

An Artist on a Pilgrimage to the "Lourdes of Rock Music". Interview with Edoardo Bennato

Maria Rita Latto (February 27, 2010)



At 60, his fighting spirit is still intact. It's his rage that has allowed him to continue to make powerful music. Edoardo Bennato will perform in New York on March 26 thanks to Massimo Gallotta Productions.

[Edoardo Bennato](#) [2] is one of the most admired and beloved Italian singer-songwriters. His first album *Non Farti Cadere Le Braccia* (Don't let your arms fall) was released in 1973 and since then has been ever-present on the Italian music scene as a symbol of our signature style of rock music.

From the beginning of his career, Bennato has always been one step ahead, a precursor of stylistic trends, introducing them to the Italian music scene as a one man band with a guitar and harmonica, telling stories of the Belpaese with a critical and disillusioned eye, with strident irony, often reinventing Italian fables like Pinocchio in a modern key. Songs that are decades old seem to have been written yesterday and they all fall into the category of rock music.

Bennato recently turned 60, but he is as active as ever, enjoying success after success while undertaking new projects such as the soundtrack for the musical Peter Pan, the story of a perpetual child from Neverland who flies back to fight the evil Captain Hook in tune to a rock beat. This musical was inspired by one of Bennato's most acclaimed albums *Sono Solo Canzonette* (They are only little songs) released in 1980, as well as the tale by James Matthew Barrie. In addition to songs from his 1980 record, Bennato also composed a new song entitled, *Che Paura Fa Capitan Uncino!* (How scary Captain Hook is!)

In short, he's multi-faceted and always on the move, meaning concerts and tours not only in Italy but all over the world.

We joined him by telephone, while he was at the airport just a few minutes before he left for Central America with a planned stop, among other places, in New York at the [Highline Ballroom](#) [3] on March 26.

"Last year we played in London, then Beijing," he immediately tells us while promoting his new album *Le Vie del Rock Sono Infinite* (Rock's Paths are Infinite) which will be released on March 5.

Last Thursday, for the first time in his career, he performed on stage at [Teatro Ariston](#) [4] during the [Sanremo Festival](#) [5]. In honor of Sanremo's 60th anniversary, the organizers decided to pay tribute to the songs and artists that made the festival famous.

The event, which took place on the third night of the festival, was entitled, *Quando La Musica Diventa Leggenda* (When music becomes legend) and included performances by such high-caliber artists as [Riccardo Cocciante](#) [6], [Massimo Ranieri](#) [7], and [Fiorella Mannoia](#) [8] who sang famous songs from the festival along with other popular songs from their repertoire.

During his debut at the Ariston, Bennato paid tribute to [Luigi Tenco](#) [9] who committed suicide in 1967 right after his performance at Sanremo and his elimination from the festival. Bennato sang *Ciao Amore Ciao* (Farewell, my love) by Tenco followed by a medley of his three most popular songs, *Un Giorno Credi* (One day you believe), *Il Rock di Capitan Uncino* (Captain Hook's Rock), and *È Lei* (She is the one), his new single.

It was a moving and mesmerizing performance. We asked him if he had chosen the songs, and if so, why Tenco. "Each guest was asked to choose a song that had been performed at the festival and I chose Tenco because he represented something specific for Sanremo. The festival," Bennato goes on to say, "is a huge circus for managers and agents in the music industry, and very often artists who are a bit more sensitive risk being crushed by this machine, especially if they find themselves at a particularly vulnerable point in their careers and personal lives."

"Sanremo can be ruthless, so I paid tribute to Tenco because ever since I was a child his vibrant personality impressed me the most – he was full of energy but also very vulnerable. In the end, Sanremo was a tragedy for him and it meant the end of his life."

Even on Ariston's "institutional" stage, the true nature of rock music came through as well as its inherent power to dissolve prejudices, assumptions, stereotypes, and conventions. It's a way, as Bennato says, of "provoking and inciting people to think for themselves. But it must be objective, and perhaps it must use irony as a weapon."

While Bennato talked on his cell phone, the public address system was audible in the background: his flight was now boarding. We ask about his new record; a single from it was recently released and met with success on Italian radio. It's entitled, *È Lei*, and has very intense lyrics.

Bennato sings: "It is she who at this very moment is being born / in the poorest corner of the world / Who will perhaps change this world / It is she because poverty gives her an advantage / It gives her more levity and more courage / And with this advantage she will fight."



We are curious to know who "she" is. "She is the hope that somewhere in the world someone can be born who, even from humble beginnings, can be a positive force in the world like Obama."

We cannot neglect to ask, even in passing, how he sees the issue of immigration and the west, a topic that appears on his other albums and one that is connected to a theme that is dear to him: latitudes. "First of all, one needs to shake off whatever prejudices one carries. Humanity began in one geographic area, near the equator, and then slowly moving north, it increased its technological capabilities. But we must not forget that we all come from the same family, even if moving around has changed the color of our skin. The color of one's skin is not a fundamental element, it's not important. What truly counts," Bennato continues, "is that the planet is divided into separate compartments in which there is a mature, technologically evolved part while the other part needs help and assistance. The catalyst to make things better can come from even the poorest areas, just as it occurred with Obama. Obama is proof that in a country like America even a president can come from a humble background or have a darker color of skin."

Speaking of America, he will be in New York on March 26 for a concert at the Highline Ballroom. We asked him if this will be his first time in New York: "We played at the [Apollo Theater](#) [10] in 1988 for an event called 'Naples Meets Harlem,' a wonderful evening with [James Senese](#) [11], Tony Esposito, [James Brown](#) [12], and [The Temptations](#) [13]."

When we asked about his relationship with America, Bennato begins to laugh: "On my new album, there's a song entitled, Mi Chiamo Edoardo (My name is Edoardo) in which I talk about America and I say I'm going there on a pilgrimage to thank her. Because thanks to America, rock music's homeland, I am what I am. Some go on a pilgrimage to Lourdes, but I go to America...."

Bennato laughs while in the background the flight attendant announces that the flight is ready to take off. He needs to turn off his cell phone. There enough time for one last question "on the fly" about whether his rage has diminished or changed with age. "The rage is the same, but I can't be the one to say it; the person who analyzes my music should say that. I'm the least adept at judging myself."

Edoardo Bennato - "E' Lei"

Edoardo Bennato in Concert

March 26 - 8:00 PM **Highline Ballroom**

431 West 16th Street

New York, NY 10011-5892 **For tickets visit**

[Massimo Gallotta Productions' Website](#) [14]

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