

In the midst of Italy, there is a city named Latina in the region of Lazio. In the beautiful green trees and sunshine, you may find the 25 year old Fabio, an independent musician, who describes himself as an introverted person who loves math and science and goes under the artist name “Plumbus”.

The experience of seeing Plumbus perform live is vulnerable and beautiful. He sits on stage, with a guitar placed in his arms. A microphone sitting by his mouth recording loops of beautiful vocal harmonies as well as guitar arpeggios, mixing it up with electronic drums and ambiences as he goes. It seems an intimate experience for the viewer and Fabio himself.



Fabio has spent more than half of his life creating music. Although he might not have wanted to socialize greatly as a child, he certainly has found a voice that touches people deep within.

*“I started when I was a kid, I was 11 or 12. At some point I realized that the songs that I knew weren’t that complex, and wanted to try to create something similar myself. I told myself: just write the song that you’d like to hear but doesn’t exist yet! It was also a way to get out of the loop of my social life, that I often found boring.”*

It seems Fabio has come a long way, as he describes the most fun project he worked on having been playing a live soundtrack for a theatrical performance inspired by Edgar Allan Poe’s works. There he loved rehearsing with the actors and creating the soundtrack from scratch, as well as he says that each concert he has played has left him with something new and that the performances have always been special in their way.

*“I would like to have the possibility to tour around my country, or even Europe, playing in places with people that are interested. I would enjoy playing with a cellist too.”* Fabio

answers after being asked what his dream position would be as a musician. *“I would like to compose music for movies, but probably the thing I'd like the most would be being the official musician for a theatrical company, following them on tour... That would be great. Maybe acting with them sometimes”*. Fabio loves breaking expectations, as the theatrical interest might seem surprising considering his current project as Plumbus, but Fabio is also full of surprises with the amounts of technique he enjoys using in his live sets.

Fabio would describe his music going somewhere halfway between ambient and a pop-folk. *“I also like writing electronic music with drum machines playing weird rhythms. I am kinda obsessed with drum programming! But probably the thing I like the most is subverting the listeners' expectations, especially live.”*

Among these folky aspects to Plumbus's songs, Plumbus definitely enjoys playing around with technology when it comes to his music. He brings a pedal board with him onstage where he usually uses five of his pedals, although he owns around ten. He describes his set up reflecting the two aspects of his music: *“The "guitar" part consists of my two guitars passing through octaver, delay reverb and in the end the loop station, together with my effected voice.”* He mentions this pedal named “Hall of Fame 2” which he loves to use, because he can modulate the reverb length with his foot. It seems quite useful to be able to use the extension of other parts of your body when you're busy playing the guitar with your hands. Then for the second aspect, he describes, it is the computer part, because he also brings his computer as part of his set up. *“The computer part is just a computer running reaper and my midi keyboard. The guitar and computer part are separated, but I found a way to sync the loop station to Reaper, and I'm really happy about it!”* As he mentions “Reaper”, he refers to a Digital Audio Workstation, which is a program within the computer where he can record and manipulate sound as he is playing live.



When asked which song he considers his favourite and why, he replies that it's probably “Sorvolare l'abisso con delle splendide fragili ali”, which translates directly to: Fly over the

abyss with beautiful fragile wings”. It is no surprise it’s the first song that pops up on his Spotify, either. The beautiful guitar playing and vocal harmonies feel sort of like a blanket of warmth and love, even for a listener who possibly doesn’t understand the meaning of the lyrics. *“It’s the first song I release in which I sing in Italian, and I found out that I can go deeper with the lyrics in my mother language, I feel more confident. Also the song is simple, and it works also when played with just a guitar. To me that means that the song has a nice harmony at its core, which I think is fundamental to enjoy a song.”*



But what does it mean for Fabio to be an artist?

*“Interacting with the world to make it express something I couldn’t with words. I like the fact that artists just use whatever they can to express themselves. Instruments, electrical signals, computer codes. It’s the physical world bent to your own thoughts. It’s great.”*

Fabio evaluates the most important aspect of his artistic process probably being *“The absolute freedom.”* He continues: *“I wanna explore every idea that comes to my mind, no matter how absurd that can be. Otherwise, I wouldn’t know that a 808 bass and a guitar really sound good together! Then, it’s important that I don’t get too fixated on “reaching” some kind of standard. Sometimes I start making a lot of confrontations with other artists, and that’s not good for genuine art.”*

The way Fabio describes his usual day as a musician is variable. He separates his musical life in two parts, consisting of either producing his music or preparing for gigs. *“If I have a gig coming, I spend the day rehearsing and solving the infinite amount of problems that come with a complex setup like mine. In periods without gigs, I record stuff and work at my songs.”* But even for the amount of rehearsing and creating music for Plumbus, the artist also works with his other passions like mentioned before, in science and math. *“I didn’t study music, in*

*fact I have a master degree in Neurobiology, but I didn't pursue a research career to concentrate on music, which is somehow still a research career”.*

Not only does Fabio have a masters degree in Neurobiology, but he is also a middle school teacher for math and science. *“It's great, it allows me to keep studying sciences and also pedagogy and psychology, topics I love. Also, being with the kids reminds me not to take myself too seriously.”*

It is good for Fabio to remind himself that he shouldn't take himself too seriously, as well. Because as he mentions in the interview, it can be quite stressful to be a musician, which isn't much surprising in our current society. He tells us that the biggest difficulties he faces as a musician are excessive self criticism, insecurity and anxiety. *“It got better, but I still have to fight with a lot of these difficulties sometimes. I tend to hyper concentrate on stuff that I like, and sometimes I get so absorbed into making music that I become nervous and stressed out.”*

There seem to be many interesting aspects in life which brings Fabio inspiration, as it isn't all about music. He enjoys his variety of passions for music and science, as well as bringing knowledge to children, but he talks about drawing his inspirations from even wider sources than just music. There are a few artist that he does feel inspired by, such as Thom Yorke, which coincidentally has been compared to Fabio's vocal timbre, as well as Elliott Smith, Sufjan Stevens and Iosonouncane, which is an Italian electronic musician. *“But to be honest a lot of inspiration comes from tv shows or movies. I like the idea of building a song like a story, breaking expectations, building a structure that evolves into something. I love all of Charlie Kaufman work and a lot of dialogues from his movies have been used into my performances. I also love Dave Porter soundtrack for Breaking Bad and Preacher.”*

The inspiration from TV shows or movies might not come as such a surprise to some people, since they might recognize Fabio's artist name “Plumbus” from the TV show Rick and Morty. But what then is “Plumbus” and what significance does it have to Fabio?

*“A Plumbus is a strange and pointless object that appears in the show Rick and Morty. In an episode, they show this thing that has a vaguely sexual shape, and explain how it's done and the process is hilarious. Everyone seems to know what a plumbus is, but the viewer has no idea. I choose it as a joke, to say: I am weird, I am not sure of what I am, I have no clear purpose, but still I can be fun. That's what art is for me!”*

It's not uncommon in these times for people to feel unsure of the future or even for their own purpose in these confusing times, as covid-19 has been taking a toll on many musicians in these times. Many artists do not have the possibility to perform as well as we can not know for sure the current or future stance of our global society. Fabio tells us that he lacked inspiration during the quarantine, having had no motivation for playing nor writing songs. *“I was kinda stuck in a loop, which is paradoxical cause I use loops a lot in my music”,* he says. *“It was only after the quarantine that I started enjoying music again. There is one positive side: it was during the quarantine that I recorded a live performance for streaming at the sottoscala9, which is a place I love here in Latina that during those hard times has been capturing live performances of local artists to keep music going even when concerts weren't allowed.”* Sottocala9 is not the only place that might hold a dear place in Fabio's heart, since he also mentions the concert of Grimm Grimm, which was placed in an apartment in Rome, where the home base of the collective “Misto Mame” used to be. This collective has since

moved from Rome and will most probably be opened up again in the North of Italy. Fabio says this concert was an experience that changed him. *“Grimm Grimm is a japanese/english solo artist playing psychedelic and dreamy folk. His approach with loops, vocal effects and synths really showed me the potential of a solo project. That taught me a lot.”*

This inspiration seems to have lived on inside of Fabio, as he definitely does display the infinite potential of a solo performance on stage. Inside the cracks of intimate performance, we've gotten to see the big world lurking inside of the heart of Plumbus, with the hopes that as the pandemic goes down, he will rise up and bring more joy to the audience, as well as pursuing his heart on these passions. He says he might see himself in ten years, perhaps living in some other city, having found a balance between being a teacher as well as a musician, hopefully living without the anxiety he is facing in these times. Perhaps, in the future, he will be composing music for movies or theatrical plays.