

High Hopes



Manny Fizzotti

"I'm from Biella, a small town at the foot of the Alps in north west Italy, though I've lived in London since 2011," says guitarist, Manny Fizzotti. "My father and my sisters played the piano, my grandfather the violin and my great-grandfather from my mother's side was first flute at La Scala in Milan with Arturo Toscanini. As a child, I remember my dad listening to Benny Goodman and other swing records and mum had a huge collection of 78s from the 1940s and '50s. I started playing when I was fourteen, then by sixteen, began having lessons. Back then I loved The Beatles, Stones, Free, Zeppelin, Ten Years After and Rory Gallagher. Then via Cream and Clapton, I found John Mayall and The Bluesbreakers, and from there the great American blues artists like Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, B.B. King and Buddy Guy, and just fell in love with the music."

Manny graduated with honours from the Guitar Institute of Technology in Hollywood, an experience he recounts with delight. "I went there to become an all-round musician, so I studied different styles of music, jazz especially. I could talk for ages about the school but let me just share a few things. You sit in a room with world famous artists such as Joe Diorio, Robben Ford, Scott Henderson, playing with them and receiving advice on how to improve your playing. World famous artists on tour though L.A. were often playing concerts at the school. I

remember seeing Ginger Baker, Bo Diddley, Mike Stern, Joe Pass, Steve Gadd and Lonnie Brooks. Los Angeles was never a blues town, but there was Rusty's Surf Ranch and the famous Harvelle's in Santa Monica, which opened in the '50s."

After moving to London, Manny wound up playing regular gigs with harmonica players Alan Glen and John O'Leary at The Hideaway and the famous Eel Pie Island, and more recently, with Giles Robson at The 606 Club and out on tour. "Once, at Ain't Nothin' But in Soho, Jennifer Noble, the official photographer for the Chicago Blues Society, came in with Billy Branch," recalls Fizzotti, "that was great!" He's also played with Laurie Garman, another great harmonica player who recorded a couple of albums for Mike Vernon's *Blue Horizon* label. And what about in Europe and back home in Italy? "I played with Fabio Treves, a harmonica virtuoso who's one of the best Italian bluesmen on the scene. He had his first band back in 1974 and played with Mike Bloomfield, Paul Jones, Warren Haynes, Sunnyland Slim, Alexis Korner, even Frank Zappa. With my own band I've performed at some major European festivals, among them at Vallemaggia Magic Blues in Switzerland, the International Jimi Hendrix Festival in Budapest: in Italy, Pistoia Blues, San Remo Blues, Torrita Blues Festival, Narcao Blues and many more."

Pete Clack

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Nobody Understands, Manny Fizzotti's latest album is out now