



## **(H)itWeek L.A. Redefines America's Perception of Italian Music**

DARRELL FUSARO (November 03, 2009)



By all accounts the very first HitWeek L.A. was a success. Americans were treated to artists and performers of which maybe only a few have even heard of prior to the festival, one of which being Franco Battiato at the 499-seat Broad Stage theatre in Santa Monica, CA. Those who experienced any one of the thirty events organized for the occasion are right now probably sharing their new discovery with their friends

The response seemed to be the same from every American interviewed during HitWeek L.A. performances. When asked what they thought of the performers they all said the same thing, "I can't believe I have never heard of them. They're great!" At one concert an audience member held up her cell phone and shouted into it, "Are you hearing this? You have to contact them. They're awesome!" I came to find out later that her cousin is a Talent Manager and she wants to make sure he knows about these acts.

By all accounts the very first HitWeek L.A. was a success. It appears that Francesco Del Maro



achieved his dream to introduce contemporary Italian music and art to the U.S. It was a little over a year ago when Francesco first had the idea to bring mainstream Italian music to Los Angeles, CA in order to smash the American perception that Italian music is nothing more than just "mandolino and people walking in the streets of Italy singing, Volare."

### **(H)itWeek: All Darrell Fusaro's interviews**

Organizer Francesco Del Maro Giovanni Allevi Belladonna Jesus Was Homeles At first what seemed to be an impossible fantasy soon began to gain momentum when top acts from Italy agreed to join the cause by performing and when some of the biggest Italian companies came on board as sponsors it became a reality. "Although music is the soundtrack" of HitWeek L.A., Francesco added the many cultural aspects that make up today's Italian lifestyle; arranging art exhibits, movie screenings, wine tasting, fashion shows and even a massive Ducati motorcycle parade, all to take place in Los Angeles during the course of one week.

With thirty events lined up everything was in order for HitWeek L.A.'s opening event when a heavy down pour of rain nearly washed it away. Though the reception was outside on the Patio Mariotti of the Italian Cultural Institute, Francesco didn't let this discourage him, he had a large clear overhang put in place with dramatic lighting and the show went on. Although very wet when they arrived, the attendees mood was immediately elevated as the band Afterhours rocked the Institute, performing live in the intimate one hundred seat Sala Rossellini theatre. The California down pour finally broke on the second day of HitWeek L.A.

Americans were treated to artists and performers of which maybe only a few have even heard of prior to HitWeek L.A. These performances took place intimate settings that would be unheard of in Italy due to some of these artists' notoriety. Acts who regularly perform to tens of thousands were giving it their all in venues holding from fifty to a few hundred. There were many surprises for the Americans, who up until now were unaware of music that existed beyond the scope of what is regularly available in the U.S. One of the biggest surprises was that the majority of the acts sang in English and do so even as they perform in Italy.

The performance by Franco Battiato at the 499-seat Broad Stage theatre in Santa Monica, CA, on the last night of HitWeek L.A. was the grand finale. For Italians it might be hard to believe that most Americans, except for a few who know of his cover of "Ruby Tuesday" on the soundtrack of the film "Children of Men", have never heard of Battiato. It maybe even harder to believe that this was his very first live performance in Los Angeles and only his second in the U.S.

Watching one of lead singers of Linea 77, the hardest and most aggressive musical act to perform during HitWeek L.A., sitting in the front row with his mates and singing along like a child to a Battiato ballad spoke volumes.

Francesco Del Maro stated in our first interview that this was a labor of love and although not sure how it would turn out, he was driven by his passion. He felt compelled to share his love of music and contemporary Italy with the world.

After Battiato's concert, looking back on HitWeek L.A., Francesco said with a big smile, "I'm happy."

Hitweek L.A. came to a close on October 18th but it's not over, the ripple effect has just begun. Those who experienced any one of the thirty events is right now probably doing exactly what the gal shouting into her cell phone at the concert did, enthusiastically sharing their new discovery with their



friends

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