of the book), as well as it could be talked in terms of Contemporary Art (it's not a coincidence that those musicians also work in the Interactive Art field and not only that), and it seems to me that who study the processual side of sounds usually tend to detach himself from those musicians who compose experimental music maybe because they are fascinated by the potentialities of the available tools, such as those electronic. Is it so important, for every experimental musician, to conceive the sound with the same approach used by those artists who focus about its intrinsic properties?

We're talking about the so called electroacoustic scene, that is particularly vital in Italy. I've put, within a section of the book, a series of the characters of the genre, well conscious of having not inserted most of them, because I'm talking about a segment of experimentation particularly active in the last years in Italy. It's a setting in which the musician searches for, in an ever-increasing obsessive and explicit manner, the conceptualization. Sound is seen as a sort of living matter to which give shape, to sculpt, partially moving outside of the traditional aesthetic concept that wants the process of composition as a melting of notes that needs, in some way, to communicate a feeling, an emotion, or something similar. Here the idea is to work directly on the sound, conceived as a matter shaped by the musician-sculptor, and this brings him to ask himself, in a more philosophical manner, about the origins of sound, on the kind of interaction that he wants to give to the matter. If you take a look at the interviews, you'll see that there are some particularly deepened, such as that to **Domenico Sciajno**, maybe the artist that talked more than the others. In these musicians, there's a need to weld philosophy, physics, mind and sound, while other musicians, which come from different backgrounds, operate into a setting more interested into the emotional and the expressionist sides of music.

7) I admit it: I'm one of those persons that, before starting to read your book, haven't imagined that Italy have had offered a lot in the experimental musical field, as well as in the dark ambient, in the field recordings, prog, ambient and electronic music fields, and, consequently, concentrated specifically on foreigner acts. Do you think that, in general, our musical heritage is sufficiently discussed and that it's quite valued?

No, for two reasons: the first one is that, beyond the preclusion that sometimes could exist when the releases don't come from some countries – and I underline the word sometimes – because Italian experimental musicians are often more appreciated abroad than in Italy, and, unfortunately, I could focus on our wrong behaviour, as we aren't able to appraise and to propose, too often we fight with our neighbours when, in the contrary, we should move united toward the same direction; the second is that we pay what is the global image of Italy as far as music is concerned, the image of a country that, apart from few rare exceptions, when talking about rock or pop, has nothing to say. When I read the musical newspapers and I see that a lot of space is dedicated to the so called "indie" scene of the new singers, I think that we're wasting time and energy in front of products that not only have nothing to say, but that, in addition, probably are counter-productive for the image of our country between the listeners that, otherwise, ask

something more to the music, as Italy has a lot to offer, but the country should see in another direction instead of that that is followed by who's inside the music business.

8) Assuming that in Solchi Sperimentali Italia the interviews occupy a very leading role because there are a lot, as well as why they help in order to better understanding the musicians's way of thinking, i would ask you how have you made these? Have you focused more on the physical interview, on the phone interview, or on the sending of a file containing the questions? Which approach do you like the most?

I wouldn't talk about a favourite method, it's a method that help to speed up the work and, very clearly, i have to tell you that making such a huge work as Solchi Sperimentali Italia could have been probably impossible to fulfill without the existence of the Socials, and, thanks to these, about 80% of the artists has been contacted and we had an exchange of questions and answers by means of emails or by means of the written text. There is also a low percentage of artists, mainly the most known, whose interviews were made by means of a telephone call. No interviews have been made live, as, although i've met some of the artists live, in that moment i already was writing, and i haven't done it. In addition, i wanted that my writing and the interviews were separated, i don't wanted that one thing could have had an influence on the other. As i wrote in the book introduction, this thing of putting together my critical evaluations in the interview has been a sort of blind date, when i've read them again it's been funny to see how some evaluations crossed between themselves and when not. I've preferred to leave to the artists the maximum space possible.

9) The book's contents are shown in a very particular way: there are icons, QR codes, the "Incroci" that recall the hypertextual links, and a smart manner of citing the album's titles within the "reviews". Have you been inspired by the language of the Web?

Yes, the hypertextuality is very important, as we find ourselves in the Web epoch and in that of the fast communication. I think that the book couldn't be exchanged with the Web and with the virtual communication, but i try to write something that could put in direct contact the written communication with that, faster, of the Web, and so there are QR codes that allow to "directly" listen to the music while reading the book and some other expedients used within each discography not to repeat everytime the albums's titles. I've used an enumeration: if i talk about three albums of an artist, i assign to each of them a progressive number, number that, then, i recall in the text. It's the only encyclopedic criterion that i've used, a criterion that i've seen in a book released more than twenty years ago, the "Enciclopedia del Rock Italiano", which analyses stopped in 1993.

10) Could you shortly talk me, if possible, about your further projects? What i surely know is that you're presenting your book to loads of persons throughout the whole italian country.

Now i'm making a real, active, promotion. The book is a way to meet, throughout Italy, the persons who are interested into this musical genre, that search for something different in the music, plus the presentation of the book is a way to allow particular performances to happen: i don't care about going from library to library making traditional presentations, but rather i care about giving to the musicians the chance to play and, maybe, to create collaborations thanks to these moments. In this way, the book, although has its lacks, wants to be a gate towards a series of ventures that start from the book to move in the presentations, but eventually, as some people told me, it could be organized a festival, or it could be created a YouTube channel. All the things

that will follow to the publication of the book will be good things, as these things will offer an additional contribution to the knowledge and it will prove that the input sent by the book could have generated good results.

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