

THE NEW ALBUM [STRANIA](#) (Alfamusic, IT - 2025)

BF Choice - Album of the Month - August 2025

INTERVIEW WITH [SENDUKI](#)

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## In a Dub Key: The Calabrias of Senduki

### #BF-CHOICE

The percussive and resonant electronics that open “Strania” refer to subterranean vibrations, to an activity of excavation and memory that, right from the first note, shows the confidence of those who know the **Calabrian territory** they are traversing well, and precisely for this reason, know how to happily bring the limits of their knowledge into tension with unprecedented modes of exploration. This centrifugal force ignited an idea within the trio who performed the album “Ερημία/Eremia” live: **Ettore Castagna** (lira, *malarruni* guitars, vocals), **Peppe “YoSonu” Costa** (drums, electronics, vocals, and overtone singing), and **Carmine Torchia** (electric bass and vocals).

Thus, a joyful, dancing, and centrifugal activity was unleashed, igniting the group **Senduki** (and many dancing nights) by involving two additional voices: **Mimmo Morello** (*zampogne*/bagpipes, winds, vocals) and **Elisa Surace** (lead vocals and tambourine). This led to an intense compositional and concert activity that also resulted in the recording of twelve tracks between June 2024 and January 2025, a rich work that we explore here with a dozen questions, to which they responded collectively.

### **How did you meet, and when did you all play together for the first time?**

**Peppe Costa:** We were traveling for the *Eremia* trio's live show at the Loano festival, and Ettore told me he wanted me to hear the latest album he had published (“Lira Sona Sona”), a work of philological nature. As I listened to one of the tracks, featuring vocals and *marranzano* (jaw harp), it was immediate for me to think about filters to apply to the voices, imagining the addition of a hypnotic and dark bass along with the movement of square, aggressive drumming. I said, "Ettore, this is a heavy dub track, but it doesn't know it yet." Continuing with the listening, another track gave me similar suggestions. "Let's redo them in a dub key, Ettore." His response was, "Alright, Carmine is in on bass, and I know who to call to complete the lineup." That's how Senduki was born.

**Ettore Castagna:** I'd say it's all my fault. I had various projects underway and knew musicians from different fields. I was about to say 'worlds,' but then it would sound like Star Wars. It occurred to me that it would be fun to reshuffle the cards a bit. I assembled the team, but the game went well with everyone. It's a moment when I see a lot of stagnation in the Italian music world. We don't have messianic ambitions, anyway. But perhaps trying to do something new with very old things and very new things.

### **What are the points of contact and the breaks between “Strania” and “Ερημία/Eremia”?**

**Ettore Castagna:** The only point of contact, I'd say, is me. “Eremia” is a songwriter's album where dialects, minority languages, and an almost exclusively acoustic sound count, markedly “ethnic” in various points. “Strania” is an opening of the window onto languages that apparently shouldn't understand each other but instead find themselves perfectly. “Eremia” is the discourse of a solitary navigator who takes friends on board along the route. “Strania” is a journey of five musicians who want to weave their discourses together.

### **You play “transitory music from a residual reality,” meaning?**

**Mimmo Morello:** I mostly know how to play as I learned from my peasant and shepherd masters. Then I search in my memory and find the encounter with musicians who come from worlds very distant from mine. Yes, perhaps it's truly right to say that it might seem like something that starts from the residual, but today it's hard not to be crushed by the mainstream and pop. And so, rummaging through small things is a genuine act of protest.

**Ettore Castagna:** One terrible and magnificent thing about life itself is that nothing remains. Everything passes. Once, I was walking among the rocks of Mount Athos, and outside an old small house I found written: “As dreams vanish, as flowers wither, so is the life of man.” We do not aspire to great music. We seek the ephemeral greatness of this very moment. We know it will pass. What matters is the sincerity and love with which you are playing. Or have played.

**On one hand, lira, zampogna (bagpipes), double flutes, malarruni, tambourines; on the other, electric bass and guitars, acoustic and electronic drums, loops: where did you start, and how did you bring them together?**

**Ettore Castagna:** We started immediately. The founding pact was that everyone entered the scene with their own musical history. It had to work instantly, or we would have chosen to stop the machines immediately. Instead, it worked. The Senduki sound was born immediately. A small miracle.

**Peppe Costa:** We started with some open tracks provided by Ettore, his recordings, to create a sound that was the goal of the album and, at the same time, the common denominator of every track. We did style exercises on those recordings, then, after meeting in the studio, we started working on the true sound of each person. We proceeded in a mixed way, recording live in the studio, but also separately and from different parts of Italy (we live in different cities). Once the recordings were acquired, I took care of imagining, assembling, and editing the sound of the individual instrument and the track in question. For some tracks, the structure remained identical to the one born in the rehearsal room; for other tracks (*Senduki*, for example), I assembled and shaped fluid, unarranged recordings together.

**To introduce yourselves, you chose “Fòcu & palùmbi” (Fire & Doves): what does it say about you and your music?**

**Ettore Castagna:** The collaboration with an artist of the caliber of Saverio Autelitano, capable of creating an abstract comic and a video where olive oil meets Tim Burton, mattered a lot. It was great fun, and we chose one of the pieces that most compels dancing. A kind of joyful threat.

**The “Calanchi” (Badlands/Gullies) open and close the album, and the six photos accompanying the booklet are dedicated to the badlands: what kind of “container” do they offer the other ten tracks, and your music?**

**Carmine Torchia:** More than containers, the songs on “Strania” are “spatial concepts”; they almost resemble those famous cuts on canvas by Lucio Fontana—something that goes beyond the surface (in this case, tradition) by going past it with contemporary acts.

**Peppe Costa:** It's about the idea of having an intro and an outro that was born first for the live show and then moved to the album as well. It's the preparation for the “ritual.” The two “Calanchi” accompany the entry and exit of the sonic journey. They do so with electronic drums and acid bass embracing the *zampogna* first and the *lira* later, seeking a dialogue between equals and not merely one of reverence.

**What is the language of your songs? Where does it come from, and how does it contribute to shaping your sound?**

**Ettore Castagna:** Every day we express ourselves in our dialects, but also in Greek, French, Italian, and English. It's a natural step to think about singing in them, maybe mixing and having fun. Being yourself even in the lyrics certainly doesn't hurt. In the

album, you will find traditional material that we have re-proposed, respecting it fully, or composition.

**Dub, electro-acoustic, world: what are your sources of inspiration in these fields?**

**Carmine Torchia:** “Strania” is a mixed-lineage album, precisely because we come from different fields: experimental experiences, authorial writing, field research, but with listening habits that unite us because they are essential.

**Ettore Castagna:** We try to remain faithful to our heterogeneity. It's a delightful idea that a peasant melody, perhaps with an ancient, ragged, high-pitched voice, blends with a loop and an electric texture. We strive to make sure every track builds its own identity, perhaps vaguely recalling Dj Punjabi or Roger Waters, but the important thing is that it moves musical tracks that are absolutely and unmistakably ours. The Dub solution never crushes the *zampogna* or the *lira* into a corner.

**How did the concerts preceding the studio recordings influence your decisions regarding the album? How do you work on the arrangements?**

**Peppe Costa:** A couple of tracks were composed remotely and were almost finished even before we met in the rehearsal room to set them up. All the others had a fairly simple genesis: a text proposed by someone, beneath which to build the movement. Some tracks were born and packaged quite quickly, and arranged quite quickly too. Others needed months of arrangement work, during which everyone proposed ideas on their own instrument or on the structure. I think I can say that “Strania” is a horizontal work, from the point of view of the importance of the contribution of each element present.

**Elisa Surace:** The concerts preceding the recordings were fundamental: they allowed us to put ideas into motion, and observe reactions—where the music breathed better, and where it asked for space or silence instead. It was a time of living exploration, which nourished the album from the ground up. We all come from profoundly different listening habits, languages, and artistic paths—distant sonic worlds, sometimes even irreconcilable on paper. Yet, when we work together, something surprisingly natural happens: we don't construct arrangements around a table, we don't chase after a form, we don't measure the ingredients. The music arranges itself, as if it were already there, waiting to be revealed. The understanding between us precedes reasoning: it is a subtle, often non-verbal exchange, made of mutual listening, respect for spaces, trust in silence, and extreme care for the sound. Every piece is a small alchemy that is born not from a compromise, but from a spontaneous synthesis. It is a song with a polyphony that was not sought but was recognized instantly.

**Where do you play? Who in Calabria and elsewhere has responded to this invitation to dance?**

**Ettore Castagna:** We have great sympathy for libertarian thought, so “Our Homeland is the Whole World.” Musically too. Calabria is a starting point because, for example, in my personal baggage there is a lot of peasant music from the region, but in the end,

“stay human” remains fundamental. In all this, seeking the fundamental pulse towards the dance is a natural process. In the alchemy of the encounter, whether the dance is in Calabria or not matters relatively little. We are not interested in the *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) but in bringing to light, in a way entirely our own, the precipitate of dances and songs deposited in our memories. It could be Heidelberg or Zungri, it changes little.

### **What are the main differences between the album and the live concerts?**

**Elisa Surace:** The album is an intimate space: every sound is sculpted, every word weighs like a ritual stone. It is a concentrated, meditated form. Live, the music becomes unanchored, becoming sweat and breath. It expands, stretches out, changes its skin. The tracks lengthen like ancient songs that don't want to end, opening up to improvisation, to necessary deviations. The rhythm modulates on mutual listening, on the shared feeling with those in front of us. Every concert is an unrepeatable ritual, shaped by the energy and dialogue with those listening to us at that moment. And then there is the body, not just ours, but the collective one that suggests, responds, sings, and dances. It is there, in that emotional combustion, that the “fòcu” (fire) turns into “palùmbi” (doves) and vice-versa.

**Peppe Costa:** Improvisation, definitely. We do not perform the album as a mere re-proposal of sequences and solutions that worked in the studio. Rather, we start from the album to develop the songs into other territories, extending them, recomposing them, building them anew, time after time, thus allowing ourselves the pleasure of not always knowing where the extemporaneous proposals of each person will lead us. It's like gifting ourselves a discovery, followed by the way each person “exists” in that musical event.



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