Band’s friendly Euro gigs

An unlikely friendship with a French train driver led to a 10-city European tour for home-grown thrash metal band Xanadoo.

Travelling from one city to the next in a small rented van, the Singaporean trio were on the road for three weeks last month, playing gigs in France, Belgium and Italy.

The road to Europe began two years ago when Xanadoo's drummer Mahesha Subramaniam, 21, befriended 32-year-old Thierry Gaichal - a train driver and music enthusiast - on social networking site MySpace.

In an e-mail interview, Mr Gaichal, who is also a music promoter, said he was intrigued by the band’s music when he first heard it on the music sharing site.

"There’s a kind of exoticism and a different approach to their sound," he said.

In April last year, while on holiday in Paris, Subramaniam attended a Metallica concert with Mr Gaichal. They discussed how they could make a European tour happen for Xanadoo.

A year later, Subramaniam and his bandmates, guitarist Zak Su and bassist Shiva Rai, both 21, were on tour. All they had to do was buy air tickets to Europe while Mr Gaichal took care of transport, accommodation and tour promotion.

The youths, who have known one another since their secondary school days at Victoria School, said they were floored by the warm reception they received from audiences there. Rai said: "It was crazy, everybody was thanking us for playing for them."

Added Subramaniam: "It was amazing that we, a small band from Singa-

pore, were playing in Europe and people were actually enjoying our music."

The band’s gigs were mostly in nightspots. Half of them were played together with punk bands to audiences consisting mainly of punk music fans.

Mr Gaichal said the feedback he had received about Xanadoo had been highly positive. "I haven’t heard of anyone who was disappointed by the gigs. The band performed quality sets each night," he said.

Subramaniam added that he was moved by the hospitality of the band's hosts - mostly friends of Mr Gaichal’s - who put them up for free and took care of their meals throughout the tour.

The money they made from the gigs, while not enough to pay for their airfare, covered most of their other expenses, he said. Since returning from their trip on May 29, the band have been gearing up for their next step - university life, which starts in a few months.

Both Subramaniam and Rai have places at Singapore Management University, while Su has a place at Lewis & Clark College in Oregon. On the band's plans while they are apart, Su said: "We'll try our best, we'll figure something out."

Listen to Xanadoo’s music at www.myspace.com/xanadoosg