

'Area'. 2 Concerts You Shouldn't Miss

Benny Profane (April 26, 2010)



Save the date for these two concerts of the "Area." The historical Italian band, perhaps little known in the US today, should actually be considered one of the mythic European bands of the 1970s.

To find Area in New York you need to head to the heart of Chinatown, specifically Monroe Street, in a basement inhabited by resilient mice. It's one of the most venerable music institutions in New York – the Downtown Music Gallery, a historic record and CD shop and performance space previously located on the Bowery from where they were evicted because, as you know, the Bowery is becoming increasingly trendy (even if the winos continue to hang out there, undeterred). The Downtown Music Gallery as the name suggests is a place for musicians from the downtown New York music scene (from John Zorn on down...), and its friendly owner Bruce often hosts concerts by avant-garde artists and the other lucky few.



Along the walls of the dusty room lined with CDs, the pea green border of the historic Cramps label sticks out, which, as my “loyal” readers may already know, back in the 70s represented a refuge from conformity for some of the most significant Italian and foreign artists of the time. First, of course, is Area, which under the careful guidance of legendary producer Gianni Sassi churned out a series of albums that are among the most beautiful and important of that time.

Bruce loves Area a lot and this speaks volumes about the greatness of the band, as my friend Bruce must have listened to thousands of albums in his lifetime, and if he says that Area deserves to be heard you must believe him (since I’m afraid you don’t believe me ...). For your “beloved” reporter, the best work by mythic European bands as Soft Machine, Popol Vuh, Can, Henry Cow, and the like have nothing on Area’s albums. Unfortunately, Area’s artistic legacy ended in the late 70's, after the death of Demetrio Stratos, the Master of Voice who with his vocal experiments earned the great distinction of connecting the world of pop music with the avant-garde.

Area is the soundtrack to a decade full of great passion and transformation. Stratos’ death was the first in a series of tragedies that struck the band. Years later, the fantastic drummer Giulio Capiozzo died, and even saxophonists Eddi Busnello, Larry Nocella, and Massimo Urbani, who collaborated with Area several times, are no longer with us. It’s a shame that Area is not very well known today, since without them many other pseudo-groups and singers would never have ventured into a profession in which they did not belong; for example Jovanotti’s off-key barking would most certainly have been considered noise pollution and perhaps instead he would have followed in his father’s footsteps and worked for Vatican City. But since we don’t live in a perfect world, Jovanotti sells 500,000 copies of his CDs and does not work at the Vatican, Clerici hosts “San Scemo” and attracts a ton of listeners, and only a handful of us know Area.

But now I appeal to you, dear reader. I know – we don’t love each other, we’ve never loved each other, you accuse me of being elitist and obnoxious, I scold you for not understanding good music, for following trends and worshipping Jovanotti. I call a truce. Believe me for once; listen to my words. Let’s forget the past. And follow my advice. Area is coming to New York after 30 years for a historic reunion with the original members of the group. The great Mauro Pagani will also be there.

There will be two concerts at the Italian Cultural Institute (April 30) and the Brecht Forum (May 2). Do yourselves, and me, a favor. Be there. Come out in large numbers. I know that you saw Jovanotti at Webster Hall and you danced and sang Jovanotti’s chants at the top of your lungs. Okay, no comment. But for once in your (music) life, be bold, take a chance. Try something new. One day you’ll thank me. Do it for me, do it for that kid who far too many years ago cut school to avoid his Greek exam, and while wandering around the Pantheon he entered a record store and driven by who knows what instinct purchased Area’s live album, Areazione. It’s an absolute masterpiece of Italian music that I strongly suggest that you listen to at least once in you lifetime.

Friday April 30th, 2010 6:00 PM
Italian Cultural Institute
686 Park Avenue, New York
RSVP 212 879 4242 ext. 368

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Sunday May 2nd, 2010 8:00 PM



Brecht Forum

451 West Street
New York, NY 10014-2041
(212) 242-4201
Admission: 10\$

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