

Stefano Di Battista

Stefano Di Battista belongs to those transalpine voices that have just landed in France: here to let us hear such interesting music that is so different and yet still rooted in the spirit of universal jazz. And Stefano Di Battista is a man going places. It's one of his main features. In just a few years he has managed to drive home the fieriness and virtuosity of his playing, so that he's now regarded as one of the safest bets in jazz.

Stefano was born in Rome on 14 February 1969. He started playing the saxophone at the age of about 13 in a small neighbourhood group. In no time at all he discovered jazz and fell in love with the acid tone of Art Pepper: 'As soon as I heard him I wanted to play like him (...) it was the start of my love affair with jazz.' Then he met the man who became his mentor, the legendary alto sax player Massimo Urbani: 'He taught me energy, generosity, physical and spiritual commitment to music..'

In 1992 Stefano played at the Calvi Jazz Festival ; there he came across French musicians for the first time, and it was Jean-Pierre Como who invited him to play in Paris. That was a revelation for Stefano 'When I arrived in Paris it was as if I'd been born there...'

1994: Stefano was already a regular performer at the Sunset, the famous jazz club in rue des Lombards in Paris. He was performing there regularly with Aldo Romano, Stephane Huchard and Michel Benita, when Laurent Cugny, who was looking for acts to line up for the ONJ, booked him on the spot as a soloist.

It was a turning point in his career. He met no end of people: Daniel Humair, Jenny-Clark, Jimmy Cobb, Walter Booker, Nat Adderley... and most importantly Michel Petrucciani, who asked him and his sidekick Flavio Boltro, red-hot trumpeter, to join his new sextet.

October 1997: Stefano brought out his first album as leader on Label Bleu: *Volare* he was nominated for the Victoires de la Musique, Choc de l'Année 97 Jazzman; his first opus didn't go unnoticed...

Autumn 1998: Stefano Di Battista signed for Blue Note and brought out his new album, *A Prima Vista*, in November. It featured his magic quintet: Flavio Boltro on trumpet, Eric Legnini on piano, Rosario Bonaccorso on double bass and Benjamin Henocq, already on Blue Note's books with PRYSM, on drums. It was an album that demanded respect and admiration.

The words that immediately come to mind with this album are generosity, energy, fluidity. In it, Stefano personifies the European revival of a leaning towards virtuosity and incredible brilliance, clarity and tone, the yardstick for which would be the Jazz Messengers. A welcome return to deserving simplicity. 'I like the idea of simple, communicative music... that remains fluid and immediately perceptible...' Do you think that could just be the key to his meteoric rise?

This eponymous third album we are proud to present was recorded at the Daniel Leon Studio in Brussels on 3 and 4 July 2000. For the occasion, Stefano Di Battista surrounded himself with four exceptional musicians: the Blue Note pianist Jacky Terrasson, whose virtuosity is in perfect tune with the playing of the saxophonist, Rosario Bonaccorso on double bass and the legendary Elvin Jones, John Coltrane's epic drummer. And guesting on three of the tracks, his sidekick Flavio Boltro on trumpet. The compositions are all originals, most of them penned by Stefano. Jacky contributed two tracks : *Little Red Ribbon* and *Chicago 1987*; Rosario chipped in with one: *Song For Flavia*.

They gelled so well, the result is just magic. This album is one of those rare get-togethers that make you think this is the moment in the career of an artist: the moment he just happens to be called to reach the top. Elvin Jones wasn't wrong: he came to Brussels to lay down tracks for 'some kid' and then went off straight away, taking Stefano on board for his own world tours with the Elvin Jones Jazz Machine.