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LOVE *Italy* MUSIC INSPIRED BY *IL BEL PAESE*

BY ANDREW COTTO

Louis Emory is a singer/songwriter raised in an Italian American household in Troy, New York. His debut EP, *Love Italy*, with his band The Reckless Few, was released in October of 2022. It is a six-song homage to Italy inspired by visits to *Il Bel Paese* with his wife in 2017 and 2019, respectively. The collection is an intersection of postcards and love letters and history lessons delivered through genres of folk, rock and soul. We sat down with Louis to find out about this unique concept album and its origins.

Musician Louis Emory in Rome

Italian America (IA): You're Italian American, how did this shape your development as an artist?

Louis Emory (LE): As an artist – I'm not really sure. I think maybe after the "baptism" of the first trip to Italy I had a deeper appreciation for what art can do for one's soul. The positive health effects of being immersed in it. Music was always a part of my life – whether it was the sound of Motown or Stax from my father, The Beatles and The Beach Boys from my mother, or Sinatra, Dean Martin from my grandmother. Elvis was pretty big in my house, too. Being exposed to all these great songs and artists early on and the joy of their music certainly had a lasting effect.

IA: Describe the creative epiphany experienced upon being in Florence for the first time.

LE: I felt very much at home, and there was an internal peace that soothed my restless spirit. I felt like my life went from black and white to color. Walking around the corner and seeing the Duomo for the first time, I was amazed at what humans could create. To see David, sit in the piazzas – all of it was quite a shock to the system. I was hooked.

IA: How did this manifest into music?

LE: Italy was my muse. I was longing to get back and since we didn't have the means to just get up and go, I started reading histories about Venice, Florence, and Rome, biographies on the Renaissance masters, the Medici, etc. I had been absorbing all of this historical insight and watching documentaries and travel shows when COVID hit, and that's when I began working on the first song, "Firenze," which is told from the point of view of Cosimo de' Medici during his exile in Venice. Like me, he was longing to go back to Florence.

IA: At what point were you aware that you had basically a concept album dedicated to Italy?

LE: I was going to the studio to work on a few songs for another album and I decided to record "Firenze." After that, I had this idea sauteing – these verses and a chorus about Rome. I played the demo for my band mates, and in the studio it all just clicked. In one session we had the bones for "Roma," which I knew could be a single. We were all very excited about the track and groove. So I had two songs about Italy, and trusting my intuition, we switched gears and started working on the rest of the songs that you hear on the *Love Italy* EP. After recording, mixing, and mastering five of the songs we went to Italy to shoot some of the videos and I came home feeling the EP needed one more song. So I picked up my Taylor and knocked out "Florence in the Fall."

IA: What were the intentions of the album as a whole?

LE: With COVID, I was aware of the economic impact on tourism in Italy. I wanted to send some love and light. I thought this is just a small thing I

could do to maybe make some people smile – to make them feel good about the land and their histories. I also wanted to shine a light on Cosimo and Lorenzo de' Medici. They *sponsored* the Renaissance. A lot of the documentaries I was seeing showed them in a dark light, but we are still traveling to see the Florence they envisioned, financed, and helped beautify.

IA: Your songs are very literal in their homage to Italy. As a songwriter, was this difficult to be so precise with regard to references?

LE: Yes, sometimes – but I enjoy the process of putting all the pieces together. I spent a lot of time trimming and shaping the verses, and it all just came together. When that happens, it's fantastic. I wanted to write about the people who were inspiring me. Whether it was the places I was living in within the pages of the books or the amazing people we met on our travels.

IA: Is "Firenze" the only song ever written about Cosimo de'Medici?

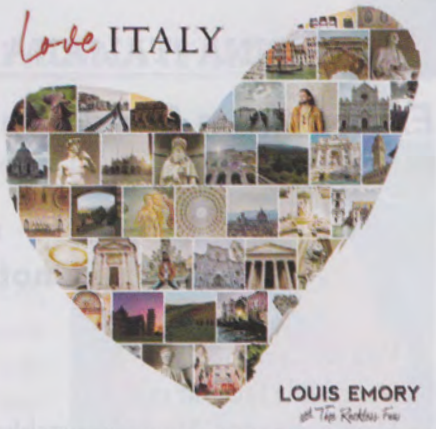
LE: Ha! I don't know. It might be. He should have more songs written about him. He was a true visionary. Part of the reason I started writing all these songs was because no one else I knew was.

IA: Do you anticipate more music inspired by Italy?

LE: Yes. I've already started writing some tracks and hope to be back in the studio around the end of the year. We had a very inspiring trip this past October promoting the EP release in Italy, meeting a lot of wonderful people, and those experiences will weave their way into the music.

IA: When is your next trip?

LE: Tomorrow? If they would let us move there next year I think we would pack up and go. We came home from the trip and within a few days we were



missing our friends, the energy, and the balance it brings to our life. We visited a bunch of new places on this past trip and there are still so many places on our list to explore. My wife Raeanne and I would love to finally visit Modena and eat at master chef Massimo Bottura's Osteria Francescana! I also would like to finally visit Cervinara, one of the towns just outside of Naples where my family came from.

You can visit Louis Emory's official website (louisemory.com) to stream or purchase the Love Italy EP.

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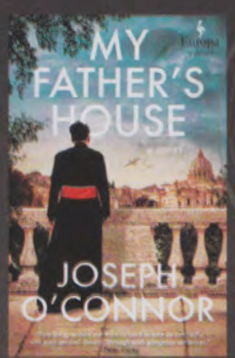

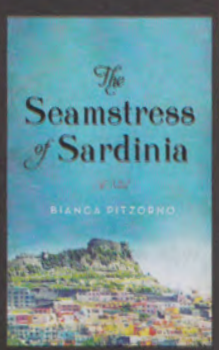

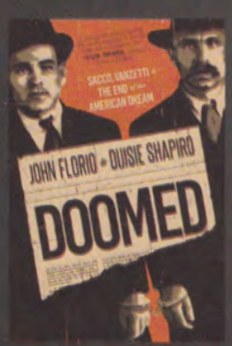

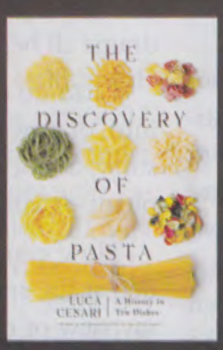

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