

Leenalchi members dream of festivals

By Jae-Ha Kim
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Founded by Jang Young-gyu (who scored the hit films "Train to Busan" and "The Wailing"), Leenalchi is a unique alternative rock group that conveys its lyrics through the traditional Korean storytelling genre known as pansori. The septet is signed to David Byrne's Luaka Bop Records and has had its music featured in Apple TV's "Pachinko."

Ahead of the recent release of their album, "Sugungga," and the U.S. leg of their tour, the group members spoke from their homes in Seoul and Paju.

This interview with Leenalchi has been edited for clarity and length.

Q: What do you remember about your first professional gig?

Park Soobum: Jan. 20, 2019, at Channel 1969 in (Seoul) as the Sugungga Project. Other than worrying that we might not have enough songs to fill the set, I remember having a lot of fun performing.

Ra Seo Jin: I still remember my first performance with Leenalchi in early May last year. We performed in Namwon and Tongyeong. Since I had to sing almost the entire Leenalchi repertoire, I was extremely nervous and felt a lot of pressure. We also didn't have much time to rehearse together. But thankfully we made it through without any major mistakes.

Q: Do you work on songs while traveling?

Ahn Yi Ho: I worked on and rehearsed the new songs in hotel rooms while we



The members of pansori group Leenalchi are visiting new cities on their latest tour. **ROBERT MACAISA**

were on the road. It was fun and not entirely ineffective, but it was also chaotic and difficult to concentrate, so I'd rather not do it that way again if I can help it.

Ejae: Even when I'm sleeping or walking, I'll turn on my recorder and record them. I think my future self can only understand about 10% of those recordings.

Q: Are you visiting any new cities on this tour that you've never been to before?

Ahn Yi Ho: Almost every city will be somewhere I've never been before. I'm looking forward to it.

Q: What is your bucket-list venue?

Ra Seo Jin: Coachella.

Ahn Yi Ho: It's not a venue, but I'd love to see a festival where we could take a train from Busan, travel through Kaema Plateau (in North Korea) and across Russia, Eastern Europe, and Western Europe, getting off in major cities along the way to perform.

Ejae: Dubai.

Q: Does the music you hear in a particular city or country inspire your own work?

Ahn Yi Ho: A few years ago, I came across a band called Brama. I think they were a French band, and I found them really interesting.

Ejae: Bali's traditional Gamelan music and Legong dance were particularly impressive. They felt like such a completely new language that I couldn't even begin to imitate one

percent of it.

Q: What is your favorite vacation destination?

Ahn Yi Ho: I like vast natural landscapes where I can feel safe. I've had the chance to perform in a few programs in the Swiss Alps and on the beaches of Costa Rica, and I really loved both experiences.

Ra Seo Jin: I like warm countries. I don't like cold weather. I love playing in the water. I also really love tropical fruits. I could probably live on tropical fruit without eating regular meals. It probably wouldn't be very healthy, though.

Q: What was a trip you took as a child that stands out?

Ejae: My first trip to Japan with my family when I was a child. The croquettes were delicious.

Park Soobum: I once visited Heaven Lake on Mount Baekdu. I was lucky enough to see it on a clear, sunny day. It was so vivid and majestic that it almost looked like computer graphics. It remains an incredible memory for me.

Q: Where would you like to go that you have never been to before?

Park Soobum: I'd like to go anywhere with vast natural landscapes, places like the African savanna, the glaciers of Antarctica, the Himalayas or the Amazon.

Ahn Yi Ho: An oasis in the middle of a desert.

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