



# **Antonio Porcar: from Castellón to New York, from New York to heaven, by Sergio Cabanillas**

Last June 11<sup>th</sup>, a historic moment happened at the iconic Blue Note of New York in the annual Jazz Journalists Association Awards. For the first time this prestigious institution rewarded a Spanish artist with the Jazz Photo Of The Year award. Castellón-based photographer Antonio Porcar portrayed a magical scene where tenor sax Benny Golson played in front of the eyes of a splendid graffiti of Billie Holiday by urban artist Chile Vinarós in the past edition of Peñiscola Jazz Festival. Jazz photographer Sergio Cabanillas had a chat with Porcar about the passions they share for jazz, photography and cultural promotion, something that Porcar has done for decades, turning Castellón province into an oasis for jazz fans and one of the most appreciated destinations to play for jazz musicians worldwide.

*Phocuzz*, his first jazz photography exhibition will be part of the XXI edition of Jazz Tardor, Lleida International Jazz Festival next autumn, and his work will illustrate the next 'Avui Jazz' series book.



*Antonio Porcar, Peñíscola, 2012*

© *Sergio Cabanillas, 2012*

Sergio Cabanillas: When did you become interested in Photography? Do you have academic training?

Antonio Porcar: I started with this hobby at 16. I worked the photo laboratory techniques in high school, but I had to give up because photography, as a hobby, was very expensive.

I returned little by little, with borrowed cameras, after attending many jazz concerts. I have no other training but self-teaching, some digital techniques seminars and, above all, the conversations I have with the friends that share this hobby.

Sergio Cabanillas: In your opinion, what features define jazz photography?

Antonio Porcar: It's basically a kind of report photography. It's about portraying the reality of jazz music and its main characters. The rest depends on the creativity of the photographer.

Sergio Cabanillas: Do you have a preference for black and white or color?

Antonio Porcar: Black and white is as direct as this kind of music is. Using color, it's easier that the message became blurred and lost part of its strength. Anyway, you have to try every choice; each message demands its own means of expression. As in most aspects of photography, this is a very subjective matter.



*Antonio Porcar / Chril Hill, Kings Place,  
London, 2013*

*© Sergio Cabanillas, 2013*

Sergio Cabanillas: Your work in photography is not limited to jazz: travel, landscape, street photography... Which one do you prefer or makes you feel more comfortable?

Antonio Porcar: I like shooting everything about jazz, all the rest is secondary or circumstantial.

Sergio Cabanillas: What names in photography do you consider your influences, inside and outside jazz?

Antonio Porcar: I don't have influences, neither inside nor outside jazz. Of course, I enjoy the work of the classics. Sometimes you feel like they had done it all. That's why you don't have to stare at them or admire them for too long: it could be frustrating. If you want to keep enjoying this, you

have to look forward, searching for your own personal language that will make you feel satisfied with your work. It's the same with musicians.

Sergio Cabanillas: When did you start to report your shows as meticulously as you do now?

Antonio Porcar: It happened when I stopped taking pictures with borrowed cameras and had my own gear. That's when I started wanting to capture more than just a report of a gig. That wasn't long ago, less than ten years from now.



*Antonio Porcar / Libor Šmoldas, Vila-Real, 2013*

© *Sergio Cabanillas, 2013*

Sergio Cabanillas: As a promoter and a photographer, you've been on both sides. What do you think about the access restrictions applied to specialized jazz photographers in gigs and festivals?

Antonio Porcar: It's difficult to find the right balance. Although most of our colleagues know how to do their work without disturbing, a few behave in a disrespectful way both with the musicians and the audience. But that's not to be solved forbidding everyone to do their job or applying absurd

restrictions. Most of the musicians understand our task, but their managers very often go too far over-protecting their artists. Many times it's a restriction coming from the one who writes a commercial contract, more than a requirement of the artist. It's something quite unfortunate, of course.

Sergio Cabanillas: As a cultural promoter, How are things going? What has happened in this business since the crisis arrived? How has it affected you?

Antonio Porcar: Crisis has affected jazz as any other art form and, as everywhere, we find some big names that apparently have been just slightly touched, while most musicians in other levels have lowered their chances to work and their incomes. But it's not really different from other activities. Things are, obviously, quite bad, and we'll have to find the way to adapt to this new situation, because, although general economy gets better, things would hardly be the same as before. The only advantage that this music has in these circumstances is that there's always been crisis for jazz, we've always had to find the way to make it economically viable. We must follow that path and become independent from public funding. We promoters have passed from being like the ones who grew rich with artists to be necessary collaborators to make things work. I think this change in attitude is positive. Many will have to change their minds to make everybody move in the same direction.



*Antonio Porcar / Joan Monné / Benny Golson  
/ Ignasi González, Peñíscola, 2013  
© Sergio Cabanillas, 2013*

Sergio Cabanillas: You have owned Café Del Mar jazz club and programmed countless gigs and festivals. After all that, what makes you keep on moving in this troubled situation?

Antonio Porcar: I don't know any jazz promoters who don't have a great passion for this music. That's the only way to explain why people keep moving.

Sergio Cabanillas: You've been publishing for the last 15 years the excellent "Avui Jazz" book series that accompanies Vila-Real jazz festival every year. How do you choose the artistic disciplines and the artists who show their work in these books?

Antonio Porcar: Using this music as the common theme, we have tried to show the work of artists who didn't have an easy access to publishing, giving priority to local authors.

Sergio Cabanillas: How did you come up with the idea to create Jazz Photographers Facebook Group? Did you expect such a great response?

Antonio Porcar: Social networks are such a different mean of

communicating that any human aspect will have to adapt to this new kind of interaction. When I was a kid, the only way of knowing about what was going on with our friends was going to the usual meeting points like the town square. With Facebook or any other platform you can interact any time of the day with friends and other people you meet. Also the concept of interpersonal relation, friendship, broadens to this field so if there's any artistic expression we want to share, social networks appear as a tool that is becoming essential. Time will tell if we are capable to change it for the better, but I can't even imagine that. Jazz Photography had to have its own way in this field and someone had to take the first step. The response we've had goes beyond our initial expectations, but is just shows how important this media is.



*Benny Golson, Peñiscola 2013, Jazz Photo  
Of The Year 2014*

*© Antonio Porcar, 2013*

Sergio Cabanillas: What made you send your Benny Golson picture to the Jazz Journalists Association competition?

Antonio Porcar: The image of a jazz icon, Billie, listening with fascination to another great living musician represented the continuity of this music we dedicate so much time and

passion to. And that continuity was so desirable to me that this message appeared to be very appropriate for this event.

Sergio Cabanillas: How did you feel at the JJA Awards at the Blue Note in New York City?

Antonio Porcar: As you can imagine, nerves before knowing the result and exaggerated nerves after hearing I was the winner.

Sergio Cabanillas: There's a Spanish saying: 'no man is a prophet in his own land'. From my point of view, I believe that Spanish jazz photographers' work is more valued and respected outside of Spain. Do you agree with this? If you do, why do you think it happens?

Antonio Porcar: Yes. It's the same with musicians. Jazz photography is valued in each place according to the appreciation that jazz has there. When there's more response for jazz here in Spain, all the aspects that accompany music will gain recognition.



*Antonio Porcar & Joan Monné, Peñíscola, 2013*

© Sergio Cabanillas, 2013

Sergio Cabanillas: What is 'Phocuzz'?



Antonio Porcar: It's the name I've chosen for my first exhibition of jazz photographs. I didn't have in mind to do it, but I received an invitation from Lleida Jazz Festival and and got myself to work.

Sergio Cabanillas: What are your future plans both as a photographer and as a promoter?

Antonio Porcar: As a photographer, to become one, work hard. As a promoter, to keep up the good work trying to ride out the storm.

More about Antonio Porcar:

Website: <http://www.aporcar.com>

Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/axkr/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/antonioporcarcano>

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