

## Rocco Ventrella Bio

A native of the South of Italy Rocco Ventrella grew up in Bari.

1975. Rocco began studying clarinet at Conservatory of Music in his hometown Bari and during this period Rocco played with the local Symphony Orchestra and with the "Teatro Petruzzelli Orchestra", where he appeared with a list of great artists such as Placido Domingo, Luciano Pavarotti, Katia Ricciarelli, José Carreras.

1983. Graduate of the Conservatory of Music of Bari, Rocco began studying saxophone. At the same time he studies piano and composition just for some year.

From 1989 until 1992, Rocco played with the famous Italian vocalist Fred Bongusto, and appeared at television stations RAI 1, RAI 2, CANALE 5, RETE 4. During this period, Rocco also played on Bongusto's recordings.

1984-2005. Rocco played with the Big Band "J.S.O." of his hometown Bari where he appeared with an impressive list of artists such as: Lee Konitz, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Benny Bailey, Chet Baker, Paolo Fresu, Enrico Rava, Tullio De Piscopo, Ernie Wilkins, Art Farmer, Maurizio Giammarco, Tony Scott, Dizzy Gillespie, Giorgio Gaslini, Patrizia Conte, Dusko Goykovic, Bob Mintzer and others.

Others collaborators included: Joy Garrison, Renato Falaschi, Joanna Rimmer, Crystal White, Wendy Lewis, Orlando Johnson, Mike Francis, Tony Cerqua, Eric Daniel.

From 1989 until 1991 Ventrella has been the saxophone player of the famous Italian singer Fred Bongusto.

1993. Rocco moved to Boston where his friend Emilio Lyons "The Sax Doctor" introduced him to some of his own customers like Ricky Ford, Greg Abate, Fred Lipsius, Richard Elliot, Sonny Rollins and others. "I feel extremely blessed to have worked with people I've admired for so many years", says Rocco of the experience at that time.

1998. Rocco began his love affair with smooth jazz music and began to record some promotional tracks to explore this new musical style. Most recently, Ventrella has recorded, arranged and produced the CD "Tribute to Grover Washington, Jr." in memory of the late, great saxophone player. The CD contains four tracks: "Winelight", "Let It Flow", "Make Me A Memory" and "Mr. Grover"(in memory of Grover Washington, Jr.). In addition, Ventrella has some new recordings featuring his own compositions, including the soulful and haunting "I Receive Your Love". Many of Rocco's compositions are receiving consistent airplay on Smooth Jazz outlets, especially on the internet, where smooth jazz netcasts are introducing his masterful playing to an entirely new audience segment.

May 2006. Rocco participated in the "James Brown Festival" in Augusta, GA. and played 2 sets on the same stage as James Brown just two before James Show!

October-November 2006. Rocco recorded his new CD "Give Me The Groove" in Hollywood, CA.

Today, Ventrella's smooth soulful style is a benchmark for European smooth-jazz saxophone players, a combination of jazz improvisation and R&B, this genre forms a bridge from the jazz fusion of the late 70s to the jazz pop of the mid 80s.

Ventrella admits: "I like soul, rhythm and blues, funky and jazz. Dave Sanborn, Gerald Albright, Eric Marienthal, Everette Harp, Kirk Whalum and the great Grover Washington, Jr., they have been my inspiration for the last ten years. But there are many great young saxophone players on the market."

In November 2007, Rocco's CD "Give Me The Goove" (recorded in Hollywood, and produced by Bruce Nazarian) has been named to the list of the semi-final 50 contenders for a Grammy Award Nomination for Best Contemporary Jazz Album!

We believe Rocco Ventrella to be a contemporary jazz artist of the new generation who is without equal! ~ bcn