

# FESTIVAL OF SYDNEY PRESENTS



**ANNIS LIVE AT DARLING HARBOUR, MARCH 17th 2013**

He might be the best selling Greek singer of the past decade, but Michalis Hatzigiannis has remained the same humble person he was when back in 1998, he took on to the Eurovision Song Contest, kick starting what was to become a very illustrious career, full of peaks. Singing his own composition "Genesis", Hatzigiannis might have finished in 11th place, but his vocal abilities were good enough to impress famed Greek composer Giorgos Hatzinasios. An invitation to sing the title track from "Aggigma Psihis" TV series was extended and duly accepted: the rest as they say, is history.

On the eve of his appearance at both Sydney's Greek Festival and Melbourne's Antipodes Festival, the affable Hatzigiannis talks exclusively to "O Kosmos" newspaper, about his forthcoming concerts down under, the many friends and family he has here, his plans for the future, posing to tackle the question of the current economic crisis that threatens to destroy not only Greece, but also his native Cyprus.

**WORDS BY SAVVAS LIMNATITIS**

It's well past midnight on a balmy Sydney summer's night. Despite the late of the hour, Michalis Hatzigiannis is in great spirits, his cackle coming loud and clear down the telephone line. Which is understandable, given the fact that Hatzigiannis is sitting at his manager's office in downtown Athens, amicably carrying out his promotional obligations to promote his forthcoming trip to Australia and his appearances in both Sydney and Melbourne.

I will freely admit I am not a huge fan of Michalis Hatzigiannis. It must have something to do with Euterpe, the muse of music: she might be slightly tipsy and joyful when she visits Hatzigiannis, but she is most certainly stark, raving mad, well beyond repair and stumbling all over the floors when the time comes to pay a visit to the artists I like. Yet, throughout the course of the 20 minute or so interview, I catch myself becoming very fond of Michalis, the man behind the phenomenon. Not quite shy but neither an extrovert, articulate but not in a show-offish way, a player in the showbiz game but not a slave to fame and its trapping, he comes across as very likable, down to earth, a perpetually youthful person with his head stuck firmly to his neck. And at the end of the day, Michalis Hatzigiannis might be earnest, but he is most certainly not consequential.

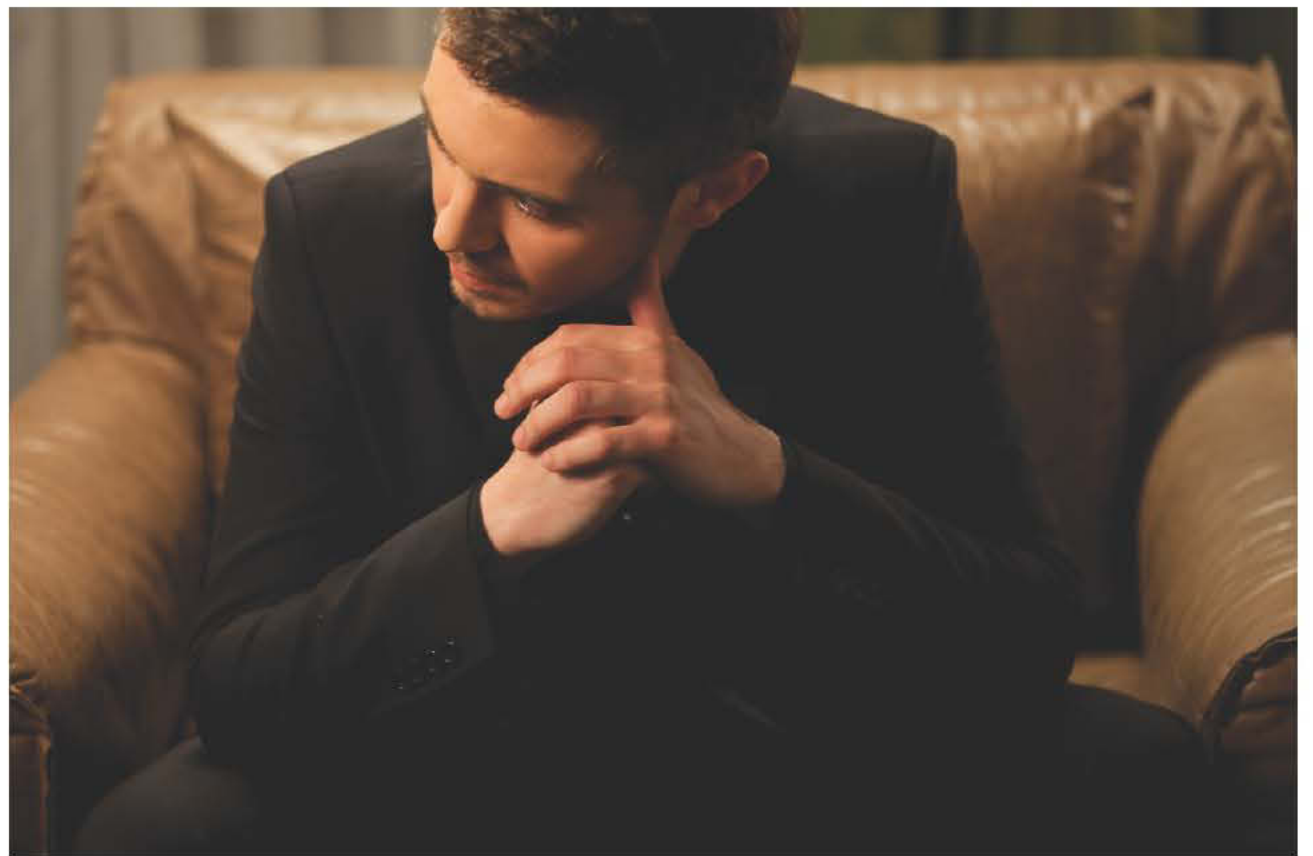
*This will not be your first visit to Australia. What memories did you load in your luggage upon your return to Greece from down under?*

I have indeed visited Australia before, but this will be my first appearance at the festival. I've been here 2 or 3 times already, but I still remember the excitement and pride I felt for the first time as well as the immense joy I experienced, when I realized I was amongst my family. I have made a lot of friends plus many relatives both in Melbourne and Sydney who fled Cyprus after the Turkish invasion of 74. So I still keep close ties with both cities. The love fervor the people of the Diaspora showed me, and the way they embraced me was something unimaginable, something new for me. They instantly won me over. The audience was fantastic: they knew all my songs, which is did not expected.

From the outset I said that (Australia) is a place I want to visit as often as possible. This time around is a special case, thanks to the festivals in Sydney and Melbourne. We are talking about two festivals which aims to maintain and spread Greek culture, our history, and this is something very important. It is something that goes beyond the limits of a normal appearance; it has a sacred purpose for me and it is very prestigious to me and (I think it is) most important than my other shows.

*This time circumstance have been changed somewhat: instead of a closed arena you will appear in the open, in front of a larger audience, and - most importantly-with no entry fee, with all the good and bad this entails. Will you change your approach or is it business as usual?*

In no event is it business as usual. It's a special case: we will be playing in front of a much larger audience made u



from people of all ages. We will not only be playing my own tunes, but also songs referring to the multicultural Greek culture, folk songs, which are generally Greek. Therefore we aim to reinvent the program, and this is very important. It will not strictly be a Michalis Hatzigiannis concert that revolves around his discography, but a concert that will have Greek color in it, that will serve the aesthetic of the festival and the purpose for which it was created. At this point allow me to express my gratitude to the Greek communities of Sydney and Melbourne, the people of the two Greek festivals, for their kind invitation to attend and perform at these two major events. It is both a great honor and a pleasure. I know that in previous years very important names have performed at these events. Besides, I see the expatriates as my own family now and it is my great honor to be singing for them.

*There is no denying the talent, a dedication to hard hard work is there, plus the first step has been taken through your collaboration with Reamonn, and the release of your first English-language album back in 2010. So I wonder why haven't you pursued an overseas career with more passion?*

I think this is a rather strict approach. I'd say we've pursued it quite a lot, but we encounter plenty of difficulties which were often beyond our control. I have to say though that this is not a dream that I have given up on or one that I find elusive.

These efforts are ongoing and will continue. Things are very difficult, but I now know the difficulties, but also the ways of how to make it possible. I think that in this field, a career

outside of your own borders is certainly much easier once you have taken the first steps.

*Do you remember your first tentative steps? How much different is Michalis Hatzigiannis - both as man and as artist- from the young man that was introduced to the public through the music for TV series «Aggigma Psihis»?*

Of course I remember my first steps. I think my first steps were what determined what followed, my future, my path. Those first steps provided me with the necessary supplies to help me proceed with a lot of caution, with great consistency, something I have done ever since. I think a catalytic part of that was my family and all the help they provided me with. Especially my mother who was always with me and has played a very decisive role in my career, from the very beginning all the way through to today. Although you may consider this weird, at least as a person I have not changed at all.

I set out to become a singer and to realize my dream, which was to sing, express myself, have a good time and communicate my own stories with others. Everything else is a result of the force of talent, which may manifest itself into sales, on magazine covers, in a commercial projection of a person's dynamics of a man, who moves in commercial circles. These things happen around us. But personally I have not changed. My friends are the same as those which I grew up with.

*But I imagine that the current economic crisis has forced*