

WORDS LAUREN JOHN

# THE TRAVELLERS

WHEN SIX FRIENDS GOT TOGETHER IN 2013 TO FORM A BAND, YOU'D BE FORGIVEN FOR THINKING THAT THEIR BAND NAME REFLECTED SOME EXCITING ADVENTURES, BUT 'THE TRAVELLERS' HAD MUCH MORE HUMBLE BEGINNINGS. SIMPLY NAMED AFTER A REGULAR FERRY TRIP THE BAND MEMBERS MADE FROM GOZO ACROSS TO MALTA, IT WAS ALSO PERHAPS A GOOD OMEN, AS THEIR MUSIC HAS NOW BEEN HEARD FAR AND WIDE ACROSS EUROPE.

Like every band in their infancy, Clayton (bass), Joseph (trumpet), Chris (vocals), Andrew (guitar and backing vocals), Slyvano (sax), and Michael (drums) set out with the desire to create something different, but how would they do that in a music scene that back then they already saw as 'diverse'?

"We started experimenting with using Maltese lyrics in a pop setting. Fast forward to 2016 and we released our E.P *Xemx u Xita*. This was extremely well received by our listeners, with three back-to-back hit singles: *Sempliċità*, *Dak Li Int*, and the title track *Xemx u Xita*.

Following this success, and the ever-growing support from their fan base, a debut album was born, *Iljuni fis-Silġ*. With music being a universal language this is a debut anyone can enjoy, no matter how well you understand Maltese.

With a strong identity from the start, The Travellers have created a blend of modern pop that is hard to resist. Album highlights include *Faġi Paċi Kuluri*, a high energy up-tempo track full of personality. The guitar parts are timed to perfection, with the brass section keeps the energy going throughout, but this is a band that doesn't

rely on just on tempo. *Gwerra*, stands out as a more chilled out, soulful track, while *Umani* has a darker, atmospheric electronic vibe.

Before writing this I was curious about how sing-able Maltese was as a language, but opting for their mother tongue instead of English has worked really well. The band believes that "our audience relates to our music in a different way, in a more intimate way when they listen to music in their mother tongue though, which was an experience missing from popular culture for the past three or four decades, as for quite a long time no one was doing pop music in Maltese." These guys make 'doing pop music in Maltese' effortless, but there have been challenges during the song-writing process. They add: "Perhaps one such issue is that whereas in English one can find a huge number of references to listen to, and be inspired from, in Maltese, the number of references you could learn from is a bit more limited."

Limitations are not impossibilities though, and 4 years down the line, and in a haze of neon pink photography (see their social media for more) they are dropping hints, and gearing up for the release of their second album *Inżul u Tlajja*. The first single *Il-Biża*, an ode to mental health and internal struggles, will be out in the ➤



*Outfits: Charles & Ron  
Photo: Carlton Agius  
Hair Styling: Hair & Co Studios*



Photo: Tonio Lombardi

world by the time this piece has wings and raising awareness of such an important issue is something that will resonate with a lot of people.

Sensitive subjects aside, The Travellers are clearly excited to showcase their new material and continue to feel the benefits of creatively interacting with fans and showcasing their music on social media.

"Our most creative social media post has to be when we asked our fans to record clips of them singing and playing our song *Xemx u Xita*, and we grouped them together to create a very cool collaboration. This was done during difficult times, where a semi-lockdown was in effect due to Covid-19 measures." Anyone that's watched socially distanced videos, live stream concerts and other lockdown activities knows what joy they brought at a time when we needed them most, but the social media plans don't stop there. "We would like to get personal with our fans, and maybe include some individual interviews with each one of us. As most of our followers know us as simply 'The Travellers', we think it would be something interesting to do as, after all, we are just regular people, all with full-time jobs, and different tastes and interests."

This is a band that "have always strived to always come up with new sounds and sound fresh. We also try as much as possible to try different techniques/add different effects to our instruments."

There is lots to look forward to in the coming months from this group of musicians and singers, as they take on real-life struggles, happiness, challenges and achievements in musical and lyrical form.

While some may feel every note and enjoy the meaning behind every lyric, not all of you will know Maltese, so we asked the band to translate a favourite lyric for us. We end with this:

*"L-imħabba kelma kbira wisq, definizzjoni ma ssibihex iżda għalija hija int."*

Which translates as: "Love is too big a word, and you won't find an exact definition for it, having said that, you are the definition to me." ✱

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Find out more about The Travellers at:

[www.thetravellersmalta.com](http://www.thetravellersmalta.com)

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