

THE ROAD LESS

Travelled

— ARTICLE BY —

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Having released their debut single, “Semplicita” just a bit over a year ago, The Travellers are one of the most popular Maltese bands amongst the young generation. Their journey so far has taken them to perform at the 2016 Farsons Beer Festival, the 2016 KSU Graduation Ball as well as the 2017 Eurovision Song Contest. What is so remarkable about this group of young artists is that they managed to obtain success despite singing in the Maltese language - a language that was gradually dying in the music scene.

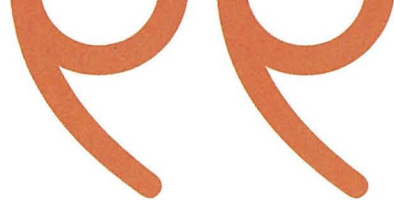




The Travellers were initially made up of four friends, later joined by another two members once the band decided they were going to pursue music in a serious manner. The band name is inspired by the fact that all members are from Gozo, and thus, all have to travel to Malta to study and work.

The group sees the use of Maltese in songs in part as a way to revive the language they proudly describe as ‘something of our own’. The fact that all singles so far have been in Maltese is quite unique, although it was not like this from the very start. The Travellers started their musical career with original songs in English and performing cover versions. Most of these songs were experimented on, twisting them into their own style.

This proved to be difficult at times, as it was essential to incorporate the brass, i.e. the saxophone and the trumpet, especially in cover songs where brass was absent. These helped giving them their original sound. Further down the line, they decided to start writing original songs in English. They felt



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that it wasn't enough and decided to take up the challenge of making the Maltese language sound as fresh as possible in a contemporary musical environment. After a lot of experimentation and writing, these original songs in Maltese were performed live and were well received. The biggest step in their career was when all major radio stations in Malta were playing "Semplicita" within 24 hours of its release. This unexpected success led to their win of 2016's Best Song of the Year by Bay Radio.



Writing in Maltese is particularly challenging, as you cannot compare your lyrics to other bands, the group explains. The aim is to reach an international audience with their Maltese sound and also to perform abroad. Apart from being an achievement for them, this would also be a way to expose the Maltese language even further. The Travellers are confident that the use of the Maltese language is an advantage and not obstructing them from attaining their goal. There are artists who are successful producing music in their own language. However, it has to be a holistic package at the end of the day, not just the song.

The song-writing process is quite a long and crucial one and even though they all have different musical backgrounds, when writing songs, they try to relate to contemporary music as much as possible. After producing the lyrics, guitarist and songwriter Andrew points to the style that he believes would perfectly fit the song. The members individually look for inspiration and then get together to discuss them. Eventually, the song is created by combined effort of the band. The group also emphasises that in many instances songs undergo numerous changes until the final version is found. For instance,





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“Xemx u Xita” was completely changed in the studio, “Semplicita” had three other versions before they entered the studio for recording and “Pirati” was initially planned to be sung in English. A number of their songs are actually first written in English, and then changed to Maltese. This latter process takes even more time as one must be careful in choosing the right words which would sound smooth when singing them.

One of the most memorable moments for the band was their performance at the 2016 Marsovin Wine Festival, which took place just four days after their single “Xemx u Xita” was released. Despite this, they were incredibly surprised to hear the audience sing along to the song wholeheartedly, already knowing the lyrics.

Another great experience was at the 2016 KSU Graduation Ball, when the attendees started cheering at the very first chords of their opening song. In the summer of 2016, The Travellers were also invited to perform at Kelma Kelma Nota Nota, concerts which aim to further promote the Maltese language.

The band’s next project is their upcoming album, which is to be released by the end of the year and in anticipation of it, some singles will be released along the way. Even though this is expected to be all in Maltese, when asked, they did not rule out the option of producing music in English in the future.

Looking back at all they have achieved, the band reflected on how none of this would have been possible had they lacked determination, commitment and above all passion for what they do. For them The Travellers is not just a pastime, rather it is “more than a full-time job” and seeing people appreciate what they do, is their ultimate reward.