

## Establishing Italian Jazz on the International Scene from 1960 to 1980

### Four Case Studies: Nunzio Rotondo, Giorgio Gaslini, Enrico Rava, Perigeo

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*Respectfully dedicated to Maestro Giorgio Gaslini*

[...] *habitus and field designate bundles of relations*. A field consists of a set of objective, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power (or capital), while habitus consists of a set of historical relations “deposited” within individual bodies in the form of mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation, and action.<sup>1</sup>

The history of jazz and its developments is often discussed in relation to musical analysis, to its differentiation from other music genres, or to issues of race and ethnicity in the USA.<sup>2</sup> It is a type of discussion that does not concern itself with the inner workings of the jazz ‘world’ or ‘scene’ according to the most common designations. In other words, the jazz scene—including musicians, journalists, promoters, record producers and other agents—is often described as a unified field despite the impossibility of defining its boundaries. But in actuality jazz has been, and still is, a complex universe that not only defines itself in the context of other musical genres, but also has its own internal ideology and structure. To my knowledge, the first time Pierre Bourdieu’s analysis of ‘cultural production’ was applied to jazz was in an article by Paul Lopes<sup>3</sup> that was later expanded into a book<sup>4</sup> and that paved the way for several studies of jazz according to the theories of this French sociologist. Lopes situated jazz in the American

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<sup>1</sup> Loïc Wacquant, ‘Toward a social praxeology: The structure and logic of Bourdieu’s sociology’, in Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992), 16.

<sup>2</sup> See Lewis Porter, Michael Ullman and Edward Hazell, *Jazz: from its Origins to the Present* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1993); Ted Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York etc.: Oxford University Press, 2011); Geoffrey C. Ward, *Jazz: A History of America’s Music* (London: Pimlico, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Paul Lopes, ‘Pierre Bourdieu’s fields of cultural production: A case study of modern jazz’, in *Pierre Bourdieu: Fieldwork in Culture*, ed. Nicholas Brown and Imre Szeman (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield 2000), 165–185.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Lopes, *The Rise of a Jazz Art World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

field of cultural forces, its ‘hierarchical structure of cultural distinctions’<sup>5</sup> defining jazz as a cultural form based on ‘assemblages of elements from a variety of sources’,<sup>6</sup> and outlining how the jazz art world was born from ‘a *collective* refashioning of the meanings and practices of jazz that incorporated a diverse set of dispositions, distinctions, and interests of an equally diverse set of social actors. Sometimes in conflict and sometimes in harmony [...],’<sup>7</sup> echoing Bourdieu’s definition of habitus.

The French ethnologist and sociologist Alexandre Pierrepont published an innovative study in 2002<sup>8</sup> in which he defined the jazz movement in terms of plurality, arguing that it is precisely this, and not any supposed ‘unity’, that gives it global relevance. Pierrepont opposes the very idea of a ‘common denominator’ for jazz, of trying to define the essential element of this music. The strength of the jazz field, according to him, lies in it being created by the combination of different forces. He is inspired in this by the work of Harold Becker,<sup>9</sup> who considers the ‘art world’ to include not only the artists, their works and their aesthetic principles, but also the ‘gatekeepers’ (the critics, programmers, record producers, radio DJs and the like), the venues and programmes, and the audience. Pierrepont focuses on the relationship between the community of musicians and the music, while Becker has a wider perspective, looking at the relations between all actors in the field. These perspectives are in fact complementary and allow a clearer perception of the forces at play.

More recently, the musicologist David Lee has analysed the impact of the saxophonist Ornette Coleman’s arrival on the New York jazz scene in terms of Bourdieu’s theory of the ‘cultural field’.<sup>10</sup> In *The Field of Cultural Production*, Bourdieu argues that all cultural production takes place in a relational space, ‘a space of literary or artistic position-takings [...] inseparable from the space of literary or artistic positions defined by the possession of a determinate quantity of specific capital (recognition) and, at the same time, by occupation of a determinate position in the structure of the distribution of this specific capital.’<sup>11</sup>

Lee proceeds to identify the different players in the field at the time—personalities in classical Western music, leading figures in jazz, music critics, record producers—and the role they played in what was called ‘the battle of the Five Spot’ after the name of the venue in New York City where Coleman was invited to perform.

Bourdieu discussed music in his ethnological studies in his key work *Distinction* (1979), which was translated into English as *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* in 1984. In it, he identified musical taste as an indicator of social status: ‘nothing more clearly affirms

<sup>5</sup> Lopes, *The Rise of a Jazz Art World*, 274.

<sup>6</sup> Lopes, *The Rise of a Jazz Art World*, 277; Lopes here quotes Richard Middleton.

<sup>7</sup> Lopes, *The Rise of a Jazz Art World*, 277.

<sup>8</sup> Alexandre Pierrepont, *Le Champ Jazzistique* (Marseille: Parenthèses Editions, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> Harold Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley etc.: University of California Press, 1982).

<sup>10</sup> David Lee, *The Battle of the Five Spot: Ornette Coleman and the New York Jazz Field* (Toronto: Mercury Press, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 30.

one's "class", nothing more infallibly classifies, than taste in music.<sup>12</sup> Jazz occupies a somewhat contradictory place in this work, being sometimes classified with minor 'art' music by inference, and at other times associated with 'pop' art forms like the cinema. What Bourdieu actually knew about jazz, however, might be questioned after reading this observation in his Postscript: 'Jazz, a bourgeois entertainment which mimics popular entertainment, is only an apparent exception: the signs of participation (hand-clapping or foot-tapping) are limited to a silent sketch of the gesture (at least in free jazz).'<sup>13</sup>

Regardless of this, Bourdieu's detailed analytical methods in the fields of literature and the visual arts, integrated in the *Art world* concept of Becker, have only lately been applied to the internal workings of the hotly debated musical field of jazz, whose very status has changed over time along with its mass diffusion across the globe. The concepts of field, habitus and cultural capital introduced by Bourdieu reveal their analytical power when applied to the agents of the jazz field. According to Bourdieu, habitus is the internal representation of a system of external/social structures, our understanding of the social structure and how we represent ourselves within it. According to the linguist and sociologist Michael Grenfell, in order to apply Bourdieu's theory to music, one must '[c]ompare the habitus of a range of individuals; [e]xamine the inter-relations between agents and institutions; [study the f]ield in relation to other fields and the field of power.'<sup>14</sup> 'Habitus' according to Bourdieu is cultural capital internalised in a system of dispositions, or in other words 'the generative formula which makes it possible to account both for the classifiable practices and products and for the judgements, themselves classified, which make these practices and works into a system of distinctive signs.'<sup>15</sup> For example, class habitus are aristocratic asceticism and middle-class pretension. This allows us to have a deeper understanding of the forces at work in determining musicians' careers, realising the strategies deployed by the artists (or the lack of them), and their career paths.

Especially relevant to an area replete with sub-genre classifications like jazz is Bourdieu's observation that 'One should study the genesis of the systems of classification, names of periods, schools, genres and so forth that are actually the instruments and the stakes of the struggle'.<sup>16</sup>

Taking this as my inspiration, I have here chosen four significant actors on the Italian post-War jazz scene in order to identify the general musical field in which they moved, and the specific characteristics of the Italian and European jazz fields. I have identified the elements of their artistic histories in order to try and define their habitus and its impact on the course of their career. Each of these careers was characterised by a markedly different development,

<sup>12</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, translated by Richard Nice, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 18.

<sup>13</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 488.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Grenfell, *Bourdieu and the music field*, [online paper] <http://docplayer.net/41928769-Bourdieu-and-the-music-field-professor-michael-grenfell.html> (accessed 17 November 2017).

<sup>15</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 170.

<sup>16</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 180.

influenced not so much by ‘artistic’ quality (even if such a definition were possible on an objective scale), but by the interaction of the musicians’ habitus with different and interrelated fields including the field of power. Each of these musicians had, in Bourdieu’s terms, a different ‘cultural capital’, created by their temperament, cultural goods and educational qualifications. This capital, according to Bourdieu, can be converted into other forms of capital: ‘[...] *cultural capital*, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and [...] *social capital*, made up of social obligations (‘connections’), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital’.<sup>17</sup>

Musicians’ careers in the field of jazz are markedly influenced by their cultural and social capital. Compare, for example, the autonomous strategies deployed by musicians like Duke Ellington and Miles Davis, whose families were well-to do and socially connected in their communities, with the careers of Louis Armstrong and Charlie Parker, who had to find ‘white protectors’ or succumb. Further capital is accumulated into the habitus in the period examined, not primarily through educational qualifications, but through a system of relations with other agents in the field (internationally recognised elder musicians, festival and club directors), while formal education can on the contrary become a liability.

The main objective of this article is a better understanding of the development of the jazz field from the point of view of Italy within an international and, more specifically, a European context. The main focus will be on developments in Italian jazz during the two key decades from 1960 to 1980, when Italian jazz moved from a marginal, niche position to assume huge visibility in the media. It played a significant role in the cultural policies of local authorities and began to acquire a specific international status (though it returned to an even more marginalised position after 1980). For a better understanding of the forces at play, we must first investigate the historical background.

### Historical background

Jazz in Italy was not officially prohibited between 1936 and 1945, but it was certainly marginalised.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, syncopated dance music, such as one-step, fox-trot, maxixe and tango was quite popular in those years, both live and on the radio. This provided a working context for a small but enthusiastic cadre of musicians who were pioneers of jazz in Italy, such as Mirador (Arturo Agazzi), Vittorio Spina and Nicola Moletti. They developed their own network of local and international relations, travelling to the European capitals London, Berlin and Paris as well as using jobs on transatlantic cruise ships to visit clubs and theatres in New York.<sup>19</sup>

It should not surprise us that there was a deep connection between jazz and Italy. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, New Orleans was home to the largest Italian community in the USA,

<sup>17</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, ‘The forms of capital’, in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John Richardson (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), 241–258, here 243.

<sup>18</sup> See Adriano Mazzoletti, *Il jazz in Italia: dalle origini alle grandi orchestre* (Turin: EDT, 2004).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 4, 25, 93.

with an estimated community of 30,000 in 1890. Another 2,000 arrived each year from the western provinces of Sicily, travelling via the port city of Palermo. Italian musicians made a notable contribution to the musical environment of New Orleans.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, Italian music—especially operas and the march traditions—provided inspiration and even musical material for early jazz recordings. Operas had been staged annually in New Orleans since at least the 1790s (which was the final decade of Spanish rule), when European companies were engaged for a season at a time. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, after the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 had made New Orleans into an American city, French and Italian composers like Giovanni Paisiello and Luigi Cherubini achieved pre-eminence. In the 1820s and 1830s, four operas by Gioachino Rossini had their American première in New Orleans, and in 1835 the St. Charles Theatre, with 4,100 seats, was built to present Italian operas. These included Bellini's *Norma*, Donizetti's *Parisina* and Rossini's *Semiramide*. This theatre was destroyed by fire in 1842, but in 1859 the French Opera House opened, ushering New Orleans' golden era of opera with a production of Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*. Verdi's *Le Trouvère/Il Trovatore* was given in New Orleans in its revised French version. The Civil War in the early 1860s did not stop the popularity of opera in New Orleans, and before the century ended, the city had also seen its first stagings of *Carmen*, *Aïda*, *Mefistofele*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Manon*, and *Pagliacci*.<sup>21</sup>

The migration of jazz musicians to the north (mostly to Chicago), which according to legend was caused by the closure of the red-light district of Storyville, was in fact a reflection of the general decline of the city, which had lost its primary role as the sea harbour of the Mississippi River after goods began to be transported by railway instead. Both jazz and opera began to move away from the city (without anybody linking this to the closure of the brothels), as did financial institutions like the Mint.<sup>22</sup>

Several members of the 'Original Dixieland Jass [sic] Band', the band that recorded what is conventionally considered the first 'jazz' record,<sup>23</sup> came from the ranks of the Italian dance and marching bands: all of them had been members of the 'Papa Jack' Laine Reliance Band. One of the very first reports of jazz to be published in Europe appeared in the Italian magazine *La Lettura* in August 1919, describing the jazz orchestra of the Pace Theatre that was led by the Italian violinist Giuseppe Fulco.<sup>24</sup>

Meanwhile, in Italy, jazz appeared to be received with enthusiasm by a young, metropolitan generation of revellers and fascinated, forward-thinking composers including Giacomo

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Maselli and Dominic Candeloro, *Italians In New Orleans* (Charleston: Arcadia, 2004).

<sup>21</sup> Louise McKinney, *New Orleans: A Cultural and Literary History* (Oxford: Signal, 2006). For operatic material in early jazz, see Joshua Berrett, 'Louis Armstrong and Opera', in *The Musical Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (Summer 1992), 216–241.

<sup>22</sup> Ned Sublette, *The World that Made New Orleans: From Spanish Silver to Congo Square* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2008).

<sup>23</sup> 78 rpm record *Livery Stable Blues – Dixieland Jass Band One Step* (Victor 18255), recorded 26 February 1917 in New York City by the quintet Original Dixieland Jass Band from New Orleans.

<sup>24</sup> Chevalier Bruno Zuculin, 'Musiche e danze americane', in *La Lettura* 19, no. 8 (August 1919), 599–600.

Puccini,<sup>25</sup> and was briefly even adopted as the ‘music of tomorrow’ by the Futurist movement. In *La Musica Futurista* in 1924, the composer Franco Casavola wrote of:

‘the practical, though incomplete, implementation of our principles: the individuality of the singing of instruments, bringing together for the first time sound elements of a different character; the persistence of its rhythms, bold and necessary, form the basis of Futurist music [...] Music is movement [...] music as harmony is colour. The scale of vibrations of the sounds corresponds to the scale of vibration of the colours.’<sup>26</sup>

After the introduction of the first Italian Racial Laws against the Italian Jews in 1938, jazz began to be marginalised, not least because of the ethnicity of major composers such as George Gershwin and Irving Berlin. It was further limited by the prohibition of songs with English words after Italy declared war against Great Britain as an ally of Nazi Germany.<sup>27</sup> However, jazz was one of the components of the craze for all things American that swept Italy after 1945—helped by the Marshall Plan and by the popularity of Hollywood movies in the post-War world. The Italian left at the time was cautious to embrace jazz, however, as it firmly allied itself to the Soviet Bloc and its aesthetic of Socialistic Realism. Furthermore, there are passages in letters by Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), one of the founding members of the Italian Communist Party, in which he writes disparagingly of jazz as an ‘Africanisation’ (in a regressive sense) of European culture.<sup>28</sup>

In the most influential field of culture produced in post-War Italy, namely neo-realist cinema, jazz was almost never used. In fact, the director and poet Pier Paolo Pasolini later used it only briefly in *Accattone* in 1961 (with unaccredited musicians) as a symbol of degradation. It provides the soundtrack for a dancehall scene in which Accattone tries to turn his girlfriend into a prostitute. Things changed with the advent of the so-called ‘commedia all’italiana’, a film genre usually based on a satirical view of Italian society that began in 1957 with *L’audace colpo dei soliti ignoti* with its jazz-inflected, big-band soundtrack composed by Piero Umiliani. This was also the year of *Ascenseur pour l’échafaud* by Louis Malle in France, whose soundtrack by Miles Davis inaugurated a non-diegetic use of jazz music in films. The main composers of film soundtracks in Italy after 1960—Piero Umiliani, Armando Trovajoli, Piero Piccioni—had experience in jazz, recorded jazz albums themselves and often referenced jazz by using jazz musicians from Rome—the city to which the movie industry had been relocated by the Fascist regime.

In the early 1960s, Italian jazz was characterised by a small scene with a marked separation between the two main centres of Rome and Milan, and with few significant figures outside them. Events were relatively well documented by an active, well-informed, specialist

<sup>25</sup> See Amedeo Escobar’s interview in Mazzoletti, *Il jazz in Italia*, 78.

<sup>26</sup> As translated in Marilisa Merolla, ‘Jazz and fascism’, in *Jazz and totalitarianism*, ed. Bruce Johnson (New York etc.: Routledge, 2017), 31–49, here 36–37. See also F. T. Marinetti, *Scatole d’amore in conserva* (Rome: Edizioni d’Arte Fauno, 1927), 91.

<sup>27</sup> Mazzoletti, *Il jazz in Italia*, 219.

<sup>28</sup> See Antonio Gramsci, *Lettere dal carcere* (Turin: Einaudi, 1965), 179–180, 112.

monthly magazine (*Musica Jazz*), though jazz remained quite isolated from other movements in music at the time. The first number of *Musica Jazz* was published in 1945, just months after the liberation of Milan, on the initiative of a small group of jazz fans. It had already operated as a type of ‘Hot Club’ organisation from the early 1940s onwards. Its news pages—as opposed to reviews of live concerts and records or critical articles—offered almost complete details of all jazz happenings in Italy, including the activities of Hot Clubs and local events. It continues to be published once a month to this day, and is one of the longest-running jazz magazines in Europe. The issues that were published from 1945 to 1995 have been name-indexed by the Centro Studi Sul Jazz ‘Arrigo Polillo’ in Siena. This provides an invaluable research tool for students of Italian jazz and jazz in Italy, and was an important source for the present article.<sup>29</sup>

The Hot Clubs were organisations that united jazz fans and followers and were first established in Paris, then spread all over Europe through a process of imitation and informal affiliation. These clubs sought to promote jazz culture through concerts, publications, magazines, recordings and schools. They were federated on a national basis and existed as an informal international network, acting as jazz ambassadors in many countries. This network was centred on Paris, and produced the world’s first jazz magazines, festivals, and labels. It marked the switch in Europe from a scene dominated by commercial promoters on the nightclub and dance circuits, to one in which jazz promoters were jazz fans first and foremost and were more concerned with popularising the music than with making profits.<sup>30</sup>

Classical composers, critics and listeners generally remained at a distance from jazz, and it was not accepted by teaching institutions at the time (and in some cases was actively rejected by them). Until the 1970s, conservatories refused to set up jazz courses, and jazz concerts in ‘art’ music venues were an exception rather than the rule. Popular music in Italy, as defined from 1951 onwards by the Sanremo Festival of Italian Song, was dominated by the nascent tastes of television and became a largely artificial model of supposedly ‘Italianate’ melody with simplified lyrics and an operetta-derived vocality. This was despite the widespread use of jazz musicians in radio and TV orchestras and as unaccredited accompanists. The Sanremo Festival was established as a competition for original songs in Italian only, with the implicit intention of opposing the post-War domination by English popular song.<sup>31</sup> Later, the Festival also featured major personalities from the US-American jazz scene and the English-language popular music world. This began in 1968, when Louis Armstrong formally entered the competition, singing in phonetic Italian while Lionel Hampton played instrumental versions of the songs for the competition jury.<sup>32</sup> In fact, paradoxically, apart from these two instances, jazz-like music was more likely to be heard

<sup>29</sup> See ‘Centro nazionale studi sul jazz’, accessed 30 October 2017, <http://centrostudi.sienajazz.it>.

<sup>30</sup> See Jeffrey H. Jackson, *Making Jazz French: Music and Modern Life in Interwar Paris* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 159.

<sup>31</sup> Gianni Borgna, *La grande evasione: storia del Festival di Sanremo: 30 anni di costume italiano* (Savelli: Festival di Sanremo, 1980).

<sup>32</sup> Marcello Giannotti, *L’enciclopedia di Sanremo, 55 anni di storia del Festival dalla A alla Z* (Rome: Gremese, 2005).

by the average listener in the 1940s than in the 1950s, at least in Italy. The hierarchy of power in the music world was confirmed by the existence of different, separate spheres for ‘popular’ and ‘art’ music (the main event of the former being the Sanremo Festival, that of the latter being the gala opening night at La Scala Milan). But this division left no space for a genre of less clear-cut classifications, like ‘jazz’, which had been removed from its original role of being dance music and had become less visible during the 1940s. The projection of racist stereotypes onto jazz also persisted, even into the decade after jazz musicians had begun to break down genre barriers and to refuse aesthetic parameters imposed by others.

By the end of the 1960s, however, several ideological, cultural and political ruptures would change this state of affairs, prompted not least by the student unrest. While Italian jazz musicians actively took part in these changes, they also had to deal with the complex situation that had arisen with regard to their working conditions, their relationships with the recording industry and the general challenges that their art brought with it.

In order to discuss these changes and the different coping strategies adopted by jazz musicians, we shall now consider and compare four case studies. We hope to get a better understanding of the processes involved by invoking the analytic categories introduced by Bourdieu and adapting them to this specific field, in light of Lopes’ suggestions in his article of 2000 quoted above that introduced the category of ‘gatekeepers’, and examining each musician and band habitus and their relations in turn.

### Nunzio Rotondo (1924–2009)

The Roman trumpeter Nunzio Rotondo, while almost unknown today outside Italy, was one of the first Italian jazz musicians to achieve international success after World War II. He thereafter worked mostly on the Roman scene, playing for Hot Clubs and doing film and TV work. He had limited exposure at live gigs and on recordings in Italy, and practically none abroad. Born in 1924 in Terracina near Rome to a musical family, Rotondo first studied classical piano, then switched to the trumpet at nine. He entered the conservatory at ten, and began to play in dance bands, notably with Piero Rizza in the early 1940s.<sup>33</sup> He soon left the accepted curriculum for classical musicians, which prevented him from investing cultural capital in the academic, rather staid Roman classical music world. Rotondo entered the jazz scene after World War II, cautiously moving to embrace first swing and then the popular, cool style of the 1950s as inaugurated by the 1949 recordings of Miles Davis and Gil Evans that were later gathered together on the record entitled *Passa a Classics in Jazz: Miles Davis*.<sup>34</sup> In that same year, the Rome Hot Club formed its own Sextet, which was led by Rotondo and featured Carlo Loffredo (b. 1924) on double bass and Carlo Pes (1927–1999) on guitar. They also often played with the pianist Romano Mussolini

<sup>33</sup> See Arrigo Polillo, ‘Nunzio Rotondo’, in *Musica Jazz* 6, no. 5 (May 1950), 21; Mazzoletti, *Il jazz in Italia*, 352.

<sup>34</sup> Miles Davis, *Classics in Jazz*, 10” LP, (Capitol, H-459, 1954).



(1927–2006)—who, ironically (in view of the Fascist regime’s opposition to jazz) was one of Il Duce’s sons. The Rome Hot Club Sextet also hosted international musicians including Louis Armstrong (in 1949 and 1962)<sup>35</sup>, and Rotondo regularly collaborated with the Turin Hot Club, where musicians such as the tenor saxophonist Gianni Basso (1931–2009), the guitarist Franco Cerri (b. 1926), the drummer Franco Mondini (b. 1935), and the trumpet players Oscar Valdambri (1924–1996) and Sergio Fanni (1930–2000) gathered to play the new music.<sup>36</sup> As demonstrated on recordings, such as the compilation *Jazz in Italy in the 50s* featuring Umberto Cesari, Nunzio Rotondo and Armando Trovajoli,<sup>37</sup> Rotondo’s attitude is one of Milanese coolness in the midst of bop-inspired saxophones and pianists not yet able to follow the lessons of Bud Powell, so they are still basically rooted in swing style. Thanks to his participation in the Hot Club activities of 1952, Rotondo was chosen to represent Italy at the International Paris Jazz Festival, where he was given a warm welcome and became the hit of the festival with his most famous composition, ‘Stelle Filanti’ (‘Shooting Stars’). This established a pattern of preferential sympathy among French intellectuals towards Italian jazz artists that would later also have a positive influence on the careers of Enrico Ravas and Paolo Fresu. These two trumpeters shared several affinities with Rotondo, including taking their initial inspiration from Miles Davis. In 1955, Rotondo was invited to join the Lionel Hampton Orchestra.<sup>38</sup> However, all this success did not lead to his enjoying a substantial international career, due to the fact that Rotondo seemed to be waiting passively for invitations, or for local fans to organise events in Rome together with visiting jazz luminaries like Dizzy Gillespie.<sup>39</sup> This was perhaps because of a combination of personal shyness, the language barrier, the fact that in Rome he was on the periphery of the international scene, and also the fact that he was very busy working for cinema and TV soundtracks from 1957 onwards. From his base in Rome, Rotondo stayed interested in the most recent developments in both jazz and contemporary music, and remained aware of what was happening. This is proved by the soundtrack he created for the opening titles of an Italian TV series based on the character of Nero Wolfe—a brilliant, oversized, eccentric armchair detective created in 1934 by the American mystery writer Rex Stout (the series is available today on YouTube).<sup>40</sup> Later, he founded a quintet with the Argentinian saxophonist Gato Barbieri (1934–2016), who was living in Rome at the time, the pianist Franco D’Andrea (b. 1941), the bassist Giovanni Tommaso (b. 1941) and the drummer Bruno Biriaco (b. 1949), and he also played in the European Broadcasting Union Big Band. Despite all these activities, Rotondo operated in

<sup>35</sup> Marcello Koch, ‘Armstrong... a Roma’, in *Musica Jazz* 5, no. 11 (November 1949), 8; and Roberto Capasso, ‘Louis Armstrong a Roma’, in *Musica Jazz* 18, no. 6 (June 1962), 12–13.

<sup>36</sup> Mazzeletti, *Il jazz in Italia*, Vol. 2, Dallo swing agli anni sessanta (Turin: EDT, 2010), 402.

<sup>37</sup> Umberto Cesari, Nunzio Rotondo, Armando Trovajoli, *Jazz in Italy in the 50s* (Riviera Record, RJR 12, 2006).

<sup>38</sup> [Anon.], in: *Musica Jazz* 11, no. 3 (March 1955), 17.

<sup>39</sup> Roberto Capasso, ‘Dizzy Ospite romano’, in *Musica Jazz* 12, no. 4 (April 1956), 15.

<sup>40</sup> See ‘Nero Wolfe: Titoli di testa (Rai 1969)’, accessed 30 October 2017, <https://youtu.be/HLvPkkjaFhM>.

relative obscurity, enjoying a combination of local cult fame and a very low international profile. He played very well until a relatively late age, as is demonstrated by rare recordings and late concert appearances. Today he is practically unknown on the international scene, and very few remember him even in his native Italy. In Nunzio Rotondo's career, one sees a lack of engagement with the international jazz field in all its aspects, and an engagement with the Italian scene only during the Hot Club phase when the national and international network of these clubs opened doors for him. His output of recordings was limited; these featured only Italian musicians and were not distributed outside Italy. But a local cult following was not enough to grant him a permanent place on the international jazz landscape, despite his moments of high visibility in the Italian media and his having enjoyed the esteem of his international colleagues. His cultural and social capital was invested in the local scene, and his habitus was not adequate to post-1960, modern forms of jazz.<sup>41</sup>

### Giorgio Gaslini (1929–2014)

The Milanese pianist Giorgio Gaslini's ground-breaking work as an instrumentalist and composer in the late 1950s, his qualifications in classical and academic music, and his unwavering commitment to exploration made him a personality akin to Michel Portal in France and Friedrich Gulda in Austria. He was an ambassador for jazz music who could open the doors of conservatories and concert halls to jazz. However, his artistic successes did not close the chasm between composed music and jazz in Italy. Gaslini was born into a middle-class, art-oriented family, and he expressly mentions his father's collection of African masks and contemporary art as a source of inspiration to him.<sup>42</sup> He studied classical piano and composition at the Milan Conservatory, and at the age of nine was already performing as a pianist in public, giving his first solo concert at thirteen.<sup>43</sup> As soon as World War II ended in 1945, he brought a jazz piano trio into the recording studio. At nineteen, Gaslini performed at the first international jazz festival in Florence, an event promoted by the Italian Federation of the Hot Club with Italian musicians that was not yet an international festival. In the 1950s he focused on bridging the gap between Western European composed music and jazz, as demonstrated by his performances and recordings in 1957 of his suite for octet entitled *Tempo e relazione*,<sup>44</sup> in which he ambitiously and successfully tried to integrate his knowledge of contemporary music, especially of twelve-tone

<sup>41</sup> For recordings listen e.g. to *The Artistry of Nunzio Rotondo* (DIW, DIW3031, recorded in 1959, issued in 2001); *Sound and Silence* (Twilight Music, TWI CD AS 05 18, comp., issued 2005); *Nunzio Rotondo. The Legend* (Twilight Music, TWI CD AS 07 44, comp., 2007). Both these two last CDs contain recordings from 1964 to 1980 featuring Franco D'Andrea and Gato Barbieri.

<sup>42</sup> Antonio Gnoli, 'Giorgio Gaslini: "Ho scoperto il paradiso del jazz nell'Africa da salotto di mio padre"', in *La Repubblica*, 14 April 2014, [www.repubblica.it/cultura/2014/04/14/news/giorgio\\_gaslini\\_ho\\_scoperto\\_il\\_paradiso\\_del\\_jazz\\_nell\\_africa\\_da\\_salotto\\_di\\_mio\\_padre-83557457](http://www.repubblica.it/cultura/2014/04/14/news/giorgio_gaslini_ho_scoperto_il_paradiso_del_jazz_nell_africa_da_salotto_di_mio_padre-83557457) (accessed 17 November 2017).

<sup>43</sup> See Adriano Bassi (ed.), *Giorgio Gaslini: Vita, lotte, opere di un protagonista della musica contemporanea* (Padova: F. Muzzio, 1986), 23.

<sup>44</sup> *Tempo e relazione* (La Voce del Padrone, 7E PQ 581, 1957).

music, into the language of jazz. This experiment was contemporary with a similar trend in the USA that went under the generic banner of ‘Third Stream’, but was independent from it. The latter was a concept introduced by Gunter Schuller in around 1957 that had evolved out of the Modern Jazz Society of two years before.<sup>45</sup> In the 1960s and ’70s, Gaslini’s most significant works were for large ensemble, often with the participation of international avant-garde musicians like the trumpet player Don Cherry, the saxophonists Gato Barbieri and Steve Lacy (on the album *New Feelings*, 1966), the trombonist Roswell Rudd and the composer Anthony Braxton.<sup>46</sup> As its title suggests, this 1966 record reflects the spirit of the times, and Gaslini was the foremost Italian jazz musician to engage in a dialogue with the youth and pacifist movements, as well as acknowledging the social changes that students and leftist movements demanded in Italy in 1968. In fact, some of his records (such as his *Il Fiume Furore* of 1968) were published by the Dischi del Sole label, a decidedly left-wing producer of political and folk songs.<sup>47</sup> Gaslini continually tried to introduce jazz to the conservatories, and he was among the very first to teach jazz at an Italian tertiary institution when he gave a course at the Rome Conservatory in 1972/73 and, later, in Milan in 1979/80. His students included some of the most important Italian jazz musicians, such as Maurizio Giammarco (b. 1952), Massimo Urbani (1957–1993) and Bruno Tommaso (b. 1946). Even when he wasn’t teaching, Gaslini was continuously renewing his band with younger talent such as Claudio Fasoli (b. 1939), Gianluigi Trovesi (b. 1944), Andrea Centazzo (b. 1948) and Roberto Ottaviano (b. 1957). His groups—usually piano quartets with saxophone, bass and drums—made extensive tours across Italy, introducing jazz to new generations of listeners. Instead of performing at jazz festivals and clubs, his concerts were mostly featured in classical concert seasons, like those organised by the Association of Jeunesses Musicales. In these situations, playing for audiences mostly unfamiliar with jazz, he always won the listeners over with explanations and charming oratory. He also wrote compositions for the cinema: a total of more than forty soundtracks including *La notte* (1961) by Michelangelo Antonioni and the themes for *Profondo rosso* by Dario Argento (1975), a horror movie supposedly inspired by his adventures in Rome while teaching at the Conservatory—in the film, in fact, several Italian jazz musicians can be seen as extras. Gaslini often toured extensively abroad often with the support of Italian Cultural Institutes, a branch of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for promoting Italian culture abroad that otherwise rarely had contact with jazz, concentrating more on language, writers, classical culture, painters and so forth. In his writings *Manifesto di musica totale* (‘Manifesto of Total Music’), *Musica totale* (‘Total Music’), and *Il tempo del musicista totale* (‘The time of a total musician’) Gaslini made his voice heard directly and persistently.<sup>48</sup> He did this by

<sup>45</sup> See Nat Hentoff, ‘Counterpoint’, in *Down Beat*, 28 January 1955, 15.

<sup>46</sup> Giorgio Gaslini, *Nuovi Sentimenti (New Feelings)* (La Voce del Padrone QELP 8154, 1966).

<sup>47</sup> Giorgio Gaslini, *Il fiume Furore* (I Dischi del Sole, DS 167/69/CL, 1968).

<sup>48</sup> Giorgio Gaslini, *Manifesto di musica totale* (Milano: private edition, 1964); Idem, *Musica Totale. Intuizioni, vita ed esperienze musicali nello spirito del ’68* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1975); both included in: Idem, *Il tempo del musicista totale* (Milano: Baldini & Castoldi, 2002).

bypassing the jazz press, which at the time was a unique occurrence. Gaslini proposed the concept of a total music beyond genres and techniques, integrating composition and improvisation, and folk and classical materials. In 1991 he was nominated the director of the Grande Orchestra Nazionale di Jazz established by the short-lived Association of Jazz Musicians, and later he composed two suites, *Pierrot Solaire* and *Skies of Europe*, for the Italian Instabile Orchestra, the latter released on the ECM label.<sup>49</sup> In his repertoire and his recordings, original compositions and even operatic music stand side by side with reinterpretations of compositions by Robert Schumann, Jelly Roll Morton, Thelonious Monk, Albert Ayler and Sun Ra.<sup>50</sup> Giorgio Gaslini invested his notable capital in the field of composed music: including in his habitus a conservatory degree, a network of relations with like-minded international musicians, and broad performing experience in Italy and abroad. This capital was mostly based on his academic qualifications, and in my opinion he failed to engage the gatekeepers of the jazz scene—critics and festival directors—in a way that could have facilitated his unqualified acceptance by the international jazz world. His jazz work was never picked up by a prestigious non-Italian record label (unlike Enrico Rava, for example, who would later record on the ECM label); most of his band's international performances were supported by official Italian cultural organisations; he was not invited to join other bands outside Italy; and even in Italy itself, he was only engaged by the Instabile Orchestra, which operated as a collective—and even then, their roads diverged soon afterwards.

By openly positioning himself in a vague terrain, in a no-man's-land among the genres, by running his own label (I Dischi della Quercia) and by maintaining parallel careers in composition, cinema and jazz, producing work that is unified only by his personality and not by any stylistic or practical aspects, Gaslini kept his artistic freedom and was able to build up an extraordinary career. However, he did not fully embrace the global jazz scene in terms of accepting its conventions—such as the standard repertoire or the jam session ritual—and, in return, he was not embraced by that scene either. The price he paid was that he never organically entered the jazz world, despite critical approval of his work. His resolute independence probably did not help his academic career either. Despite his academic qualifications and his being one of the promulgators of jazz education in Italy, he did not become a regular teacher when jazz began to be taught in the conservatories—perhaps because he was not offered what he really wanted, or because he did not want to comply with bureaucratic rules. His recorded works nevertheless still stand as one of the monuments of European jazz.

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<sup>49</sup> Italian Instabile Orchestra, *Skies of Europe* (ECM, 1543, 1995).

<sup>50</sup> For his most important recordings see e.g. *Message* (BASF, Z 23312, 1973); *Colloquio con Malcolm X* (PDU, Pld A 6004, 1974); *Gaslini Plays Monk* (Soul Note, SN 1020, 1981); *Schumann Reflections* (Soul Note, SN 1120, 1984); *Ayler's Wing* (Soul Note, 121270-1, 1990); *Lampi* (Soul Note, 121290-2, 1994); *Jelly's Back in Town* (Dischi della Quercia, 128020-2, 1996); *Mister O: Jazz Opera* (Soul Note, 121300-2, 1997).

### Enrico Rava (b. 1939)

Enrico Rava was born in Trieste in 1939 into a musical family (his mother played the piano), but grew up in Turin. He was inspired early on by Louis Armstrong and classic jazz, taking up the trombone as his first instrument, though he was soon fascinated by the ‘cool’ sound of the 1950s and switched to trumpet after listening to Miles Davis’s records and to Nunzio Rotondo’s frequent live appearances at Turin’s Hot Club. This had been the first such club to be established in Italy, and was one of the most influential since having organised guest concerts by Louis Armstrong back in 1935.<sup>51</sup> Rava’s strategy was more or less the opposite of Rotondo’s, for he performed widely abroad, travelling to Buenos Aires, New York and Paris while gaining acceptance both internationally and in his own country. Rava was instrumental in creating an international image for Italian jazz, even an Italian ‘sound’, and opened the doors to many other Italian musicians after him. Rava was largely self-taught (he had some lessons in New York with the trumpeter Carmine Caruso),<sup>52</sup> though he quickly established an international network. He joined the quartet led by Gato Barbieri, the Argentinian saxophonist and long-time Italian resident who was one of the foreign musicians living in Rome in the 1960s and who helped to internationalise the Italian scene. Rava also often met and played with the trumpeter and singer Chet Baker, who was another frequent visitor to Italy and also an important source of inspiration to him. In 1965, Rava began to collaborate with the American soprano sax player Steve Lacy, who lived in Rome before moving to Paris. Together with the two South African émigrés Johnny Dyani and Louis Moholo (on bass and drums), they played a jazz that was resolutely oriented towards free improvisation. Their quartet toured Argentina and got stranded in Buenos Aires,<sup>53</sup> where they recorded their ground-breaking LP *The Forest and the Zoo* for the American avant-garde label ESP.<sup>54</sup> In 1967, Rava moved to New York where he associated with free jazz luminaries such as Roswell Rudd, Marion Brown, Cecil Taylor and Charlie Haden. He played in the band led by Carla Bley that recorded the album *Escalator over the Hill*.<sup>55</sup> At the same time he tried his hand in one of the earliest jazz-rock bands, Gas Mask, just months after the release of *Bitches Brew* by Miles Davis in 1969 (Gas Mask’s first album, entitled appropriately *Their first album*, was released by Tonsil Records in 1970).<sup>56</sup> In 1972, after having paid his dues in the time-accepted jazz tradition, Rava recorded his first album as a leader: *Il giro del giorno in 80 mondi* for the Italian Black Saint label (its title was taken from a novel by the Argentinian, jazz-inspired writer Julio Cortázar).<sup>57</sup> It features only original music except for *Olhos de Gato* (Barbieri) by Carla Bley, which is a meaningful tribute to two of the musicians whose acceptance helped him to

<sup>51</sup> Mazzoletti, *Il jazz in Italia*, 273.

<sup>52</sup> Enrico Rava, *Note Necessarie* (Rome: Minimum Fax, 2004) 173.

<sup>53</sup> Rava, *Note Necessarie*, 59.

<sup>54</sup> Steve Lacy, *The Forest and the Zoo* (ESP Disk, ESP 1060, 1967).

<sup>55</sup> Carla Bley, Paul Haynes, *Escalator over the Hill* (JCOA Records, 3LP-EOTH, 1971).

<sup>56</sup> Gas Mask, *Their First Album* (Tonsil Records, 2383-068, 1970).

<sup>57</sup> Enrico Rava Quartet, *Il giro del giorno in 80 mondi* (Fonit Cetra International, ILS 8043, 1972)

establish his international jazz credentials. As he often did throughout his career, he here led a piano-less American-Italian quartet with Marcello Melis on bass, Bruce Johnson on guitar and Chip White on drums. These were his years of heavy touring in the USA, South America and Europe. In 1975, Rava recorded an album for ECM with another international quartet, but featuring only his own music: *The Pilgrim and the Stars*, which proved a big success.<sup>58</sup> He was here joined by John Abercrombie on guitar, Palle Danielsson on bass and Jon Christensen on drums (at the time, Danielsson and Christensen were also members of Keith Jarrett's European Quartet). Rava followed this up with the album *The Plot* in 1976, again for ECM and with the same quartet of musicians.<sup>59</sup> In the late 1970s and 1980s, Rava led a series of quartets with Italian and international musicians including the saxophonist Massimo Urbani, the drummer Aldo Romano (an Italian resident in Paris), the pianist Franco D'Andrea, the trombonist Roswell Rudd, the drummer Tony Oxley and the bassist Jean-François Jenny-Clark. Among his higher profile appearances as a sideman were performances with orchestras led by Gil Evans and Cecil Taylor. During his career, Rava has demonstrated an astonishing flexibility, being able to function in a standard or post-bop context while at the same time exploring a wide range of options including free jazz, popular music, large ensembles, jazz-rock, and operatic arrangements. In all these different contexts, as in his own musical world, Rava's sound is immediately recognisable for its warm timbre and melodious lyricism. His solos are inspired by introspective meditation but can also be explosive when required. It seems that between the late 1950s and the mid-1970s, Rava spontaneously visited all the mythical places of the jazzman—New York at the end of the classic jazz period, before Miles turned electric in 1969; tango clubs in Buenos Aires; Rio in the early stages of bossa nova; and New York lofts, jazz clubs and jams across the world, high-visibility festivals and provincial venues. Wherever he went, he never failed to fraternise with local musicians and jazz lovers, joining in jam sessions and conversations and building a strong network of connections. Nomadic and curious by nature, Rava right from the start possessed a deep knowledge of the traditions and contemporary trends in the music that he acquired from listening to records (for he was without any formal training, as mentioned above). He also began very early on to associate with other musicians, first in Italy, then internationally. He invested his social capital in travelling and living outside his native country. From his early days in New York onwards, he was able to engage with the different areas of jazz on their own terms, creating a habitus that allowed him to produce his European records of the mid-1970s with international bands (such as *Pupa o Crisalide* of 1975 on the ECM label, with John Abercrombie on guitar, Palle Danielsson on bass and Jon Christensen on drums).<sup>60</sup> This allowed him to navigate the changes in the field exemplified by Miles turning electric and participating in the Isle of Wight Festival in 1970 and by the popularity of electric jazz bands, yet without renouncing his allegiance to jazz traditions including its acoustic avant-garde and European developments. At the same

<sup>58</sup> Enrico Rava, *The Pilgrim and the Stars* (ECM, 1063, 1975).

<sup>59</sup> Enrico Rava, *The Plot* (ECM, 1078, 1977).

<sup>60</sup> Enrico Rava, *Pupa o Crisalide* (RCA, TPL1 1116, 1975).

time, Rava maintained strong links with the Italian scene, offering continued global visibility to a newer generation of players, and proving his capacity to incorporate new material and techniques in his music. Without committing himself to a career in education, he kept teaching informally in masterclasses organised by Siena Jazz and others, which allowed him to engage with newer talents such as Paolo Fresu. Rava's geographic mobility is mirrored by his avoidance of being tied to any specific stylistic area in jazz. This created some animosity, but at the same time made him more acceptable to a general intellectual public without his having to 'translate' his music into forms suitable for academia. Practical experience and capital accumulated in the international arena positioned him as a leader of the jazz movement in Italy, where he is acknowledged as the first-ever Italian jazz musician to achieve such global visibility with a personal, non-imitative musical conception.<sup>61</sup>

### Perigeo (1971–1978)

Perigeo was a jazz-rock quintet in the mid-1970s. Their recordings are still extremely popular in Italy, and a collection has recently been reissued in a CD box (*Antologia*, RCA 2015). The reaction to their music by the jazz establishment and their curt dismissal by the industry led to their disbanding, after which several of its members—such as the pianist Franco D'Andrea (b. 1941), the saxophonist Claudio Fasoli (b. 1939) and the bassist Giovanni Tommaso (b. 1941)—continued to produce some of the most exciting Italian jazz.

Franco D'Andrea, Giovanni Tommaso and the drummer Bruno Biriaco had already been very active in Italian jazz before Perigeo, having played, for example, in Nunzio Rotondo's resolutely modern band in Rome. In 1971, inspired by the experiments of Miles Davis and with the support of the Italian branch of RCA, they decided to establish a jazz-rock oriented band. Their line-up was completed by the saxophonist Claudio Fasoli from Venice and the American guitarist Tony Sidney, who was studying at the Florence Conservatory at the time. Fasoli and Sidney already had much experience, though they were both young and came from different backgrounds—Fasoli from jazz proper, being inspired especially by cool players like Lee Konitz, while Sidney's roots were in classical composition and rock.<sup>62</sup> At the time the band was established, D'Andrea and Tommaso were among the most in-demand accompanists for visiting American soloists. Tommaso had achieved his fame on the Italian jazz scene as a member of the Quartetto di Lucca, a very sedate, modern jazz quartet-inspired band. Fasoli was an up-and-coming alto sax soloist on the Milan jazz scene, while Biriaco was a piano student, a composer and a drummer just beginning his professional career and a pupil of Sergio Conti, the drummer

<sup>61</sup> Further important recordings are e.g. *Enrico Rava Quartet* (ECM, 1122, 1978); *String Band* (Soul Note, SN 1114, 1984); *L'Opera va* (Label Bleu, LBLC 6559, 1993); *Electric Five* (Soul Note, 121214-2, 1995); *Certi angoli segreti* (Label Bleu, LBLC 6594, 1998); *Shades of Chet* (Via Veneto, VVJ 023, 1999).

<sup>62</sup> 'Anthony Sidney: Il Compositore', accessed 30 October 2017, [www.musicoff.com/articolo/anthony-sidney-il-compositore](http://www.musicoff.com/articolo/anthony-sidney-il-compositore).

in the Radio-TV Big Band. After releasing their first album *Azimuth* in 1972,<sup>63</sup> Perigeo immediately established a connection with a youthful audience, playing to capacity theatres and festivals and rapidly becoming a success on the recording scene (the radio show *Per Voi Giovani*, for example, included Perigeo albums in its listings along with Miles Davis and Weather Report as the only representatives of jazz-rock). Perigeo played an astonishing number of live concerts—up to 150 a year, in other words one every three days.<sup>64</sup> They released one album each year from 1972 to 1975 when they toured Europe, opening for Weather Report.<sup>65</sup> In 1977, Perigeo released their last record, which was given different titles in its Italian and USA editions (*Non è poi così lontano/Fata Morgana*, on the RCA label).<sup>66</sup> The group disbanded suddenly in 1978. A few reunion concerts confirmed its continuing popularity, though without adding anything to its musical legacy, which was determined by its first albums. It is worth noting that, apart from Giovanni Tommaso, none of the members of Perigeo returned to expressive modes like those employed by their former band. D'Andrea later shunned electric keyboards altogether; Fasoli developed his research into the concept of extended modes, abandoning the alto saxophone that he had played in Perigeo and concentrating on soprano and tenor only; Biriaco directed big bands and composed for them; and Sidney went back into contemporary composition. One of the reasons for their disbanding might have been a lack of interest on the part of the band members themselves. At the same time, 1975 was a crucial year for electric jazz, with Miles Davis recording the albums *Agharta* and *Pangaea* live in Japan. These included some of his more complex music, though he thereafter made another temporary disappearance, leaving jazz rock in the more commercially oriented hands of men such as Herbie Hancock and Joe Zawinul/Wayne Shorter of the band Weather Report. Maybe there were power shifts within RCA and the new management thought that the experimental bent of Perigeo was at odds with the prevailing tendencies in jazz. At this time, the major labels were recasting jazz as a 'classical' music supposedly fixed in the forms and repertoire it had assumed in the mid-1950s, with its links to modern music restricted to so-called smooth jazz as exemplified by Incognito and Kenny G (whose initial successes all date from the early 1980s). The window of opportunity that had been opened by free and modal jazz in the USA in 1959 (with Ornette Coleman's album *The Shape of Jazz to Come* and Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue*), when cross-genre experimentation seemed possible, was about to close after 1980.

The cultural capital of a band is arguably the combination of the habitudes of its components, where the process of 'paying one's dues' is a key factor in one's acceptance. Despite the indisputable jazz credentials of the band members of Perigeo—with the exception of Tony Sidney, who was, however, qualified in classical composition—the Italian jazz

<sup>63</sup> Perigeo, *Azimuth* (RCA Italiana, PSL 10555, 1972).

<sup>64</sup> Francesco Martinelli, *Claudio Fasoli, note interior, un musicista si racconta* (Turin: Edizioni Siena Jazz, 2012), 24.

<sup>65</sup> Among others, *Genealogia* (RCA Italiana, TPL1 1080, 1974) and *La Valle dei temple* (RCA, TPL1 1175, 1975)

<sup>66</sup> Perigeo, *Non è poi così lontano/Fata Morgana* (RCA, TPL1-1228, 1976/77).



establishment, led by Arrigo Polillo (the publisher of *Musica Jazz* magazine at the time), reacted to the band's concerts and records with vehemently negative reviews. Polillo disliked anything associated with electric instruments, including Miles Davis's post-1969 music, and local musicians were an easier target than a figure like Davis. So they had to pay a heftier price, being accused of something akin to high treason. However, Perigeo was embraced by the then popular youth music magazines (*Ciao 2001* and the more politicised *Muzak* and *Gong*), where its name appeared alongside those of rock stars and alternative bands ranging from new folk to electronica. Moreover, Perigeo was supported more from Rome than from Milan, and this factor contributed to the attitude of the Italian jazz press and festival scene that was centred in the North.

In terms of Bourdieu's analytical categories, a band like Perigeo did not engage the jazz gatekeepers in the specialised press, but resolutely located themselves in a different area of the field. They appealed to a new generation, and thereby supposedly endangered the 'art music' qualifications that older generations had worked so hard to attain (moving out of the club and dance scene, and into theatres and festivals). Judging from the contemporary debate in *Musica Jazz* magazine, which wrote extensively about Perigeo's concerts at jazz events and reviewed their records<sup>67</sup> (see, for example, Gian Mario Maletto's album review 'Abbiamo tutti un Blues da piangere' in December 1973),<sup>68</sup> it seems that the jazz gatekeepers (established critics, festival directors, club owners and record producers) felt bypassed by these jazz musicians having established a direct relationship with their audience without going through the time-approved procedures of acceptance (the club, the jam, the festival, the repertoire). As already mentioned above, jazz musicians traditionally 'pay their dues' by playing in a supporting role for more established soloists, by demonstrating their knowledge of the tradition and its repertoire through performing 'classic', standard tunes, and by measuring their technical prowess (or 'chops' in jazz parlance) against that of their elders and peers in 'cutting sessions' (see, for example, the mythic relevance of the episode of Charlie Parker and the cymbal thrown at his feet, like a gong sounding the end of a boxing game, which was re-enacted in the movie *Bird* of 1988, directed by Clint Eastwood). This rejection of Perigeo came about despite the jazz credentials of Fasoli and D'Andrea having been confirmed when they accompanied visiting soloists (D'Andrea) or performed with them (Fasoli). They also always made a point of introducing jazz to a wider audience, such as when they included an acoustic rendition of Coltrane's 'Naima' in their set, with Fasoli on tenor. At the time, the general jazz scene in Italy was changing, as exemplified by the switch from the elite environment of the Sanremo Jazz Festival (organised from the mid-1950s onwards by the same people who produced *Musica Jazz*) to the Umbria Jazz Festival of the mid-1970s with its free concerts in city squares and a wider selection of genres. I argue that Perigeo was here a kind of 'sacrificial victim', and while I can offer no proof for this, one cannot

<sup>67</sup> See Arrigo Polillo's review of the Alassio Jazz Festival: 'Alassio, settembre' in *Musica Jazz* 29, no. 10 (October 1973), 31–32.

<sup>68</sup> Gian Mario Maletto, 'Perigeo', in *Musica Jazz* 29, no. 12 (December 1973), 35–36; the album *Abbiamo tutti un blues da piangere* appeared at RCA (DPSL 10609) in 1973.

but wonder if support from the jazz world would have helped the band to survive. Crushed between the enmity of the jazz scene on the one hand and the decisions of the entertainment industry on the other, and perhaps also weakened internally by the diversity of its members' interests, the luminous trajectory of Perigeo remains unique in the history of Italian jazz. It is notable that Perigeo's music today is more discussed, appreciated and exchanged in fan circles dedicated to 'prog' rock than in the official jazz books: neither the *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*<sup>69</sup> nor the Italian edition of the *Dizionario del Jazz* by Carles, Clergeat and Comolli, which includes entries on Italian musicians,<sup>70</sup> have an entry on Perigeo.<sup>71</sup>

### Conclusion

The closely knit Italian jazz scene in the years under consideration operated under its own rules. It was dominated by a group of promoters and critics who were mostly based in Milan, though musicians in the Rome area generally enjoyed more visibility in the film industry and on TV broadcasts. The magazine *Musica Jazz* celebrated the rituals of the jazz club and the introduction of jazz into the arena of high culture, associating it with modern art and classical music and combatting any associations with the 'vulgarity' of popular music such as rock'n'roll. The Sanremo Festival of Italian Song was not even mentioned in polite company, though jazz musicians formed the backbone of its orchestra and the founder of *Musica Jazz* magazine was himself a frequent lyricist, even winning the first edition of the Festival with the tear-jerker 'Grazie dei Fior'.

Before the social and cultural ruptures of the 1960s, jazz was music to be enjoyed intellectually and was associated with a cultural and economic élite that was not affiliated to the main political camps in Italy (neither the Christian Democrats and the Church, nor the Communist Party and the trades unions). Going against the grain in jazz meant one could be ostracised, while keeping a foot in a different area was admissible only if that area was itself considered 'higher' than jazz (such as classical music). Marginalised by the language barrier, by the small size of the scene and by the lack of jazz education in their country, Italian musicians were only able to emerge on the international circuit thanks to intense work in building up as broad a network of contacts as possible.

Despite his early successes in the early 1950s, Nunzio Rotondo did not embrace the international mobility that was necessary to associate himself with relevant players in the hotbeds of European jazz (in Paris, London, and Copenhagen), let alone with American musicians—and this was despite his being repeatedly invited to join their travelling bands. In that era, however, European players who actually accepted such invitations were few and far between. It

<sup>69</sup> Barry Kernfeld (ed.) *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London etc.: Macmillan, 2002).

<sup>70</sup> Philippe Carles, André Clergeat and Jean-Louis Comolli (eds.), *Dizionario del jazz* (Milan: Mondadori, 2008).

<sup>71</sup> But see, for example, the Italian prog website 'Perigeo', accessed 30 October 2017, [www.italianprog.com/a\\_perigeo.htm](http://www.italianprog.com/a_perigeo.htm).

was only later that men such as the bassist Dave Holland and the guitarist John McLaughlin (both possessing English as their mother tongue, of course) would move to the USA to play in the band with the highest possible profile, namely that led by Miles Davis. Rotondo never accumulated enough capital to be able to spend it outside the country, and he contented himself with the local jobs a jazz musician could live from in the Rome of the 1960s—working for TV, radio and film soundtracks. His recorded output was not constant enough or of a quality consistent enough to bring him to wider continental attention.

Giorgio Gaslini accumulated instructional capital through his academic studies and his well-to-do intellectual family, whose art collection provided him with an introduction to the art world. However, he never accepted the role of sideman, but started as a leader at a very young age (compare his career with those of pianists such as Keith Jarrett or Michel Petrucciani, who played for years accompanying top musicians like Charles Lloyd or Miles Davis). This fact prevented Gaslini from establishing a jazz curriculum, while his early experiments with dodecaphony placed him far away on the intellectual side of the field. His knowledge of jazz traditions was always geared to his own projects, he never proved himself in jam sessions, and he did not release enough records of accepted materials (compare him here, for example, with John Coltrane, who established himself as a player conversant with the tradition in albums like *Ballads*<sup>72</sup> before he fully launched his experiments). Gaslini was supported much more by academic music institutions than by the international jazz circuit; despite his associations with avant-garde players like Don Cherry and Gato Barbieri, their music together always took place within the format of his own projects and bands.

Enrico Rava set the example of a winning model for further generations of musicians. He began in the accepted tradition, playing Dixieland-style music in the Turin Hot Club (one of the most prestigious in the country). He started to establish his position very early on, taking part in jam sessions, concerts and recordings; he then moved onto an international plane, leading bands with non-Italian players and moving to New York where he ‘paid his dues’. He later played with the most important free players on the scene without restricting himself to one genre. He is still regularly invited to perform with the widest possible stylistic range of musicians, from the free-form orchestras led by Cecil Taylor and Alex von Schlippenbach to pop songs with Italian singer-songwriters. He could then invest his accumulated capital in proposing high quality projects to European labels like Black Saint or ECM. At the time, these labels were at the forefront of the international jazz scene, offering visibility to American players who could not get recording contracts at home. By demonstrating flexibility and an openness to experimentation while retaining a strong personal voice, Gaslini allowed himself to take part in the jazz acceptance rites without being bound to a specific style group. In more than one sense, he can be considered a gate-opener, giving opportunities to several generations of younger players.

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<sup>72</sup> John Coltrane, *Ballads* (Impulse!, A-32, 1962).

Perigeo occupies a position almost exactly opposite to that of Gaslini. Despite its members' qualifications in jazz and academic music, their music was discussed in the jazz press in terms of instrumentation (electric as opposed to classic jazz acoustic) and even their appearance and dress-style were debated, while no in-depth discussion took place about the quality of their recorded output. Their distance from the accepted jazz venues (clubs and theatres), their lack of performances of established jazz standards, and the impossibility of blending their musical practices with jam sessions or jazz festivals, brought upon them the wrath of the jazz press (*Musica Jazz* in Italy but also *Jazz Journal* in the United Kingdom). They seemed to counter the efforts of the jazz community to elevate themselves to the status of high art, and never engaged the gatekeepers of the field in accepted terms. They did not produce recordings featuring the established repertory, but associated themselves with the popular music of their time. By examining the careers of these three musicians and the band Perigeo in the terms proposed by Bourdieu and expanded by Lopes and Lee, we are better able to understand the degree of their success in dealing with the different institutionalised powers of the jazz world, and the wider scene of an opposition between popular culture and 'art'.