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front of me, because I was so young and innocent. I was lucky in that respect as I probably never fell into the wrong hands. But it was a very good lesson...I tried to do things my way and if I failed, I would have been happy knowing that I held my head high. But at the same time, leaving Greece was my choice.

#### Any regrets?

Because I didn't have a proper childhood, I started being a child later on in life, trying to catch up on all the things I missed out on. But because I have always been a positive person, I can see the bright side of it. Everything in life is an experience you can learn from. I needed to have those experiences.

#### Do you ever catch yourself regretting not doing things according to the Greek star system?

Not at all! I am really happy with myself. And I did do really, really well, not only as much as a good but also to an Afstralogenimeni that knew nobody. When people over there speak of me, they refer to me as "their Maraki". To me that's the most important thing in the word: to have the respect of people that I like. They used to tell me that I wasn't cut out for the night, that no matter how good I was, it wasn't enough.

#### Was there ever a time in your career when you thought of changing music genres and singing entehno for example, instead of the laika-pop hybrid you serve?

My heart wasn't there and I always follow my heart. I grew up loving more laika sounds. It wasn't a decision and it was never premeditated. I never wanted

to be a famous singer at any cost. I only do what my heart takes me. Plus back then I was so young I wasn't in a position to decide to do things because my career requires it. I was learning as I was going along.

#### Love aside, did you feel disappointed having to come back to Australia with all the usual problems that stem from an almost amateurish approach to music?

I made the most of it. I took what I learned in Greece and brought it here. Don't forget that it was people in Australia that made me who I am so I am forever grateful to them. Now I am in a stage of my life where I wish I did more in Greece. I worked hard for it, sacrificing a lot from a young age. You can't help but feel disappointed for not reaching your goals. On the other hand though, I am OK with it. Because I did try my best.

#### Plus not everything was your fault or down to your abilities as a singer.

If it had to do with that, then I would have been really disappointed. The people that did try to help me were telling me I had what it takes to make it. Unfortunately, those that could really help, wanted other things in return.

#### If I asked you to weigh up family life against fame, where would the scale tip?

I think if you are good, you can do both. Don't forget that singing all year round is a decision you make. You can choose to sing six months a year and dedicate more time to your family. But people become greedy, plus once you get to the top you have to fight to stay there. So, often people forget about family. It's

about to the individual.

#### Am I wrong in presuming money was never high in your list of priorities?

You are spot on. I never cared much about money. I am in love with singing. Through singing you can touch people. So, one of my dreams of making involved of giving love back to people, to use my position to offer things. Charity concerts for example. I have never been one to approach music on a purely egoistical perspective.

#### In 2006 you went back to Greece and even tried for a spot in The X Factor.

Yes, I did go back, but this time with my daughter. What an experience that was. When I was back in Australia I was contacted by some people working on the show that asked me if I wanted to be on X Factor. Since I was going anyway, I thought why not, let's give it a shot. In the beginning I did really well, went through all the stages, but on the last hurdle, as I walked in front of the judges, I couldn't even remember my name. For the first time in my life I had stage fright! I wanted it so much, and I was so overworked and so over worried, I lost it completely. Maybe it wasn't meant to be. I don't know really...

#### We have probably focused too much on the negative aspect of Greek. Surely there must have been some good times too?

There were lots of great moments. Because of my character, I have always been positive towards things. To me my work was beautiful, I met great people, I traveled, made great friends. I have learned a lot in regards to my work.

Altogether, I worked for 10 years in Greece. When I first arrived there, we used to work seven nights a week. And now it's only once a week, if that...

#### Any advice to give to those dreaming of a career in Greece?

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#### How is the album coming about? Have you got a tittle for it yet?

I have already released two CDs in Australia: one with Krazy Kon, another with Tommy the bouzouki player, plus I have sang on someone else's album in Greece. Now it's my time to release my own album. The songs are written by (Greek composer) Spiros Georgiou, who also writes for Ploutarho. The two of us became friends while I was in Greece. We have decided on a tittle yet and we are hoping the album we will out just after Easter. It hasn't been finalized yet, but I'm thinking of recording a duet with a Greek singer, who is a good friend of mine. I'll give you more details in the future. The album will be released both here and in Greece, plus I am trying to break through to America. We are still talking about it, but the idea behind is, since I couldn't make it in Greece under those special circumstances we talked about earlier, maybe I can do it with Greeks around the world. And who knows? If it works out, people in Greece might show some interest hopefully.