

Pop CD

Enzo Avitabile and Bottari, Save the World

4 stars (Wrasse)

Robin Denselow
Friday July 30, 2004

The Guardian

One of the strangest, most compelling sights of last weekend's Womad festival was the appearance of a portly veteran Italian star backed by an extraordinary barrage of percussion.

Surrounding Enzo Avitabile on stage was an array of wine barrels, bashed with sticks by hefty young men in black, spurred on by an excitable conductor. In front of all this were the more conventional instruments - brass, keyboards and oud - and the singer himself, adding his chanting vocals.

The use of such barrels in Italian folk music dates back to medieval times, but Avitabile has up-dated the tradition for a new global fusion. His album may not be as dramatic as the stage show, but involves a whole batch of unexpected African guests, from the rai star Khaled to Manu Dibango and even Hugh Masekela, and songs that range from moody, half-spoken ballads to thunderous percussive work-outs.

Ignore the cringe-making title; this is a European best-seller that's worth checking out.

May 08, 2004

Enzo Avitabile & Bottari
World

Save the World (*Wrasse*)



Every so often in world music a sound comes along that knocks you sideways, for it has almost no reference to anything that you have heard before. Enzo Avitabile has made such an album. In Italy he is a huge star, and he has worked with artists such as Tina Turner, James Brown and Randy Crawford. But on *Save the World* he has made a dramatic break with his pop past in favour of a thrilling new global soundscape. The building block is the ancient musical tradition of rural Campania in southern Italy, focussing on the hypnotic percussion of Bottari, a group of drummers beating huge, empty barrels. Over this mesmerising backdrop, Enzo sings in a voice rooted deep in some Mediterranean equivalent of the blues. But that's only the start. The unmistakable voice of Khaled brings out a rich, Arabic flavour on *Balla Balla*. The trumpeter Hugh Masekela blows up a storm on *Questa e l' Africa* and the saxophonist Manu Dibango does similarly sterling service on *Salvamme O'Munde*. An Egyptian brass band adds exquisite slabs of middle-Eastern funk all over the place, while the Palestinian violin and oud player Simon Shaheen contributes more subtle flavours. If you insist on a comparison, then last year's world music hybrid, *In the Hour of Two Lights*, by Terry Hall and Mushtaq, was at least conceived in a similar spirit. Enzo and his drummers play WOMAD this summer. On the evidence of this record, they should be a sensation.

Nigel Williamson

esreview

Roll out Italian barrels

WORLD
Enzo Avitabile and Bottari
 Jazz Café, NW1

Sue Steward

THE Jazz Café saw an unlikely collision of time and place last night when the Neapolitan singer/songwriter Enzo Avitabile brought his barrel-drum band, Bottari, into town. Based on the traditional 14th-century troupes who drove out spirits threatening the villages' wine cellars, Bottari's two modern musclemen, with arms like hams, beat a barrage of rhythms on huge wine barrels, while two younger, skinny guys moved faster on small cutaway barrels.

Among the drums, three Motown funk-style horn players raged and snorted as two quiet men sat on stools and delicately embroidered melodies on a mandolin and oud-like lute — like old ladies in an Italian village bar. Avitabile —

splendidly eccentric in leggings and peasant silk smock — is an authoritative musician and a charismatic performer; his bitingly soulful tenor recalls Junior Walker, but can also be a knotty piece of assured, free jazz blowing.

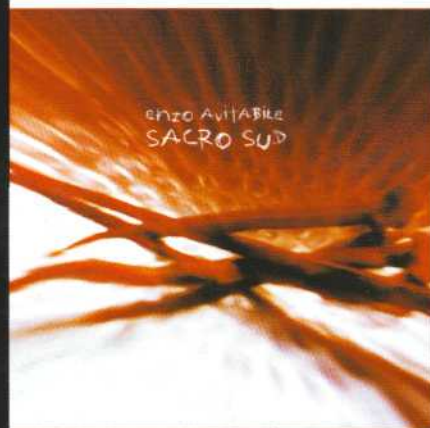
Avitabile engages closely with his audience — assisted here by an enthusiastic group of tarantella-dancing Neapolitan youth. He paraded songs from his latest album, *Save the World* (*Salvamm'o munno*), with themes about the state of the world, and of children in Africa, and his obvious response to the pagan excitement of the drums infects audiences.

Energy levels were also raised by the extraordinary solos — particularly on electric bass and a "crying" mandolin. When the three horn players wove through the crowd, Avitabile demanded they *Dance on the Barrels*; after that performance, the Jazz Café should have some of the best-protected wines in town.



Reminiscent of Junior Walker: the charismatic Enzo Avitabile's bitingly soulful tenor sax

Enzo Avitabile "Sacro Sud"



Musicista del mondo in viaggio perenne tra l'America nera, i villaggi della sofferenza africani e i sentieri più veri del nostro Mediterraneo,

Enzo Avitabile si spinge con questo disco in un percorso interiore alla ricerca delle radici della spiritualità. Un percorso immaginario da Marianella al Golgota, per mettere in risalto i mali delle nostre città, dei tanti Sud del mondo e dei popoli sofferenti.

Sacro Sud è un progetto interamente acustico, che vede il grande artista partenopeo affiancato dalle launeddas di Luigi Lai e dalla ghironda di Maurizio Martinotti. Con loro anche i Cantori del Miserere di Sessa Aurunca e il Quartetto Polifonico Alphonciano.

il CD è distribuito da IRD - www.ird.it

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WOMAD 2004

ENZO AVITABILE & BOTTARI (ITALY)

In the medieval haciendas and homesteads of southern Italy, farmers used to beat barrels to exorcise evil spirits from their barns and cellars. As so often happens, this very practical exercise turned into a ritual and eventually into a distinct musical culture, with entire villages turning out to chase spirits away from their fields, lead by a beat master or *capopattuglia* .

Think of a Mediterranean equivalent to the Drummers of Burundi, with a little of The Ghostbusters mixed in. This ancient tradition has been kept alive in one particular southern Italian village called Portico, with young disciples learning the rhythms from the old *Bottari* or barrel beaters. It was to Portico that Enzo Avitabile, a Neapolitan musician of some fame in Italy who has previously worked with James Brown, Tina Turner and Randy Crawford amongst others, turned for a trip back to his roots. He worked with the Bottari of Portico for three long years, incorporating their primal barrel rhythms into a hi-energy mix which included jazz, blues, the voices of the Brotherhood of the SS Crucifix and an ancient southern Italian vocal styles called *canto a fronna* .

Word of this intriguing project soon got out and artists like Khaled, Amina, Hugh Massakela and Manu Dibango all begged Enzo to be allowed to contribute. It's certainly one of the most unexpected and entrancing global music adventures of 2004. A CD is out now on Wrasse Records.

Courtesy of Andy Morgan, July 2004

Read other people's comments:

Saw them at the Barbican last night and they were fantastic, everyone should try and get to see them. I'm still dancing the day after and I'm 54
Michael from Highbury

Love to see him and his group in person. First heard, just recently, Avitabile's vocals "Vota vota" on the KPFK.org global village show.
Santa Monica, CA USA

I haven't heard them live, but on record Enzo and the Bottari-gang surely got some seriously interesting stuff going...
Mikka, Valby

Absolutely orgasmic; I saw them at WOMAD, I danced madly for an hour, clapped my hands off. I bought the CD so I can do it over and over and over... The mystical and powerful drumming with Enzo's unique style is head blowing!
Abi Warwick

I listened to the first set, and almost left thinking this wasn't for me. At that point the stage erupted! One hour later I was left reeling after experiencing some of the most captivating and exhilarating music I have ever heard. Have just ordered the CD. Incredible
Caleb, Bristol

Fantastic - sorry we missed you Live at WOMAD!!
Theo Wood, Bristol

Fantastic band - irresistible energy - probably the best performance at this year's WOMAD, along with David Byrne & Tosca Strings (why no mention here by Radio 3?)
Simon, Somewhere

What a sensational set that quite had the Italian half of my blood rushing. They were brilliant even if Enzo looks a little like Danny Baker on speed. Everyone that enjoyed this should get onto Amazon, or wherever, and buy the album SAVE THE WORLD. Together we can get this up the charts and each sale benefits Amnesty International as well!
Pete Hirons Rochester, Kent

This set had everything - great rhythms, great music and a set of performers who were enjoying themselves every bit as much as we were. Best gig of the weekend by far, and the only one that had me grinning like a Cheshire cat afterwards.
Jaysee, Hampshire

PHWOAR!!!COULDNT TAKE MY EYES OFF THE GORGEOUS,BARREL-BEATING PASSION ON STAGE AND COULDNT KEEP FROM JUMPING AROUND WITH A HUGE SMILE ON MY FACE!WHAT AN INCREDIBLE,INFECTIOUS,BOOMING SOUND OF CELEBRATION...BY FAR THE BEST ACT I SAW AT WOMAD THIS YEAR AND I HOPE I GET TO SEE THEM AGAIN!!

Laila Williams,Swansea

Hypnotic and compulsive during the gig. great to hear a recording last night on the radio. Please play it again on thursday

Brett, hounslow

Can we have some more please?!

Helen, London

Best gig of the WOMAD festival for me. I'd expected people like Tinariwen, Souad Massi, and so on to be good, but Enzo Avitabile and Bottari topped them all.

Gordon Baxter, UK

ENZO AVITABILE & BOTTARI Just the most storming set - heart and soul, music of joy. An enthusiasm for life and dance combined with brilliant musical skills. Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful

John Senior - UK - Suffolk

Womad 2004: they blew me away. That wonderful sight of a band very physically throwing themselves into their performance and enjoying it as much as their audience. See them if you can!

Paul Dalton, Bristol

Wonderful set at WOMAD. Real get you up and dance music. Straight to the feet.

Andy White, Reading

Enzo Avitabile and Bottari had absolutely everybody dancing - strong, lusty rhythms and echoes of many music traditions. A truly inspired combination of sounds.

Sarah, Suffolk

They are very great and hypnotic...

Calzetta Gianluca, Neaples (Italy)