

EUROPEAN PYROTECHNIC ARTS NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to Malta !

by *Therese Camilleri*

MALTA is a small island, surrounded by the full beauty of the Mediterranean. It is about 17 miles in length, and 9 in width, while its population barely exceeds 320,000. To cross the island by car, the maximum time required is one hour, of course, not including the time wasted in traffic jams, as on this small island, 190,000 vehicles are registered as in activity.

Malta is not very well known in sports, maybe because of its small size, but on the other hand, our little island's name is notorious in things regarding history and tradition. Its past can still be felt through many historical sites, which

are still in good conditions, despite their age.

There are also many traditions, which although they know their origin to several centuries ago, are still very strong though modern times brought a totally different style of life, a life where old traditions are no longer important.

One of these old traditions, that still takes place today is the celebration of the feasts of the patron saints of every Maltese town and village. The climax of the feast is reached when the statue of the patron saint is brought out of the local church and is carried through the streets of the place, once every year. The celebrations of the feasts take place in the church, but to extend the joy of these feasts, external celebrations take place, including the playing of marches from Maltese bands, locally manufactured fireworks and all kinds of decorations in the streets. Without any doubt, the fireworks are one of the main components of the Maltese festa. This old tradition still lives and makes our festas so popular.

Today, few countries in the world can offer the same quality of fireworks with two breaks, with three breaks, and even more. Many exhibitions are made with fireworks with only one break, but this does not apply to Malta. The result of the fireworks traditions in Malta, is not seen only during the night and in the dark, but one must also appreciate the quality of the fireworks, fired during the daytime. There is no doubt that the Maltese are masters of a unique class for the latter quality of fireworks, and the same can be said for the ground fireworks. The work found in the Maltese festas, especially in the villages, is very difficult to find otherwise. Maybe the only thing that can

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Welcome to Malta (continued from page 1)

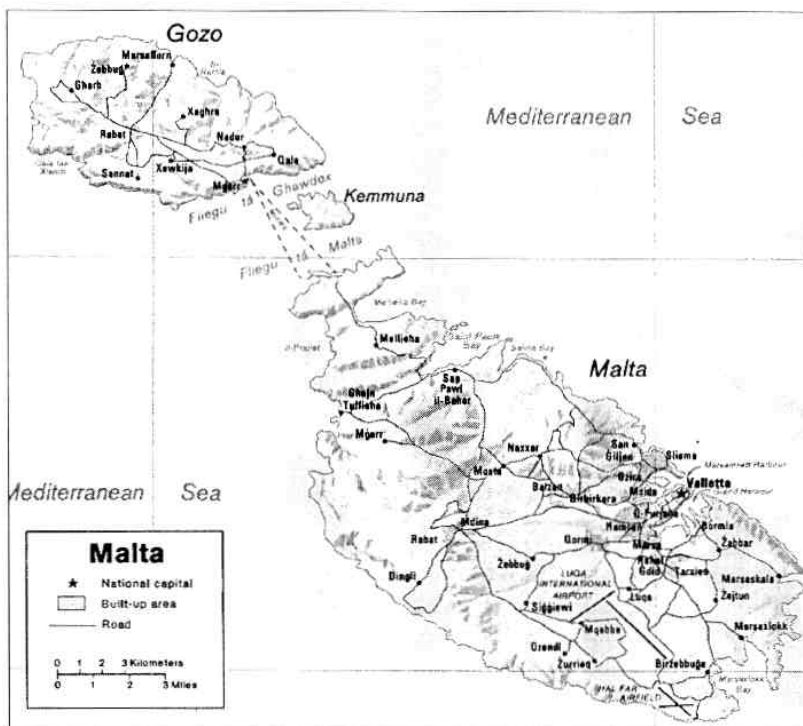
be criticized in the Maltese fireworks is the way in which they are presented to the public.

Presently, thanks to electricity every fireworks exhibition in the world is presented in the shortest time possible with a quick rhythm, which gives pleasure to the eye, but the Maltese prefer to fire them by hand, and this system sometimes cause excessive delays, and here one must consider the great weight of these shells, which have to be carried from the store to the mortars, while others are being fired. One must also understand that the

fireworks' role in the Maltese festas, is only one ingredient, which is there to be combined with the others; the bands, the religious functions, etc ...

In spite of this defect, the fact remains that the Maltese fireworks during the summer, Sunday after Sunday, still attract thousands of people and as was written in EPAN, every fireworks amateur, coming from anywhere, should not miss to see, at one time or another, the Maltese festa.

Therese Camilleri, April 1996



1996 festas which are popular for their fireworks

Date	Festas	Places
June		
2nd.	St. Joseph	Ghaxaq
9th.	St. Philip	Zebbug
16th.	Our Lady of the Lily	Mqabba
16th.	St. Katherine	Zejtum
23rd.	Our Lady of Lourdes	Qrendi
30th.	St. Nicholas	Siggiewi
July		
7th.	St. George	Qormi
7th.	St. Andrew	Luqa
14th.	The Annunciation	Balzan
21st.	St. George's martyr	Rabat (Gozo)
21st.	Our Lady of Carmel	Zurrieq
28th.	St. Joseph	Zebbug
28th.	St. Margaret	Sannat (Gozo)
August		
6th.	The Saviour	Lija
15th.	St. Mary	Ghaxaq, Mosta, Mqabba, Qrendi, Rabat
18th.	St. Elena	B'Kara
25th.	St. Mary	Zebbug (Gozo)
25th.	St. Barthelomew	Gharghur
September		
1st.	St. Catherine	Zurrieq
8th.	Our lady Of Victory	Mellieha
15th.	St. Leonard	Kirkop

Beside the list above, there are other festas celebrated in other villages but I only included those most renowned for their fireworks.