

Jovanotti in Williamsburg: when Brooklyn becomes the Ombelico del Mondo

Francesca Giuliani (March 13, 2012)



The Tuscan singer-songwriter and rapper kept Brooklyn bouncing all night with his international jam band. New Yorkers as well as Italians danced and sang along to his newest hits and historical songs, defeating linguistic barriers with the power of music.

For about two hours yesterday night Lorenzo Cherubini a.k.a. Jovanotti transformed the [Music Hall of Williamsburg](#) [2] into the vibrating and pulsating “ombelico del mondo” (the center of the world, literally: “the belly button of the world,” as the title of one of his hit songs goes).

The Tuscan singer-songwriter and rapper, who started his career in Italy in 1988, kept Brooklyn bouncing all night with his international jam band. He played his newest and historical hits while combining improvisation moments with tributes to the Beastie Boys (who inspired him to start rapping), paying respect to Italian traditional music by playing Domenico Modugno’s [Vecchio Frack](#) [3], and saluting [Lucio Dalla](#) [4], one of the most



influential Italian contemporary singers and songwriters who passed away on March 1.

Italian fans living in New York or travelling from Italy to see Lorenzo perform were just about as many as the Brooklynites and New Yorkers, who often sang along in Italian and cheered for “Lorenzo” with their softer “r” sounds, but equally as loud.

“I’m gonna tell you what happens tonight...I don’t know, we don’t even have a set list,” said Jovanotti after coming on stage in a Michael Jackson-ish suit with the US flag colors: blue jacket, red shirt and white pants and tie, with a smooth criminal’s hat.

Lorenzo started with “Battiti di ali di farfalla” from his last album, “Ora,” and immediately set the mood inviting the crowd to “step into the ring,” as the song says. In the audience, hands were in the air and feet were “dancing the swing,” speaking a crossbreed language between Jovanotti’s Tuscan accented Italian with a slight hint of lisps, and his English, which he said sounds “like a New York taxi driver.”

Jumping around like an African tribal dancer, Jovanotti breaks rhymes in a well crafted Italian that echoes with literary quotations and cultural references, and that is definitely a part of the experience of his music, which not only is irresistible for the feet but is also rich in its messages.

The hits from the 1990s such as “Penso Positivo,” “Piove” or “L’Ombelico del Mondo” sounded just as actual and catchy as when they were released, and they were enriched and empowered to go beyond any linguistic barrier not only by Cherubini’s charisma, but also by the powerful contribution of the instrumentalists from Brazil, Greece, Italy and the Caribbean that Jovanotti brought to heat up the Williamsburg venue.

Songs from the most recent albums “Buon Sangue,” “Safari” and “Ora” were also extremely appreciated by the audience, to the Italians in which Jovanotti wished a happy life before leaving the stage: “I know that the United States is a tough place to be and you gotta work hard, so I wish you all to be happy like you were my brothers. Come back to visit us sometime,” he said.

Jovanotti’s “Il più grande spettacolo dopo il Big Bang” (from the title of a song from “Ora,” meaning “the greatest show after the Big Bang”) will be repeated tonight and Tomorrow night at the [Bowery Ballroom](#) [5], across the bridge in Manhattan, and it will then move to other locations in the US such as Austin, TX on March 15 and LA on March 17.

Performing in America, Lorenzo said last night, has always been his dream. “I owe it to my wife, who at some point told me: Fuck, let’s just do it!”

To her, “whom I owe everything,” he said, he dedicated one of his most romantic songs, “A te,” which the American girls in the audience sang from start to finish.

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