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## **VazzBluesNews**

## **Interview with Francesco Amenta: Music** has always been part of me, of my way of life: Video, New CD cover, Photos

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- 26/04/2021 - In INTERVIEWS, VIDEOS

Post Views: 10,309 Jazz interview with jazz saxophonist Francesco Amenta. An interview by email in writing. JazzBluesNews.com: - First let's start with where you grew up, and what got you interested in music?

**Francesco Amenta:** – I was born in Modena, Italy. Musically I started off between Modena and Bologna for a few years, then as you may have read from my bio, I moved to Paris, then The Hague (The Netherlands) and

influence of Afro-American music, many icons of this genre have performed there and still do today. I grew up listening to these great musicians, going from concert to concert and following them everywhere.

One of my first teachers, Piero Odorici, played with Cedar Walton and Eddie Henderson (who was one of my teachers for a very short period of time). They all came to Bologna... I remember seeing Johnny Griffin, whom I

recently to the US. You have to know that since the end of the second world war Bologna has always felt the

met again when I was studying in Paris, and Bobby Durham with whom I had the opportunity to play on Genoa when I was very young. JBN: – How did your sound evolve over time? What did you do to find and develop your sound? **FA:** – I have always thought that sound was a fundamental thing, a bit like good manners, or a business card. I listened to a lot of jazz, swing and be bop and tried to imitate what I heard, my models were and still are Dexter

Gordon, Sonny Rollins, Stan Getz, John Coltrane, Charlie Parker, Lester Young Joe Henderson. I fell in love with their music and sound and tried to reproduce it. Especially in my youth I was always busy buying new records, listening to them obsessively and trying to imitate and play them myself, but also improvising on them... Later on, when I started to play professionally, I became more focused on how to evolve my own sound... Lately I have been very keen on specific U.S. artists I particularly appreciate, such as Joshua Redman, Seamus Blake and

Mark Turner. JBN: – What practice routine or exercise have you developed to maintain and improve your current musical ability especially pertaining to rhythm? **FA:** – The daily practice is what allows me to improve on my musical ability, I like practising hours on end when I can... Until a few years ago, when I was at the conservatory, I used to study all day long, now I have to carefully maximize my time as an artist and choose selected areas I want to practice each day, as time is more scant. Let's say that the perfect day includes a warm-up, some Bach and then some technique. Usually I choose a solo to

work on, which I transcribe or learn it by heart. Then there's the piano break, in which I study standards or

practice composition, and then I go back to the sax, studying the language and improvisation, and I typically

FA: – Your question made me smile  $\bigcirc$  Jazz, is par excellence, contamination of different cultures and sounds,

and I welcome external contaminations in my sound, especially after having lived in New York City, the place

close by studying some standards or originals. This, in general, is my perfect day. The sequence of exercises I mentioned above may sound ke a lot of things but everything is connected. JBN: - How to prevent disparate influences from coloring what you're doing?

where you hear the jazz tradition but also all the modern currents. I don't think there are any negative influences in music but like many things you have to dose them with good taste, the result is always personal. JBN: - How do you prepare before your performances to help you maintain both spiritual and musical stamina? FA: - Usually, I choose a transcript of a solo, most times the great Sonny Rollins, which I use to warm up and then I try to listen to the musicians and the music around me... sometimes the emotions are very strong but usually when the music starts, it surrounds me as a warm blanket and you go with the flow...

JBN: – What do you love most about your new album 2021: Midtown Walk, how it was formed and what

**FA: –** "Midtown Walk" is definitely a stark transition from my first album "Colors and Ties" for several reasons. It certainly is from a technical and stylistic point of view... I think I have evolved in recent years both as a saxophone player and composer. This album was an opportunity to work with the great pianist Cyrus Chestnut,

you are working on today.

other great musicians to work with.

working with me on my record.

what they want?

part of the game.

us?

musicians.

it makes me fly.

life?

be?

assimilate.

questions to ask them.

JBN: - Yes, of course, Come Sunday!!!

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JBN: - What's the balance in music between intellect and soul?

from which I learnt many things. Another gift from this album was to be able to collaborate with John Lee, recording Director and Co-producer of the record. I learned a lot from both of them and hope to get back to the studio as soon as possible. From a compositional point of view, "Midtown Walk" is a photograph of the influences I have absorbed since I arrived in NYC, the place where tradition blends with a myriad of influences and colors.

"Midtown Walk" is also the first record released under my record label "Amenta Music International" (AMI), and

will be the first in a long series. Indeed I hope to be back in the recording studios soon, as I have other ideas and

Did your sound evolve during that time? And how did you select the musicians who play on the album? **FA: –** My sound has definitely been influenced by listening to a lot of music over the years. Life in New York has certainly accelerated this process. I met my rhythm section here in NYC, both talented young musicians. It has been a pleasure working with them and I look forward to organizing some live or streaming gigs with them. The collaboration with Cyrus was a proposal of the Co-Producer and recording Director of the Album, John Lee,

who, after hearing my previous project, and listening to my ideas on the new one, proposed Cyrus Chestnut. I

**FA:** – This is a difficult question to express in words, I think the balance lies in the ability to juggle everything at

the same time, the technique and theory, the language influences, the decision to manage the emotional part or

JBN: – There's a two-way relationship between audience and artist; you're okay with giving the people

**FA: –** Sometimes it can be difficult to compromise, but I must say that here in NYC – and in Northern Europe too

- people are involved and listen with interest to the solos and music. In other places it may be different but it is

JBN: – Please any memories from gigs, jams, open acts and studio sessions which you'd like to share with

FA: – I would have plenty to tell, but I'll only mention two, the first was a gig in Italy, during a jazz festival, the

square was full of people and I was really excited, it was a beautiful concert and we received a lot of

let it flow, all of the above condensed in an instant, in a solo, in a color, like when you play a ballad.

remember with excitement the day I received the phone call confirming that Mr Chestnut was interested in

JBN: – Ism is culled from a variety of lives dates with various performers over the course of a few years.

appreciation from the public.The second time was here in NYC, the first time I played at the Knickerbocker, in a trio. I remember at the end of a ballad, "Lover man", people standing up to applaude us while we were playing the coda of the song. It happened shortly after I arrived in NYC. JBN: – How can we get young people interested in jazz when most of the standard tunes are half a century old?

**FA:** – I think it's just a matter of cyclicality.... everything comes back. Also, there are many young and talented

JBN: - John Coltrane said that music was his spirit. How do you understand the spirit and the meaning of

**FA:** – Music has always been part of me, of my way of life. Each of us – musicians – has a personal relationship to

music. As far as I'm concerned it's the way I express myself, the place where I shelter, playing makes me feel full,

JBN: - If you could change one thing in the musical world and it would become a reality, what would that

**FA:** – One thing I would like to change is for our profession to be respected and cared for much more. Especially after the experience of this covid pandemic, it is clear that we as a category need to be more protected and safeguarded. This is especially needed in some European countries like Italy, where fundings for the arts are always very limited because the arts are not given the status they deserve.

contemporary scene. There are a lot of great musicians. In recent years I have been listening to Brad Mehldau,

FA: – Well, one part of me is always tied to tradition, the other part of me is very curious about the

Joshua Redman, Seamus Blake, Aaron Goldberg and many others. I have much to listen to and much to

JBN: - Who do you find yourself listening to these days?

JBN: - What is the message you choose to bring through your music?

JBN: - I have been asking you so far, now may I have a question from yourself...

**FA:** – Did you like my record and which track were more interested in?

concerts, express my art and my language to the best of my abilities.

JBN: – So putting that all together, how are you able to harness that now?

**FA: –** When I approach the composition I try to express an emotion, a moment, or a story. For me it is always a very evocative moment. JBN: - Let's take a trip with a time machine, so where and why would you really wanna go? **FA: –** Well I wish we could! I'd like to go back a bit to the times of Miles, Dexter or Coltrane. I'd just have a few

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**FA:** – I would like to continue my journey, both artistically and intellectually, I would like to launch other records,



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