

Chocabeck, the Most Lavish Production Yet by Zucchero

Patrizia Orioli (September 28, 2011)



On October 4th, Italy's favorite rock star launches the Italian and English versions of his latest work, a recording that is simultaneously a concept album about his roots in traditional village life and a milestone in his exceptional international career. This precedes a North American tour that includes Toronto, Montreal, Detroit, Chicago, New York and Boston to name a few.

"Every country produces one singer in each generation who represents that country, the way Bruce Springsteen represents America or Bono does Ireland. Zucchero is the Italian voice for everyone in the world." — Sting

[Zucchero](#) [2] ("Sugar") is Italy's most beloved rock star and one of the top Italian artists worldwide, having sold 40 million records over three decades. As a singer-songwriter, guitarist and keyboardist,



Zucchero has collaborated with the royalty of international rock, blues, R&B, jazz and classical music – from Bono, Sting and Eric Clapton to Miles Davis, John Lee Hooker and Solomon Burke to Luciano Pavarotti and Andrea Bocelli.

On October 4, 2011, [Decca Records](#) [3] releases the North American edition of Zucchero's Chocabeck, a recording that is simultaneously a concept album about his roots in traditional village life and a milestone in his exceptional international career. Chocabeck – co-produced with Don Was (the Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan) and Brendan O'Brien (Pearl Jam, Bruce Springsteen) – includes English lyrics by Bono, Iggy Pop and Roland Orzabal of Tears for Fears. Chocabeck will also be released as an all-Italian, stand-alone album on October 4th.

Zucchero's autumn/winter tour on behalf of Chocabeck includes a handful of dates in select cities across North America including Toronto, Montreal, Detroit, Chicago, New York and Boston to name a few. Asked to describe Zucchero, his longstanding collaborator Bono said: "My friend Zucchero has had Italy singing and dancing for years. . . His boyish smile makes him the most charming man in Italy, that smile that just runs all over his face. But the voice is the sound of aged oak, like an old, oak-aged whiskey. . ."

Born Adelmo Fornaciari, Zucchero – like only the very brightest luminaries in pop – has become known far and wide by his one-word nickname, bestowed on him by a schoolteacher back in his hometown in northern Italy. The 11 songs of Chocabeck loosely follow the cycle of life in an imaginary countryside location not dissimilar to the village where Zucchero was raised. "This album is all about my roots," he says. "Fragments of life and emotions on a typical Sunday from dawn to dusk in the village where I grew up."

Zucchero teamed with Bono for the track "Someone Else's Tears," a delicate acoustic song that captures the rhythm of life in the Italian countryside: "The grapes are gathered, the wine is pressed/ And despite the rain/ It's been a good year to walk these fields again," Zucchero sings, his voice rising in a soulful refrain above a bed of shimmering keyboards that include harpsichord and a church organ. "I've been a friend of Bono's for a long time," Zucchero says. "He wrote the lyrics for my song 'Blue' and also for 'Miserere,' the song I performed with Pavarotti. Bono doesn't speak Italian at all, but he heard this song and then came out with these beautiful lyrics that exactly matched my idea of what it was about – life in the country, making wine, enjoying the simple things. It's true what they say – the music already has the lyric inside it."

Contributing to the Chocabeck sessions were such top-flight session virtuosos as Greg Leisz (guitars, pedal-steel, banjo, mandolin) and Josh Freese (drums), with co-producer Brendan O'Brien also playing guitars on a number of tracks in addition to mixing the album. Several songs are colored by the string arrangements of Davide Rossi (who arranged the strings on Coldplay's album Viva La Vida and has worked for years with Goldfrapp). Beach Boys idol Brian Wilson adds distinctive harmonies to the song "Spirit Together," which features words by Iggy Pop, who also adapted English lyrics to Zucchero's Italian-language song "Alla Fine," now titled "Too Late." This emotional song reaches a climax of sweeping orchestral grandeur, inspiring a vocal performance of almost operatic emotion from the singer. "The song is dedicated to a friend who died of cancer," he says. "But it is really a deep love song. It is a song for anyone who misses someone who is not there anymore."

The songs in Italian on the English version of the album include the powerful ballad "Soldati nella Mia Città" (Soldiers in My Town), which evokes the hopes and fears that haunt the folk memories of Zucchero's rural community. "I was born 10 years after the Second World War, but there was still something lingering in the air from that terrible era," he recalls. "I remember my grandmother Diamante taking me for a walk on a Sunday and we saw all these soldiers leaving the town. To me, it seemed to be a sign that after all the rain and sadness, a new day full of hope and sunshine was coming. The fear that I felt as a small boy seeing the soldiers was disappearing. The negativity of war was being replaced with the joyful spirit of summer."

The album closes with "God Bless the Child." Not the famous Billie Holiday tune, this "God Bless the Child" is an evocative orchestral song co-written by Zucchero with Roland Orzabal of Tears For Fears along with Chaz Jankel and Derek Hussey of the Blockheads. The song's setting is the end of the day, with a gathering sense of calm that helps end the song cycle on a note of quiet optimism. Zucchero sums up the themes of Chocabeck: "I've travelled around the world for many years," he says. "And it is now more important than ever for me to reconnect with the sights and sounds and feelings of life



in a village community. The houses are made of stone, the fields are full of flowers and maize, and you can hear the hypnotic sound of the river running close by. I like to live a simple life with my family, observing the old traditions. And this is what my music is truly all about. It comes from inside my soul."

ZUCCHERO FALL 2011 NORTH AMERICAN TOUR:

Friday, 10/14, St. Catherines, ON, Brock Center For The Arts
Saturday, 10/15, Toronto, ON, Massey Hall
Sunday, 10/16, Montreal, PQ, St. Denis Theatre
Tuesday, 10/18, Ottawa, ON, Centre Point Theatre
Thursday, 10/20, Edwardsville, IL, Southern Illinois University
Saturday, 10/22, Chicago, IL, Park West
Sunday, 10/23, Cleveland, OH, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame
Tuesday, 10/25, New York, NY, Beacon Theatre
Thursday, 10/27, Cranston, RI, RI PAC
Friday, 10/28, Collingswood, NJ, Scottish Rite
Saturday, 10/29, Boston, MA, Berklee Performance Center

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