

The Making of 'My Affection' (Synthesis, 2005)

At the beginning of the 2004, Raph released a fantastic tribute to Depeche Mode, with him on keyboards, playing a lot of their classical songs. While I was listening to them, I used to sing over such songs. The style Raph played the songs was made for it! As I accepted to participate to a competition in July, I wrote to Raph telling him that I wanted to use 'his' Sister Of Night in that occasion. Raph was so kind to telling me to wait a few days, as he was, after a lot of advice, remaking the whole project with a 'real piano sound'! Some days after, I received the new version of Sister Of Night, together with the whole Raph project 'My Caress', 16 superb songs (plus one special bonus, Memphisto, for a total of 17!). The 17th of July I sung Sister Of Night for the competition and, even if my performance wasn't one of my best (maybe one of my worst, lol!), because that day I was really nervous (at today I still don't know why!) and my voice was, as Raph correctly described, a little 'broken', inside me the 'My Affection' project had the really first start! Only months ago I really started thinking to realize my personal tribute, using Raph instrumental piano songs, adding my voice. The next step was finding the best way to record it. Even if at that moment I'd always realized lots of demos, I wasn't really happy with the vocal recording, due to not professional microphones and other things (I used to do everything in my home). Some days later I had the opportunity to know a fantastic man, a great piano player (and a really good person, too), Francesco Sacchi. We started talking and I expressed him my intentions to sing over a lot of songs and the fact that I was searching a place to record them. He told me that we could have tried once in his studio to see if I would have been pleased with the results. Between March and May 2005 the first 5 songs were realized: Little 15, Sister Of Night, The Love Thieves, Higher Love and One Caress. Despite the good critics I was receiving from the few people that listened to the songs, some things were bothering me: Raph always told me that he liked my versions but that my voice was too 'powerful' and needed to be a little 'smoother' and 'calm', Francesco Sacchi felt strange that I couldn't record more than 1 song per session, that my voice wasn't enough 'open' and that I wasn't using correctly my vocal chords. Some days later something happened! I recorded Death's Door, and, for the first time, I forced to use my voice in a really different way: calmer, smoother and really deeper than before. The results were, in my opinion, a lot better, as I could reach a really higher point than what I used to do, spending a lot less energy. But the song that made me change permanently my way to sing (and the way I was using my mind during the singing) was Dressed In Black. While thinking at which song to record next, I couldn't 'not' put Dressed In Black in the list: the way Raph played it was amazing and the song in itself is, even for a Depeche Mode fan, a not so classical one, but a masterpiece! Dressed In Black reach points that were a lot higher for my voice... but I tried! Vocals in Dressed In Black, in my project, is maybe the thing that I prefer the most. Now I have to thanks both Raph both my vocal director, Francesco (that helped me a lot during the recording), for what they told me. For the first time in my life I'm really proud of what I've done. The other songs were recorded easily, even if it was the really first time that I was singing most of them, like Blue Dress (my best friend is considering it the best one), Here Is The House and Enjoy The Silence. My idea was to include 12 songs and, most important, something that involved me more than a just a vocal executioner! (I usually write songs and play synthesisers and for me it's quite frustrating being just a performer). I was thinking to include an acapella version of Home, but that song isn't really made for it. As I used to write lyrics over instrumental songs, as I did, for example in my 1986 project 'Digital Illusions', in the 1987 'Daep, Dark Age L'Età Progressiva' and in the 1988 'La Valle Dei Sogni', all of them under a different nickname, I thought: why not try something similar, but using, this time, a Depeche Mode lyric over another instrumental song from them? Memphisto was chosen (the Raph 'My Caress' bonus track) for the instrumental one. As Playing The Angel is the latest album from DM and for the fact I think it's quite a good one, I really wanted to choose a lyric from it! 'TDS Vocal Improvisation' stays for: 'The Darkest Star...'. Am I crazy or is it just an amazing idea? I really hope that you will like it, as I did while I was completely improvising the singing, with great vocal direction help from Francesco. As soon as I finished the

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12 songs, while remixing them, I found that I was really disappointed with the first 5 recordings. Why not redo them? And so I did, in just 2 sessions!

During the recording, "My Affection, the other side of 'My Caress'" (this is the full title of my project) became more a tribute to the incredible playing style of Raph, instead of a tribute to Depeche Mode. Raph had the ability, talent and feeling to create a special 'aura' around Depeche Mode songs. Maybe you cannot believe if I tell you that if I could have the greatest pianist in the world under my supervision he wouldn't have been able to play half good the way that Raph did. It was so easy, even if I'm not really a singer (not at all!), to interpret Depeche Mode over Raph music. Don't forget to check the real Raph tribute, of course: without it, 'My Affection' couldn't have seen the light!