

# Comunicaffè

## **TOWARDS THE WBC (WORLD BARISTA CHAMPIONSHIP) IN TOKYO JULY 31 - AUGUST 2, 2007**

**Interview with Guido Bernardinelli, Marketing Manager at La Marzocco, espresso coffee machine manufacturer and technical sponsor of the WBC**

### **How did La Marzocco get involved in the WBC ?**

“Near the end of 1999, major companies involved in the industry were contacted by a very small group of aficionados, mostly from northern Europe, who were interested in enriching the coffee industry by taking a closer look at the product in the cup and the professional Barista. In those years, however, the most significant investment by espresso coffee machine manufacturers was directed at super automatic types of equipment that could make a worthy cup of espresso coffee at the press of a button. It is also likely that the modest nature of the initiative, with the first championship taking place in the hall of a hotel in Monte Carlo in 2000, did not represent a very stimulating attraction for potential sponsors. It was our president, Ron Cook, who intuitively recognized the value generated by the passion and, to some extent, obsession expressed by the organizers. As a consequence, La Marzocco decided to supply technical and financial support for the venture, which today still witnesses La Marzocco’s contribution well beyond sponsorship itself”.

### **What advantages does La Marzocco derive from sponsoring the event?**

“Essentially to associate our brand with the best Baristas in the world in order to reaffirm La Marzocco’s rank at the top of the market. Moreover, it allows us to more thoroughly understand the needs of the end user, which directly influences product development. Finally, La Marzocco has chosen to work almost exclusively for the small niche represented by coffee shops keenly interested in quality in the cup in reflection of the competition itself. For a small artisan company like ours, this alone is quite valuable”.

### **Have you managed to establish good relationships by collaborating with various Baristas?**

“Absolutely! Some of them have become instructors for our training programs or participate at exhibitions, while others have proven very useful in indicating modifications, improvements and actual rethinking of our products by strongly

expressing their opinions and desires. In some cases, the champions have represented a point of reference for our distributors around the world, joining forces with the distributors themselves as well as with the final client. Others still have become good friends that share a common passion for the finest cup of coffee. Naturally, such relationships make us very proud”.

### **Does the close relationship with the greatest Baristas in the world allow you to improve your coffee machines?**

Yes! As I pointed out, the Baristas facilitate our aim to understand the needs of the end user and indicate the most important parameters which they feel should be managed in order to ensure top quality in the cup. This facet in developing the product is as important to La Marzocco as the mechanics, electronics, design and materials employed”.

### **What significance has this specific event acquired in Italy?**

“In spite of a difficult start due to the fact that espresso coffee does not represent a “specialty” in Italy, like other parts of the world (but a daily routine), today it is possible to find dedicated professionals, serious organizations, barista schools and ultimately, professional Italian baristas with specific training interested in the promotion of quality. They are finally beginning to shake up a fair amount of interest in the mass media. La Marzocco is in fact very proud of this and certainly nothing could please us more than a revived interest in quality in Italy, which is considered the birthplace of espresso and cappuccino. Naturally, it is imperative to recognize the amount of energy exerted by a variety of organizations involved in the industry in Italy today, beginning with the Italian chapter of SCAE, as well as other organizations that are doing everything in their power to reintroduce good coffee into the Italian market”.

### **Why doesn't a company like La Marzocco sponsor the national competitions as well?**

“First of all, La Marzocco is the technical sponsor only for the World Barista Championship finals and not for every single nation participating in the competition. Approximately 55 countries are represented at the finals. In practically every participating country there are regional and national competitions. Just in virtue of the fact that La Marzocco is an Italian company deeply rooted in one of the most emblematic cities in Italy, such as Florence, it would certainly be very exciting to supply equipment to national competition, especially in light of the evident renewed interest in quality. Through our network of distributors, La Marzocco has supplied coffee machines to about 20 national tournaments in 2007 alone. If in the future we have the opportunity to supply equipment to the Italian championship, we would enthusiastically bend over backwards to make the competition a greater success”.

**La Marzocco has always sponsored the WBC, which is quite amazing since the goal is to promote Italian espresso around the world. In your opinion, what capacity do Italian businesses in the industry have to shore up Italian espresso in light of the shake up and economic success that new, non-Italian operators have accustomed us to?**

“In our opinion, the opportunity for Italy is important and concrete. Indeed, non-Italian industry members have demonstrated this by shaking up Italian culture, and have gained extraordinary benefits without actually always being the protagonist behind producing the best coffee machines, realizing the better blends or knowing how to create that so-called atmosphere and gathering scene which is the Italian bar.

The capacity to work as a team in Italy, in spite of unquestionable improvement, is lacking in light of cultural realities in the first place, but also due to business practice and customs. For example, the relationship with the market is often entirely handed over to intermediary companies who distribute products and services and, in theory, carry out strategies of the same Italian head offices within a specific business territory. It is obvious that the management of growth and expansion suffers from the limits placed by intermediary companies. This dependence, however, also represents an important merit earned by Italians in that we are the best within niche markets, in problem solving and in searching for compromises. In any case, within the coffee industry which is growing in light of such qualities, except for well known exceptions, we Italians are not the actual market advocates or suppliers of opportunity. Practically, we are not the architects of the market itself. In all likelihood, we individually satisfy demand stimulated by the initiative of others who, with less history and perhaps less specialization, manage to produce incredible results. There is a growing and evident desire for everything “Italian” within the world of fashion, like in the world of espresso coffee. If only we could integrate our individual qualities, work as a team among colleagues, distributors, end users, strategic suppliers and other operators in the sector, collaboratively define targets and opportunities, and carry out agreed upon and regulated strategies, perhaps then we could do something greater in the world of coffee, similar to what happens in the world of fashion. We at La Marzocco, in a humble manner, are making every effort to do so. The date for the WBC is set for July 31 to August 2 in Tokyo, to sustain all the competitors and creators of delicious coffee in 2007”.

### **The Company:**

La Marzocco was founded in 1927 by the Bambi brothers and from the beginning has specialized in producing handmade espresso coffee machines with meticulous attention aimed at excellence, a quality cup and style. The company is located in Pian di San Bartolo, in the vicinity of Florence, Italy, and has offices in Milan and Seattle.

La Marzocco has 35 employees and produces espresso coffee machines and grinders, which are currently exported to more than 60 countries with the support of importers and distributors, making La Marzocco’s presence known in 5 continents. La Marzocco is the official sponsor of the World Barista Championship (WBC).