

Mr Rez, Albanian reggae ambassador, vinyl collector, dj and vocalist from Durres, had a chance to participate in project by Association of non-aligned artists (UNU) in July, and present his work to audience in Subotica and Belgrade.

Good afternoon Mr Rez. Welcome to Serbia. What are your first impressions?

Good afternoon, thank you for the invitation for the hospitality in Serbia, it's a pleasure to be here to promote reggae music, my first impressions are good and the reception of my colleagues has been excellent

You came to Belgrade for special reason. Can you tell us more about your collaboration with UNU, and your project that was supported by European Cultural Foundation from Amsterdam? You visited urban and rural areas and connected with local artists. How did that go?

It is true I'm here in Belgrade with the support of the ECF of Amsterdam and thanks to the invitation of the local association of UNU Belgrade. I especially thank the UNU that helped me a lot during the days of my stay in Serbia, thanks to them I had the opportunity to know a lot about the reggae scene in Belgrade, in the surrounding area and throughout Serbia.

Has been a particularly useful experience in order to know the Serbian reggae scene and exchange ideas with my colleagues on the future development of reggae in the entire Balkan region. Through this experience I have known reggae artists from Belgrade, Novi Sad, Subotica, Nis and Vinca and with all these artists are of the same opinion that reggae music and a weapon to unite the different peoples of the Balkans leaving the old discords of the past to work hard in order to build a prosperous future for the region in general and in particular for the reggae scene.

Lack of opportunities to perform around the region, insufficient support by institutions, and fact that not many people has opportunity to learn the language, are all common problems of artists that sing in their mother tongue. Does it seem that Balkans reggae scene shares the same problems?

Yes, actually there is still much work to do to make that reggae music get the support of local institutions and the music industry in order to allow this music to get more visibility and support from the general public. Currently there are not many possibilities for artists from the Balkan countries to be able to play and promote their music outside of their country of origin. The fact that many of the artists sing in their native language obviously prevents them from reaching the other states, but in my opinion the language is a not a big problem, because the fact of singing in their native language can significantly help the development of the local scene and to bring many people to the message of the reggae music, in particular conveys, the second phase begins once the scene has developed in their own country, since it is fundamental to sing in English to reach the international public. These problems are there in all the states of the Balkans as in Albania and other countries that I have visited, but I believe that reggae music being born in Jamaica where they speak English is a universal language and most of the artists with whom I have collaborated knows the English language so I think that in the future the 'English will be the language that will unite the various artists and public of the Balkan region with the international one..

Last year you started to write and record reggae in Albanian language. We all know Crisis, by legendary Bob Marley, but you came up with the idea to record „Eshte krize“. You see similarities between Jamaica and Albania?

As I said before, the idea of singing in my native language, comes from the need to understand the message of the text to the local public exactly as the prophet Bob Marley did in Jamaica. My song is various social issues united by the slogan * Esht Krize * which explains why the world is experiencing a global crisis due to the malfunctioning of the capitalist system, its institutions and corrupt to the non-respect of human rights and the persistence raciste discrimination between the different peoples of the world. I think L 'Albania has many similarities with the Jamaica because in both countries has not yet reached a good level of social and cultural well-being and both have problems with the political system, corruption and poverty, especially rural arias. My intent with the song was to denounce these various problems and to reflect the public to make them understand that not everything they are told by the mass media and television is always the reality.

Reggae in Albania is gaining popularity in past few years. Tell us about the artists on local scene. Can you live of reggae art?

Albania is a small country geographically, so that even the local reggae scene is small. However in recent years due to economic growth, the development of democratic institutions towards integration into the European union, even the modern and contemporary art has experienced some growth compared to the sad and dark communist past. The reggae in particular has grown rapidly thanks especially to the work of local artists and singers of the first DJs in the country, and especially thanks to the Albanian diaspora in Europe. Over the past 7 years, along with other crew and sound from Tirana and not only have organized many parties reggae dancehall, plus 2 editions of the Albanian reggae festival, which gave us the possibility to bring in Albania known artists such as: Million Stylez, General Levy, Brother Culture, Skarra Mucci and many more. Currently we have several singers or rappers Albanians at the level of the general public offering mainstream productions and reggae dancehall songs. Among the most popular I would like to remind Noizy, Dafina Zeqiri, Lyrical son, Dj Blunt, Young Zerka, Natty Culture and Bim Bimma. I believe that only live reggae nowadays is difficult even to other parts not only in Albania, I have personally lived in Italy for over 20 years and I can tell you that the problems for reggae music are more or less similar in all the world. I believe, however, that this music has a huge Albanian potential growth due mainly to the development of tourism in the country, as the sea and the mountains are similar to Jamaica, for this reason I believe that investing in reggae in this country in the coming years can afford to create a stable job, dedicated full time to the reggae music.

Through project „Faya Agency“, you linked up young artists from local scene. Whats next? Maybe collaboration with artists from Serbia and the region?

Of Course, Faya Agency is a project for entire Balkan region and to all the artists who are mainly involved in reggae music. Comes from my collaboration with 'Faya Agency Switzerland' which has as its goal the development of the reggae scene in Albania, promoting and producing singers, DJs and local artists, as well as booking and promoting events with international reggae artists. After producing the first single in the Albanian language as ESHT Križe and No Compromise featuring Natty Culture, future projects involving the exit of one of our Riddim, with the collaboration of various artists mainly from the Balkans and other European countries such as Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland . This project involves artists from Greece, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Slovenia and of course from Serbia with the participation of Prince Sol from Roots and Sound Crew.

You shared stage with IRIE FM in Prizren, and reactions were very positive. You also had a chance to listen to artist from Serbia, at South Vibes festival in Himare on Ionian sea, in July 2012. How did that connection happen? Do you agree that reggae might be the right path for Balkans?

Reggae Music is an universal love, which unites all the people of all the nations of the world, regardless of their race, culture or skin color. That is, these things do not matter in reggae music, because the prophet Bob Marley and the Rastafari religion they profess and proclaim in peace and love and respect and with the motto: One Love, One Heart, One Destiny. So I think that is absolutely the reggae considering the history of the Balkans is definitely a weapon of unity among all peoples. In Serbia there are good bands and musicians just as IRIE FM, Roots Sound and Darez Selecta From Subotica and others with whom I had the pleasure of sharing the stage, or to invite in Albania as in the case of Roots and Sound in the summer of 2012 to Himara. And through collaboration between the various countries we can grow the scene, spreading the message of reggae music in all the Balkans and realizing that cultural union that will allow us to grow and live in prosperity in our children respect and love for diversity of others and of our neighbors.

You aswell made many new fans in Serbia in past few years. Were you surprised to learn that even in Belgrade or Subotica, there are fans of artists like Rita Ora, Dafina Zeqiri, DJ Blunt, Noizy, Young Zerka, Natty Culture?

It is very interesting how the language of music, especially reggae music knows no boundaries and barriers, Sure I'm a little surprised to see that the Albanian artists are known for their music in Serbia, but knowing personally the artists you mentioned and knowing that many of them have lived abroad and often sang in English, this does not surprise me that much more, as if an artist has talent seems normal to me to be appreciated abroad, especially in states bordering Albania.

You collaborated with artists from Jamaica, Bulgaria, Germany, Switzerland... You performed in Italy, and all around the Balkans, head to head with likes of Kymani Marley, Lion D, KG Man, David Rodigan and many others. What artists made a biggest impression on you?

Each of the artists you mentioned most many others, I have left good impressions, as they represent reggae music and more I have less everyone, regardless of their fame and their international success all share the same ideals that characterize the reggae music, especially the being simple people and do not feel like Super Star. Among these definitely Kymani Marley David Rodigan and I was so impressed by their simplicity and fairness despite their fame has given him the 'opportunity to perform around the world, they were simple people who respect the work of their colleagues in the less famous scene. Play and share the stage with veteran reggae DJ David Rodigan as world and have the chance to meet and spend time with him, helped me a lot to continue my mission to spread the reggae in the Balkans following the example of his strength and by his enthusiasm that 65 years seems stronger than ever.

Audience in Serbia had really enjoyed your shows. What are the next destinations for Albanian reggae ambassador? Maybe Exit, Outlook, Overjam in 2015?

Certainly it was a great experience to play and promote my music in Serbia and especially to see that my style dj and singer has been appreciated by wine lovers reggae in Belgrade and Subotica. Of course, these three festival you mentioned represent the top of the festival in the Balkans and I think every artist would like to have the opportunity to perform in these stages. For me the most important thing is to continue my work with constant production, the organization of events and the promotion of my music abroad, since I believe that once they have reached the goals set by the organizers will be a pleasure to be able to invite in these festivals. Of course I've heard a lot about Exit Festival and I'd love to be able to play in Novi Sad.