



me. But growing up, we were all aware of these types of music, but for some reason rebetika spoke to us, it has some kind of magic connected to it. The first time I heard a rebetiko tune outside of my personal environment, was when I watched *The Exorcist*. I remember thinking to myself "what the heck was that? What type of music is that?" And it has grown from there. The more you look at it, the more you find, the more relevant it becomes to my life, and our social and economical environment. It's still on target today, and that's what drew me to it. It wasn't just the love songs and the hash songs; the music had a social punch that resonated with me.

*If we are allowed to generalize here, Melbourne has been more of a working class city, again in comparison to the more cosmopolitan Sydney. Is that why so many traditional rebetika bands have been doing the rounds of Melbourne for years now?*

You know I was thinking that just before! Why hasn't Sydney had the equivalent? I really can't answer the question accurately, but I think on the case of Melbourne it has something to do with the student population back in the 70s. Many of them had lived in Greece and had come back. I was one of those too, and I met other like-minded people and it blossomed from there. Maybe in Sydney you have more of a disconnection.

You can answer that.

*It might have something to do with the grass being greener on the other side, but I have always thought of Melbourne of being more of an art city in general.*

The other thing is in Melbourne we had people playing this type of music back in the 50s and 60s. There was a guy called Stathouloupoulos who played rebetika, there was Stathis Gormas, a teacher and researcher of rebetika music. He was a guiding light for us, giving us information and songs before they were available on CDs, before youtube. 25 years ago you had to look for it. I don't think we are more patriotic here, but there was an availability which helped things. It's a subject that demands a lot of conversation.

*You were telling me earlier that when you first started playing in small pubs, you used to get a predominantly non-Greek audience. While I can see the connection rebetika has with Turks and other middle-eastern people, I cannot imagine what would draw a Scotsman or an Irishman to a rebetika concert.*

This happened even with other bands before Rebetiki was formed. In the beginning I would say the audience was only 20% Greek. The Irish for example, have the same themes, the same experiences of migration, of poverty, of a sense of loss and all the

things we have experienced as a nation. I don't know how the music connected with the Irish and the Scots, but with people from Turkey and the Middle East, the music and the songs are very similar. There is something vibrant about the music and when you hear it for the first time, it's like a siren's call! I presume they wanted something a bit more authentic and that's why Greeks didn't come in the beginning. I remember in the beginning they used to ask us whether we would play more recent music. Our answer was "megale, we would have loved to please you, but this is the type of music we play". So the people that came were those that liked this traditional music of urban Athens and other cities of Greece. It prevailed in the end, but we had to fight for it.

*People seem to forget that rebetiko was originally an outsider's music with a lot of drug references. And when the refugees from Asia Minor arrived in Greece, they weren't accepted in society.*

You are right about that. It's a bit like today, nothing has changed. People always say "these migrants are taking our jobs". When Greeks moved to mainland Greece from Asia Minor they weren't welcomed. People used to say "the Turks have come". But they persevered, became a part of society, every one forget their differences and realized we