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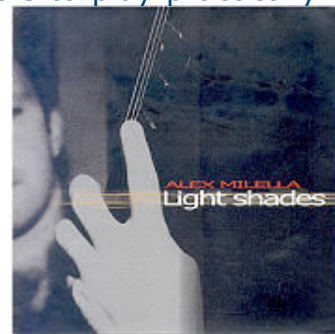
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Interview with [Alex Milella](#) by [Alceste Ayroldi](#)



Having two reference marks is mandatory for anyone, and if such references have influenced an overabundant number of musicians, then it becomes practically inevitable. So, we may as well take references by wits, understanding the innovations, the techniques, un-framing them and taking them as our own, to achieve an evolution that is the personal goal of a growth we can aim to, if we have the talent and the will to improve and to confront. And an incredible young talent such as [Alex Milella](#), doesn't surely lack all of this. Being able to play practically anything on his guitar, he has released a first album ([Light Shades](#)) that, in a straightforward and sincere way, shows a tribute to his myths, who are [Scott Henderson](#) and Allan Holdsworth, leaving anyway a wide space to his "guitarism" and to his compositive vein still thick with a very effective originality. Listening to him play his very smooth licks, gives to us a good hope that we are dealing with a musician who can aspire with ease to his prestigious personal goal.



A.A.: *Alex, how did you decide to become a guitarist?*

A.M.: at the age of four I used to strum on the organ I had at home, playing the songs I knew from the commercials. My parents, noticing my natural bent for the music decided to make me study the piano. Unfortunately then, a bad teaching made me hate the piano and so at the age of ten I decided to quit studying. Two years later, thanks to my cousin, I started to listen and enjoy bands like Dire Straits and Pink Floyd, being amazed by what and instrument like guitar could create in that context. And so I started studying guitar.

A.A.: *[Scott Henderson](#), Allan Holdsworth, but also Robben Ford and John Scofield... your hands touch the guitar inspired by such guitarists. Which was your teaching route, and when did you meet the styles of these great guitarists?*

A.M.: everything began when, after having an indigestion from rock, I read in a musical magazine bad reviews about guitarists like Malmsteen, and acclaims to musicians like **Allan Holdsworth** (who was a perfect stranger to me by then); the funny thing is that the author of these judgements was one of my favourite guitarists of that time: Gary Moore. And it's not all, I hear good words about Allan Holdsworth also by **Umberto Fiorentino** who impressed me so much and that I had just met at the mid eighties (still now I have a deep esteem for him and I think he's one of the best international musicians). So I decided to buy my first Allan

Holdsworth record, and... it was a shock. Still some times before I felt the need to deepen my knowledge, but after hearing Mr. Holdsworth this impulse became a learning frenzy. From that day, I started listening to musicians from **John Coltrane** to **Michael Brecker**, from **Charlie Parker** to **Miles Davis**, from **Bill Evans** to **Chick Corea**, from Wes Montgomery to **John Scofield** and **Scott Henderson**, always more and more, but not just listening, also tabbing down everything I could... when I was a student there weren't such things as educational videos or sheet music with transcriptions... and forget the Internet! Everything was written down by myself and all of that helped me mostly to train my ear! Since a couple of years now I enjoy also playing tunes by Robben Ford and Steve Ray Vaughan... what guys they are!

A.A.: are there any musicians that you dream to play together with?

A.M.: sincerely I would have loved to play with **John Coltrane**; being part of **Miles Davis'** line-up from the "Bitches Brew" time going on. Today I would really love to play with **Gary Willis**, Chad Wackerman, **Marcus Miller**... I would also like to play somehow with Steve Kahn, maybe a duet...

A.A.: you've been reviewed very well also on the American All About Jazz...

A.M.: I'm really very flattered about the way my record is having positive replies mostly on international level; I'm very happy about the way John Kelman appreciated my record "Light Shades" reviewing it on All About Jazz USA; then John W. Patterson included my record in the playlist of his on-line radio Eer-music.com; also Len Davis from Australia, who has been involved with Fusion since twenty-five years, included me into the playlist of his radio www.bitches-brew.com; there are news even from Jakarta, Germany and Japan.

A.A.: have you ever thought of America? Do you think that it's important today trying to be listened to in America?

A.M.: it is not indispensable being listened to in America, but it is indispensable being listened to in many parts of the world. It is obvious that in America the market is so wide that it can give some space even to those minorities that here in Italy, for a matter of numbers, would die, or would hardly exist; but it is interesting also addressing to some parts of the world that haven't been "colonized" yet... do they still exist? Anyway, even Americans paradoxically dream to come here to Europe, just the way we dream to play in America.

A.A.: what line-up do you prefer

A.M.: it depends on what do I want to play: if I fancy to play in a more powerful way, I choose a more complete line-up at the sound level like the quintet (drums, bass, synth, sax and guitar), if on the other side I fancy to be more introspective I prefer a quieter band (drums, bass, guitar, and maybe I add just one wind instrument).

A.A.: you also sing, which is not easy while you play a guitar solo. Some masters are George Benson, Robben Ford, the lamented Stevie Ray Vaughan, obviously Jimi Hendrix... Are you planning to use the voice in a next project?

A.M.: using the voice while you play and improvise it's a more aware way to express oneself; many musicians use the voice not really like a proper instrument but as a mean through which they can connect mind heart and hands to express better their musical concept; while other, since they are more tuneful, take advantage of their voice like a second instrument. In other words all the greatest improvisers play their phrases simultaneously with their voice and with their instrument; those who cannot sing just utter some sounds, while the tuneful ones literally double the same notes played by the instrument... as if they were playing two of them! Sometimes even I use the voice like a second instrument because I always used to sing since I was a kid, but officially I am a guitarist and so I don't think I will use the voice in my next record as a "main" instrument, but I would like to bring it close to the guitar and... time discloses all things.



Rossella Favia

A.A.: have you ever thought of "betraying" your instrument?



A.M.: No, never. I am a convinced monogamist because my idea is that it's quite hard living an intense path with your own instrument; in fact for me it's difficult staying far from the guitar for more than two days. Only when I compose I use the piano and the computer.

A.A.: *is there "energy" among your pupils? I mean, do you see new lymph, a right approach, devotion, will to study and making it?*

A.M.: it's very hard today, in a world that is full of inputs that are all but artistic and based only on the way you look, for a boy to be involved with music in such a deep way as it happened to me. By saying this I don't mean that there aren't motivated boys, but the study of an instrument and of music it's a serious matter and demands a lot of sacrifice and devotion, that is why there are very few of those who are willing to do it; among the many pupils I've had in these years I've been able to find out only in very few of them the same real interest that I had, when I was a teenager, in the study of the instrument.

A.A.: *what excites you more when you listen to a guitarist?*

A.M.: his feeling, his timing, and his harmonic-melodic approach; I like those who are less mannerist and more experimentalist.

A.A.: *the last innovator of the guitar as an instrument...*

A.M.: **Allan Holdsworth** for sure in these last thirty years... I also like Wayne Krantz very much and **Kurt Rosenwinkel** as a composer.

A.A.: *three records to save from the end of the world...*

A.M.: "**Giant Steps**" by **John Coltrane** because he really invented something, that "Coltrane Change" of his, also called the "Magic Triangle", has really set the path to the future. "**Bitches Brew**" by **Miles Davis** because it was the record of the break-up of the border between rock and jazz, who gave life to the first real fusion between sound/energy and harmony/improvisation, which later would have been called "Fusion". The last record that I would save is "Secrets", first because it was the Allan Holdsworth record that electrified me, and then because it has so much teaching material inside that any musician, and much more a guitarist, should desire it... but honestly I would save much more records.

A.A.: *three books...*

A.M.: I would surely save Dante Alighieri's "Divine Comedy" because throughout the great travel, Inferno, Purgatory, and Heaven, the human and the divine meet themselves in an apotheosis so unique and unrepeated in the universal literature. "Madame Bovary" by Flaubert because it's the first novel where romanticism melts with realism in the way of the "scientific method"; it's a work of the XIX Century but it was a novel of great breaking with the past. The third book I would save is "The Lord of the Rings" by Tolkien; the lands, the characters and the atmospheres are all immersed in a timeless world where the fight between good and evil is certainly current, making this masterpiece absolutely modern.

A.A.: *which are your upcoming projects?*

A.M.: to consolidate this record and to experiment and to innovate with the next one.

A.A.: *do you have any regrets?*

A.M.: I would say I don't.

A.A.: *who would you like to thank?*

A.M.: first of all my mate who always sustained and supported me... having someone who believes in you and never hinders you, and creates the right mood of calmness and tranquillity it's really vital for me. The musicians who made my project alive: **Giuseppe Berlen**, **Pierluigi Balducci**, **Luca Cacucciolo**, **Michele Carrabba**, **Davide Santorsola**, **Beppe Sequestro** and **Roberta Carrieri**. **Mimmo Campanale**, my godfather, the one who made possible the contact with **Lino Nicolosi** of the NbM label. Lino Nicolosi for his professionalism. The **Losavio** brothers

for their continuous support by opening for me the path to this beautiful moment. **Ernesto** for my first beautiful review and **Marco** for helping me so much and including me in what I really regard as the first Italian portal of jazz reference: jazzitalia.net. **Steve Khan**, a very good musician, a very good teacher, and exquisite person because he was able to give me the good advices. Alceste Ayroldi for the mutual esteem. **Rino Liuzzi** and the guys of "Jazz, Fusion e Dintorni" for the hospitality and kindness. **Fabrizio Dadò**, **Maurizio Parri** and **Gianluca Russo** of the "mythic" guitar magazine "**AXE**" that for years has been educating and helping the path of so many Italian guitarists... if not all of them. **John Kelmar** for the beautiful words written on "All About Jazz USA". **Rossella Favia** for the beautiful pictures and the website along with **Alessandro Turi**. **Guido Di Leone** and the music school "Il Pentagonogramma". And finally I thank all those who believe in me, because without them all of this would have never been accomplished.

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