

## Saudi group puts out fun music videos about new laws

Music group 'Most of Us' has earned recognition for songs about women getting permission to drive and the return of movie theaters to Saudi Arabia.

**Bruna Garcia\***

São Paulo – A positive attitude of embracing change in Saudi Arabia is the defining feature of *Most of Us*, a music group whose latest two releases are garnering worldwide popularity.

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The band rehearsing in a studio

*Saudi Women Driving* has over 400,000 views on *YouTube*. The song's a parody of *Born to Be Wild* (1968, written by Mars Bonfire and made famous by Canadian group Steppenwolf) whose lyrics celebrate the fact that Saudi Arabia has – finally – cleared women to drive automobiles. Saudi Arabia was the only country in the world with such a prohibition in place, and the new law will go into effect next June.

Over the phone from his home in Jeddah, frontman Hasan Hatrash told a bit of his story. He had the idea for the song as soon as he learned the news, and decided to jump at the occasion. He wrote the lyrics, recorded with the band and edited the video in two days' time, never guessing it'd be this successful.

"It was a great chance for us to celebrate the good news about our country with the entire world," he said. The group was criticized by the more conservative spectrum of Muslims, but Hatrash said the positive comments made it all worthwhile. "One girl wrote to us saying that as soon as she gets her driver's license, the first song she'll listen to in her car will be ours,' an emotional Hatrash said.

Another recent hit is *Cinema in Saudi*, released after the end of a 35-year ban on movie theaters. Featuring music and lyrics by Hatrash, the video features fun shorts of the band interacting with characters and superheroes

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from memorable films from the past few decades, like *Spiderman* and *Star Wars*. “The idea was to have our favorite movie characters sing along with us, celebrating the return of cinema to our country,” said Hatrash, who also produced the video.



The band plays lighthearted pop rock with social overtones

The four-piece group sings in English and Arabic. They play lighthearted, jazz and reggae-infused pop rock with social overtones and a positive outlook at all times. “Pop rock flies straight into people’s hearts. They listen and have fun,” said vocalist and guitarist Hasan Hatrash. The other band members are bassist Khalid Sharani, drummer Amro Hawari and keyboardist Amer Abbas.

## Background

Hatrash, 43, spent a few years in London, UK as a kid, from 1978 to 1984 – his father was a diplomat –, during which time he was influenced by music greats of the likes of Bob Marley, Jimi Hendrix, Pink Floyd and Abba. According to him, his repertoire is infused in one way or another by each and every musician that was part of the 1970s musical revolution.

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Hatrash: a self-taught lead singer and guitarist

Back in Saudi Arabia, growing up in a country where pop music was frowned upon made him a minority, and young people who played instruments or were interested in music weren’t easy to come by. “On the one hand, it was terrible and frustrating, because music wasn’t regarded as an art form by society, but on the other hand, oppression makes you more creative and driven to improve,” said Hatrash, who taught himself music and video.

He formed the band *Most Of Us* towards the end of the 1990s, but up until two years ago they’d only rehearse at home or play at friends’ houses or private locations, since public musical performances were prohibited. “Since king Salman ascended to the throne in 2016, you’re allowed to perform at a few predetermined public places, with government authorization,” he said.

Despite the success on the media and the views, he said the band hasn’t been invited to play shows, record albums or anything like that. “We’re really glad about the popularity, but financially we have been in a pinch since the 2016 economic crisis. Music brings us hope.”

Quoting Gandhi, Hatrash said he believes “we are the change we want to see in the world.” He’s optimistic about the future and believes the new generation of Saudis is more open to change, more loving and understanding. Regarding what’s to come for his band, he said “We will never stop.” The next move is to keep writing and playing their own songs on a bevy of subjects. “We’ll discuss whatever’s interesting, and although we will write songs about social issues, we’ll also write upbeat, joyous songs about life,” he said.

Find out more: [www.mostofus.rocks](http://www.mostofus.rocks)

Watch the videos for Saudi Women Driving and Cinema in Saudi:

**\*Translated by Gabriel Pomerancblum**

**<http://www.anba.com.br/>**

**[www.inovsi.com.br](http://www.inovsi.com.br)**