

## When magic alone is not enough

David Schembri



Many blamed the cold weather and the fact the event was so close to Christmas.  
Photo: Darrin Zammit Lupi

The cold snap on Saturday may have jinxed the first edition of Città Magica and the event was deemed a "disaster" by those working in the shops on the night.

The event was coordinated by the Malta Tourism Authority, in consultation with the Valletta local council and the business community in Merchants' and Republic streets. It was aimed at livening up the capital city in what is considered to be a "shoulder month" for tourism.

However, despite their best intentions, the organisers did not manage to attract as many visitors as perhaps was envisaged, especially when compared to the previous editions of the highly popular Notte Bianca, normally held in October.

Karen Muscat, manager of a jewellery shop in Merchants Street, said that although she was in Valletta at one for the afternoon shift, she only opened at 4.30 p.m. because there were not enough people around. She then closed at 10.30 p.m. instead of at midnight, as planned.

Sandra Zammit, a salesgirl at a shoe shop, said they were expecting more people and had advertised the outlet would stay open until midnight. However, like many other shops in the area, the staff switched off the lights and headed out shortly after 10 p.m. The common sentiment echoed by many shopkeepers and salespeople was that the event was something of a flop and even a "disaster" while some said it was

"just another Saturday" in terms of business. Many blamed the cold weather and the fact the event was so close to Christmas.

"We had been expecting an attendance similar to Notte Bianca, so we stocked up on food and ingredients," a cafeteria owner in St Lucy Street said, adding that a lot of the stock he bought had to be thrown away because it soon expired.

Another restaurateur said business actually suffered on the night because his regular patrons did not enter Valletta for fear there would be Notte Bianca-style crowds.

The night seemed to have worked miracles for isolated outlets, thanks to their location, however. Paul Lapira, the owner of a wine bar in Merchants Street, was very thankful for the business that the performances, right outside his shop, had attracted to his outlet. He closed at about 3 a.m.

The MTA said when contacted that, considering the adverse weather conditions on the day, attendance was fairly good.

It added it was still "too early to determine whether or not there will be other editions of the Città Magica event and what format they would take".

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## Comments

victor pulis (on 13/1/10)

Could the lack of interest be due to the fact that there was nothing new or innovative in the so called activities? We've been seeing the same faces singing the same songs on the same stages in the same streets. We have been eating the same kind of food and watching the same 'entertainment' people can go shopping in Valletta anytime they want to and they will find the same shops. in short been there done that.

Paul Borg (on 13/1/10)

This just confirms that its madness to invest money in a roofless theatre that will not be used in summer because of the festa bangs (a concert at the palace courtyard this summer had to stop because of the 'murtali') and wont be used in winter because of the weather.

Already the ballet schools and orchestras have said that they cant use such a theatre because of the evening dew. Now, if people wont even go into Valletta in winter for FREE entertainment, for sure they wont risk good money on buying expensive theatre tickets and risk that it rains. Who on earth is going to pay to sit watching a performance freezing out of doors in winter?

The Government is going to waste the people's money on an extravagant white elephant.

N.Calleja (on 13/1/10)

All this shows how ill-time this event was. Some business people are so greedy and never happy!! Do they expect to make a fortune after such a long Christmas shopping period and the sales season!! How greedy and never happy they are!!

Vince DeBono (on 13/1/10)

These are the sort of activities that MTA should be pushing. It should not spend a penny on peak season activities but on these shoulder month events.

This event was not marketed. Let's start working on the VALLETTA MAGIKA January 2011 and plan weatherproof events and start marketing internationally.

Andrea Portelli (on 13/1/10)

An event like this should be done during the week between Christmas and New Year's day.

e busuttil (on 13/1/10)

What do you expect during the first weekend after the Christmas & New Year Holidays?!?!?!?  
The cold weather was the least cause of poor attendance.

Franco Farrugia (on 13/1/10)

One other thing: people come to Valletta NOT to buy jewelery and clothes, on such events, but to enjoy themselves in Valletta, to eat and to go round and enjoy the street activities.

Franco Farrugia (on 13/1/10)

If these activities become common, the 'magic' will go and less people will turn up for the event.  
The weather also plays a very important part - HENCE THE NEED TO RETHINK THE ROOFLESS THEATRE!!!!  
Lastly, the Publish Bus Service needs to be overhauled and come to reality!