



KEVIN VAN PAASSEN/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

BROTHER VERSUS

BY GUY DIXON

There's a not-so-secret, Toronto-based trinity of musicians ruling Canadian music awards, including this weekend's Junos. And they go by the name Occhipinti.

First, there's bassist and composer Roberto Occhipinti, whose disc *A Bend In The River* has an orchestral-meets-jazz groove to it and is up for contemporary jazz album of the year. It's competing directly against younger brother Michael's album *The Sicilian Jazz Project* which, as the name suggests, is a jazz and world music update of Sicilian folk songs.

So is Roberto, 12 years older

and long established in both the Canadian classical and contemporary music worlds before Michael (born in 1967) was anywhere near turning of sibling rivalry à la Oasis and the Gallagher brothers.

"What I say to everybody is that because I played bass on [Michael's] record and I produced the record, and because part of the genesis of the record were some Alan Lomax [field] recordings I gave him, I've been intimately involved with it from the get-go. So what I'm saying to people is that I'd be very happy if my brother won," Roberto said.

» SEE 'BROTHERS' PAGE 4



.... BROTHER

FROM PAGE 1 » BROTHERS

Music and family bond brothers and cousin

» "But I wouldn't be disappointed if I did," he added.

Then there's cousin David Occhipinti, also a guitarist and born in 1966. A past Juno contender (both he and Michael were nominees last year in contemporary jazz album of the year), David isn't up for a Juno this time around, but is in the running for guitarist of the year in May's National Jazz Awards. Roberto says he's nothing but happy about that, if miffed that at least one press report confused David's one National Jazz Award nomination with his six nominations in various categories including bassist and musician of the year.

» **We're three bald guys that play jazz in the city of Toronto.**

Roberto Occhipinti

There you have the problem. When Roberto and Michael were at the Juno nominees announcement a few weeks ago, they both stood happily together. No testiness to grab headlines. No attention-getting digs against the other. Just two mature siblings with toothy grins, professing their support of each other's music.

Growing up, Michael had tagged along to older brother Roberto's performances and club gigs for years, soaking in Roberto's classic, Latin and jazz repertoire. Roberto has

been a professional musician all his working life, never having a day job, and served as a role model for Michael and David. The bond continues.

"When our names come up, there's always confusion. ... I would like to make sure people know who we are. We're three bald guys that play jazz in the city of Toronto," Roberto said.

That's jazz for you. They contribute artistically to each others' works and roll in the awards, but don't bother with the fratricide act.

"Well, you know, Italians grow up busting balls," joked Roberto, whose family is from Sicily, and then quickly corrected himself: "But no, not at all."