

A Lasting TRIBUTE

For accomplished musician, composer and orchestrator, Art Phillips, music runs deep within his veins. The latest project for this renowned musician who now lives in Australia, 'Chitarre Acustiche d'Italia', pays tribute to his late father and grandfather and draws on his Italian heritage for inspiration.

FROM THE TIME Art Phillips was six or seven years old, he can't remember a single evening where he didn't walk through his grandfather's backyard and into his kitchen to play music. "My father and I would play guitar and my grandfather would play the mandolin. The whole family would sit around, eat and listen to good, fun music. I could hear the echoes of my Uncle Ray laughing because he just loved hearing our music so much. It was truly amazing," Art says as he recounts the memories of joyous times spent at the family home in Erie, Pennsylvania.

Hailing from the small village of Montenero Val Cocchiara – which loosely translates to the spoon of the mountains and is located in the Province of Isernia on the border of Abruzzo and Molise – Art's grandfather, Antonio DiFilippo, migrated to the USA in 1901 at the age of seven.

Sadly, Antonio's mother passed away during childbirth and his father suffered a fatal heart attack only five years later, leaving 22 year old brother Nicholas to care for his younger siblings. Before long, Nicholas made the decision to relocate to America with his family in search of bigger and better opportunities.

"Back then, Italy had a lot of problems and people were looking to get out and find this new place called America – and the same thing was happening with people migrating to Australia," Art says.

On arrival at New York City's Ellis Island, Antonio's passport was stamped by immigration. "Now you are an American," they said, suggesting he take "an American surname." In an instant Antonio DiFilippo became Antonio Phillips.

Antonio and his family settled in Erie, Pennsylvania and he eventually married and started a family of his own. His wife, Clara Cacchione, was also from the same Italian village – though they had not known each other prior to meeting in their newfound home.

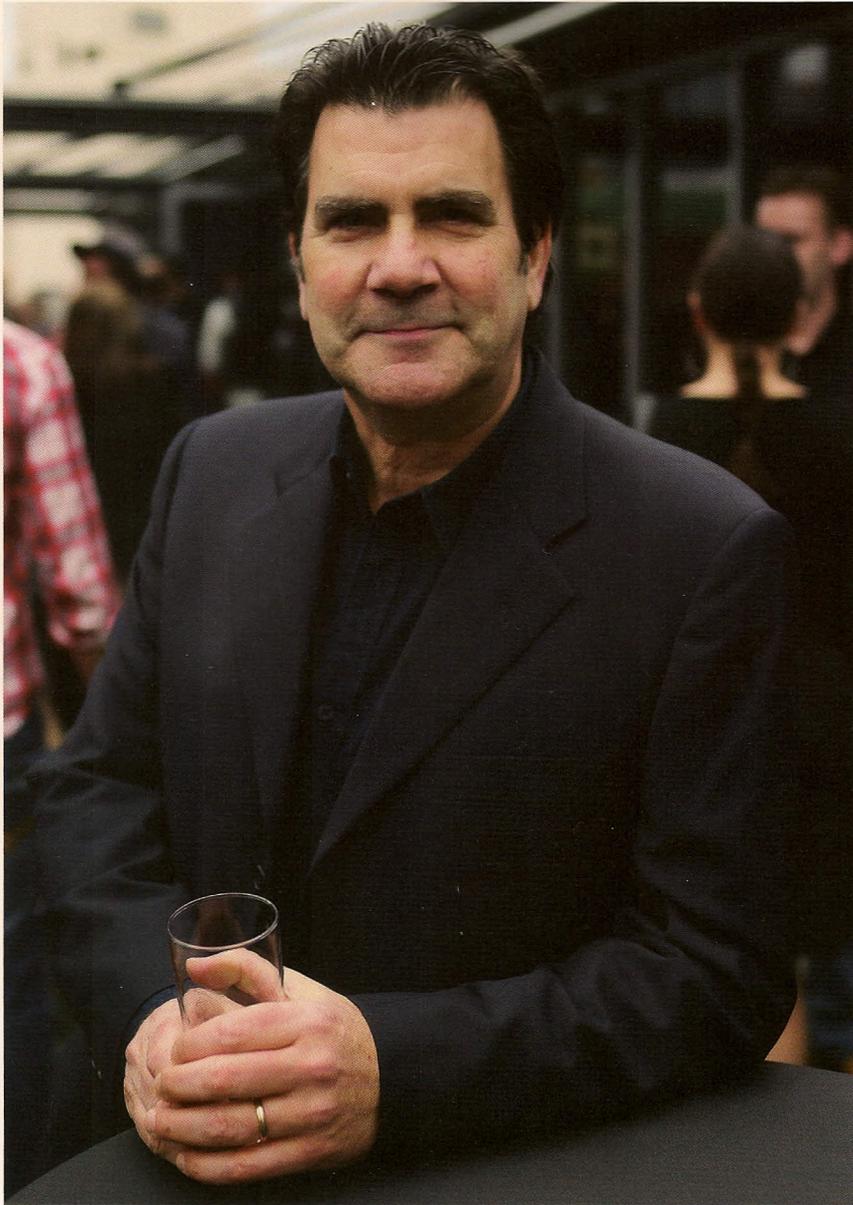
Antonio was an avid mandolin player and it was no surprise that he passed this musical talent onto his son, Arthur M. Phillips, who in turn passed this innate talent onto his son, Art.

"My Italian heritage was always very strong in my family and has always been very important to me. Our backyard connected to that of my grandfather's, so there was also a very strong family connection. Keeping the family's Italian roots intact was a very big part of my childhood," says Art, whose passion for music started at a very young age.

He began learning to play guitar, taught by his father, at the age of five or six and by nine, he already knew that music was what he wanted to pursue.

His father's collection of records from American guitarist, Tony Mottola, also of Italian descent, proved to be a great influence in Art's career. Tony had worked with such famous artists as Frank Sinatra and Perry Como. "When I was about 10 years



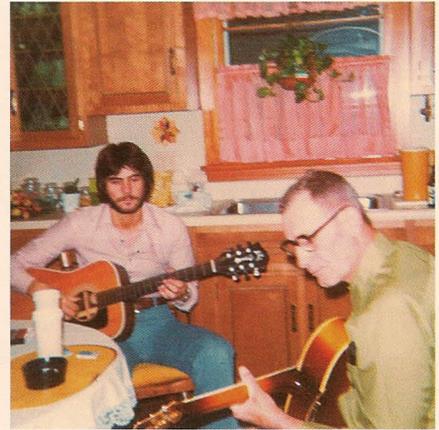


old, I listened to one of his albums called *Roman Guitar - Vol. 2*. On that album he had recorded a version of the song "Anema e Core" which translates to "heart and soul." I was taken away by his beautiful introduction on guitar – the whole piece was so passionate and so lovely. Around six to 12 months later, I decided that I wanted to be him. I wanted to live and breathe music – to taste it," says Art.

"I found out the name of his record company and decided to write him a letter. But, it took about six months before I got an answer because the record company had actually been renamed. Tony responded with a hand-written letter that was really encouraging. I had asked him for the arrangement of the song, but he said it would be impossible to send it because of copyright reasons."

Although Art may have been oblivious to the significance of this letter at the time, it sparked a relationship with Tony Mottola which continued until Art was well into his thirties, communicating through letters and the occasional phone call. "I used to record pieces of my music and send them to Tony to show him what I was up to – I once even made an album cover, which is hilarious when I think about it," he recalls. "Even though I was responsible for finding my own path, he was very inspirational and encouraging, as were my father and grandfather, as well as my mother and entire family."

While working in New York City as a guitarist for Barry Manilow during the mid 1980s, Art finally had the opportunity to meet his idol. "Although I never got to sit down and talk with Tony that day because



he was recording, meeting him was one of the highlights of my life. His musicians were all there too and they remembered me from my letters," says Art, whose career now spans almost 40 years.

Throughout his career, Art has received many awards and nominations for television series, soundtracks and movies, both in the US and in his adopted country Australia, where he has lived since 1988. He received two Emmy awards for his contribution to "Outstanding Music Direction and Composition for a Drama Series," while working as co-composer for the daytime television series "Santa Barbara" from 1984 to 1993.

While in Los Angeles, Art also worked with the likes of The Lettermen, Minnie Riperton, Demis Roussos, The Carpenters, Smokey Robinson, Dory Previn and Burl Ives. He worked as a guitarist, musical director, conductor and orchestrator on concert tours for Demis Roussos, Dory Previn and John Rowles, and toured as guitarist for Barry Manilow for over three years.

Art also produced recordings for several artists and achieved a Gold Record award for his production work on John Rowles' EMI Records album *Another Chapter*.

But it was while working as musical director for Demis Roussos that Art got his first glimpse of life in Australia. His first trip to Australia was a tour with Roussos in 1980 and that led to Art meeting his first wife. They were married a year later and moved to LA. Ironically, Art kept coming back to Australia for several different concert tours and recording projects.

"We had this connection with Australia which was wonderful because it showed me Australian life, and I loved it," he says. He moved to Australia when his eldest



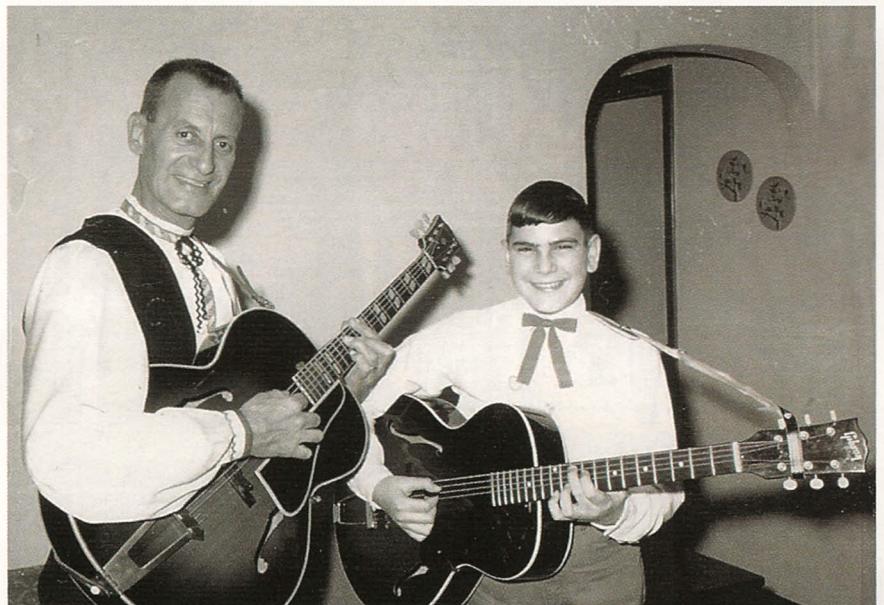
Art's grandfather Antonio Phillips on mandolin and Art's father Arthur M. Phillips on guitar at the family home in Pennsylvania in 1945.



A young Art pictured with his parents in 1962.



Art and his father playing guitar together in 1967 (right), in 1982 (above) and in 1979 (above left).



daughter was less than two years old. "The Los Angeles lifestyle was very different and I decided that I didn't want my children growing up there, so that's when we made the move to Australia."

But, despite his mainstream success, one of the most rewarding achievements for Art has been producing the CD *Chitarre Acustiche d'Italia* as a tribute to his late father. "My father always wanted me to release an album featuring the traditional Italian compositions we would play together. For many years of my childhood I would play those pieces in the house with my father and grandfather. When I established my career as a guitarist and worked in LA for several years, I would still play these songs with my dad every time I saw him," says Art.

"He and my aunts and uncles would always say, 'Arturo, when are you going to make an album?' And, I always asked myself - why? In my view, there was no market for it. But, I woke up on New Year's Day 2011 and something came over me. Within a week I was back in the studio and recording. I decided to record the CD to pay homage to my heritage. It is a tribute to my father

and his father because they were responsible for my talent and my passion with music. The CD is composed of traditional, instrumental music from various periods of the 19th and 20th centuries and most of the songs are those that I learned from my father and grandfather."

The album's 14 tracks are played with acoustic guitars including the 1941 Gibson L-12 that belonged to Art's father and the 1954 Gibson A-50 Mandolin owned by his grandfather. An original song called "Grandpa's Kitchen," written by Art in honour of his Uncle Ray, who was also very encouraging of his music, is also included on the CD. A photo of Art and his father in his grandfather's backyard, taken in the summer of 1982, was chosen by Art as the album cover. "My father never had an album of his own so I think he would have been really happy with that choice," says Art, who has also included a photo of his

father and grandfather on the album, taken in 1939. "As much as this project is a tribute to my father and grandfather, it is also all about enjoying life and the true passion of Italy."

Chitarre Acustiche d'Italia can be purchased online by visiting www.artphillips.com/italia.

WIN!

For your chance to win one of 10 copies of 'Chitarre Acustiche d'Italia' by Art Phillips, simply visit the Italianicious Facebook page and tell us your favourite Italian song of all time along with the special memories it holds for you.

