"...we are ugly but we have the music".

ROCK BOTTOM MAGAZINE



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Leonor Watling & Leo Sidran

with The Groovy French Band

The Art of Trusting the Flow

Rock Bottom Magazine

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Basemen Saints



Miguel Ríos



Leonor Watling & Leo Sidran



Montefurado



Montana Stomp



Editorial
por javistone

FIRST OF ALL

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

PLEASE... GO OUT AND LISTEN TO MORE THINGS

Jackson Browne used to sing, “please don’t judge me for my mistakes, because I haven’t forgotten them either”. It’s a phrase that could have made a good first tattoo, but I chose better and had “stone” tattooed instead. That’s the name I chose for myself, and that’s how I feel: a stone is hard, it’s resilient, but if you throw something at it with enough force, it can still break. Browne’s phrase would also have made a good tattoo, less cryptic and more painful. Not only because so many words would mean far more needle pricks than just one, but because constantly reminding myself of certain things may not be what one really needs. I don’t need to be reminded every day that I’m judged—sometimes even by people who were once close to me. I don’t need to be reminded of my mistakes; I’m well aware of them, present like sacks filled with cement on my shoulders. Present: a word that can also mean gift—funny how polysemy works, right? Yes, sacks full of reinforced concrete pushing me toward a ground I refuse to fall onto.

It’s true that Jackson Browne was never exactly a ray of sunshine, but according to some of my colleagues (hello, Jesús), neither am I. My daughters, however, think I’m completely ridiculous, the least serious person imaginable, and the image you project onto them isn’t such a bad thing, I admit. And yet, writing these lines while “Wake Up” by Mad Season is playing—a song that, after twenty-five years, I’ve realised is built on four basic chords, making it very easy to play and sing (doing it well is another matter entirely)—I like to think that one… that one is many things. One is what one eats, what one drinks, what one says, what one sees… and in my case, what one listens to.

And among my many mistakes, I don’t think having a closed mind when it comes to music is one of them. No, you won’t see me jumping on certain bandwagons (reggaeton is an absolute NO), and styles like flamenco—which I hold in sacred respect—ended up having the opposite effect on me after I tried too hard to make myself like them. They made me not like them at all. The last—what, twenty years?—have helped me open my ears, which doesn’t necessarily mean broadening one’s tastes, though in my case it did. Two things have helped a lot in that process. The first is Monkey Week, without a doubt. Being immersed live in music I would never have approached on record of my own accord helped enormously. It’s something I recommend at every edition of the festival—believe me, it’s an exercise in spiritual health.

Then there’s this sacred magazine, which has gradually pushed me to examine what’s being done in real time, to learn to value things and artists who have won me over through effort, friendliness, charisma, quality… traits that don’t always go hand in hand, it’s true. But when they do, they usually combine very well.

Lately I’ve been asked several times, “hey, since you know about music (what a dreadful expression…), what do you think of Rosalía’s album?” Well, I’ve listened to it, and I can say that… I have no opinion. The song with Björk sounds more than good; the rest feels like a uniform whole that’s easy to listen to, but it doesn’t move me. At the same time, I’ve listened to Miguel Ríos’ album, the antithesis of what Rosalía represents. After the superb Un largo tiempo, this Último Vals leaves me feeling much less. Looking back, this year I’ve listened to albums that I’ve enjoyed enormously: One Ride by the Italians The Peawees (it’s from 2024, but who cares), a brutal revitalisation of high energy à la Hellacopters; the bedroom pop of Simmcat; British stoner rock from Dunes; power pop from Pelazo; the infernal psychedelia of Hippie Death Cult; Spiders—there’s never enough high energy; Zalomon Grass, Lilly Hiatt, Edgar Allan Pop, Ghost… I could go on and fill several pages. And if we also talk about non-current records—albums and artists from earlier eras that I’ve been discovering—the thing becomes intense, almost schizophrenic. Rosalía? Please… go out and listen to more things.

P.S. These days, with such important people leaving us—like Jorge Ilegal or Robe Iniesta—I feel compelled to dedicate my most heartfelt tribute to Gary “Mani” Mounfield, bassist of one of the bands of my life, The Stone Roses. When he passed away, I felt that a small piece of that childhood and youth we carry inside us went with him. Eternal thanks, Mani. I’ll play “Fools Gold” in your memory.

ETERNAL THANKS, MANI



Basement Saints

To conquer the world

Tras el lanzamiento en formato single de una enérgica versión de "Wicked Game" de Chris Isaak, por fin podemos charlar con Basement Saints, la banda suiza de rock psicodélico y riffs poderosos a los que ya llevábamos un tiempo siguiendo. Para ello contactamos con Anton Delen, quien nos habló de cómo han llegado hasta aquí, qué podemos esperar de ellos en el futuro y su amor por el público español, entre otras cosas.

How did the band form? What are the origins of The Basement Saints?

I'm Anton — singer, guitarist, occasional bartender, and full-time noise addict. I met Tobias Arn back in 2012 at a Black Box Revelation gig. I wasn't there for the beer or the crowd — I was there to dissect their goddamn amp setup. Three amps, no bass, just pure sonic heresy. Tobias caught me eyeballing the gear like a mechanic sizing up a dragster and figured, yeah, this bastard's a musician. A handshake, a few too many beers, and the next thing I know we're trading numbers like two junkies swapping dealer contacts. Every weekend became a ritual of noise, the kind that rattles your bones and fries your neurons. We didn't have songs, just raw voltage and blind faith. We'd jam for an hour straight, sweat dripping off the walls, like exorcists trying to drive out the silence. Then came our first gig. No setlist, no plan. Just chaos. The crowd roared, the amps screamed, and at the end of it some trembling promoter handed us a 100-franc note. Tobias looks at me through the smoke and says, "Fifty-fifty, yeah?" Then he rips the bill in half and hands me a piece like it's some sacred relic. That was our covenant.

And then?

Everything after that moved at the speed of

whiskey and adrenaline. We got a drummer, an EP, more gigs, and the terrifying realization that we might be a band. Then, in 2018, after two albums and too many hangovers, the drummer drops the bomb — he's leaving to "focus on his career". Tobias heads off to play with Annie Taylor (who explode into rock 'n' roll glory), and I… I open a bar. Because if you can't play the music, you might as well pour it. That's where Molly showed up — this hurricane of rhythm with sticks for weapons. He played my bar one night and afterward said, "We should jam". I said, "Hell yes". We formed a new outfit called Twin Piston Cult. But every poor bastard who heard us said, "That just sounds like Basement Saints". Fine. The cult was dead. The Saints lived on. Somewhere in the chaos, we met Levent Basharan — a British guitar wizard, equal parts genius and lunatic. He burned through solos like a man with lightning in his veins. We recorded Stimulation with him, and at one gig, this guy Robby's slinging drinks behind the bar. After the show he leans over and says, "You ever need a Hammond, call me". He had that look — the kind of man who knows exactly what he's offering. We called. He came. He never left. Then the world caught fire. Corona hit, Brexit followed, and Levent got stranded across the Channel, left to form his own band in the ashes. We tried filling the hole he left, auditioned every guitar hero in the book, but nothing stuck. So, I said, "Fuck it. I'll learn lead myself". And here we are now — three maniacs: Hammond, drums, and guitar. No bass, no safety net, just raw sonic combustion. Basement Saints, reborn in the wreckage — louder, dirtier, and still chasing that impossible frequency that keeps the world spinning.

Where does the band's name come from? I think it's bloody cool.

Thank you, Basement Saints, yeah — it does sound cool, doesn't it? Rolls off the tongue like a riff that's too dirty for radio but too holy to kill. The name came from the chaos — like all good things. See, Tobi and I were skaters. We lived off scraped knees, busted decks, and Tony Hawk's Pro Skater marathons that warped our brains into trick-combo obsession. If you know the game, you know the sacred code: when your back's facing the direction you're flying, it slaps a BS in front of the trick. Backside kickflip. Backside lipslide. Backside everything. It was poetry in pixels — rebellion in motion. And BS — well, it also stood for Black Sabbath or bullshit, the two eternal pillars of rock 'n' roll theology. We were down there in the basement, sweating under cheap bulbs, summoning riffs like pagan priests, blaspheming against silence. That's when it hit us — we weren't just jamming. We were preaching. From the basement. So Basement Saints was born — half joke, half gospel, all noise. We've been down there ever since, preaching heresy with amplifiers instead of bibles. Nothing's changed. The saints are still in the basement, and the basement's still shaking.

It's been almost ten years since the release of your first album, "Get Ready". How has the band evolved since then?

Ten years since Get Ready — Jesus Christ, where did the time go? Feels like we blinked and woke up in a world where everything's faster, dumber, and somehow more expensive. Truth is, not much has changed — not where it counts. We still plug in, turn up, and let it all bleed out. Maybe we drink a little less and pretend to be more professional. Robby's a full-time building site manager now, so he's got that clipboard-and-hard-hat precision that somehow leaked into the band. We've become terrifyingly organized — spreadsheets instead of hangovers, at least on weekdays. But man, the landscape's different. Back in the Get Ready days, people actually bought your damn music. They'd trade cash for sound — a beautiful, simple ritual. Now it's all digital ether. Streams, algorithms, invisible audiences. You pour your soul into a record, and Spotify tosses you a handful of pocket lint and a pat on the head. Fuck Spotify. And yeah, half our time now goes to feeding the hungry god of social media — videos, posts, content, content, CONTENT — while that mythical perfect song keeps slipping through our fingers like smoke. But you know what? We still love it. Every bit of it. The sweat, the grind, the deafening nights when it all clicks and you remember why you started. Ten years later and we're still here — louder, tighter, a little more sober, but just as goddamn feral as ever.

> ***BS también significaba Black Sabbath o bullshit, los dos pilares eternos de la teología del rock 'n' roll. Estábamos allí abajo, en el sótano, sudando bajo bombillas baratas, invocando riffs como sacerdotes paganos, blasfemando contra el silencio. Ahí nos cayó la idea.***

Your songs are characterized by a very organic sound. Does the fact that there are only three of you help with that?

Yeah, absolutely — being just three of us is the secret sauce, the raw nerve of it all. It keeps everything honest, human, and a little bit dangerous. There's no hiding behind layers or session players — it's just us, the noise, and whatever demons crawl out when we hit record. We do almost everything ourselves. It starts in the basement — our bunker, our cathedral of chaos. We jam until something takes shape, a riff that feels like it could crack concrete. I hammer out the lyrics, Molly pounds the groove into submission, and Robby wraps it all in that Hammond glow that makes it sound like the devil's church choir. We built our own studio down there, wires hanging like vines in some kind of Frankenstein lab. Molly's the wizard who understands how the machines work — the kind of guy who can fix a cable with one hand and down a beer with the other. Robby went full mad scientist and taught himself to mix and master. I handle the artwork and social media circus, while Molly keeps the numbers from eating us alive. We figured instead of dropping fifteen grand on a fancy studio, we'd buy our own gear. Now, time's our only expense — we can record till our fingers bleed and the amps melt. But make no mistake — putting an album out still costs a small fortune. By the time you're holding the vinyl, you've burned through fifty grand easy. The only way to claw that back is by playing gigs, hustling merch, and praying the gods of rock 'n' roll don't send the tax man. And yeah — being in Switzerland has its perks. Sometimes the government throws a few coins our way for "cultural projects". I guess preaching rock 'n' roll heresy counts as culture now. Bless their bureaucratic hearts.

Your albums range from blues rock to psychedelia and sound closer to stoner rock. How would you define your sound?

Define our sound? I don't even fucking know, man. People have thrown every label in the book at us — blues rock, stoner rock, psychedelic garage voodoo, blues metal, country-fried fuzz, pop rock with a hangover — you name



it, someone's called us that. But the truth is, we don't define it. We chase it. Each song's its own creature, born from whatever mood, riff, or hallucination crawls out of the amps that day. Sometimes it's blues, sometimes it's acid-soaked desert rock, sometimes it's just pure, loud catharsis. We don't give a damn about fitting into a box. Boxes are for coffins, and we're not dead yet.

After almost a decade, four LPs, and touring all over Europe, what's next for Basement Saints?

What's next for Basement Saints? Same thing we do every goddamn night, Pinky — try to take over the world. We're just trying to do more of what we love and less of what we're supposed to do. The dream's simple: make a living out of the noise, trade the day jobs for the stage lights, and let the amps pay the rent. But it's a blood sport out there — too many bands, not enough ears, and every label exec telling you there's "no demand". So, as usual, we're doing it the Basement Saints way: by ourselves, for ourselves, and loud enough for the neighbours to complain. We're clawing at every door, scratching our fingers raw, trying to find people who get it — who believe in the sweat and the soul, not just the streams. But you know who gets it? Spain. Yeah, Spain loves us, and the feelings mutual. Last tour, crowds showed up, screamed, sweated, and gave a damn. That's the kind of fuel we live on. Lestrato Rock Conciertos — our Spanish partners in crime — they've been booking us down there, and it's been working like a charm. So, what's next? More touring, more noise, more madness. The crusade continues. We'll keep playing, keep pushing, keep preaching from the basement until the walls cave in or the world gives in. Either way — we win.

In Spain, bands are increasingly complaining that there are hardly any places to play, and the record industry is not, shall we say, benevolent in our country towards certain musical styles. How do you experience this in Switzerland? Is there a scene? What other bands from your country would you highlight?

Yeah, you're not alone in that, brother. The struggle's the same all over this godforsaken continent. Europe's turned into this glittering airport lounge of international acts — it's easier, cheaper, and trendier to fly in some English or American band that brings a herd of influencers and their phones than to back the local guys who bring their parents and a crate of beer. That's the ugly truth of it. But honestly, we can't complain too much. Switzerland's been good to us — better than we probably deserve. We put in the hours, spilled enough sweat to rust our gear, and somehow carved out a space for ourselves. The Swiss scene might not be massive, but it's real — full of lifers, freaks, and diehards who still believe in the holy power of a loud guitar and a good chorus. We get to share the stage — or at least the air — with some of the country's old warhorses like Gotthard and Krokus, who basically built the mountain



temples we're now howling in. Then there's the new blood, the ones carrying the torch with fire in their eyes: Andrea Bignasca, Phippu Bluedög Gerber, Jack Slamer, Pablo Infernal, Death by Chocolate — all killers in their own right. And then, of course, there are the ones breaking out beyond the Alps — Cari Cari, Hermanos Gutiérrez, Dirty Sound Magnet, Eluveiti, Zeal & Ardor — bands proving that Swiss rock can travel, sweat, and seduce just as hard as anyone out there. So yeah — there's a scene. You just must dig for it, bleed for it, and make enough noise so nobody can ignore it.

Finally, your latest release was a cover of Chris Isaak's famous "Wicked Game". Why did you choose that song?

Ah, "Wicked Game". Yeah, that one's been my secret weapon for years — the ultimate late-night serenade, the song you pull out when the lights are low and the whiskey's doing the talking. I've been wooing women with that tune since forever, never once thinking to drag it into the chaos of the band. Then summer rolled around — that dead zone where nobody gives a damn because they're too busy burning under the sun — and we needed something to keep the pulse alive. So, we said, hell with it, let's record Wicked Game. No grand plan, no deep artistic revelation — just a flick-of-the-wrist move, pure instinct, like lighting a match because you're bored. We figured it'd sink like the rest of our singles — just another body in the digital graveyard. But somehow, this one hit a nerve. Maybe it's that slow-burn melancholy, maybe its Isaak's ghost whispering through the amps, maybe people just needed something real again. Whatever it was, the damn thing caught fire. And we're not complaining — sometimes the songs you think are throwaways end up owning you.

When will we see you again in Spain?

Fuck yes, Spain — you beautiful, sunburned kingdom of chaos and rock 'n' roll. I don't know if I'm supposed to spill the beans yet but screw it — consider this your holy warning. From May 27th to 31st, 2026, the Basement Saints will be back, roaring through your towns like a caravan of fuzzed-out pilgrims. We'll be basking in carajillo and jamón ibérico, sweating out the hangovers under that merciless Spanish sun, and spewing distorted riffs for the sinners, the dreamers, and the diehards who still believe in live music as a religion. Spain's got that fire — that madness that still gets it. And we can't wait to plug back in and feed it. So yeah… sharpen your knives, chill the beer, and clear the stage. The Saints are coming.

Many thanks!

No, thank you, brother. Thanks for giving a damn, for letting me rant, rave, confess, and exorcise whatever demons were rattling around in my skull. This whole interview lit me up — hands sweating, brain buzzing, not wanting it to stop.

But every good trip needs a breather. And I think it's time for a cigarette.

Marcos Sánchez



Those Who Keep Going When No One Is Watching

In a musical world that seems to be governed by algorithms, streaming numbers and tours calculated down to the millimetre, there are still musicians who keep moving forward without spotlights, without sponsors, without trending topics. Artists who were never part of the mainstream (nor did they seek it) but who continue to compose, record, release music and step onto a stage as if financial reward were little more than an anecdote. People like **J. Teixi Band**, whose name may not appear on the brightest posters, but whose authenticity shines far more than many products designed to glow for two weeks on social media. Fourteen albums since 1999 (Atrapado) up to the latest in 2024 (Diez de Diez) stand as proof.



Javier Teixidor and his band, like so many other veterans of the trade, represent a value that is rarely celebrated: artistic perseverance without strings attached. For them, music is not a strategy; it is a way of life. By now, they could have quietly stepped aside, but they are still there—crafting songs with the same honesty as when they began in the late 1970s—while the industry pivots towards a model that penalises age, independence and anything that is not easily monetised.

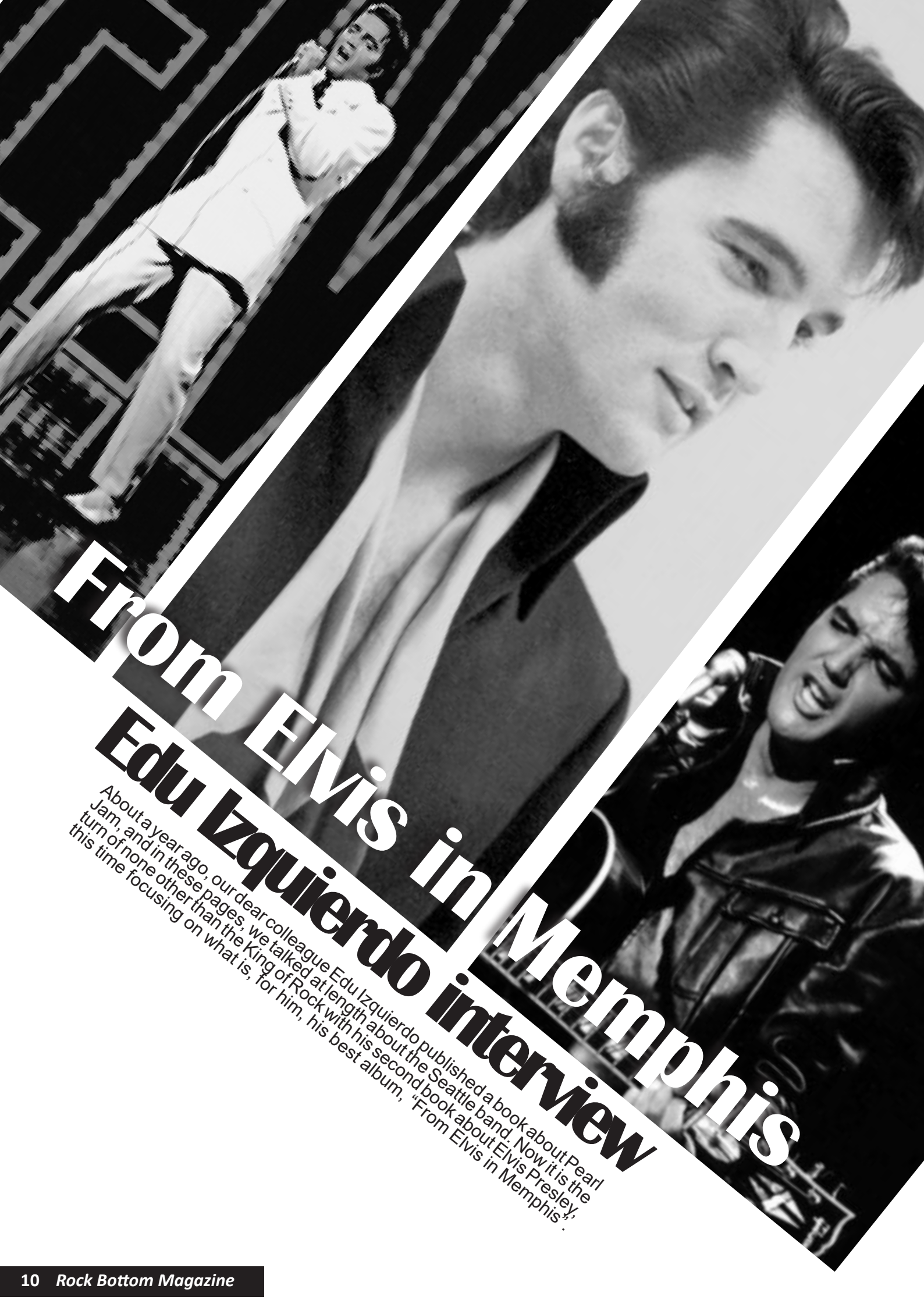
Because the reality is harsh, and times do not favour those without a marketing plan, without a management team, without an army of followers, without even social media platforms willing to turn every post into an advert. And yet, these musicians continue to release albums that perhaps only a few hundred or a few thousand people will hear, but which contain more truth than many hits carefully engineered to sound the same.

The contrast is inevitable. While some bands reunite solely to keep their egos afloat or to squeeze a little more out of the old golden goose, others keep creating for the simple act of creating. They are not chasing profitable nostalgia or tours repeated to exhaustion. What they do is something more fragile, more intimate, more valuable. The certainty that art does not need to justify itself.

The underground scene survives thanks to them. Thanks to those who never gave up, to those who do not need mass approval to feel like musicians, to those who keep going even as the world asks them, again and again, what for? And there is the answer. For nothing… and for everything. For themselves, for anyone who wants to listen, to keep a flame alive that does not go out, even if no one sees it.

In times when the industry rewards immediacy, artifice and repetition, these veterans of the margins remind us that there is another way of understanding music. The kind made for the love of art, out of necessity, out of instinct, expecting nothing in return except the chance to keep making it.

"Coge el tren" (Mermelada, 1979) is still played live, and that, in an ecosystem so saturated with noise and smoke, is almost an act of resistance.



From Elvis in Memphis

Edu Izquierdo interview

About a year ago, our dear colleague Edu Izquierdo published a book about Pearl Jam, and in these pages, we talked at length about the Seattle band. Now it is the turn of none other than the King of Rock with his second book about Elvis Presley, this time focusing on what is, for him, his best album, "From Elvis in Memphis".

Needless to say, the book is wonderful, it instantly draws you in, reactivates your "Elvismania", and is a pleasure to read, which we wholeheartedly recommend. It also goes without saying that a conversation between Edu and myself about Elvis would give rise to much more than even this extensive interview, which is, in reality, once again a conversation between fans of the greatest. And the thing is that Elvis and his life, despite having left so early, offer endless material: his relationship with the eccentric (not to say something less diplomatic) Colonel Parker, his passion for Black music, his insecurities, his dreadful films, his overwhelming personality… damn, fucking Elvis Presley, bigger than life.

Why a book about one specific Elvis's album? Is it the best? The most famous?
Well, the most famous, like the first one, I don't know; the best, I don't think so. In January this year, without it being planned, I wrote an article in "Ruta" ranking Elvis's studio albums from worst to best, and for me the best was "From Elvis in Memphis". I defended it by arguing that while the first one, "Elvis Presley" (1956), is an unbeatable collection of singles — and it was also second on my list — "From Elvis in Memphis" has a spirit of an album as a whole that, as I say, the first one does not have. At that time, he was in a very marked personal moment, because of the separation from Priscilla, because of the feeling of having wasted time making terrible movies in Hollywood… even though he made a lot of money, but he was going through a complicated moment. And with "From Elvis in Memphis" it is the first time that Presley considers recording an album as such, it is the first time in a long while that he takes the lead, decides on the choice of songs… And in the end that is what makes me think that, as an album, it is the best. I was coming from writing a book a few years ago called "El regreso", published by Lenoir Ediciones, which talks about the period just before this one, the "Comeback Special", and even though it was with another publisher, it made sense to keep pulling on the thread. The "Special" is Elvis's return to concerts in a big way, and "From Elvis in Memphis" is Elvis's big return on record.

A lot has been said about Elvis, but you open by quoting Chuck Berry, who was not exactly a model of humility, saying that "Elvis was the greatest that ever was, is or ever will be". Damn, for Chuck Berry to say that about a white guy, that's a lot. And the fact that, as has always been said, he didn't write songs doesn't take away an ounce of greatness from the figure of Elvis, does it?
Of course. Someone like Chuck Berry, as you said, with Chuck Berry's ego, with the way he thought and conceived his career, with the idea that he had that he was, and probably rightly so, the inventor of rock and roll… although we could find one hundred and fifty inventors of rock and roll…

We could talk at length theorizing about that (laughs).
Well, for a guy like Berry to say that about Elvis, I think it ultimately legitimizes him, especially in the eyes of the Black community, because it is an attack that is often made on Elvis, about how he usurped that music from Black musicians. The truth is that Elvis is an easily attackable figure for many reasons, there are many things in Elvis's career that were not done well, but usually the things he is attacked for, curiously, are untrue: things like that he took music away from Black people, that he took advantage of them, that what he really had were very good songwriters behind him, etc. Elvis had some very good songwriters at one point, but for a very large part of his career he had very bad songwriters behind his songs. For example, the songs written for the soundtracks were, generally, horrible. I have a friend here, Jorge Briol, singer of Los Brioles, who always says that in every Elvis soundtrack you can find at least one redeemable track, so it is already worth getting hold of an Elvis soundtrack. But it is true that everything Elvis is usually attacked for, like the paraphernalia of the 70s, which I am a big defender of the 70s Elvis period.

> *If you want to criticize Elvis, you go to any year between 62 and 68, pick any album and you can tear it apart easily. He is artistically dead, and he himself is aware of it. In the late 60s, around 67, he looks back and says, "What a mess I've made of my musical career.*

As we were saying, he has mainly been criticized for the fact that he never composed anything.
Yes, he has been treated unfairly with this attack that he wasn't a songwriter, that he wasn't a musician. I argue about this a lot: why don't we consider Elvis a musician, while other singers who sang wonderfully are considered musicians? No one argues, for example, that Freddie Mercury was not a musician. It is true that Freddie Mercury played the piano, but Elvis also played the piano. And surely both of them played it equally badly, because obviously neither Freddie Mercury was an expert pianist nor was Elvis. But no one argues that being a singer means you are not a musician, and that is only argued in Elvis's case. With Elvis it is always the same: that he had many arrangers, that he had a lot of people behind him… And that is true, absolutely true. But there are thousands of examples in the history of music, especially in the 60s and 70s, which were full of arrangers and full of advisors. But well, I think Elvis's innate talent is absolutely unquestionable. His ability as a singer seems unbeatable to me; he will always seem to me to be the greatest singer in history.

He was also very versatile.
He was able to sing rock and roll, obviously, but he also sang gospel, blues, soul… And when he sang blues, you could find two better blues singers, fine, probably. But surely Elvis would be among the ten best blues singers in history. He would be among the ten best country singers in history. The guy had it all, he sang everything. So for this person to be considered not a musician, and for that to be an argument… it seems to me almost, almost an infamy.

Well, you mentioned that in "Ruta" you made a list from worst to best Elvis's albums, which one was the worst?
The worst Elvis album… I think I put the soundtrack to "Harum Scarum", which is a dreadful film. But when I make lists of this kind, like the one I do every year for "Ruta" of the fifty best Americana albums, I always insist that between position forty-eight and forty-three, there isn't much difference. At that point you have four or five albums that in a positive list seem equally good to you; or four or five albums that, in the case of the Elvis list, seem equally bad to me. So, in this case I chose the "Harum Scarum" soundtrack, which I think there is no way to defend. That one, I think, doesn't even have, as Jorge Briol would say, one redeemable Elvis's track. But there it is taking up space on the shelf, I have it because I should have it, and because it really amuses me to see Elvis dressed as an Arab on the cover, which is what he plays in the film — it's all a bit comical, isn't it? What I would recommend is that people, with the exception of two or three soundtracks such as "King Creole" or "Jailhouse Rock", which are good, should never start with Elvis through a soundtrack, because I did (laughs). I started with one because of a petrol-station cassette, travelling with my grandparents to Seville, because my grandparents were from a village between Seville and Huelva, and the first thing I remember is buying the "Kissin' Cousins" soundtrack, which is a soundtrack where Elvis plays a soldier and the soundtrack is also horrendous. But well, I am fond of it because it was the first one, I bought it and we wore it out in my grandfather's Simca 1000, during the fifteen hours it took us to go from Barcelona to Seville. But anyway, I would always recommend not starting with Elvis through a soundtrack.

Let's set the scene. We are in the late 60s. Elvis makes the mistake of joining the army, which was, surprise, surprise, the Colonel's idea. Since then, his career has declined completely because of the films, prioritizing the commercial, making movies that started off well, he made some good ones at first, but then it all declines to lamentable levels. We find an Elvis who, as you were saying, was a bit artistically burnt out.

This is the moment that gives ammunition to anyone who wants to criticize Elvis. If you want to criticize Elvis, you go to any year between 62 and 68, pick any album and you can tear it apart easily. He is artistically dead, and he himself is aware of it. In the late 60s, around 67, he looks back and says, "What a mess I've made of my musical career. I haven't achieved what I wanted, which was to be an actor like James Dean or Marlon Brando, because I don't have that ability."

That was his goal, to be a James Dean.

Yes, but he neither had the ability nor was he ever given the scripts, which, even if he had been given decent scripts, he still wouldn't have been Marlon Brando or James Dean, that's clear, but maybe he could have done something a bit more decent, because I insist that there are some films, "King Creole", for example, which is before he went into military service, that are acceptable films. In other words, it seems that Elvis could have had a more or less decent acting career. What happens is that later the scripts he gets are infamous, because they are aimed at making four films a year. So at that point Elvis completely forgets about his musical career, hand in hand, of course, with Colonel Parker, who convinces him that in the end what matters is money, that the musical career isn't going to give him the same, that being in every cinema is going to give him a lot of money. And the truth is that Colonel Parker delivers on what he says; in that sense we cannot say that he deceived him.

And Elvis, artistically, is dead.

In fact, there aren't even high-profile songwriters who want to write songs for Elvis. RCA has its own songwriting team, which is two men and one woman, who always write the songs for the soundtracks. They know the type of song that won't bother anyone, that will go into everyone's home, that can practically be sung by children in nursery school — that is what they make him sing in the films. And it takes him time to rebel, until the moment of the "Comeback Special" in 68, which is when he starts to see things differently, helped by some key figures like Steve Binder, who is around, some of his friends from the Memphis Mafia, and Charlie Hodge. Because Elvis was a guy who, let's not forget, had been nicknamed the King of Rock, so his ego wasn't exactly small at a certain point. But he needed, despite being incredibly insecure, to feel that he was the one making the decisions. Colonel Parker did that very well: he played him very well so that Elvis believed he was deciding. But there came a moment when his friends and people like Steve Binder made him see that it wasn't true, that he had to take the bull by the horns and go back to being a musician; that he had to stop being a puppet, almost a clown, which is how Sinatra, for example, saw him, privately ridiculing him constantly throughout the 60s. So, when 68 arrives, Elvis decides to take the bull by the horns. His friends do their part by pushing the Colonel away through various tricks. And then he resurfaces; I think he resurfaces and resurfaces, for me, until the end of his career. I think Elvis maintains a dignified career until his death.

The turning point isn't just the "Comeback", but distancing himself from the Colonel, stopping being that puppet, letting himself be advised by other people. Because, besides, everyone saw what Elvis was capable of giving, so it was a continuation.

Yes, it's curious how that man suddenly regains confidence; it's what you say: he is the fucking king of rock and roll.

And at the same time, he was very insecure, incredible.

Because he was a guy who had always followed the guidelines of third parties, first his mother, then Sun Records, then the Colonel, not to mention… He sent him into the army first and then had him make dreadful films.

In the film you can see how the Colonel, for the Christmas special he had in mind, was already making tacky merchandising out of all that. So, stepping away from that, with the impact of the deaths of Martin Luther King, of Kennedy… he also wanted to create a song with more feeling, a social feeling like Sam Cooke had done with "A Change Is Gonna Come"… He regained confidence, saw that he could record something powerful again, like "If I Can Dream". And one of the most important people at that moment was Chips Moman.

Yes, Chips is essential. Because it's true that Elvis already comes from the "Comeback Special", and well… the "Comeback Special" appears in December, and "From Elvis in Memphis" in January, so there is practically no distance between one and the other. But in the "Comeback Special", until the very last moment, he even has doubts about going on stage. But the "Special" helps Elvis realize, first: he hasn't been forgotten, people still react in a super passionate way to anything he does. Second: that he feels comfortable as a musician. And third: that he is still the fucking boss.

Absolutely.



Elvis with Colonel Parker

The seated shows seem to me to be the best shows in the history of rock and roll. And they are seated, right? With a guy playing percussion, DJ Fontana, who is using a guitar case for percussion; with Charlie Hodge, his mate, who wasn't some great guitarist… well, with his mates he creates an atmosphere that is brutal. And he feels that again, as you say, he feels like the fucking boss. So when he comes out of that, his closest friends insist: "You can't take a step backwards, you need to stay where you've managed to recover what you've recovered." And that's where the figure of Chips Moman appears.

The Colonel, obviously, when he sees the success of the "Comeback Special", wants to put Elvis into a studio to record an album.

His plan is to put him back into an RCA studio, with RCA musicians and RCA songwriters. On the other hand, Charlie Hodge and some of his closest colleagues tell him: "Hey man, how about recording an album in your city? You have to go to your city, record in Memphis, because there's a guy there who owns one of the studios… American Sound Studios, with a great band that sounds incredible. It's a band that has the sound you've always been looking for and that you've always wanted: a sound halfway between Black music and white music, very soul-based, with lots of horn arrangements, lots of string arrangements…" He was a guy who was very clear about the type of sound he wanted.

So when they go to Elvis to introduce him to Chips Moman…

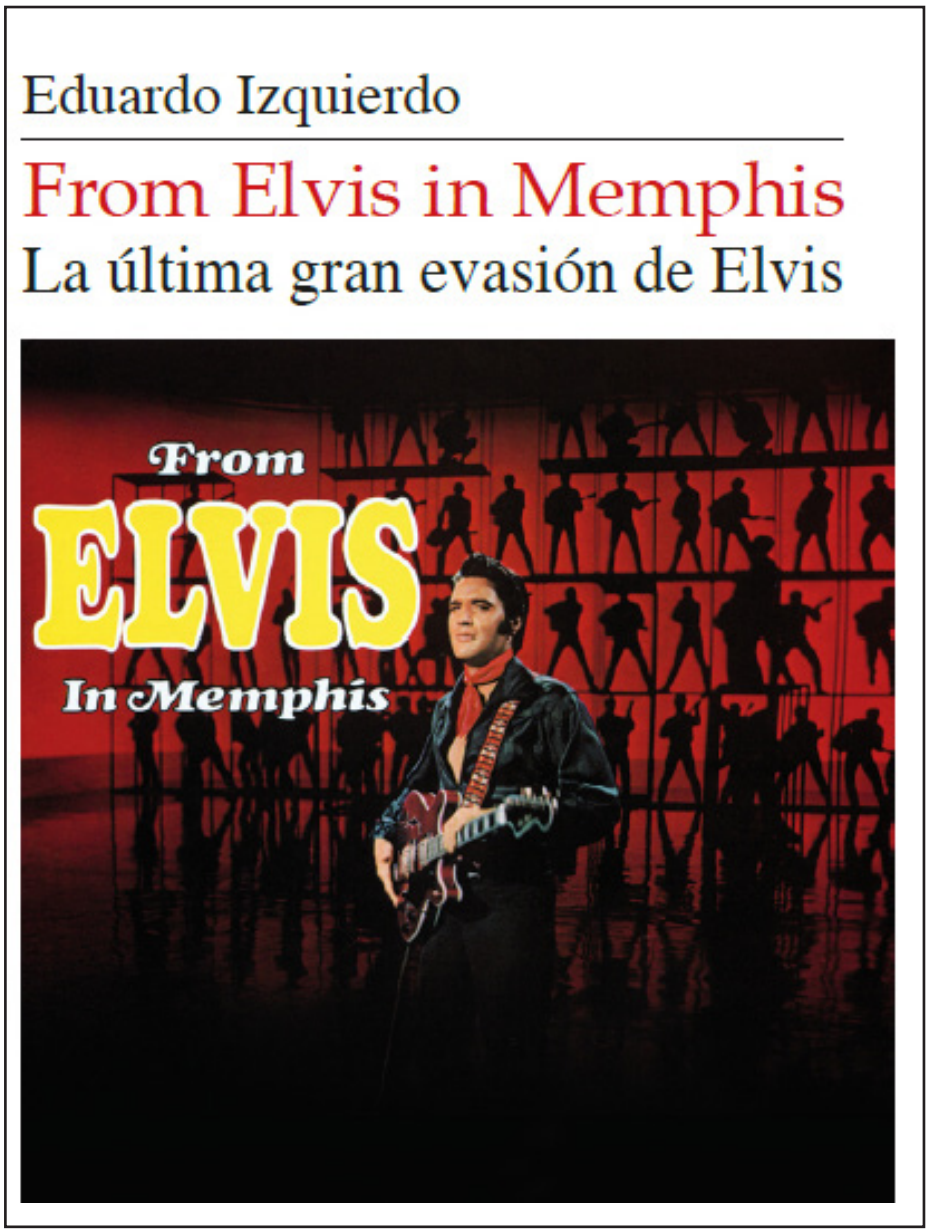
Elvis arrives with the entire Memphis Mafia, twenty-five guys show up, and Chips Moman is very clear that all of them are not going to be part of the recording. He even clashes with Felton Jarvis, who was the regular producer, the one who had been Elvis's regular producer for the previous ten years.

Because Felton Jarvis wanted to have his

share of the spotlight, right?
He had been there, he had done what the Colonel had asked of him, he had not made decisions about the quality of the songs, and he had tried to produce the albums as well as possible. And suddenly an external guy arrives and tells him, "I don't even want to see you near the studio" (laughs). In the end they do manage to reach some kind of half-agreement so that, on some tracks, the production is credited as shared and things like that, but ultimately what Chips does is isolate Elvis again, which is the same thing they do in the "Comeback Special" — something that is also very clearly shown in the film — isolating him both from the Colonel and from many other things around him, and making him focus on what he does best.

So that's when Elvis feels comfortable.
I really like having had the chance to listen to the "From Elvis in Memphis" recording sessions in a box set that was released, only for connoisseurs and for people who are a bit crazy, like me, because you can hear how Elvis, in the first sessions, is still somewhat fearful, even after coming from the "Comeback Special". What's more, the studio musicians, at first, receive him with doubts, they receive him thinking, "Damn… let's see what this guy can do." They actually would have preferred to be recording with Neil Diamond; in fact, they have to cancel a recording session with Diamond to record with Elvis. They don't trust what Elvis can do, and Elvis wins them over by singing, he wins them over on the first night, when he starts to shake off the nerves and does take after take of different songs, he ends up winning them over and they end up saying, "Damn, what we're going to do here is going to be huge." But at the beginning, even in the first session, those doubts remain. What Chips Moman also does very well is once again play the game of making Elvis feel comfortable, of making Elvis think that he is making many decisions, which I also think he does, but they make them together. He doesn't impose decisions on him. He is not a very interventionist producer; he likes to feel comfortable with the artists he records, and he is not willing to change his way of working even with the King of Rock. "I record in a certain way, and with you I'm going to record in the same way. We're going to work the same way, and something great is going to come out of this." That helps a lot in making the album end up being as great as it is.

Because he ended up recording thirty-six songs, I think, in a couple of weeks.
Ten days — just imagine how comfortable he must have felt. And in fact, it never happened again. He never recorded an album like that again, so far removed from the Colonel's influence. Even though many of those thirty-six songs didn't make it onto the album… But it's curious that something like that never happened again. I imagine that his life in Las Vegas turned him more into a live artist than a studio artist.



Because when he records "From Elvis in Memphis", the Colonel already has the Las Vegas contract signed. And since the Colonel had full power to sign contracts in his name, the Las Vegas deal was done. And of course, that implied almost exclusive dedication, and he would have little time left to record albums. At first, what they do is mix in those songs that didn't make "From Elvis in Memphis", they place them here and there among other things. But in reality he didn't even try again, because he didn't have time; whatever little time the shows left him, he recorded right there in Las Vegas, or at RCA studios, but he never again had the time he had with this album to listen to songs, to choose tracks himself, to sit at the piano and make the songs his own… the Colonel already had everything agreed, and the contracts kept getting bigger and bigger, with more and more performances…

He even did several shows in a single day, which is unthinkable now.
Up to three or four shows in the same day, and of course, there was no time. That's why, at most, they would pick bits from here and there to put albums together. The 70s releases have gems scattered throughout because there are recordings that come from "From Elvis in Memphis" or even earlier, some interesting things that he did record in the 70s… but they are works that have no coherence. You are listening to a song that seems wonderful to you and suddenly… bang! The album collapses with a song that is nowhere near the same level.

What he did release was a lot of live albums.
A lot — it was the easiest thing for the Colonel: put the microphone on and release the album. So, the albums multiplied, but practically with the same repertoire and usually with very little time between one release and the next. Now they don't stop releasing live albums and more live albums… and well, those of us who are obsessed buy them all, even though they're all the same. Some of them are the



Elvis with Chips Moman

morning show, the afternoon show… all the same. They'll keep squeezing us, but well (laughs).

Let's talk about the songs. It might be sacrilege, but there are some Elvis classics that I don't like. "Don't Cry Daddy" is a song I can't stand.
I don't like it either (laughs).

That one made it in and "Inherit the Wind" and "Kentucky Rain" were left out, which are two colossal songs, beyond something like "Suspicious Minds"… it's incredible that something like "Inherit the Wind", which isn't one of Elvis's best-known songs and is enormous, was left out, while "Don't Cry Daddy", which is a bit of a syrupy song for that Elvis… it makes me drop out a bit.
Well, on the original vinyl it wasn't included. It didn't come in until it was released on CD.
True, even so, it's one of Elvis's most famous songs. I've known it since I was very young and, as I say, loving Elvis all my life, I never could stand this one.
And then in the 90s or so they did that horrible thing of singing it with his daughter — terrible. It's a song that isn't up to the level, no. And look, it's a song by Mac Davis, who is the songwriter of "In the Ghetto", mind you, who as a songwriter is a guy with quite a résumé.

"In the Ghetto" isn't one of my favorites either.
But it's much more respectable than "Don't Cry Daddy", much more.

Now let's get to the cool stuff: how a song like "Suspicious Minds", one of the best songs in history, was left out of the original selection. You mention it: the Colonel had many virtues, let's say, in commercial terms, but musically he was useless.
He was a dolt.

A fairly despicable man in general, but for him to have the balls to say that he didn't see commercial potential in that song… it's incredible. And, mind you, the anecdote about him trying to break into the studios at night to steal the "Suspicious Minds" masters and burn them… that's huge (laughs).
And when Moman tells him the next day what he had done, he had the nerve to say that it must have been someone who looked like him, and of course, seeing the Colonel's appearance… it was impossible for it to have been anyone else! (laughs)

It's a spectacular anecdote (laughs).
I think that with "Suspicious Minds" the issue was simply that the Colonel couldn't stand not having any influence over something Elvis did. And I think Moman makes a mistake by giving in on this, this is completely personal opinion, but I think Moman gives in to the Colonel by not including "Suspicious" on the album. When they see the Colonel getting so intense that he even breaks into the studio to steal the master… they say, "let's give him something", which is basically what they do in the "Comeback Special": the Colonel wanted him to record Christmas carols and that's what they do, but they're rock and roll carols. But it's clear that leaving such a song off the album is a tremendous mistake. If you ask anyone for their five favorite Elvis songs, I guarantee they'll all put it among them.

I'll admit that when I started reading about the Colonel objecting, I suddenly thought he might be clever enough to think, "OK, we leave this good song aside and it can serve me in the future." But when you explain that the guy wanted to burn the masters… no way. This man has his sense of taste in his arse. Speaking of another song, "It Keeps Right On A-Hurtin'", which I really like and which reminds me a lot of Gram Parsons. It's curious because Gram Parsons later recorded those two albums, I think, with Elvis's band, or rather with the band he had in Las Vegas, with musicians he had in Las Vegas.
Gram was a superfan, as you know, of Elvis and everything he represented, to the point of having the suits he wore on "The Gilded Palace of Sin" by The Flying Burrito Brothers made under Elvis's influence. And his obsession led him to want to record with musicians who had recorded with Elvis. The thing is that in Las Vegas Elvis had a band that included many people, so it was relatively easy at that time to record with musicians who had recorded or had been on stage with Elvis at some point in Las Vegas, because Elvis spent eight years in Las Vegas and the bands were huge. There are names that repeat, although many musicians change, reinforcing the band, obviously playing many times, not in every run, but playing three times a day for weeks and weeks. In the end, what mattered was that Elvis was there; the musicians could change and nothing would happen. So it was relatively easy for Gram to fulfil one of his dreams, which was that: recording with Elvis's musicians.

I'll also tell you something: Gram Parsons was lucky enough to always have money, he had a trust fund, and that's how I'd also devote myself to living life and leaving a nice corpse at twenty-six (laughs). This comes up because of "It Keeps Right On A-Hurtin'" and because the album is very country soul, and despite that it has that darkness that Elvis knew how to give it. The album is very country, country soul, but damn, he gave it a tremendous darkness with that confidence, with that way of singing.
Yes, in fact, that's something I also like to highlight. Look, when in Elvis's early days it's said that at Sun Records what Sam Phillips was looking for was a white man who sang like Black people, it's true that at first, when Elvis sings rock and roll, that is achieved. But after Elvis falls into that darkness of the 60s, it's here that he achieves it again, and curiously he achieves it with country songs. There is only one song written by a Black songwriter; most of them are songs by Hank Snow, Dallas Frazier, Mac Davis, Eddie Arnold — songs by white musicians. And the original versions



Elvis losing his mind with Nixon



Mr. Eduardo Izquierdo

are very white country, very authentically white Texas country. Despite that, Elvis gives them that turn towards soul music, taking into account that Chips Moman's production does a lot to make that happen. When you walk into his studio, you know how you're going to end up sounding; Neil Diamond also sounds like that when he records with him. But Elvis's greatness is that while Neil Diamond has albums I like, although I find him syrupy, he doesn't have that darkness. Despite recording with the same band, the American Sound Studio band, not even Chips Moman manages to make Diamond sound as black as Elvis does singing country.

To finish… I wanted to ask you about the film. What did you think of it?

I liked it. I'm not very critical of biopics because I analyses them as Hollywood works that need to sell and allow themselves licences. No one can go to a biopic expecting to see a faithful story — documentaries are for that. A biopic is something else, it's a way of approaching a character. It's true that there are lines that shouldn't be crossed. For example, I think in the Springsteen one some lines are crossed that add nothing. The same in the Dylan one. I liked it, although there are things that don't add to the story. In the Elvis one there are many licenses, but I think they generally add a lot to the story and to the rhythm of the film. It's true that B. B. King and Elvis weren't close friends, it's true that Elvis probably didn't see Little Richard on Beale Street… but I do see the point of licenses like the jam session with Little Richard and Sister Rosetta, because it gives you context for his passion for Black music. In short, I really like the film, I'm pro-film, I think it should be understood that way. If you want a truthful story, go watch a documentary. But the film should be watchable both by an Elvis fan and by someone who doesn't know him. And I think it hooks you quite a lot.

And the actor is splendid. He sings very well and portrays Elvis very well.

The film seems exuberant to me. How many Elvis films have we seen with a physically similar Elvis but with no acting ability? Then came the Priscilla film…

I didn't want to watch it.

It's abominable, there's no way to defend it. He doesn't look like Elvis, but that's the least of it. There's no spark, there's no Elvis, it's an uninteresting character. It's logical that the film wants to focus on her, since in the end she's a woman married to Elvis Presley, but even so it's completely wasted. The story tries to be auteur cinema, but it doesn't get anywhere.

I think the only two biopics that work are "Walk the Line" and the Elvis one.

"Walk the Line" is my favorite biopic. And it also takes liberties, but it works. You enjoy it, it has rhythm, anyone can watch it, and the performances are stellar. Joaquin Phoenix gives an Oscar-worthy performance and Reese Witherspoon wins it.

I didn't want to finish without telling you that I really liked the book, I really like how you portray Elvis, an exultant, happy Elvis. It reminded me of "True Romance" when Christian Slater says that line: "I'm not gay, but the only man I'd fuck is Elvis". I think it's a memorable line.

I'd get that line tattooed (laughs).

With Val Kilmer playing Elvis!

Yes, and you never even see his face.

Not only the image of Elvis you give, but also the photos you use convey that image of Elvis enjoying music, handsome, radiating charisma… Except for the back cover of the album, which is enough to kill whoever chose the photo (laughs). Not him, but the person who chose it.

Once again, the Colonel's work, who didn't want to spend money on a photo shoot. They use one from the "Comeback Special". I would have loved that album to have its own cover, but well, it's so good on the inside…

One last thing: do you think the film does justice to Colonel Parker?

I think it does. There's a book by Eloy Pérez about him. Colonel Parker was a bastard; despite that, he did things for Elvis. Elvis wouldn't have become Elvis without him. Would he have been happier without him? Probably. Would he have died later? Maybe.

Johnny Cash didn't have a Colonel Parker and he survived by the skin of his teeth.

Colonel Parker didn't want Elvis to die; he wanted him to work. And I think the film does him justice because at some moments it seems like he cares about him. I think he must have cared; I don't think you can be such a bastard without feelings.

I think he cared because Elvis was his money-making machine.

Yes, and even so he was still a human being, although I think he had very few feelings. Tom Hanks does it very well; you see photos of Colonel Parker and he's pitiful, a despicable being, spending money on prostitutes and in Las Vegas; he had no family; he was miserable; suspected of murder in Holland; changed his name; couldn't leave the United States… He didn't have shades of grey, he had darkness. But then he sets out to put Elvis in every home and he succeeds. He makes him earn a million per film, he succeeds. He makes him the most important artist in the world, he succeeds. For me he is the greatest manager in history.

The inventor of merchandising before George Lucas.

The first guy to make mugs, badges, glasses, T-shirts, caps, teaspoons… And the incredible thing is that he had to squeeze him so much and still went bankrupt. He was a gambling addict. A gambling addict in Las Vegas… imagine. The day Elvis died he must have thought: "What do I do now?" He most likely invented the reissues or stole the idea from someone else, surely, although curiously he ends up on good terms with Elvis's family. There was a lawsuit for misappropriation and fraud, although they reached an agreement by which the family compensated him and allowed him to keep minor rights. Priscilla ends up speaking well of him. He dies alone and in poverty, but you will never find statements from Priscilla speaking badly of him.

Javistone

MALACARA BLUES BAND

Stories, scars... guitars



Few bands in this country have managed to turn the blues into a way of being in the world quite like Malacara Blues Band. From the nocturnal, electric Barcelona scene to the most out-of-the-way corners of the bar circuit that keeps live music alive, the project led by Xavi Malacara has built its own identity over more than two decades: raw, street-level, deeply emotional and absolutely faithful to the tradition of the genre while still looking forward. This is not a revival or a stylistic exercise; it is a sung biography, a collection of scars turned into songs, a craft learned the hard way on stage, gig after gig, week after week, in that school that only the road and the bars can offer.

Over the years, the band has gone through different line-ups and sonic phases, but always with a clear compass: absolute respect for the roots, a passion for live performance, and a very personal way of writing and singing the blues. Their previous releases already hinted at constant evolution, but it is with 1000$ Blues (Rocksound & Producciones Acaraperro), their sixth album, that Malacara Blues Band seems to have closed one circle and opened another. It is a more electric, more direct, more urgent record. An album that breathes the spirit of the stage and moves between sharp shuffles, high-temperature guitars and lyrics that look at the world without filters. Recorded “at home”, at Cabeza de Vaca Records (the studio they share as if it were an emotional and creative refuge), and once again produced by Mario Cobo, the album captures that moment when a band knows exactly who it is, what it wants to say and how it wants to sound. It is no coincidence that Malacara himself speaks of this record as a destination station: a place to hang your hat after a long, intense road full of stories to tell.

With the energy of someone who still believes that music can save nights, and maybe people too, Malacara Blues Band returns with a record that reaffirms their identity and broadens their reach. That is why, at Rock Bottom Magazine, we sat down at length with Xavi Malacara to unpack this new chapter and look back on a life journey that, thankfully, shows no signs of stopping.

“1000$ Blues” is your sixth album and the most electric one so far. What would you like the audience to understand about this record, and what sets it apart from the previous ones?

We’re at a destination station. Like the first track on the album says, “a place to hang my hat”. We’ve been on a long road, and 1000$ Blues sums up our career up to today. The road, concerts, highs and disappointments. The main difference from the earlier records has to do with the lyrics. They’re much more direct. I’ve moved away from prose and focused more on getting the message across.

The album moves through classic shuffles and electrifying guitars. How would you define the sound you were looking for, and how did this more electric direction come about?

There was a need to electrify part of the repertoire in order to express what we had inside. Unconsciously, we wanted to raise our

voice. It was a contained shout, and also a desire to have fun and entertain the audience. It's a more direct album, very much aimed at the live setting.

Once again, you worked with producer Mario Cobo. What does Mario bring to Malacara Blues Band, and how has his vision influenced this new record?
Mario's work on this recording has been extraordinary; he's given the songs a third dimension. We came in with strong foundations, and he worked like a goldsmith. His guitars and the post-production arrangements brought to the album exactly what I had in my head. We've done so many productions together that it wasn't even planned. That level of empathy is within reach of very few producers. And as a guitarist, he's endless; he's an encyclopedia of resources.

What was it like working at Cabeza de Vaca Records? How important is the studio to you in the creative process?
Cabeza de Vaca is the studio of Tai, our bassist. The luxury is that it's also our rehearsal space. So when we record, we're playing at home. The sessions are very relaxed. There's no tension at all, and everyone contributes. We know each other so well that we always know what works and what to expect from one another. Tai and Mario work perfectly together on the technical side, and Mario has that instinct for knowing how each song's production will end up. For me, recording at Cabeza de Vaca is a release. I always used to be scared of studios.

The album talks about an inner journey, about a "desired place" that we all carry inside. What personal experiences gave rise to the lyrics on "1000$ Blues"?
There is a look around a world that is changing at breakneck speed, and another that tells where I've been. I write about injustice. It hurts me to see the richest man in the world picking on the weakest. Seeing people sleeping in parks. And on the other hand, I talk about personal experiences. In Rowdy Soul, I explain how I met Watermelon Slim.

You've been running this project for more than two decades. Looking back, has the journey been worth it? What moments, good or bitter, have shaped your path?
I can't say whether it's been worth it. I know I've missed out on things, but being a musician isn't a choice. From a very young age, my favourite toy was a record player. At seven, I got on stage with a guitar, and I haven't stepped down since.

How do you see the blues and roots music scene in Spain? Is it still hard ground to break through?
We're not doing that badly. Roots music in Spain has its audience. Small, but loyal. There are festivals all over the country and venues with weekly programming. On the downside, there are the restrictions bars and restaurants face when it comes to hosting small-format gigs. In Havana, Dublin or Nashville, there's music in every bar. Live music creates a good atmosphere and builds an audience.

What's your view on blues sung in Spanish? Is singing in English an artistic or a lyrical decision?
Blues sung in Spanish is within reach of very few. I like Agustín from Las Balas Perdidas, with that Argentine flavour, and Txus Blues, who works magic with language. In my case, I sing in English because that's how I understand the blues. My vinyl shelves and my playlists are one hundred percent in English. I have to admit I'd love people to pay more attention to my lyrics, and that would be easier in our own language.

You spent time in the United States. What did you learn there that you still apply to your music and your understanding of the trade?
Americans are very clear about the sense of spectacle. Concerts are full of hooks to keep people engaged and stop the show from dragging. When I played there, I did three one-hour sets. That means you work twice as hard as here. That level of demand creates a living scene. I met a guy in Clarksdale who travelled from motel to motel with a Strat, playing a different city every night. That's my philosophy. Playing every day. In Spain, I have to settle for two gigs a week at most.

How important is attitude compared to technique in a genre like the blues?
I think they go hand in hand. The blues is a way of life. As Howlin' Wolf said, the blues is not being able to pay your rent. When you play blues, you have to make people feel something, and that's attitude.



> ***El Blues es una forma de vida. Como dijo Howlin' Wolf, el Blues es no poder pagar el alquiler de tu casa. Cuando tocas blues tienes que hacer sentir y esa es la actitud.***

Do you have any rituals, obsessions or habits that connect you to the blues tradition?
Not really. I don't know if it connects me to the tradition, but having a shot of bourbon before starting to warm up my voice, maybe.

Bars have played a fundamental role in your career. What has that school of weekly live playing in Barcelona taught you?
Playing is what makes you a musician. Like I said, I'd play every day in three-hour sessions. A lot of the time I play solo. The repertoire grows with you over time. I rotate up to a hundred songs, depending on the line-up (solo, duo, trio or quartet).

What is your process for writing lyrics and shaping a song?
To write, you need things to say. I used to carry a Moleskine and jot everything down. Now I do it on my phone. I always have material to work with. When it's time to write, I draw from that. On the other hand, I also keep guitar fragments recorded on my phone.

Which artists, albums or references have been essential to your development, and which still inspire you today?
There are many records. I started with Robert Johnson, of course, and then moved on to the Chess Records circle. Willie Dixon's songwriting, the voices of Otis Rush or Lonnie Johnson, the guitars of T-Bone Walker. I always come back to those guys who invented everything.

What music plays in the van when you're on tour? Any recent artist or album that's surprised you?
I like discovering new things and hardly ever suggest anything myself. It's Tai and Joker who always bring something new. Calypso, boogaloo, bebop. Mostly rarities. From more recent stuff, I'm really into the albums by Fantastic Negrito and GA-20, and also the current live shows by Ry Cooder, Eels, Bob Dylan, Watermelon Slim or Jack White.

When and where can we see Malacara Blues Band live presenting this new album?
You can see us every week somewhere in Barcelona, in some bar or another. And whenever we can, we play outside the city. Towns around Catalonia, Madrid, Andorra, Zaragoza. Places where people already know us and we keep coming back.

Dolphin Riot

THE DETROIT COBRAS
The songs they learned



As someone deeply passionate about covers and reinterpretations (not the same thing, mind you), I have always felt a special affection for the garage rock band The Detroit Cobras, formed in the Motor City in 1994 by vocalist Rachel Nagy (sadly passed away in January 2022) and guitarist Mary Ramírez. Their ability to reinvent songs by rhythm and blues, soul and 1960s pop artists—often obscure ones—set a standard and brought us enormous joy throughout their career, leaving behind unforgettable records such as Mink, Ratt or Rabbit (1998), Tied & True (2007) or the forceful Life, Love and Leaving (2016). From their entire discography, I have recovered ten songs that they made their own, as they so often did, with the skill of true music lovers.

"You Know What to Do" (Barrett Strong), 1959

Barrett Strong was the first artist to record a hit for the Motown factory—sorry, record label—with the legendary "Money (That's What I Want)" (Tamla, 1959), which, with its ironic tone, spoke about the power of money to corrupt people's ideals. His next step was the captivating "You Know What to Do", a mid-tempo track full of groove that tried to reach the same level of popularity and sales as his debut hit, logically without success. In truth, it deserved better luck, as it is a powerful melody supported by the unbeatable backing of The Funk Brothers, and driven by a discreet but galloping Farfisa-style organ riff that would later influence the sound of 1960s garage bands. In many ways, it represents wasted talent. In the mid-sixties, Strong put the microphone aside to focus on songwriting for the label, alongside his inseparable colleague, producer Norman Whitfield, giving soul fans priceless gems such as "I Heard It Through the Grapevine" and "Papa Was a Rolling Stone".



"Shout Bamalama" (Otis Redding), 1961

At this stage in our lives, it hardly seems necessary to explain who Otis Redding was; I do not think it is essential. Before making the leap to the major leagues of soul, roughly from 1962 onwards, he recorded a series of songs accompanied by The Pinetoppers, the band of guitarist Johnny Jenkins, which belong squarely to the archaeological roots of soul music. "Shout Bamalama" is one of them. Released in 1961 as the B-side of the single "Fat Gal" on the seminal Confederate label, it was reissued three years later, with Redding riding the crest of the wave, this time as the A-side due to its clear rhythmic

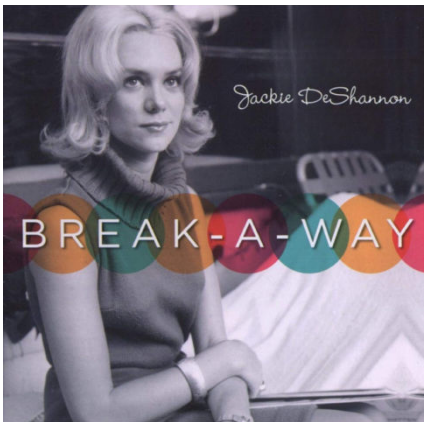
potential. The Detroit Cobras included it on their outstanding covers album Life, Love and Leaving (2001), pushing the original's intensity up a notch.

"Stupidity" (Solomon Burke), 1963



Solomon Burke, "The King of Rock 'n' Soul", one of the greatest soul men of all time. A flawless career that he closed, already in his twilight years, with albums as moving as Don't Give Up on Me (2002) or the epistolary Hold On Tight (2010). His place here, however, is due to one of his earliest and most legendary anthems, the joyful and cheeky "Stupidity". As a curiosity, The Beatles themselves used the main horn line for their "Good Morning, Good Morning" (1967). On the other hand, pub rock kings Dr. Feelgood not only titled their colossal 1976 live album Stupidity, but also included an electrifying version of the song. Written by Burke himself and recorded in August 1962, it was first released by The Van Dykes in September of that year, and by Burke in June 1963. All later adaptations, including that of The Detroit Cobras, stick closely to the original and add little overall, which is why, in my humble opinion, Solomon Burke's take has never been surpassed.

"Breakaway" (Jackie DeShannon), 1964



Those of us who wandered through Madrid's mod scene (not modern, mind you) in the early eighties had a hyper-catchy song constantly playing at parties and in bars: the refreshing "Breakaway" (1983) by Tracey Ullman. As someone who likes to track down the origins of melodies that win me over, I soon discovered that the original belonged to the sugary Jackie DeShannon, yes, the woman behind the eternal love anthem "What the World Needs Now Is Love" (1965). Written by DeShannon herself, it was first recorded as a demo with the brilliant Leon Russell on piano, a take that remained hidden for years until it surfaced on a compilation alongside the better-known version. Officially, the first released "Breakaway" appeared as the B-side of Irma Thomas's single "Wish Someone Would Care" (1964), reaching number 17 on the US charts. For nostalgic reasons, I stick with Ullman's version, although I must admit that the rock edge added by The Detroit Cobras is undeniable.

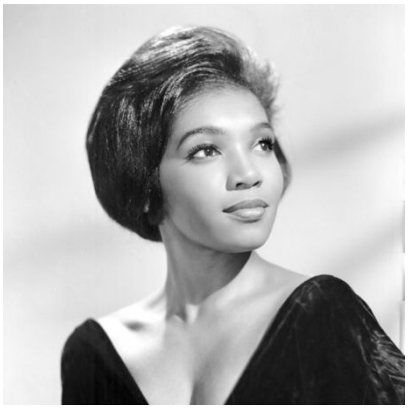
"I'll Keep Holding On" (The Marvelettes), 1965



Along with Martha and the Vandellas, The Marvelettes have always been my favourite girls within Berry Gordy's vast catalogue. Often seen as the pop side of Motown, they were perhaps for that reason overshadowed by The Supremes and The Vandellas. Essential anthems such as "Too Many Fish in the Sea", the adorable "Destination Anywhere" or "Beechwood 4-5789" are part of the musical heritage of the twentieth century. But The Detroit Cobras went a step further and chose to cover the fabulous "I'll Keep Holding On", a personal favourite, giving it a rougher sound, far removed from the quartet's original style. Written by Mickey Stevenson and Ivy Jo Hunter and sung by Wanda Young, one of the group's key vocalists alongside Gladys Horton, the song tells the story of a woman determined to win the love of a man who does not return her feelings, telling him she will convince him to love her "until my will to resist disappears", backed by her bandmates' improvised "oh yeah / sho nuff". Upon release, it was described as "a moving pop-blues song about a girl in love who insists she will stick with her man no matter what".

"Heartbeat" (Gloria Jones), 1965

Beyond her historic "Tainted Love" (1965), one of the defining songs of Northern Soul, and her work as a keyboardist and backing vocalist for T-Rex, as well as her relationship with Marc Bolan, Gloria Jones had a very interesting career, with songs like "Heartbeat" well worth rediscovering—just as Rachel Nagy and her band did on their first EP, released in March 2003. Released in



1965 as the B-side of "My Bad Boy's Comin' Home", "Heartbeat" followed in the wake of "Tainted Love" with a sonic whirlwind driven by a scorching organ riff that becomes the song's true star, without overlooking Jones's incredible voice and backing singers. Faced with such an overwhelming original, the Cobras simply replaced the organ with a sharp guitar; otherwise, I stick with the original. In the early seventies, the track was rediscovered by DJs in northern England and became a staple at clubs like the Catacombs and Wigan Casino.

"Weak Spot" (Ruby Johnson), 1966

Ruby Johnson is one of those dark objects of desire that soul aficionados love to savour, with a raw and powerful voice that planted seeds later taken up by subsequent singers, including the ill-fated Rachel Nagy. After early work as an R&B singer in local bands like Samuel Lathan and the Rhythm Makers and performing in nightclubs, she was signed in 1965 by Al Bell (songwriter, executive and producer) to the Memphis label Stax Records, co-run with Jim Stewart. Produced by Isaac Hayes and David Porter, and backed by Steve Cropper, Duck Dunn and Al Jackson, she recorded an impressive run of classics, including, of course, "Weak Spot". Released on the Volt subsidiary as the B-side of "I'll Run Your Hurt Away", another of her great songs, it takes us, in just two and a half minutes, inside an erupting Pacific volcano, with a voice that seems to break each time she howls "Weak spot", wrapped in soft yet powerful instrumentation. A true gem that went completely unnoticed, to the good fortune of those treasure hunters known as



The Detroit Cobras.

“Mean Man” (Betty Harris), 1967



The powerful Betty Harris has always been one of those singers I consider almost my own, nearly private, given how little known her work and career are. Known as the “Queen of Florida Soul” or “The Lost Queen of New Orleans”, she was born in Orlando, Florida, in 1941 into a family of preachers, which explains her deep religious roots and love of gospel. Her decision to devote her voice to soul meant that at seventeen she had to leave the family home. But this is not the place to analyse her life, rather her mega-hit “Mean Man”. Before releasing this bombshell, she had a tour planned with Otis Redding, which, for reasons you can imagine, sadly never happened. The volcanic swagger of The Meters and Harris’s hurricane-force vocals turned the song into a funk-driven soul whirlwind. The Cobras replaced the horn section with sharp guitars, transforming it into something like seventies hard rock in the style of Free or Humble Pie.

“Baby Help Me” (Percy Sledge), 1968



Percy Sledge did not live solely off the hugely famous “When a Man Loves a Woman” (1966). Contrary to what one might think, he had a flawless career that I never tire of recommending, starting with “Warm and Tender Love”, one of the songs of my life, which I even consider superior to “When a Man Loves a Woman”, and continuing with the thrilling and wonderful “Baby Help Me”. Sledge was already somewhat tired of sentimental ballads which, while profitable, undermined his interpretive credibility. With “Baby Help Me”, he reached one of the peaks of his career—pure country soul or southern soul, any label fits—delivered with a conviction and emotion that have yet to be surpassed. And yes, personal opinion, The Detroit Cobras managed to match it, though not surpass it.



“Nothing but a Heartache” (The Flirtations), 1968

Another obscure track that triumphed in northern British clubs during the Northern Soul explosion was revived by “the best bar band in the world” for their 2007 album Tied & True. Sometimes described as “heavy soul”, this overwhelming melody was performed by the female vocal trio The Flirtations, led by sisters Earnestine and Shirley Pearce, originally from South Carolina. Written by Wayne Bickerton and Tony Waddington, it is considered a paradigm of the movement, both musically and on the dance floor. Initially released in the USA with no impact at all, it became a massive hit in the UK after the group relocated there. Sales then grew across several European countries—no, our “beloved” country is not among them—and even reached Australia. The Cobras’ version added a bit more depth and weight to the original, without making any especially radical changes.

JL Crespo ‘ZepiSoul’



The Death of the Illegals



On 9 December 2025, Jorge Ilegal left us. I know very little about him, and I will let someone else write the other half that gives meaning to the title of these words. But I do dare to untie the knot that is choking me this morning. And because, if anyone was truly "illegal", it was Robe… who takes a long rest so that you can do whatever you want—just make sure no one sees you.

When I wake up, I feel cold. I look at the sky, all grey and uniform. Sadness floods my eyes; I need some blotting paper for these words, so soaked they are. I've had to hide from the tears of the angels. Today I can't work. Robe's death was not something I could have expected. I feel like an orphaned child inside myself, one who ran naked through the corridors of his home while singing: "Puta", "Golfa" and "Standby". For years I felt he was slipping away from me, but I can't quit him, and I still put him on from time to time. I listen, rediscover, leave him for years, and then fall back again. And… who am I to speak of you, if I remained dead while you lay here?

I was born in 1987, just like Extremoduro. I was lucky enough to live in that time when music was passed from tape to tape. Damn… what today's young people are missing. And I was just a kid, a revolutionary in his bedroom, singing swear words and cheeky lines, alongside a broken and angry voice, aggressive and full of melodies. It was beautiful and ugly at the same time. And that was Robe: delicacy in battle, a utopia on his own path.

To talk about Robe is to talk about persistence, merit, deserved recognition. About leadership, constant struggle, innovation, necessity and ingenuity. About knowing how to steal—or borrow. About changing and breaking rules to improve what is established according to communal needs. About clear and persistent ideas, without fixed ideals. Without flags or borders. A synonym for inspiration, transcendence, social therapy. It was pure rebellion, without disguises, "without fear of laws or nostalgia" ("And you will surely see the powerful resurgence of the warrior. And you will see him fall again and again. And rise once more with the pure banner of his race. Solitude of love, sad and pure. Solitude of love and madness"), like a shaman of healing words for different generations and social groups.

"Be a poet or be rubbish", what difference does it make. The culture and wisdom behind the "junkie". Protest against the mayor, the police, politicians and businessmen enriched through pollution and the working class. He taught me Cervantes and Neruda, horses and little bags. Something so bitter and sweet that, when you put it together, produces something that… goes and tells you: "here, season it". He managed to put Plasencia on the map, and I also took from his lyrics the name of someone called Zappa. Another day it was Marcos Ana's turn.

With his music, I started with whatever reached you in the mid-nineties, in my case thanks to my older brother. And at my cousin's house I remember that cover of Agila, with those colours and that raw power, fitting perfectly with the sound of the guitars and the lyrics inside. Who better than him to title a song "Iros todos a tomar por culo" and stay so calm about it? Enough already of all that conservatism and political correctness. And then came another album with Jesus Christ himself on the cover. Shocking for me as a child, attending a religious school. He gave a surname to the figure from whom we count year zero. Was that the king of the deck?

Years later I went back to the beginnings and discovered the true sound of transgressive rock, an abyss with Robe on his own. But that's logical—the evolution and maturation of a human being. Another turn was La ley innata, something sublime that what seemed like an attempt to approach it with Mayéutica never quite reached. Anyway, I'll leave music criticism to the experts. For me, I divide Extremoduro into three very different periods: beginning, development and end. And apart from that, there's Robe solo, which would be the fourth stage—more personal and altered—where I would place Para todos los públicos and La línea divisoria. As a kid, I didn't understand La pedrá until I discovered progressive rock and went back. Then yes! Although it's not exactly an Extremoduro record. But that's another story I recommend you let Juancaraes tell you. And like me, you'll now know, almost forty years later, that there was once a band called Dosis Letal.

I could go on, mentioning Poesía Básica by Manolo Chinato, Fito y los Fitipaldis… and how I've felt Robe inside me since childhood. But I don't want to bore you, so I'll end this piece here. I could write a whole book analysing everything that Robe encompasses, saving lives like a surgeon with strings and pen. I'll just add that to speak, you need to know what you're talking about, understand the why, and live until you die. Respect and value. Make noise without bothering others.

Robe created images with music and words, and today I imagine him buried, "with his dick hanging out so a mouse can eat it."

Kafo Oldman

Leonor Watling & Leo Sidran



“We already knew each other when we walked into the studio. And then it was Leonor who insisted on recording it quickly, so it would have that energy, that spark, that live sound—even though it wasn’t a live album, it still needed to keep that freshness. And above all, what she insisted on the most was that it shouldn’t be perfect”.

One of the surprises of the season, without a doubt. With no news of Marlango since 2018 (the pandemic took its toll on so many artists…), Leonor Watling seemed to have left her musical side behind. As she tells us in the interview, she entered a period in which, despite not being idle in other areas, music seemed to have abandoned her in some way, which made her feel sad, like when you miss a loved one who is no longer close. But magic appeared by chance when Leo Sidran offered to record his own compositions with her. What initially seemed like it would be a “Leonor sings Leo Sidran” project naturally turned into a duo album. Together with The Groovy French Band and people like Javi Peña, they managed to record a work that radiates warmth, naturalness and an immeasurable love for music. Leonor’s angelic voice fits perfectly with Sidran’s wonderful compositions and the musicians accompanying him. The result is Leo & Leo, an absolute delight—to be listened to in silence at times, to be danced to at others, and to always feel alive.

I have to say that this is one of the most wonderful interviews I have ever had the pleasure of doing. Leonor is exactly the person she seems to be: sweet, kind and tender; Leo is a truly endearing person and seems to enjoy every question that makes him reflect on what he has done (he repeats several times, "that's interesting, what you're saying"). At times, they even forget that I am there and begin talking to each other about the process behind the album, drifting into aspects they had not previously considered. He from New York, she from Madrid and me from the south, and yet for an hour what was meant to be a promotional interview felt more like a conversation between old comrades. That is the art of conversation.

I wish my father were here with us; he was a huge fan of yours, Leonor. He would have loved to know that I was talking with you. I'm thinking of him a lot right now, because he was a big fan of yours.
Leonor: Oh… how beautiful. Thank you.

First of all, congratulations on the album, because I absolutely loved it—it's a delight.
Leonor: Thank you very much.

I imagine you must be very proud of the result.
Leonor: The truth is, yes. Before starting the interview you were talking about doing things for the love of art, and we have also done this for the love of art, so we completely understand you. When you want to do something, you have to do it, and then you'll see how you pay for it later (laughs). But honestly, when it was finished and we listened to it, we were so proud that we said, "hey, this is really good."
Leo Sidran: The album was made very quickly and, as Leonor says, it was made without knowing exactly what its purpose was. We did it because we felt like doing it. Then, once it was finished, we listened to it and realised that we liked it more than we could have expected. So yes, we are very proud.

The first question is obvious: how did the project come about? I understand that you have known each other for easily twenty years, and that behind the scenes, while you were each touring separately, you would cross paths, but that it was in 2023 when, suddenly, the stars aligned.
Leonor: Well, just as you've told it, really. Leo knows Jorge Drexler; he has produced things for him—El otro lado del río, for example, the song with which Jorge won the Oscar. Whenever they come to Madrid on tour, we go to see them and a friendship has formed. It goes beyond him inviting me on stage, or Marlango inviting him to play with us. I think the key moment was when Leo had a concert in Vitoria and suggested that I join him, along with Javi Peña's jazz trio, to do a double concert. So he sang with us, and I sang with them—that was in 2023. Then what happened next is… well, I've listened to Leo's albums a lot, I really like the way he writes, I really enjoy watching him play and… it just happened. I was at Café Central listening to them last spring. And I was actually listening to The Art of Conversation, which is the first song on the album, and I thought, "I'd love to sing these songs." I'm not writing anything right now and, therefore, I'm not singing. So I'm sad, and I suggested it to him. I invited him for a coffee and said, "hey Leo, would you like to make an album of Leonor singing Leo? Like one of those songbooks the classics used to do, a singer interpreting a songwriter." That was the starting point, but then, talking and talking, we decided it was really more about Leo and Leo—that it wasn't Leonor Watling sings Leo Sidran, but rather doing something together… more shared, because Leo is also a performer and wanted to sing. So in the end we realised it was a project belonging to both of us.

You said, "I don't write, I don't make music and as a result I'm sad…" That's something only musicians, even amateur ones, really understand.
Leonor: That's true.

All of us who are musicians, or try to be, understand that. You have kids, work, a thousand things… and suddenly you can't play, or you have an arm injury and you can't play, and that affects your mood. It's a necessity.
Leonor: You play guitar, right?

I play guitar, bass, I have a dobro, a ukulele… I'm self-taught, I'm not exactly a technical prodigy. I've even recorded an album at home… all for the love of art again (laughs). I actually work as an accountant, but in the end, music moves mountains, doesn't it?
Leonor: Oh, absolutely.
Leo Sidran: You're doing well—how I wish I were an accountant (laughs).

Well, you live in New York, not in Jerez. I'd rather live in New York than in Jerez.
Leonor: But Jerez is beautiful. I loved it.

Do you know Jerez?
Leonor: I lived there for three months.

And why was that?
Leonor: Filming La templanza.

That's right, that's right. Funny enough, I haven't seen it. My wife says we should watch it, that it shows a beautiful, classic Jerez.
Leonor: It really does show Jerez beautifully. I loved it. I honestly thought it was gorgeous.

Going back to the beginning of the project, when you finally came together, what did you have in mind? What ideas came up? Once you got together, what came out of it? What common ground did you find to make the music? There's a bit of cabaret, a bit of swing… musically speaking, where did you meet, or from what point did you start?
Leo Sidran: We started with the style—that's where we found ourselves at the first crossroads, among a thousand styles and not knowing which one to choose.
Leonor: Yes, totally.
Leo Sidran: People find it hard to place me. I come from the world of jazz; there's always a bit of jazz in what I do, but it's not jazz-jazz either. In any case, the discussions were basically about which songs were going to make it onto the album, don't you think, Leonor?
Leonor: Yes, that was basically it.
Leo Sidran: Whether we sang this song or that one… We didn't talk much about whether it was going to be a distorted album, heavier, or softer, or anything like that.

I can't imagine you making a heavy album.
Leo Sidran: No, fortunately that possibility never came up (laughs), so we didn't have to



argue about it much. Then there was also the band. The band was already set, fully formed, and we've been playing together for many, many years. The French guys (The Groovy French Band) and I, and then Javi Peña as well… We already knew each other when we walked into the studio. And then it was Leonor who insisted on recording it quickly, so it would have that energy, that spark, that live sound—even though it wasn't a live album, it still needed to keep that freshness. And above all, what she insisted on the most was that it shouldn't be perfect, which I confess is hard for me, but I've managed to do it.

That happens to me too, but the other way around, because I learned on my own, without a metronome. So when they tell me I lose the rhythm, some people tell me I should follow the beat, but others tell me no, that it's part of the charm, that imperfection. It's interesting how the perspective changes. You, Leo, as you were saying, are closer to jazz, and there the rhythm has to be more precise, almost mathematical…
Leonor: In the end, rhythm is a very personal matter. In fact, in a song the decision is whether you record with a click track or not—that's the most important production decision, because you're going to follow the rhythm anyway, but there may be moments when you speed up, everyone's looking at each other, or it might slow down, very slightly, but enough that a click track doesn't work. In this case we recorded with a click track, mainly Leo and Román, the drummer, so that we could record horns later and do other things afterwards. But the idea was that it would feel like it was without a click track—so that if we were all slowing down towards the end of the song, that would be the tempo.
Leo Sidran: That's something we did actually discuss, and it's something we haven't touched on in interviews so far. Leonor, I find it very interesting that Javi brings this up, because we also had so little time for all the takes. You actually sang this album live. So if, in one take, a phrase was missing or something like that…
Leonor: …suddenly the first verse is great in one take and the chorus is great in another, you need a click track. Otherwise you can't use it.
Leo Sidran: And it's true that Leonor—both you and I have been doing this for many years, more than we'd like to admit (laughs)—so there are a lot of tricks and technical factors that we use, which we're quite familiar with, and that also helped the album be made quickly while keeping that freshness you were talking about. That experience also helped us spend more time talking to each other.

Leonor, you hadn't recorded anything since 2018.
Leonor: That long?

Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think the last Marlango album was in 2018…
Leonor: Wow…

…but you've been busy—you've been doing theatre, you hosted the Goya Awards… did you also do a Harry Potter audiobook?
Leonor: Yes, yes.

On top of having kids, which, as we all know, leaves us loads of free time (laughs).
Leonor: We were touring with Marlango. Wow, I hadn't realised it was 2018. Of course, a lot of time has passed. And I'll also say that the pandemic hit Marlango really hard.

Yes, it affected everyone in the sector who had projects ready to be released.
Leonor: It's true that we played a lot, because we started doing something very special, which was piano and voice, something we rarely did, and we called it Delicatessen. It was piano and voice and trumpet or trombone. At first it was piano, voice and cello, and then we changed to piano, voice and trumpet with Toni Molina. When the pandemic arrived, we even had a date booked at the Teatro Español and a tour planned to celebrate Marlango's nineteenth anniversary, and we had to go back to piano and voice. We played a lot, honestly—I think we were one of the bands that played the most in 2020, because it was very easy: it was basically just us and a tour manager. The problem was that, creatively, we got blocked—we dried up. Alejandro has some incredible piano albums, one from 2001 and another from 2023, but as Marlango it's true that we got a bit stuck. That's why I asked Leo, almost as a favour, like "help me, I'm out in open water flailing around, and I think this could really help me". I put it to him exactly like that.

I was very struck by something you said in an interview—I think it was for Fnac—where you said you had stopped writing, that life just didn't give you the time. That feeling of not having time to focus for a moment to write, to play… It really struck me because, well… you're Leonor Watling, and you have so much music behind you, so much art… and not everyone is capable of admitting that kind of thing. On the one hand, it felt hard, but on the other, it felt very honest, very sincere.
Leonor: Oh, thank you…

That said, you haven't stopped—you haven't been doing nothing.
Leonor: No, I haven't stopped, thank goodness, because otherwise it would have been terrible…

You even had time to live in Jerez for a few months (laughs).
Leonor: At first it was funny, because I'd say, well, I'm a bit blocked, and I had friends telling me, "that's great, you also need to lie fallow for a while for things to come out". And then suddenly I realised that it wasn't that I was lying fallow, it was that I think I was also entering a particular stage of my life. I think age has a big influence too. I think that for women, reaching fifty is like the rules of the game change, the way things work changes, right? And so I think I'm also waiting to understand what this game is about in order to be able to write.

> ***Yo no estoy escribiendo nada ahora y, por lo tanto, no estoy cantando. Por lo tanto, estoy triste y entonces se lo propuse, le invité a un café y le comenté: "oye Leo, ¿te apetece hacer un disco de Leonor canta a Leo?***

I can say that for men, reaching that age affects us too.
Leonor: I think so too. I think it's not talked about enough—for men as well.

The thing is, they talk less about their feelings. I turned fifty-one just two weeks ago, and for those of us who like art, who are a bit drawn to bohemia, it's a perspective where you have to look forward, but it's inevitable to look back as well. Even so, one way or another, you need to create. But we're in 2025, and it's also a strange time.
Leonor: It's a time when, if you look outward, it's terrible and doesn't really give you much space to write; and if you look inward, you're at an age full of doubt, of asking yourself, what am I like at fifty-one? I think what you said is spot on, because it's true that men don't talk about it as much, and now it's talked about all the time… women, menopause, change—and it's great that it's talked about. But it's also very good for men to be able to talk about it. Men go through a change too, a rediscovery and a reinvention. It's like being a teenager again, really. Now that I have teenage children, I think it's quite similar.
Leo Sidran: Totally.

Do you have children, Leo?
Leo Sidran: I have a fourteen-year-old daughter, and I see exactly what you're talking about. I find it very interesting—we're going through our own moment of transition as adults, and I'm more or less the same age as you.

We still feel young, but we're starting to stop being young.
Leo Sidran: Did you know that here there's a magazine and an organisation called AARP (American Association of Retired Persons), which is sort of an organisation for retirees and semi-retirees, and when you turn fifty, you get a letter?
Leonor: Nooooo! (Laughter).
Leo Sidran: Yes, they send it to you without you asking for it.
Leonor: No, no, no…
Leo Sidran: My wife turns fifty in fifteen days; I still have a year to go, and she's already received the letter.
Leonor: Noooo!
Leo Sidran: It's like, "welcome to the group of the elderly" (laughs).



Welcome to the fifth floor, as they say now. From there, straight to the IMSERSO.
Leonor: Just imagine suddenly getting a letter from the IMSERSO saying, “now you can sign up for our trips”. How brutal (laughter).

Leo, do you know what the IMSERSO is?
Leonor: It’s trips for retirees. They’re actually very good—there’s public support, so they’re cheaper. Basically, they’re trips for retired people, mainly to go to the beach in summer.

No, I know they’re great, but you imagine them for grandparents.
Leonor: Exactly, you don’t imagine them for yourself. If I got a letter from the IMSERSO, I’d die (laughs).
Leo Sidran: Well, it’s kind of that, isn’t it? But in the end it’s like you say, Leonor: from the outside you see that your perspective on things changes, and that’s fine. I like that idea of the rules of the game changing. It’s not that we feel exactly young; it’s that we don’t feel old.

Exactly. That’s the phrase—you don’t feel old.
Leo Sidran: Of course, hang out with someone who’s fifteen…
Leonor: Yes, then you realise you’re not (laughter).

Well, we’re drifting away from the conversation.
Leo Sidran: Yes (laughs).

The first song is called The Art of Conversation. Is the album an artistic musical dialogue between the two of you? You’re two people with different personalities, and it feels like a kind of art of musical dialogue. Is the feeling the album gives me—that it’s a conversation, a musical, emotional dialogue—real?
Leonor: Leo often says something I love, and I’m going to steal it: that all conversations are the construction of something new that didn’t exist before. What the three of us are having right now—already we have certain codes between us, so that if we meet again in a week we could make a joke that only the three of us would understand, and that’s really beautiful. It’s creating a world that didn’t exist before that conversation. And now, when everything is so fast, so headline-driven, so full of quick ideas, clickbait, everything so fast… conversation requires time. It requires you to say something, for me to stop and think and say, “wow, yes, that’s true—it’s not about feeling young, it’s about not feeling old.” That process is a real art.
Leo Sidran: Exactly.

I could interview you every week, because it’s a joy talking with you. It’s one of the most beautiful interviews I’ve had in a long time.
Leonor: That’s lovely…

Something that happened to me the other day, one of those coincidences of life—I was writing the questionnaire and a song came on Spotify, Ain’t No Mountain High Enough, by Marvin Gaye and Tammy Terrell. Did you have any duo, or any duo album, in mind when you came together?
Leo Sidran: It’s funny you mention that. Leonor talked a lot about songbooks as a reference, but for me the reference has actually been, from my point of view, João Gilberto’s album João Gilberto & Stan Getz. Even though what we do has nothing to do with that, I’m saying it because of Jobim’s presence—Tom Jobim, the great architect of bossa nova, together with João Gilberto. On that album, the composer is present, playing his songs on the piano in front of another singer, or there is another singer singing in front of the composer. That was my reference when we started, even though it ended up becoming a duo—which I love hearing Leonor describe, because now that I think about it, it happened without us really talking about it (Leonor bursts out laughing). I jumped straight into the album, without asking your permission or forgiveness. What she actually proposed to me was “Leonor sings Leo Sidran”, and I said, yes, yes, perfect. But once we found “Leo & Leo”, we changed our minds, which is funny because sometimes the name is what leads the way—it was as if the name came first.
Leonor: And I really believe in things when they come about in a genuine way. If Leo hadn’t felt like singing on the project, it would have been an album produced by Leo Sidran, with songs written by Leo Sidran and sung by me. But the fact that Leo felt like singing his songs with me—whenever he asked me, “do you mind if I sing here?”, I always said yes, because that’s how projects that really work are born: when they come about spontaneously, for real. If I’d asked him and he’d said, “no, I’m focused on producing”, that would have been fine—but he was producing it and he felt like singing. And I think that’s what you have to do: follow that impulse of “this is what I feel like doing”.
Leo Sidran: Exactly. In fact, now that I think about it, Leonor—even though we don’t know whether we’ll ever make a second album or anything—we’re just starting to play around with new songs, but the truth is we should stop thinking so much and let ourselves go again. Because now we have a bit of that chemistry and that impulse of “this is how we did it on the first album”. We need to keep that freshness, that way of doing things.

You’re talking about the songs, which were yours, Leo. But then you composed a couple of them together, right? And in fact, you spent just three days in a studio—how did you choose the songs? What was that three-day process like? Isn’t that a bit crazy?
Leonor: The recording took three days because they know the repertoire inside out. They changed some keys, but they’ve been playing these songs for a long time. That’s why we chose those musicians—because we

had very little time, we couldn't rehearse, and we had to record almost as if it were live. And then Leo insisted a lot that I had to choose the songs. Leo was incredibly generous; he opened up his catalogue to me and said, "choose whichever ones you want". But he also insisted that there should be two original songs on the album, which I'm very grateful for. One he wrote on his own, which is It's Not Too Late, and the other is Somehow They Understand. He composed the music and we wrote the lyrics together over WhatsApp.

There's also one by Javi Peña.

Leonor: Yes, there's a song by Javi Peña where I wrote the lyrics. We felt it also made sense for it to be on the album.

Because you recorded the album in three days, but then there was mastering, recording the brass sections, which gave it more depth and a more universal sound overall—something people who don't know anything about production aren't always aware of. But the treatment of the songs is spectacular. You mentioned earlier that you were surprised when you heard the final result.

Leo Sidran: The technical way of recording it was to track the band itself—bass, drums, guitar, keyboards and the lead vocal—in three days. Then we chose the takes, and after that we added percussion, brass, backing vocals, guest vocals, and tweaked a few things. I'm afraid I have a bit of a habit of doing a lot of that, and Leonor was the one saying, "no, no, take it out, take it out" (Leonor bursts out laughing).

Leonor: He's very perfectionist, Leo.

Leo Sidran: Adding brass and backing vocals is actually a very classic technique from the 1970s. Nowadays, what people would do is run everything through filters, edit it, go over it endlessly, change the sound a lot… Instead, this is a fairly organic album—we used very handcrafted techniques.

You can really hear that. Anyone with a bit of an ear can tell when an album has been recorded one way or another. It's not about having lots of resources—you can have all the resources in the world and still not sound good. Yours is an album that communicates, that conveys something. It's mostly sung in English, but it flows naturally with French, with Spanish… so for me it's a very organic record. I think you said that earlier, didn't you?

Leo Sidran: An album sung in English, but promoted in Spanish, with French musicians (laughs).

It's a very universal album. I'm not sure if "universal" is the best word, but I've been thinking about how to define it. It has a bit of an American feel, like music from the 1920s and that era. It feels as if it were made among smoke and night-time atmospheres. For example, you were talking earlier about those two songs—It's Never Too Late is pure cabaret sound, and Somehow They Understand feels like the soundtrack to a Raymond Chandler novel.

Leonor: How beautiful!

Sometimes it has a melancholic, Nick Drake-like air… What does it sound like to you?

Leo Sidran: What you said is perfect—I think it's spot on (laughs). That thing you mentioned about the 1920s, about cabaret—that's absolutely right. The song we wrote together is very cabaret. Look, when I talk about jazz, what I really mean is what jazz musicians call standards—songs everyone knows how to play, from Summertime to My Funny Valentine. Very classic songs, with their structure and their logic. And I think, composition-wise, that's a bit how I write: borrowing some techniques from that way of composing and trying to modernise it a little, although the truth is I only really get as far as the end of the twentieth century.

Leonor: We were born too late, Leo—we should have been born earlier.

One of my favourite songs is Wake Up SoSo. I played it for my daughter, who's sixteen and has very good taste, and I said, "look, this is a great track". And she says, "yes, it's very nice, but it's very calm", and I replied, "but it sounds like the perfect soundtrack for going out dancing on a Saturday night!" Doesn't it have a very New Orleans feel? You can really hear a powerful chemistry between the two of you there.

Leonor: This was the only one where Leo said to me, "are you sure you want to sing this one?" Because it's a song Leo wrote for his daughter, whose name is Sol. And I didn't want to change anything—I loved it so much, it seemed like such a wonderful song. It reminds me a lot of Calvin and Hobbes as well. It has some beautiful lines, and I loved it.

Leo Sidran: It's very innocent lyrically, very direct. It has some funny lines in English, but it's a song I wrote for my daughter. That's why I love hearing that you played it for your daughter, because it's a song that was born between my daughter and me, where I'm saying: "wake up, Sol, wake up, the day is starting—get out of bed, we've got things to do and places where people need to see us".

Leonor: I love that line, and I always picture Calvin and Hobbes—the cartoon of the boy who has a stuffed tiger he always imagines to be real.

"SoSo" comes from Sol.

Leo Sidran: Sol, that's what they call her, yes. You know, I lived for a while in Seville with a partner from Cádiz, and what a coincidence that an Andalusian is interviewing me and asking about this song—something in you that sounds like "chocho"… (laughs).

Right, to wrap up: in this issue we've done an article about songs that close albums,



which are often very particular songs. For example, I chose The Wanderer by U2 on Zooropa, where after such a strange, otherworldly album, Johnny Cash appears.

> ***Leonor talked a lot about songbooks as a reference, but for me the reference has actually been, from my point of view, João Gilberto's album João Gilberto & Stan Getz.***

Leonor: I love that album. And what a great idea for an article…

I like it too.
Leonor: That's one of my favourite U2 albums.

This brings me to how you end the album, which, as I've been saying, feels like a conversation from the start. You end this dialogue with a song like This Too Shall Pass, which is a beautiful song. Leonor sings like an angel, and I feel it's one of those songs that, after a journey—which is what I understand that conversation to be—is placed there to let you relax. It breaks the rhythm, that cadence, but at the same time it makes you want to come back. It's that feeling of having finished the journey, relaxing… but then thinking, actually, I want to start the journey again, I want to listen to the album again.
Leonor: I wrote it with Javi Peña, and it stepped a little outside the rhythm of the rest of the songs. And yes, everything has to pass—we'll find a way to get through it—but it will come back.

It's a song that fits very well as a closing track. Finding the right place for songs on an album is an art in itself. For example, the first and last tracks are fundamental and are usually quite particular.
Leo Sidran: And you know what's also very curious—if you ever have to sequence a vinyl record, that's another art altogether. With streaming or CD, you have a beginning and an end, a first song and a last song. But with vinyl, that happens twice, and even though each side is shorter, it actually makes it more complicated.



Leonor: You have to start twice and you have to end twice.

Are you going to release it on vinyl?
Leonor: It's already out on vinyl. That said, the song with Javi Peña, This Too Shall Pass, isn't on the vinyl, because we had to remove one due to length. And well, it's already on a Javi Peña album—it's not with The Groovy French Band, but it is recorded and it's on vinyl. So we felt it made sense that this was the one to be left out.
Leo Sidran: We should have released two vinyl records…
Leonor: Exactly… (laughs).

Listen, there's one thing—I don't know if you're familiar with the band Rufus T. Firefly.
Leonor: Yes, of course.

We interviewed Teresa, the keyboard player, who released an album last year under the name Manola. The album is called El Sótano. You really should listen to it, because it has a very similar feel to what you do—very elegant.
Leonor: I'll write it down, because I forget everything.

I've recommended an album to you—what would you recommend to me? What are you listening to right now?
Leo Sidran: Well, as I mentioned, I also do interviews, and quite often what's playing at home is the person I'm about to interview. The most recent one, which came out a week ago, was with an American singer-songwriter, Madison Cunningham, who has just released an album called Ace, which for me is an amazing record. She's also worked with Andrew Bird, who's another songwriter.
Leonor: I love her.
Leo Sidran: I'm also listening to an album called Deg by a guy called Vulfmon. He sings with a woman I love called Evangeline. There's a lot of instrumental stuff, but it's wonderful.
Leo Sidran: You're talking about Vulfmon! He's a friend of mine!
Leonor: What are you talking about! I'm such a fan!
Leo Sidran: Of course—Jack… he's a very close friend of mine…

(At this point I'm completely blown away, watching them chat with each other while I sit there as a spectator, and once again I think about how genuinely lovely they both are.)
Leonor: And I love Evangeline.
Leo Sidran: She's his girlfriend—or she was…
Leonor: We watched something—I think Luca found it—and we watched the live concert at Madison Square Garden. It was wonderful.
Leo Sidran: Yes, yes—but the thing is… I was there!
Leonor: What are you saying! It was amazing.



It blows my mind that they can fill places like that playing instrumental music.
Leo Sidran: Everything they do—the whole story—is crazy. They're independent, they don't even have a manager, and they filled Madison Square Garden entirely on their own.
Leonor: WOW…
Leo Sidran: And this guy, Vulfmon… well, all those people have been around my house a lot. I find it hilarious that you mention that album.

One last question. Leo, you're in New York, and Leonor, you're in Madrid—how have you approached playing live? Or was it just about recording the album and that's it?
Leonor: No, no, no… We absolutely plan to play this wonderfully organic project live. We really want to perform. It could have stayed as a project of "we invest this money and we'll see, we do four concerts and forget about it", but we really love playing live. In fact, the day we finished recording the album we played at Café Berlín, which is quite funny because normally it's done the other way around—you play when you're already presenting the album, not on the day you finish recording it.
Leo Sidran: And you can't sell it.

That's actually quite common—playing concerts before releasing the album.
Leonor: No, no—I mean the very day you finish recording.

Ah, the same day is less common.
Leo Sidran: The same day—we didn't have an album to offer. It was literally leaving the studio and playing it live for the first time.
Leonor: We've played Barcelona and Palma, and in March we'll be doing Vitoria, Valladolid, Burgos, Murcia… then we'll play again in the summer. Since Leo is coming from New York and The Groovy French Band is coming from Paris, what we're looking for are blocks of dates we can do together.
Leo Sidran: Like small tours.
Leonor: Yes, like mini tours.

Leonor, Leo, I've already told you several times—it's been an immense pleasure. You're both absolutely lovely.
Leonor: Likewise.
Leo Sidran: Thank you, Javi.

Javistone

“The London Howlin’ Wolf Sessions” (Chess Records, 1971)



September 1969. The Paul Butterfield Blues Band are playing at the Fillmore East in San Francisco, while backstage there are members of Electric Flag (Mike Bloomfield’s band) and Cream. It is there, between a few beers and maybe the odd marijuana cigarette, that Norman Dayron, a producer for Chess Records, makes Eric Clapton an indecent proposal: to record an album with the blues master and label star, Howlin’ Wolf. The guitarist from Surrey agrees without hesitating for a second.

The groundwork had already been laid by Dayron himself when he brought together Muddy Waters and Otis Spann with young white musicians such as Bloomfield and Butterfield, or the MGs’ Donald “Duck” Dunn, on the album Fathers & Sons. The formula was later repeated on the acclaimed Hooker ’n Heat by John Lee Hooker and Canned Heat (another essential record), where veteran bluesmen joined forces with young white musicians who were taking their legacy to another level.

But let’s return to the album at hand. The chosen location for the recording was London’s Olympic Studios, a regular home for the Rolling Stones and Eric Clapton himself, who was put in charge of putting the band together. He therefore called in the best possible rhythm section—musicians with chemistry between themselves and with the studio—the Stones’ Charlie Watts and Bill Wyman, joined by keyboard player Ian Stewart.

From the United States came the young harmonica player Jeffrey Carp, who had already been playing with Howlin’ Wolf, and his regular guitarist Hubert Sumlin, at Clapton’s express request. Clapton refused to go ahead without the presence of another of his idols, even though the label had no intention of paying for Sumlin’s travel and accommodation. With everything in place, we arrive at 2 May 1970, the day the first of five sessions began—ending with the Mississippi bluesman shaking and grabbing Eric Clapton by the lapels, and Clapton on the verge of throwing in the towel.

Chester Burnett (a.k.a. Howlin’ Wolf) was born on a farm in Mississippi in 1910. Until the age of 16, he worked on that farm for white landowners. At that age, he decided to run away from home, barefoot, with nothing but his guitar, and began playing for coins throughout the South, enduring racism and abuse. At 38, he formed his first band, and it wasn’t until well into his forties that he recorded his first records. However, thanks to his 6-foot-6 frame, his more than 130 kilos in weight and his rough, gruff character, he was never intimidated by anything.

Close to turning 60, with a fully established career and after playing countless bars, the grumpy Chester couldn’t understand why he had to cross the world to play with and for a bunch of long-haired white kids “who would never understand what it means to play the blues”.

That day, things started off badly. To begin with, despite it being spring, the cold and damp London weather made Howlin’ Wolf fall ill, souring his temper even more than usual. Then Mick Jagger and some Beatles showed up at the studio, fluttering around with their entourage of groupies and onlookers, further unsettling the atmosphere. And to top it all off, neither Charlie Watts nor Bill Wyman turned up for the session. Klaus Voormann and Ringo Starr himself (though he was not credited to avoid possible contractual issues) had to step in as an improvised engine room.

Eric Clapton, partly nervous about playing with his idols and partly overwhelmed by the responsibility of acting as master of ceremonies while seeing that nothing was flowing, became withdrawn and distant. This finally pushed the American bluesman over the edge, and he left, as mentioned, in a very bad mood. Only one take from that day was salvaged: “I Ain’t

Superstitious" (the song list, chosen by Dayron, consisted of pieces from Howlin' Wolf's regular repertoire, with no hits included, almost all written by the fantastic Willie Dixon, Chess's regular songwriter and producer). This track was later improved in Chicago with the addition of a horn section by the 43rd Street Snipers. The day ended with the guitarist from Surrey in full retreat mode, and Norman Dayron having to step in to prevent the entire project from collapsing right then and there. Thank heavens he did.

The following day, tensions did not ease much, mainly due to Howlin' Wolf's continued mistrust of the project. At least Wyman and Watts showed up. The two Stones gave the songs far more substance, and that day they completed "Rockin' Daddy", "Poor Boy" and "Wang Dang Doodle".

On the third day, the bluesman from Mississippi remained distant and gruff toward the other musicians, but they continued to make progress and managed to record the definitive versions of "Sittin' on Top of the World", "Do the Do" and an extraordinary "Highway 49". Alarms truly went off, however, when they found the howling wolf collapsed in the bathroom with his trousers down, victim of a minor heart attack (he already had heart problems), brought on by the stress of the sessions—once again putting the entire project on the brink of cancellation.

Whether it was because the scare left Howlin' Wolf more vulnerable, or because the stars finally aligned, the fact is that during the fourth and penultimate recording day, everything changed radically. It all began when Clapton, in a masterful move, approached the old bluesman with guitar in hand and politely asked him to show him how to play "The Red Rooster", the song they were due to record, and how to feel the blues "feeling". Chester looked at him and, reluctantly, took the guitar from his hands and began playing slide with unusual mastery, provoking admiration and amazement all around. That humble gesture from Eric Clapton—presenting himself as a student seeking advice from his teacher—and the sincere reaction of the other musicians were enough for the genius to finally open the tap (all of this is documented on tape and included in the 2003 reissue). The songs recorded that day—"Who's Been Talking?", "Worried About My Baby", "What a Woman" and, above all, "Built for Comfort", which also had horns added by the 43rd Street Snipers—take you straight to heaven and are probably among the finest versions ever recorded by the American bluesman.

The final day was devoted to a few touch-ups, bringing to a close the songs that would immortalise one of the most iconic albums in the history of the genre born in the Mississippi cotton fields, and kept alive decades later by a handful of young white musicians on the other side of the world.

Before release, Norman Dayron added some overdubs at Chess Studios and, to further swell the list of British artists involved, a few piano tracks were added by Steve Winwood, who was touring North America at the time. As might be expected in such a tangled story, the album was not a commercial success and went largely unnoticed on both sides of the Atlantic. Much later, however, elevated to classic status by the passage of time, justice was done with a deluxe reissue that added three new tracks—most notably the glorious version of "Killing Floor", along with "Goin' Down Slow" and "I Want to Have a Word with You"—and a second disc of alternate takes that place us right inside the recording studio.

In the end, this was Howlin' Wolf's penultimate work. He died of heart problems in 1976. It was the album that shattered his prejudices about that generation of musicians (foreign and white) who not only wanted to play the blues but revered it at its very roots, and the one that, much to his own surprise, made him happy again playing the music of his ancestors.

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The Ninja's corner

"Big Trouble in Little China", (1986)



Turning things over in my corrupted brain to decide what to write about in this first issue of 2026, I had several options, and in the end I went with this film by master filmmaker Carpenter, which, coincidentally, turns forty in this newly started year: Big Trouble in Little China, one of my go-to films from my now distant childhood.

With this movie, director John Carpenter was facing a major challenge, as several of his previous projects had failed to fully connect with mainstream audiences, and with this one he was possibly risking more than just his prestige. With a sizeable budget for the time—twenty-five million dollars—and pressure coming from 20th Century Fox, development began a couple of years earlier, finally materialising in 1986. Unfortunately for Carpenter, the film did not even make back half of what was invested, dealing a heavy blow to the director, to the point that his subsequent projects were produced far from the major studios. Fortunately, the home video market was there, where the film performed very well, quickly elevating it to cult status—a status it still enjoys today.

The main character, the priceless Jack Burton, was an old friend and familiar face to Carpenter: none other than the great Kurt Russell, who had already worked with the director on films like The Thing and Escape from New York. Although the studio had suggested names such as Clint Eastwood or Jack Nicholson, Carpenter was determined that the role of Jack Burton belonged to his friend Russell, and he eventually convinced him, despite Kurt's doubts. At the time, the actor had not yet landed a major box-office hit and feared missing the chance to break into Hollywood's top tier. Russell decided to go for it, turning down a very possible leading role in Highlander, and ended up playing one of the cockiest and most beloved characters of the 1980s. The long-haired actor would work with Carpenter again a few years later on Escape from L.A.

The Carpenter–Russell partnership was very enthusiastic about the film's potential once shooting wrapped, and even at an early press screening the reactions were very positive. However, after a strong opening, the film collapsed at the box office. The close release of movies like Alien or The Golden Child—the latter with a somewhat similar storyline—may have played a role. As for the rest of the cast, the protagonist's sidekick was played by California-born actor of Asian descent Dennis Dun, who took advantage of Jackie Chan's refusal says no to land the role and who would later work again with Carpenter on Prince of Darkness. The film featured many actors of Asian origin, such as the much-loved Victor Wong, regular collaborator Al Leong, and James Hong playing the villain of the piece, David Lo Pan. Naturally, we also have to highlight the female lead, the beautiful Kim Cattrall, who was coming off the success of that piece of silliness called Mannequin.

As usual, John Carpenter took charge of the soundtrack, proving that he was—and is—just as capable a composer as he is a director. It is one of the director's favourite hobbies, as on more than one occasion he has formed his own band to go on tour playing the themes from his films. As a bit of geek trivia, the movie features three supernatural henchmen of the villain, one of whom inspired the character Raiden in Mortal Kombat. There was also a video game adaptation for the computers of the time; in fact, the author of this makeshift article still keeps his original Spectrum copy with affection—I remember it being a pretty difficult game.

In short, a film that, for me, had everything when I saw it as a kid: a Carpenter movie, Kurt Russell playing a very charismatic and humorous role, stick fights choreographed by James Lew, humour, Kim Cattrall, and so on. I'm happy to champion it again four decades later.

The fine line between inspiration and copying



“The Old Man Down the Road” (John Fogerty, 1985) / “Run Through the Jungle” (Creedence Clearwater Revival, 1970)



This is a rather striking case in the dizzying world of musical copying, since the plaintiff is the same person as the defendant—in other words, an author who sued himself. Yes, just as you read it. The protagonist is John Fogerty, who was sued because his song “The Old Man Down the Road”, from his solo period (Centerfield, the third album of his career), showed more than obvious similarities with “Run Through the Jungle”, from his work with Creedence Clearwater Revival and their encyclopaedic 1970 album Cosmo’s Factory. In reality, however, it was the lawyers for the record company that had released CCR’s albums, Fantasy Records, which still owned the rights to everything the band had released when Fogerty put out the song in question. They sued him for pure and simple mimicry of the CCR track, logically written by Fogerty himself.

On 7 November 1988, the surreal trial took place—perhaps the strangest in history—in which John was accused of plagiarising himself. The musician appeared in court with his guitar to show those present how he had composed each melody and his method for building each song, proving that he was not copying himself, but simply developing his own style. The jury ruled that John Fogerty was innocent of plagiarising John Fogerty. An outright absurdity. Taking things to the extreme, one might ask whether the Ramones or AC/DC could sue themselves for how similar their songs sound across their careers. When inspiration runs out and the rubber band gets stretched…



“Sweet Child O’ Mine” (Guns N’ Roses, 1987) / “Unpublished Critics” (Australian Crawl, 1981)

Appetite for Destruction was a key album in the musical development of the late eighties. Among its essential run of anthems was the heavily played and endlessly heard “Sweet Child O’ Mine” (yes, I confess that at first its melody captivated me, but the later, hateful overexposure has almost made me hate it). An Australian magazine uncovered the more than obvious resemblance between the Guns’ song and the 1981 single “Unpublished Critics” by Australian Crawl. You do not need a master’s degree in musical composition to surrender to the evidence: the same chord progression, very similar openings to the verse solo, and above all the drawn-out monosyllable in the chorus. Another detail that adds fuel to the fire is that the single, from the album Sirocco, was released in the US on Geffen, the same label that released Guns N’ Roses’ debut in 1987. Duff McKagan, the band’s bassist, denied plagiarism, although he did acknowledge the strong resemblance between the two tracks. The Australian band never pursued legal action. I leave it to you to pass judgment.

“Come As You Are” (Nirvana, 1991) / “Eighties” (Killing Joke, 1985)

A song can be considered an imitation of another whenever there is melodic coincidence or similarity within a harmonic context. One can speak of plagiarism when it is not the vocal melody that is copied, but that of any instrument that stands out above the rest. That said, the following example



is irrefutable proof of this. Cobain blatantly plagiarised the riff from “Eighties”, performed by the post-punk band Killing Joke—albeit played at a faster tempo. In this particularly obvious case, there was no lawsuit because Kurt admitted the misappropriation to Jaz Coleman, the British band’s leader, on the one hand; and on the other, the legal action that was being prepared was shelved due to Kurt Cobain’s suicide. Faced with such a tragic event, the members of Killing Joke decided that life is too short to enter into legal disputes over a song. Who knows what might have happened if Nirvana’s lieutenant had not burned out so early.

“Why Don’t You Get a Job” (The Offspring, 1998) / “Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da” (The Beatles, 1969)



An equation is an equality between two algebraic expressions that establishes a condition for the variable or variables involved. An example: if we take the variable The Beatles and add the variable Simon & Garfunkel, the solution is a song by a Californian hardcore punk band founded in 1984 and still active today. Solving the equation completely, we get The Offspring.

In the late nineties, perhaps the band's peak period, they came up with an idea to smash the charts around half the world: take the most saccharine song—putting it politely—written almost entirely by Paul McCartney, and mix it with the endearing "Cecilia" (1970) by the New York duo. The result was "Why Don't You Get a Job": not as "repellent" as the original (that's my opinion) by the lads from Merseyside, certainly radio-friendly and addictive, but at heart a clear example of musical sabotage with ambitions of mass popularity.

"(Get Off Your) High Horse Lady" (Oasis, 2008) / "Hi-Heel Sneakers" (Tommy Tucker, 1963)



The work of my "dear" Noel Gallagher as a distinguished plagiarist is undeniable, and he can even boast about it. He does not quite reach the heights of my idol Jimmy Page—painful as it is for me to accuse him—but he is just two points away from the top spot. The bulk of his compositions are based on ideas from other artists, but nobody seems to mind, and the band continues to draw crowds with insulting ease (just look at the British frenzy surrounding their 2025 reunion). Even so, they do have a few lawsuits in their history, as I mentioned in a previous instalment of this plagiarism series.

Following the example of the notorious lawsuit over George Harrison's "My Sweet Lord", record company lawyers decided that the most sensible course of action was to reach an agreement with plaintiffs and include them as co-authors in the credits. This avoids bad publicity for the artist or band and, at the same time, prevents the total loss of publishing rights. But back to Oasis. Their discography offers plenty of examples, and I will probably return to some of them later, but today's case wins the award for brazen copying: a full-colour, 3D photocopy of Tommy Tucker's classic used to compose the successful "High Horse Lady", which shares the same melody and structure. According to my modest research, there was no controversy or critical debate about it, allowing Gallagher's ego to continue its upward climb. You are welcome to act as prosecutor or defence lawyer in this case, and then send me your verdict.

J. L. Crespo (ZepiSoul)



Miguel Ríos

Insurrection and sentimental education



Miguel Ríos—quite something. This is the second time we've been able to get in touch with the great myth of Spanish rock. This time, the reason is twofold. First, he has taken part in an initiative promoted by the Granada Teacher Training Centre (CEP) and the Miguel Ríos Foundation, bringing together more than 1,600 students and the Granada City Orchestra (OCG), who, together with Miguel and the band El Hombre Garabato, have recorded a choral and symphonic version of two emblematic songs: Hymn to Joy and Santa Lucía. Second, Ríos is presenting his new album, El último vals (The Last Waltz), which, while not reaching the level of his formidable previous album from 2021, Un largo tiempo (A Long Time), is still a real treat for all Miguel fans and for rock fans in general. We exchanged words about all sorts of things, while waiting for the stars to align one day so we can sit face to face with him and have a proper conversation.

How did the initiative come about to bring together 1,600 students, the Granada City Orchestra (OCG) and El Hombre Garabato to record a choral and symphonic version of Santa Lucía and Hymn to Joy?
Yes, it was very moving. Seeing the kids sing with such accuracy and energy took me back to my school choir, where I discovered the emotion produced by the sound of young voices.

I have to tell you that both performances are beautiful. The years go by and Hymn still moves me every time I hear it. I was moved watching the video with the kids and the orchestra; I was moved (and how!) when you played it on your last tour in El Puerto de Santa María. And it's quite possibly the first song I ever put on a turntable more than forty years ago, because it was the first record I found at home—the single of that song, which of course I still keep like gold dust. That song is very important in your career. How much do you think Miguel Ríos owes to Hymn to Joy? Do you think your career would have been different without it?
Without a doubt my career would have been far more limited if I hadn't sung that song. First of all, because it financed my apprenticeship in the craft of rock and roll; it took me around half the world and formed part of my ideological and intellectual development. And it also made me realise that I didn't want to be the richest man in the cemetery.

You've also chosen to join forces with El Hombre Garabato, who are a great band and who often act as the backing band for the (great) José Antonio García. Why this choice? It's not easy for a rock band to step into orchestral territory. I remember attempts by people like Metallica, Gustavo Cerati or Lou Reed, and well… you have to have a lot of confidence to do it. How did you convince them?
The truth is that it's an idea that Nico developed with my Foundation, with which he collaborates on educational projects. He's a great guy and a very restless musician. My own symphonic experience comes from having worked with the OCG when it was conducted by Josep Pons. We performed together at the Palace of Charles V as part of the Granada Music and Dance Festival in 2017. It was the first time that, at the Festival, the temple of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music hosted rock and roll—the music that changed the twentieth century. It was a very powerful experience that was captured on Symphonic Ríos.

You also have a new album, which sounds very different from the previous one, Un largo tiempo. What differences would you point out between the two? That one was more intimate, more bluesy (one of the best albums of recent years, I have to say), and this one is, let's say, more conventional—full band, more rock and roll, with a Tex-Mex feel. How did you approach it?
I think it's one of my best works, and I think a lot of people think the same. The songs we play live are very well received by my followers. Throughout the whole process, from when I started writing songs with José Nortes, we realised we could repeat the tandem from the



previous album. Initially, the idea was to do something along the lines of Un largo tiempo, but when pianist Luis Prado joined the project, the songs took on a different feel. José records and produces some of Luis's magnificent albums and knows his skills as a multi-instrumentalist very well. And it became a solid rock album.

El último vals has a twilight feel to it. Songs like En la rampa de salida, Cuenta atrás, Viejos temas… What were you feeling when you wrote these songs?
There are songs that try to explain the state of mind of a man moving through later life, who wants to tell his story from memory, and that's how El último vals came out. En la rampa de salida brings together the celebration of the Day of the Dead in Mexico and life with other cheeky octogenarians. Cuenta atrás is the chronicle of a toxic relationship, and Viejos temas/Bellas canciones is a tribute to what music gave me in my youth. As always, I've written things that explain my life, my time and my concerns.

I really liked Cuenta atrás. Its chorus and its message remind me of Por si necesitas—the message feels similar, doesn't it? Songs like Por si necesitas (a song I often return to when I need to feel less alone) are what this world needs: songs that make you feel you're not alone, love as a universal concept, loneliness…
As I've said, Cuenta atrás is the chronicle of a toxic relationship, like the sad stories of heartbreak and violence. Por si necesitas is much more luminous and hopeful. It's as if that one were the beginning of a relationship, while Cuenta atrás could be the end of the love cycle.

The last time we spoke you told me, "if you write songs, that calls for the road". Will there be a tour? It's a luxury to see you on stage—what do you have planned?
We've been touring since 3 October with Los Black Betty Boys, this time made up of José Nortes, Luis Prado, Jorge Ruiz and Manu Terroso. The concert includes some new songs and the essentials from my repertoire.

In Viejos temas… the concept of insurrection comes back. Rock and roll has lost much of that capacity for insurrection, but it's still a powerful force—much more than they want us to believe. Rock and roll in particular, but music (the good kind, the kind that comes from the heart), art in general… it still keeps humanity moving.
Insurrection and emotional education. Rock loses hegemony depending on where it's made—if you're in English-speaking lands, its impact and influence can't be questioned, even if it may have lost some of its former glow. Around here, making rock and roll, aside from the shine of the eighties, has meant grinding it out. The good thing is that plenty of people are still up for demolition.

La buena orilla is a song against racism, about how hard it is to have to leave your country, face the sea and arrive somewhere where people consider you illegal… The word "freedom", incredibly enough, has been misused lately by the right—I'll just point to Trump or Ayuso…
We've had to see things again that we never thought would return: fascism, unmasked savage capitalism. Autocracies are replacing democracies while citizens, overwhelmed and stunned by trying to solve their own existential traps, buy into their lies. That's what the international far right lives on, led by Sheriff Trump or Isabel Díaz Ayuso.

Another song I really liked is Más dulce será la caída, very classic. Who sings with you on it?
The guest artist and co-author of the lyrics is Luis Prado. It's a somewhat delirious story. The song tells the story of a hard fall I took while performing with José Nortes on the stage of the old Wizink, as guests at an Ojete Calor show during Christmas 2024. Apparently, we went viral…

Finally, how can I get an in-person interview with you, Miguel? I've been pulling strings for a long time because it's a dream of mine to talk with you about your entire career…
I suppose we could meet when I'm not in promotion mode. Thank you very much, Javi, for your interest.
I hope so.

Javistone

Last Exit: The Art of Ending an Album



It has always been said that sequencing the songs on an album is an art. Years ago, when records were released with vinyl in mind, it mattered even more, since there were side A and side B openings and closings. As a result, first and last tracks usually had a personality of their own, often different from the rest. Before streaming platforms—where the damn habit of cramming in an endless number of songs has taken hold—albums were concise works, usually running thirty, forty… fifty minutes at most (ideally, enough to fit on one side of a 90-minute cassette, right?). Albums were generally conceived as a whole. In that sense, opening tracks were like the start of a journey, easing you in and setting a perspective that would soon take shape, as if finding your pace gradually were essential at the beginning of the trip. But… what about the songs that close an album?

Once again, in the platform-driven structure this idea has become blurred, but how many traditionally structured albums end with a track that feels like a rare bird within the whole? A song to end the journey, a song to shed weight—perhaps angry, perhaps easing off the accelerator. These are usually songs that could never have fit anywhere else due to excessive length, a sharp change in tempo, or a stylistic shift compared to the preceding tracks. In this article, we will try to bring together some of those compositions with a distinct personality, written specifically to close great albums. Because, as I say, structuring an album is an art, and choosing how to end it is the ultimate moment where you really have to get it right.

"Time", Blind Melon (Blind Melon, 1992)

Contrary to the image projected by "No Rain" and its wonderful video, Blind Melon were not your typical hippie band—hippie, perhaps; happy, not so much. Shannon Hoon could be the life of the party (a nonstop party full of excess) or a tortured soul whose inner demons left him no option but to lose himself in addiction. Their debut album was an outstanding work, driven by the energy of a fantastic band and the deep emotions of someone like Shannon. And yet, on an album so intense, with songs like "Change" or "Tones of Home", it ends with "Time", a song about knowing when it is time



to leave. A Shannon who begins by howling like a madman into the sky ends the journey by asking an imaginary confidant whether they are tired of him, whether all the worries in the world will remain the same… and that it is time to go. A chilling song that, once Hoon's howling ends, stretches out to seven minutes (impossible to place anywhere else on the album), leaving you completely exhausted, much like the band itself seems to feel. Can you think of a better way to end an album? I cannot. And do not forget I want it played at my funeral, Juan Carlos (León)—write it down.

Javistone

"Sin tiempo para vivir", Burning (Madrid, 1978)



An album as colossal as the debut by my favourite tough guys from La Elipa could not have ended any other way than with the sonic epic "Sin tiempo para vivir". I have always defended this stunning collection of songs as, for me, the best rock 'n' roll album ever made in this "holy" country. Anthems like "Hey nena", "Miéntelas", "Jim Dinamita", "Lujuria" or "Madrid" are permanently etched into our musical history; songs soaked in the influence of the Stones, Bowie, the Velvet Underground and Mr Lou Reed, all culminating, as I said earlier, in an almost rock opera dedicated to that "horse called death".

An emotional storm lasting 11 minutes and 12

seconds that opens with the sound of ocean waves and seagulls, giving way to Pepe Risi's delicate intro, broken by the thunder of the drums and wrapped in Johnny's bass and Hammond, preparing us for Toño's litany: "It's here, so close to me / its perfume is its way of loving, smiling, walking silently, as cold as ever it comes." Something prepares you—at least it prepared me—for the punch in the face that comes when the ill-fated singer delivers: "In my vein I felt your kiss, with pain inside me." I do not want to spoil it further; I would rather you listen to it. Clearly influenced by "Heroin", it may be the Spanish-language song that best expresses the love–hate relationship with heroin, perhaps with the exception of "Frío" by Alarma!!! A devastating musical outburst that always tears my soul apart, even though I constantly seek it out when I need strong emotions. And it ends with an epic, unexpected and masterful finale that nobody sees coming and that echoes in your ears long after it has finished. "I'm going to put an end to my life, dancing a suicidal rock 'n' roll." Enough said… no time to live.

J. L. Crespo "ZepiSoul"

"The Wanderer", U2 (Zooropa, 1993)

At the beginning of the 1990s, U2 were pure avant-garde. Once they grew tired of mysticism, cowboy hats and the legacy of Black music, they went to Berlin with Brian Eno to follow in the footsteps of Bowie's Berlin period and, like the English musician, try to renew their musical language. That experimentation produced the wonderful Achtung Baby, where everything changed: technology everywhere, loops here and there, danceable sounds… a sonic madness that reached its peak on the next album. What was meant to be an EP became a record with its own identity, and in July 1993 Zooropa was released—with one of the ugliest covers in history and two singles that made the concept of "anti-commercial" seem mild. "Numb" felt like a B-side (with a very funny video, admittedly), and "Lemon" was a disco-futurist experiment that personally amused me, nothing more.

The album pushed even further the sonic experimentation begun in Berlin, with highlights like those already mentioned or the fabulous and pompous "Daddy's Gonna Pay for Your Crashed Car", which opens with a Martian-sounding Russian folk song (I remember a friend being suspicious of it, thinking it smelled of left-wing politics). In short, a Martian album with sublime moments and others where experimentation ran out of control. But Bono must have arrived at some point and thought: how the hell do we end this? With a sublime twist: after the techno-industrial-experimental whirlwind… Johnny Cash. Did anyone see that coming? Anyone who raises their hand is lying. Before Rick Rubin resurrected the Man in Black, the Irish band remembered him to bring an abrupt and beautiful end to such an extravagant album, with a kind of mystical elegy in which a man searches for meaning in a world he does not understand—an exquisite counterpoint to a record like this.

Javistone

"Good Feeling", Violent Femmes (Violent Femmes, 1983)



The placement of songs within an album is crucial if you want the listener to stay engaged from start to finish. Order sets the pace, builds the emotional narrative and, above all, should leave no room for filler. An album does not need to be thematic or conceptual, but how it begins and how it ends is fundamental. The self-titled debut by Violent Femmes, released in 1983, is a perfect example. The first time I heard it was a true epiphany. However, I admit that, carrying some period-specific prejudices against mid-tempo songs, the final tracks did not immediately click with me. "Good Feeling", which closes the album, was especially hard for me to understand. Over time, I realised it was essential.

The song speaks about the fleeting nature of good moments, about that almost desperate urge not to stop enjoying them or let them fade away. But it does so without slipping into melodrama, always leaving a window open to whatever may come next. There is no abrupt ending. It is more like saying goodbye to someone on a station platform, imagining their return. Or like the taste of a sweet slowly disappearing in your mouth, with the calm knowledge that there are still more in your pocket.

Néstor Mandela

"Time Will Tell", The Black Crowes (The Southern Harmony and Musical Companion, 1992)



Choosing "Time Will Tell" as the closing track of The Southern Harmony and Musical Companion is not an anecdotal gesture or a simple nod to Bob Marley. It is, in fact, a statement of intent that condenses everything The Black Crowes had been suggesting throughout the album and, at the same time, an elegant way of lowering the curtain without bombast, trusting in the symbolic weight of the song and the honesty of its interpretation. The original track, included by Marley on Kaya (1978), is a calm but firm reflection on moral justice, the passage of time and truth as the ultimate judge. There is no explicit anger or revolutionary urgency, just a deep conviction: time eventually puts everyone in their place.

In The Black Crowes' hands, that idea is reinterpreted through a different tradition—white soul and gospel—without betraying its spirit. On the contrary, it amplifies it. Musically, the version moves away from reggae pulse and settles into a more restrained, almost ceremonial tempo. The organ, backing vocals and dragging cadence turn the song into something close to a farewell hymn, as if the band were leaving the stage confident they had said everything they needed to say. Chris Robinson sings without excessive drama, with a controlled tone that reinforces the message: there is no need to shout when you trust time. It is almost like a psalm sung in a small Southern church, the kind in which the Robinson brothers were raised. And that is the key to why it works so well as an album closer.



The Southern Harmony is an expansive, intense album, full of electricity, sweaty riffs and a very earthly spirituality. After songs like “Remedy”, “Sting Me” or “Sometimes Salvation”, the listener reaches the end feeling they have crossed a turbulent emotional landscape. Ending with “Time Will Tell” means stopping, breathing and looking back at everything with perspective. It is an epilogue, not a final blow. The lyrics also take on an almost meta-musical reading. In 1992, The Black Crowes were at their peak but also under constant scrutiny: accusations of opportunism, inevitable comparisons to The Faces and the Stones, internal tensions… Closing the album with “Time will tell” sounds like a spiritual farewell, as if they were saying goodbye to those Crowes who, in truth, would never return. Placed right at the end, the song does not seek easy applause or instant memory. It works like a final glance at the listener, almost a handshake: what mattered has already been said; now all that remains is to let time do its work. That calm, almost defiant confidence is exactly what makes this version such a coherent and memorable ending to one of the key rock albums of the 1990s.

Javistone

“Mothers of the Disappeared”, U2 (The Joshua Tree, 1987)



Mothers of the Disappeared is one of those endings that completely breaks with everything that came before, establishing its own dialogue and whose position at the very end feels inevitable, like a farewell. After an explosive album full of mysticism, open landscapes and rock that brushes against gospel, psychedelia and the most messianic strain of the genre, this song leaves you with a very particular feeling when The Joshua Tree ends. The band seems to turn off the lights and, like the end of any journey that has left you ecstatic, it feels like time to rest. The title leaves no doubt about the subject matter: the song was born from the direct contact Bono and The Edge had with the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, women who refused to accept the silence imposed after their children disappeared during the military dictatorship.

U2, usually prone to excess and messianism, opt here for restraint. There are no proper names, no explicit political slogans. There is mourning, waiting and a devastating dignity that permeates everything. Musically, the song is almost a whisper: dark synthesizers, a suspended atmosphere and a vocal performance that tiptoes along, careful not to intrude on the story being told. Bono sings without epic gestures, fully aware that this time the spotlight is not on him. Despite the many social references throughout The Joshua Tree, none carries as much emotional weight as “Mothers of the Disappeared”. Placed at the end of the album, it works as a moral counterweight. After traversing the myths, contradictions and ghosts of the American dream (something that would ultimately consume them on Rattle & Hum), the record refuses to end on a grand note. This closing track is an uncomfortable reminder: behind every discourse there are absent bodies, waiting mothers and a history that cannot be closed with a chorus. As a listener, you do not come out uplifted, but challenged. The silence after the final note weighs heavier than any triumphant ending. One of the greatest albums in history says goodbye without fireworks, with a song that does not close the journey, but leaves it open, demanding memory.

Javistone

“The End”, The Doors (The Doors, 1967)



“The End” is not just the closing track of The Doors; it is a rupture, an abrupt descent into a territory where rock stops being youthful entertainment and becomes a boundary experience. Placing this song at the end of the band’s debut was a gesture as radical as it was deliberate: after it, there was no turning back, no way to end the album lightly. The journey had to finish there, in the most uncomfortable place. The song began as a breakup ballad, almost folk, but grew into a dark, hypnotic ritual loaded with symbolism and latent violence. Jim Morrison turns “The End” into a kind of narrative trance where the end of love, death, myth and the unconscious all merge. The famous Oedipal passage is designed to blow apart any complacent reading and push the listener into emotionally unsafe territory.

Musically, the track is an anomaly even within the album itself. It would have been impossible to place it anywhere else but the end, and even then it remains deeply disruptive. The tempo is slow, crawling, narcotic. Robby Krieger’s guitar takes on an Eastern feel, John Densmore’s drums avoid any conventional rock pattern and Ray Manzarek’s organ sustains a constant atmosphere, as if time itself had been suspended. There is no classic climax; instead there is accumulation, tension, a slow sense of inevitability. And that is where “The End” fits perfectly as a closer. The Doors constantly plays with the duality between light and shadow: accessible songs like “Break On Through” or “Light My Fire” coexist with an undercurrent of unease, danger and transgression. The album promises freedom, desire and expanded consciousness, but ultimately reminds us that crossing certain doors has consequences. “The End” is that final door. Ending the album with this piece denies any comforting resolution. There is no redemption, no moral lesson, no return to order. Finishing here does not close a cycle; it opens a wound. When the silence arrives after the last verses, there is no sense of completion, only disquiet. And that disquiet is the album’s true ending. The Doors does not end when the music stops, but when the listener realises that what they have heard was never meant to reassure them. “The End” does not conclude the journey; it leaves it suspended, uncomfortable, aware that some experiences, once lived, cannot be unheard. Now, you may turn the light back on.

Javistone

“This Too Shall Pass”, Leonor Watling & Leo Sidran with the Groovy French Band (Leo & Leo, 2025)



What better way to close this article than with a song from the album by the artists who grace the cover of this issue of Rock Bottom Magazine. Leo & Leo—Leonor Watling and Leo Sidran—bring the conversational art that shapes their album Leo & Leo to a close with one of those songs that can only exist at the end of a record. Written by Javi Peña, and in the hands of Leonor and Leo, the track allows the conversation that defined the journey to slow down, lower its pulse and invite you to sit by the side of the road to breathe and reflect on the misadventures you have just lived through. Beyond its literal meaning, which Leonor explains in the interview, the feeling “This Too Shall Pass” leaves is that everything passes: this album, this conversation, even this moment, even this very article.

Leonor sings like an angel and achieves something that happens only very rarely: closing a circle. I have always been fascinated by albums that begin and end connected by the same thread—a shared motif, an ambient sound, a common atmosphere—because that final breath does not shut down the journey, but pushes you to return to the beginning and repeat it. Again and again. Again and again. A wonderful way to end an album, without a doubt.

Javistone

AÑO 8

NUEVO ANUARIO EN PAPEL



YA DISPONIBLE

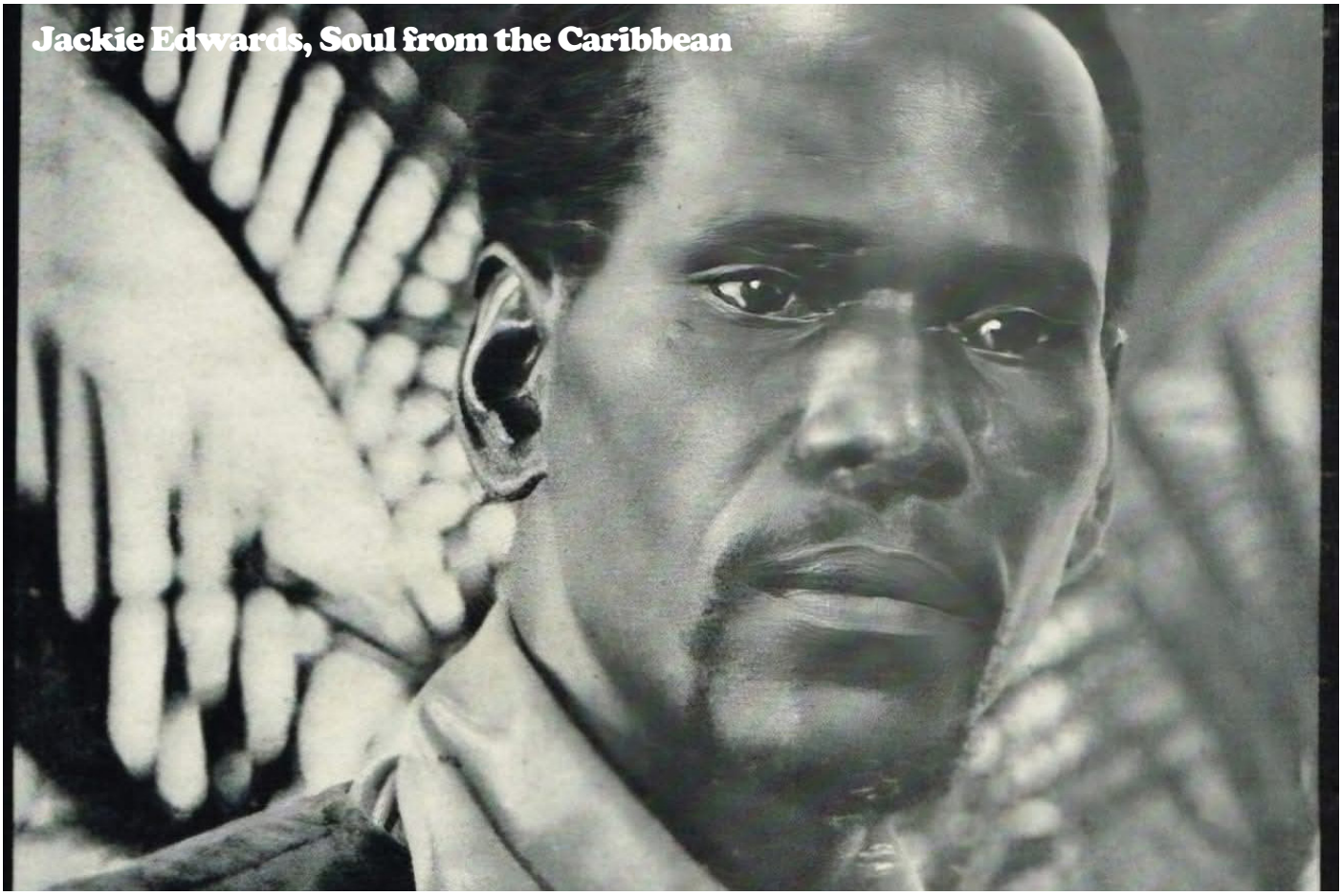
Otro nuevo anuario de la revista digital Rock Bottom Magazine que recoge en formato físico un resumen del trabajo realizado durante los doce últimos meses. Con los enormes Goat en portada, el contenido es apabullante: Sacri Monti, F.A.N.T.A., Sam Cooke, Nat Simons, Las Dianas, Los Farelli, Miles Davis, The Fuzztones, Manola, Baby Huey, Vega, The Cubical, Tom Werman, Dead Boys, Alligator, Maika Makovski, Thee Cha Cha Chas, El Niño Delta, Dunes, Jordi Pujol Nadal, Gene Hackman, The Killer Barbies, Terry Callier, Hippie Death Cult, Guernica Mancini, Lendakaris Muertos, Marina Ferbes, Zålomon Grass, Julián Maeso, Wilson Fisk, Irene Serrano, Mark Lanegan, Ruge Boreal, Los DelTonos, Lagartija Nick, Europe, Edgar Allan Pop, Lionel Richie, Jodie Cash, Bunbury, The Rocky Horror Picture Show, Morgan...

¿Te parece suficiente? Pues hay eso y mucho más.

PVP. 18 €

KEEP THE SOUL ALIVE

BY JL. CRESPO ZEPISOUL



There is no doubt that Jamaican music absorbed American rhythm and blues and jazz from the 1950s. That influence, combined with mento (the island's traditional or folk genre) and Caribbean calypso, gave rise to ska, which would later evolve into rocksteady and, eventually, reggae. Names such as Alton Ellis, Derrick Harriott, Laurel Aitken and our protagonist are inseparable from that legendary period.

Wilfred Gerald Edwards, Jackie Edwards, was born in Jamaica in 1938, a year when the island was mired in labour unrest due to the meagre wages paid to workers. This led to continuous strikes until a riot broke out at the Frome sugar factory. That rebellion pushed the population toward independence and its own political system. His childhood, within a family of fourteen children, unfolded on streets shaken by popular agitation, forging an ambitious and untamed character, yet one committed to others.

At that time, the only escape in the country's poor households—from poverty and labour unrest—was to take refuge in radio waves carrying tunes from beyond the Caribbean Sea. One of the first artists to reach those modest homes was Nat King Cole, one of the finest jazz singers and pianists. He was the first Black artist to have his own radio programme, which, of course, reached Jamaica. As soon as his smooth, velvety voice reached Jackie's ears, he became completely obsessed with the singer's magnetism, and Cole became the main influence guiding the path Jackie wanted to follow: music. At fourteen, he took part in various talent shows (the cradle of great Jamaican singers, much as gospel was for African Americans) and in family entertainment shows in Kingston, the Caribbean capital.

By 1959, at twenty-one, Edwards had already found his place and his own style, clearly shaped by his idol Cole and the emerging R&B whose first imported singles were beginning to be sold in record shops. A British businessman spending long periods in Jamaica, Chris Blackwell, signed him to his newly created label, the legendary Island Records. Between 1960 and 1961, Edwards placed four of his songs at number one on the charts, becoming a superstar whose ambition allowed him to blend Latin rhythms into his compositions. His next single reached number ten. In every jukebox, every bar, at youth gatherings—anywhere across the archipelago—Jackie Edwards was playing.

His tearful, romantic ballads, along with mid-tempo songs, became the breeding ground for a greatness that grew year after year. The instrumental work of his backing band, The Caribs, adding Creole flavour to the songs, completed the equation. The gripping "Tell Me Darling" (1960), a personal favourite, or the equally fabulous "Your Eyes Are Dreaming" (1962), featuring a superlative voice that no longer invited comparison, are examples of this initial period of splendour.

Island Records' need to expand pulled him away from the development of Jamaican music as ska emerged, but in return took him to England in 1962 alongside Blackwell, whose business vision anticipated the future. Once settled in London, Edwards began writing melodies and developing his career as a singer, becoming one of the label's key assets in the UK. He also travelled through all the city's neighbourhoods in a van, distributing records arriving directly from Jamaica as well as his own productions. Thanks to those imported singles, the new Caribbean rhythm began to claim an important place in the city's clubs, defined as blue beat.

Edwards continued writing hit after hit, both for Island artists and for his own catalogue. In 1963, a definitive album was released—one that should not be missing from your collection: The Most of Wilfred Jackie Edwards, a comprehensive collection that introduced European audiences to the essence of Jamaican music, while also serving as a revival for the growing number



of exiles living there. Songs like “One More Week”, “I Know” and “A Little Smile” are delicious examples of the album’s riches. The following year saw another essential release, Standing Up for Jesus, a personal favourite of the author. His frenetic studio activity marked him as a tireless creator, and his next two albums, Come Home (1965) and By Demand (1966), are absolute gems that I often return to when my mood drifts down the dark road of pessimism.

Within this encyclopaedic body of work are two songs that became undisputed classics of contemporary music, “Somebody Help Me” and “Keep On Running”, via a group of young lads from Birmingham. Discovered by Blackwell, with a fifteen-year-old singer named Stevie Winwood, Island’s boss suggested they record the two songs written by Edwards. The group was The Spencer Davis Group—the rest of the story I’ve already hinted at, though it never hurts to revisit it. In November 1965, “Keep On Running” was released and went straight to number one. In March 1966, the other anthem written by the Jamaican followed suit, once again topping the charts and turning them into one of the most important British R&B bands. Another adaptation, this time of the sublime Brenda Holloway—one of soul’s best-kept secrets—“Every Little Bit Hurts”, kept them at the top. In September of that same year, a collaboration between Stevie Winwood and Jackie Edwards once again brought glory to popular music: the timeless “When I Come Home”.

Let’s carry on with the island boy…
As the 1970s began, Edwards—by then fully immersed in London life—felt the need to broaden his horizons and decided to move to Trojan Records, a label allied with Island and founded in 1968 with Lee Gopthal, a collaborator of Blackwell. The name “Trojan” came from the van used by Duke Reid (producer, DJ and head of Treasure Isle, a label specialising in ska and rocksteady) in Jamaica to transport his sound system—hence Duke Reid, the Trojan King of Sounds.

With the help of another illustrious figure, the great Bunny “Striker” Lee (a Jamaican record producer and a key figure in the development of reggae in the UK), Edwards released several singles with invaluable instrumental backing from The Aggrovators, one of the Caribbean’s finest bands and Lee’s loyal companions. With them, Jackie Edwards gradually moved away from his classic, polished soul sound to embrace emerging reggae, releasing true gems that would become genre classics. Much of this new music would be reflected in and influence bands like The Clash, who not only name-check Jackie in “White Man (In Hammersmith Palace)” but also adapt—without credit—his superb “Get Up”, turning it into “Revolution Rock”, one of the essential tracks on their monumental London Calling.

Recording as a session musician, as a solo artist, with bands, producing and composing, Edwards remained active throughout the 1970s and into the mid-1980s. Thanks to royalties from his creations, he lived comfortably and without upheaval, continuing to gift us albums of considerable musical quality. One of his best contributions was his role in producing Move Up Starsky (1977) by The Mexicano, alongside Clem Bushay, Danny Ray and Sidney Crooks; his touch on



“Dub Rock” is a clear statement of intent.
In the late 1980s, he returned to his island to reconnect with family and friends and, without breaking his rhythm, to continue composing for local singers and bands. He also took the opportunity to enjoy the ancestral pleasures Jamaica offered, supported by the well-earned money from his professional career. He returned to London for a benefit gala in support of veteran musicians from the Jamaican scene—his final performance.

A sudden heart attack claimed an exemplary man and musician in 1992. He was fifty-four years old, with much still left to compose.



“We didn’t want a revival, we wanted to sound like ourselves”

MONTEFURADO

“Improvised, accident-prone, disorganised, irregular, and a constant process of trial and error to try to find a formula that lets us function”.

Montefurado, the Asturian band made up of Marcos Montoto, Pablo Piedra, Diego “Manfred” Martínez and Guzmán Gancedo, look back in this interview on a path built on persistence, line-up changes and a deep love for guitars and roots rock. After debuting as a project in 2023 and releasing their first album, Heavy Heads, in early 2025 (recorded with Hendrik Röver at Guitar Town Studios), the band reflects on the creative process, the search for their sound, the importance of the Asturian landscape in their imagery, the unexpectedly warm reception from audiences and the media, and the way they have consolidated a musical identity that looks to the 60s and 70s without falling into revivalism. An honest conversation with Marcos Montoto, their singer, guitarist and songwriter, that reveals the soul of a band moving forward calmly, with conviction and plenty of passion.

Montefurado now consists of Marcos Montoto on vocals and guitar, Pablo Piedra on drums, Diego “Manfred” Martínez on bass and Guzmán Gancedo on second guitar. You debut in 2023, although the idea for the band goes back much further and went through several line-up changes. At the beginning of 2025 you released your first album, Heavy Heads. From December 2023, when you recorded the album, until January 2025, when it came out—what did you spend that time doing?

Actually, the recording was done in two sessions. In December 2023 the three of us went in and recorded the basic tracks for fifteen songs over a weekend, and in spring 2024 I went over one afternoon to Muriedas to add some guitar solos and arrangements that were missing. From then on, while Hendrik was working on the mixes, what we did—apart from taking care of everything related to the release, design and so on—was to rebuild the band. Willy, the drummer, left shortly after the recording was finished, and it was necessary to have a stable line-up to support the album release.

You went into Guitar Town Studios



in Muriedas (Cantabria), Hendrik Röver's place, as a trio, and he also plays guitar on the record. Was that when you realised you needed a permanent second guitar in the band?
No, really all the songs on the album were written for two guitars, since the initial idea was a quartet. Before going into the studio there was a succession of guitarists who, for one reason or another, didn't fit in or lost interest. In order not to delay things any further, we recorded with the line-up we had been using to get through a few gigs. In the studio I recorded all the guitar parts as they were conceived for a quartet, and we did the vocal harmonies together. Once the album was finished, it was obvious we needed a fourth member on guitar and vocals to be able to play it live in a minimally decent way. I'm not saying we didn't play some good shows as a trio, but the balance and energy were different and some details and nuances were lost, in my opinion.

We spoke with Hendrik recently—what was it like recording with him?
Recording at Guitar Town was a ten-out-of-ten experience in every sense. Both working with him and the studio itself make you feel relaxed, like you're in your rehearsal space. Everything was so quick and fluid that it feels like it took no effort or was a simple process, but I think the final result is superb. The truth is that after finishing it and releasing it I've hardly listened to it again, because I already get enough of those songs rehearsing and playing them live, but when I do put it on the turntable at home I'm still surprised by the sound Hendrik got out of us—natural and spacious, but with body and cohesion. It's amazing. And the guitar he added to "Cold Rain and Snow" is a beast, as expected.

What stories, emotions or landscapes did you want to capture with this album?
Naturally, I tried to reflect both my personal moment and the environment in which these songs emerged—that's the material I have to work with. I think the lyrics are introspective because, for me, music is the way I reflect, explain myself or interpret what happens to me, life or the world, as I imagine happens to any creative person in whatever field. On the other hand, and this is more subjective, I try to make the aesthetic approach—the music, sounds and so on—somehow refer to or connect with the landscape and environment that inspire me. Obviously, all the influences of the music I listen to are there, along with learned stylistic resources and the rest.

How would you describe the band's evolution from those first steps until now?
Improvised, accident-prone, disorganised, irregular, and a constant process of trial and error to try to find a formula that lets us function… a reflection of life, haha. It seems that now things have finally taken on some shape.

I know you've received a lot of critical praise on social media and in music circles. I personally loved it. What kind of feelings or feedback have you noticed from audiences since the album came out?
The truth is that even at our hesitant early shows there was always a positive response from the audience. But since the album came out we've noticed quite a bit of interest, especially from independent media, digital fanzines, people doing podcasts and so on, as well as from some more established magazines. It's a response we didn't expect at all, and it's very welcome because, even though we believe in the project, seeing that it connects—even on an underground, minority level— is very encouraging, with the added bonus of discovering many podcasts, shows and digital magazines I didn't know before, some of them really interesting.

Marcos Montoto (Peralta, The Real McCoyson, Mockingbyrds…), this is the first time you've led a project. How did the initial idea for the band come about?
I'd always wanted to have my own project so I could do things my way and work at my own pace, and I'd always been writing songs that ended up parked somewhere. On the other hand, I wanted to do something with Manfred on bass. I suppose the opportunity didn't come earlier because we all had our jobs, our other projects, and everything requires time and dedication. Little by little we started meeting up to rehearse and write songs a few years ago.

I've seen on the map that there's a village in western Asturias called Montefurado. Is that where the name comes from?
The idea of using that name came from discovering a bar–shop in A Coruña called Jamonería Montefurado. I went there with Pibli to buy orujo and pork cracklings, and the name sounded to me like places in Galicia or southwestern Asturias linked to ancient Roman mining, where they "bored" or pierced the rock to extract gold. There are several: the Montefurado you mention near Pola de Allande, Penafurada near Grandas de Salime, Montefurado in the Ribeira Sacra… all of them set in a type of landscape that has always captured my imagination and inspired me. Also, both Manfred and I have ancestors from those areas.

What role do guitars play in Montefurado's sonic identity?
They're a central element, at least as important as the melodies or the lyrics. Not just the arrangement or the part itself, but also the timbre, texture, the amount and type of saturation… each of those aspects is part of the message or aesthetic concept inherent to each song. It's unavoidable for me because, although I don't consider myself a particularly technical or versatile guitarist, I think it's with the guitar that I feel most eloquent or capable of expressing things.

What is your songwriting process like? Does it usually start from an idea of yours, or do you work more collectively?

> ***Las letras son tan importantes como todo lo demás, aunque supongo que en este disco pesan menos que el resto de cosas precisamente por el idioma. Soy consciente de que cantando en inglés en España es mucho más difícil conectar.***

So far it's worked that way—I usually bring in a more or less shaped idea, but from there I like to see what each person can contribute in the rehearsal room. That back-and-forth can be very fruitful and stimulating. On one hand, everyone can make the song their own by playing it in their own way and thus perform with more conviction than if they were just executing what I tell them to play. On the other hand, they give ideas back to me that I can then work with. That's why, despite being a personal project, I wanted to approach it as a band rather than a solo project—it's more fun.

Your style blends folk, rock and roll and blues from the 60s and 70s, with influences like Crazy Horse, The Flying Burrito Brothers or The Byrds. What attracts you most about that era, and how do you translate it into your current sound?
I think the best rock and guitar music records were made in that era, and I'm still very into all that music, so it's inevitable that those influences show up. That said, it's not our intention to be a revival band, and I don't think we sound like anything specific. Anyone can surely find details or sounds that remind them of classics, but we try not to fall into the predictable, and I think there's quite a bit of variety on the album.

The psychedelic and guitar-driven element is also one of your trademarks. How do you work on guitar textures and layers to achieve that characteristic atmosphere?
I guess it's part of my style. I like to leave space and let the different parts and instruments complement each other, with contrasts and counterpoints. I think that makes everything multiply and take on another dimension. I find that more interesting or effective than everyone going flat out or bombarding the listener with notes.

Folk and psychedelic rock are often closely tied to narrative and atmosphere. How much weight do lyrics carry in your project, and why do you choose to sing in English?
Lyrics are as important as everything else, although I suppose on this album they carry a bit less weight than other elements precisely because of the language. I'm aware that singing in English in Spain makes it much

harder to connect. We chose English out of inertia and to give the album coherence. Even though the debut single had one song in each language, we recorded fifteen tracks for the album, three of which were in Spanish, but they didn't make it. It's clear that the influence of Anglo music weighs heavily on Montefurado. In my defence, I'll say that the album received a four-out-of-five-star rating in the British magazine Shindig! and referred to the songs as being sung in perfect English (laughs).

Asturias has a strong musical tradition and a very distinctive landscape. How do you think your environment influences Montefurado's music?
Well, apart from the already mentioned landscape and rural setting that have inspired us, in terms of influence from other local bands, nowadays—with the internet and everything—even if you live in Gijón you might be influenced as much or more by a band from Austin or London than by one from Avilés or Mieres, for example. There have been plenty of Asturian bands aligned with our vibe, and all of them have been an influence or an example to follow, more because of our own tastes than because of the impact they may have had. And even now new ones keep emerging (Joel Jefferson Stalin, Paxareto…) with whom we feel a strong affinity.

Live, do you try to recreate the album sound faithfully, or do you prefer to leave room for improvisation and freer moments?
With the new line-up we've focused on capturing the intention and feeling of each song rather than reproducing the album note for note. It wouldn't make sense to expect Guzmán to play exactly what I recorded, or Piedra to play what Willy did. The structures are respected because, at the end of the day, they're basic pop songs with verses, choruses and so on. But I don't usually repeat every solo or arrangement exactly, and I think the songs have evolved a bit live. There are occasional moments where things loosen up or we can stretch if it feels right, but without going too far—we're not a jam band, haha.

I think the band's image, as well as the album design, are very important to you.
The album design is important, yes. When I spoke with Héctor Castañón from Ossobukko Studio about the cover, I was very clear about the direction I wanted to go. He's a real artist, he got it straight away, added his own personal touch and nailed it. I think the album as a whole looks great. As for band image, I don't know what to say—we dress the same to play as we do to go to work at the factory or to the supermarket (laughs).

Is the band's intention to make a living from music, or to do this in a more playful and passionate way, however it turns out?
More the latter. We all have jobs outside music, although we've all always been very active in different bands and projects, which has the advantage of being able to choose what we want to play. Personally, my only concern is being able to maintain the desire and motivation to keep playing, making and recording music, because it fulfils me a lot on a personal level.



What are the next steps for Montefurado? Tour, new songs, a new album, collaborations…?
We've had a couple of quiet months, so for now it's about getting back into gear, starting to write again and playing the concerts we have scheduled from January onwards.

Néstor Mandela / Foto banda Diego Martinez



SPOTIFILM

BY TALI CARRETO





If you are over or close to fifty, you will remember those days when a film or an episode of a TV series—back when our remote-control clicks limited our options to four or five channels at most—became the talk of the neighbourhood and the highlight of the playground the next day. In connection with this It. Welcome to Derry, which visits our Spotifilm today, one particular scene comes to mind, one that many of us little kids turned into one of our favourite fears: that child who returned from the grave to scratch at his brother's bedroom window and beg to be let in, like a proper creature of the night.

That scene belonged to the adaptation that Tobe Hooper—tamed after his excesses in The Texas Chain Saw Massacre and on the verge of breaking into the mainstream with Poltergeist—made for the small screen of Salem's Lot, Stephen King's vampiric novel.

Almost five decades after that cathode-ray shock, I wonder what we would have talked about at school if this first season of It. Welcome to Derry had been broadcast back then, free-to-air, within reach of any viewer and without the overwhelming amount of content that now surrounds and numbs us. Just the opening sequence of its first episode, as unsettling as it is explicitly bloody, would have fuelled endless conversations. And nightmares too, of course. Because the HBO series driven by Andy and Barbara Muschietti—the same duo behind the massive success of It and It: Chapter Two—does not hold back on scares or gory set pieces, establishing itself as a more than respectable prequel to King's monumental novel.

Faithful to its premise, the series is also faithful thanks to its many connections to the Kingverse, that personal universe of the author which has The Dark Tower as its origin and raison d'être, and which runs throughout his long career as a writer. Some of these connections are as obvious as they are effective, such as a young Dick Hallorann, years before we meet him again at the Overlook Hotel. Others are more subtle, like references to Shawshank Prison, or to that very personal cosmology of the writer that owes so much to Lovecraft. There are even plenty of welcome Easter eggs scattered throughout, for the most devoted fans of the genius from Maine.

Despite the odd dispensable episode—such as that cemetery sequence with the main gang, more befitting of R. L. Stine—the Muschiettis' creation leaves a terrific final impression, with moments as disturbing as the Black Spot massacre or characters as endearing as Rich Santos, a thousand times more charming than any of the former kids from Stranger Things.

But let us focus on what really matters here: the songs. Set in 1962, albeit with the occasional jump back in time, the soundtrack of It. Welcome to Derry is a feast for nostalgics, doo-wop lovers, soul devotees and hardline classic rock fans. Courtesy of Kim Baum, regular music supervisor within James Wan's production orbit and also a frequent collaborator of the Muschiettis, across its eight episodes we can hear songs by artists such as Sam Cooke, Peggy Lee, Dee Dee Sharp, Jerry Lee Lewis, Bo Diddley, Ray Charles, Roy Orbison or Ricky Nelson; groups like Frankie Lymon & The Teenagers, The Marcels or The Castells; and orchestras such as those led by Nelson Riddle, Percy Faith or Henry Hall. As I said: a full-on vintage feast.

But if there is one song that stands out above the rest, without a doubt and for obvious reasons, it is the one that opens each episode's opening credits, which the Muschiettis also have the exquisite good sense to hold back until the second episode: A Smile And A Ribbon, by Patience & Prudence, released in 1956 as the B-side to Tonight You Belong To Me, a major hit at the time and a song the singers had learned at a summer camp, since the original waltz-time version had been recorded by crooner Gene Austin back in 1927. The precocious performers, aged 14 and 11 respectively, were the daughters of Mark McIntyre, a composer, arranger and pianist who had spent the 1940s accompanying none other than Frank Sinatra at the piano and who saw in his daughters a potential vein to mine. He was not wrong: that single would go on to become a Gold Record and propel the young pair of angelic voices to fame.

After that burst of hype, they would never taste success again, despite shifting towards the increasingly popular rock sound in later tracks or joining forces with another group of sisters, The Murmaids. Even so, their songs have appeared in films such as Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse, Hereditary or Election; series like Bates Motel, Lovecraft Country or the recent The Beast in Me; and even in video games like The Quarry. Special mention must go to Ghost World, Terry Zwigoff's brilliant adaptation of Daniel Clowes's comic, where A Smile And A Ribbon also served as the soundtrack to (other) teenage terrors.

Montana Stomp



“The horse is us, and the hill is the process. We all come from very different musical, personal and opinion-based backgrounds. The soil that feeds this album—and the previous one too—is that classic school of muddy ground, blues-rock roots. But not Delta blues—I mean that elegant but dirty blues”.

The Horse and the Hill has been one of the standout releases of late 2025. The second LP in the career of Montana Stomp has confirmed everything the band from Zaragoza showed us on their debut (Montana Stomp, 2022). We spoke with Susana Colt, vocals, and Beto Foronda, bass, about what this album has meant for the band and how they face the present day-to-day life of a self-managed southern blues rock band in Spain. Gallop on, gallop on… until they’re buried in the sea!

First of all, congratulations on the album. Tell me, how has the reception been?
Beto: We're very surprised, because the reception of this second album—from people who were already loyal to us, as well as from all the new people joining in—has brought some really beautiful things our way. It's incredible. And we're even a bit overwhelmed by how well it's been received. So we're delighted and we hope to give the best of ourselves to somehow give back all that love.

Did you expect this kind of response?
Susana: Look, I think that once we said, "these are the songs, this is the recording date, this is the album", it was a decision we made based on the material we already had, the feeling we had, the timing and our instincts. But we weren't thinking about whether it would be liked more than the previous one, or whether it would live up to it, because it would be a bit pretentious to say we even knew the level of the first album. But like Beto says, it's overwhelming. That's the word. It's really overwhelming. You never imagine something like this. Once you release the album, it's no longer yours—it belongs to other people. And seeing people who were already following us, along with new friends and new listeners, seeing that response is what gives us fuel. All five of us are very, very happy.

Even if I may have a clear opinion, from your point of view, what is the main difference between the first album and The Horse and the Hill?
Beto: Above all, we know each other better now, on a personal level. We understand each other more, and we're getting to know each other's musical influences. That whole mix is more present on this album than on the previous one. I don't know if it's a more "mature" album, as people say, but it's definitely a record we put a lot of heart into.

I think that sense of maturity shows above all in the intention behind the songs. It feels like the previous album had more contained anger, while here there's a clearer goal or intention. Would you agree with that?
Susana: It comes from honesty. Not for nothing, it's actually a conceptual album. If you pay attention, the first track comes in absolutely crushing, which links directly to the bull album, which really did come out charging. On that album, we were desperate to come out swinging after so many years working with so many bands and different projects. But this one had to be different. It had to be like a baby pushing the five of us towards a new place. That's why the first track bursts out with the stampede of the previous album, but soon after you start to get these valleys of sensations, of honest emotions. Like Beto says, we know each other better now, we've been through more experiences, and in the compositions you can hear both the wounds and the scars of the band. You know? I think it's a mature album because, over time, we've endured. It's an album about resilience.

Musically, there's no trickery. Montana Stomp still goes straight to the point in its songs, and this album is a good example of that. Is your sound the band's main hallmark?
Beto: The sound is very, very thought out. I don't really know how to explain it, because the Montana sound—if there even is such a thing—isn't accidental. We always try to balance what kind of tone each instrument should have in order to generate the emotion or whatever each song is asking for. There's a lot of work behind that. We think it's essential to our style.

What path did you have to take to achieve that sound?
Beto: Whatever Susana says (laughs).
Susana: Basically, whatever I say (laughs). At the beginning, it really was a bit like that, but I've learned to manage it better. There's a phrase we repeat a lot: the horse is us, and the hill is the process. Each of us comes from very different musical, personal and ideological backgrounds. The soil that feeds this album—and the previous one too—is that classic school, that swampy ground of blues rock roots. But I'm not talking about Delta blues; I'm talking about that elegant but dirty blues of Óscar. On the other hand, you've got Beto's influences, which are more jazz-based, even punk at times—he can sound like Victor Wooten one moment, Glenn Hughes the next, with the elegance of Phil Lynott. Then there's Josete on keyboards, who's an uncontrollable genius, and with just a look he knows whether to go more psychedelic like Jon Lord or lean into the classic feel of Billy Preston. Adri and I share that love for southern sounds, but in a more modern sense. When they talk among themselves, I don't understand them. They speak one language and I speak mine, but we reach an understanding. They put all of that together, and then I come in and say, "Beto, dirtier", "Adri, like colourful fish falling from the sky", and they create something unexplainable. Basically, they play and I dirty it all up in my own way or bring out the emotional side of it. From that mix of things and ideas, something comes out. We don't know if it's a Montana sound, but it's a real sound. Maybe the third album will be different. Or maybe not. We don't know, because when we say the horse belongs to everyone and we all are the horse, we really mean it.

I've read that The Horse and the Hill is a real statement. The result of huge effort to turn sound into pure strength and grit. How would you define this album?
Susana: It's a kick of pure resilience. It's a statement. It's a way of saying: things aren't easy for us, but that's not going to stop us. We can be our own worst enemy—we don't see more problems outside than the ones we might have inside, in how the five of us communicate. Nowadays there's so much talk about whether rock is this or that. So many labels. For example, the "southern rock" label gave me vertigo at first. Now there are people saying this album is more hard rock or more whatever. As if you needed very strict definitions for what you do. We're making a call to say it's just music. Obviously, it draws from all our influences, but Montana isn't just the five of us—it's also the people around us: Diego García in the studio,



Javi Vacuum on mastering, Andrea Silvan behind the cameras for photos and videos, Alicia Rodríguez handling communication… Montana is a being. It's an energy. So how do you define that? Do you know how overwhelming it is to read the things we're reading? I can't tell you what this album is. This album is resilience. It's strength.

In my review of the album, I highlighted both the bass lines and Josete's keyboard riffs. They feel very innovative to me, transcending the blues rock genre itself. Could you tell us a bit about your musical background? I think you studied in Argentina, right?

Beto: Well, first of all, thank you for listening to the bass (laughs). My influences come a lot from jazz, Motown and so on. And yes, I studied music—especially jazz—in Buenos Aires. Although throughout my studies my teacher always told me I sounded too rock, so I guess I already had that inside me (laughs). Obviously, applying all that training to this genre, and above all being surrounded by such great musicians as Adri, Josete, Óscar and Susana, was a challenge for me. For example, figuring out how not to play too much—that's something I really want to highlight. If Montana sounds the way it does, it's because all the musicians work in favour of the song. Nobody is trying to show off on their instrument, nobody wants to overplay. We're all working to make the song sound right. The song itself asks for what it needs. Once the idea is clear and we develop it, if there's room for a different bass line or to complement another bandmate's work, we do it. I think the most important work is that: everyone adding their part so that the whole is more important than the sum of its parts. As for influences—Jaco Pastorius, James Jamerson, Victor Wooten… I still study many bass players on my own. There are songs that, after five or six years of trying, I still can't play—but I will. Studying the instrument is something I'm passionate about and do every day. I also teach. In fact, all of us in the band are teachers. And I have to say that picking up an instrument and playing it still feels wonderful to me, no matter the circumstances. That's where I'm happy. So I'm happy that people can appreciate all that in this album. I have to say I'm in love with this record, just like I was with the first one I recorded twenty-five years ago. I'm very excited, very proud of how it turned out, and it's an album I can keep listening to, because I think we did a really good job.

I love it when bands show that passion for music, not just as professionals but as fans, which doesn't always happen. I think keeping that fire alive helps transmit that love both on record and on stage. Would you agree?

Beto: Totally agree. And it's absolutely necessary to keep feeding yourself, to keep listening to music, new bands. New people always surprise you by doing things influenced by others. That's how music has always come about, right? And how it's evolved. It's always necessary.

I get the feeling that the songs on this album start from a shared place and unravel different parts of a very intense life process. Is that the case? Is there a story behind The Horse & the Hill?

Susana: A lot of times, people look at the stories of songs or albums from a lyrical point of view, but that's not the case here. This album doesn't tell a single story through its lyrics. It tells different phases of the same story, because that story is the band's story—but it's not told in the lyrics, it's told as a whole. It's the story of the band from the first album up to this 7 November, when the rest of you finally got to hear the work. It's the story of everything that's happened in that time, from when we stopped touring the self-titled album until The Horse & the Hill came out.

So what's the common thread?

The common thread is a journey, where we've had to face the challenge of continuing after such a wild, brutal response to the first album. The bull album came out charging, because it was the result of more than three years of work—forming ideas, going back and forth—until the five of us who needed to be there were finally in the same room. That's when Montana is really born. A band that self-manages not by choice—and I like to stress this—when we say we're a band without a label, management or booking office, it's not because we're punks. No. We're workers. We get our hands dirty working, loading and unloading, driving, and so on. And if there's a piece of bread, we split it five ways. And if there's a problem, we split that five ways too. That's the story of Montana, and that's the story this album tells. The common thread is the passing of time, with all its weight and effort. That's why the bull turns into another animal—calmer, more tamed, more balanced. Montana is five different pillars finding balance and forming a single entity. We can have different opinions about the same thing, but Montana decides. And when one of us says, "Montana decides", the other four fall silent. That's our reality, just like the reality of the baker downstairs who gets up before dawn and goes to work every day. Our references are people who plough the land, who put on a uniform to go to the factory and change their clothes because they also have to change their face. That's our story—the story of that journey, with peaks and valleys. But we're not going to stop, mate. We're not going to stop.

The band is based in Zaragoza, although two of you live in Elche, which must make coordination and organisation quite difficult. Do long-distance relationships work in rock?

> ***Our references are people who plough the land, who put on a uniform to go to the factory and change their clothes because they also have to change their face. That's our story—the story of that journey, with peaks and valleys. But we're not going to stop, mate. We're not going to stop.***

Susana: The sex is over the phone (laughs).
Beto: Clearly it works—at least a bit.
Susana: It's just a numbers thing. Montana is wherever they hire us. Montana goes where people can see us and sleeps on the road. People talk a lot about this, but sometimes some of us go one place and others go another. What's clear is that the base of operations is Zaragoza.

Based on that, I imagine being in two different places makes even simple things like rehearsing more difficult, right?

Beto: In day-to-day work, technology helps us a lot. Not so much for composing, but for rehearsing—everyone has audio production software, we send each other tracks, and so on. It's very manageable. And then, for example, one of the strengths of a Montana live show is that you're never going to hear the same thing twice. You'll hear the song, yes, but not the exact same notes every time. That's partly because of how we work. Although maybe all this is just an excuse not to rehearse (laughs).
Susana: Rehearsing is for cowards (laughs). Rehearsing is for people who can—but we can't! The good thing is that all five of us have played so much over the years that when you're playing your own project, you do it with such desire and passion that constant rehearsing isn't necessary. The distance means we might rehearse less often, but those sessions are very intense. What really gives us life is getting to a show and seeing how it breathes. No matter how rehearsed you are, one day the bull appears, another day it's the horse.

The album cover and artwork are, in my opinion, beautiful. Tell us a bit about them and how you think they represent what you wanted the album to mean.

Susana: I think the cover says it all. The cover, the back, the whole artwork was done by Héctor Castañón from Ossobuko Studio. Even though we repeated choices from the previous album in terms of recording studio, mixing and so on, we really wanted to express the concept in a very personal way. And at



the same time, we wanted to pay tribute to those seventies albums where the artwork itself was the concept, not the band name or the album title. Out of all the proposals, this was the one where we said, “wow”. As a detail, Héctor hadn’t even listened to the album when he designed it. We had a very long phone call where we explained the concept and what the songs were about, and he said, “I’ve got it”. In fact, Héctor has prepared individual illustration concepts for each song, which will be released soon, possibly to show that musical-narrative whole from another angle.

Montana Stomp, Jodie Cash, Angela Hoodoo, Anna Duke, The Violet Cluster, Mississippi Queen & the Wet Dogs, The Blow Ups, Mothercrow, La Perra Blanco, Morgan, Susan Santos… Are we at least starting to crack the glass ceiling?

Susana: You’re not going to like my answer. I don’t see a ceiling. I know I’m throwing stones at my own roof, but if there’s no ceiling, they won’t hit me (laughs). I don’t think music is about genres, but it’s true that throughout history women have had to kick down doors in many ways. But when people ask me specifically about the place of women in rock or my role in all this, I always say the same thing: in Montana, I’m just one more. My gender is just another element. It’s not Susana Colt—it’s Montana Stomp. When I talk to my peers—Jodie Cash is one of my closest friends, for example—and we talk about this, it’s true that over the years we’ve had to give more than one slap to certain people (promoters, both men and women). But I still think the same: if the product connects, it has its audience.

It’s great to see bands with women as sound engineers, drummers and so on—but you can’t segment it. For me, there is no such thing as “female rock”. I’ve had reviews praising my bandmates and then talking about how I was dressed. Well yes, mate, I don’t have much clothing, and what I do have I spend on musical quality… do you get me? In other places, I’ve read about how hard it is for women in rock, but the truth is, I don’t have it hard. I have it easy in my band. If people want to label things, fine. But I’ve had to work through and digest whether



that phrase I read so often—"led by Susana Colt"—sounds like ego or not. I'm the singer, sure, but Montana leads. If I were the one leading, we wouldn't have got where we are (laughs). There's a lot of work behind the scenes, and the vocalist gets the spotlight, but we insist this is a band.

We were recently at a Larkin Poe concert and were very positively struck by the large number of young female fans in the audience. Do you feel a responsibility to act as a reference so women continue to be fully present in the rock world?

Susana: On that point, yes—and it lights me up inside. We get so many messages from people saying this is a band that welcomes everyone, that you can go to a Montana Stomp concert regardless of gender or age, because we look you in the eye. But especially when you see young people, and young women in particular, it's incredibly empowering for me. I put my personal life into the lyrics, and seeing a sixteen-year-old girl in the front row feeling the same thing means we're doing it right. Montana is energy, mate, and it's positive energy.

I think it's important to have people who can act as mirrors for others.

I think I'll show you what I believe answers your question (she shows a painting of Joan Jett). Are there references that push you forward?

Of course—the strength of Joan Jett, the strength of Etta James. But really, it's what you're saying: trying to see yourself in a mirror, but the mirror has to be real. I myself sometimes felt I had to act tough to earn respect, but with maturity you realise it's honesty that gives you that strength. That's also part of the journey—having people you can identify with, and realising you have to push to be heard.

Tell us a bit about how you see the national scene. Paradoxically, it seems like there are more and better bands than ever, but fewer and fewer places to play.

Susana: Look, as a self-managed band, we live this from the moment we wake up. Finding gigs while handling your own organisation is complicated—not just logistically, but also because of equal opportunities at venues.

Some venues see it as normal, given the current situation with reduced capacities and lack of support, to charge rental fees, plus a percentage of the box office, plus who knows what else. And on top of that, you have to do your own promotion, and if enough tickets aren't sold, the gig might get cancelled. On the other hand, it feels like only certain names get booked, because promoters understandably think those names will fill the venue. It's very complicated. We've been talking about this internally a lot lately—about "going back to the mud", but what is the mud? A band with five albums and a production truck might think they're going back to the mud, but for us, the mud is something else. And then there's this bad habit of thinking that the foreign act is always the one that sells out, while I'm worrying about how to pay four hundred euros for the venue—if I'm lucky—especially if it's in a capital city, or if there's a football match that day, or if it's raining. But if we thought too much about that, or about how much reissues or merch cost us, we wouldn't still be in Montana. Look, things are tough, but that's the reality.

Beto: I think this is the never-ending story—starting to talk about it at nine in the evening and finishing at five in the morning without having found a solution. Times have changed a lot. Before, only a few people could record albums because it was expensive, and you could only buy them in record shops, so everyone had to buy them to discover new music. Now anyone can record at home and everything's on Spotify or any other platform. Nowadays, those of us in rock 'n' roll are in it more for romantic reasons than for fame or money. We're here because music moves us. There is a niche, I won't deny that. There are people to reach. But everything changes so fast that it's impossible to draw clear conclusions. And we understand that promoters' job is to fill venues. Our job is to convince them that we can do that. In fact, the other day we played our first sold-out show at La Gramola in Orihuela, which was wild. Starting the tour like that is unbelievable.

To wrap things up: I understand that live shows are your element. What can we expect from a Montana Stomp concert? And above all—will it be soon?

Beto: Anything I tell you will probably be a lie, because like I said before, every day is a concert and every concert is new. So I don't want to lie to you—come and see it for yourself (laughs).

Marcos Sánchez
Fotos Andrea Silvan



Mani, and the Bassline That Walked Me Home



I never met Mani. But somehow, he was always there. He was there the first time "Fools Gold" came on at a party when I was 16, fresh out of school, just embarking on my photography career and too young to understand why it felt so important, only that it did. That bassline didn't announce itself, didn't shout for attention — it just arrived, confident, unshakeable, like it had always existed and always would. Mani taught me, before I knew the words for it, that the quiet ones often carry the most weight.

When the news came that Gary "Mani" Mounfield had died, it didn't feel like losing a distant rock star. It felt closer than that. Like losing a presence. Like a hum in the background of your life suddenly cutting out, leaving an unfamiliar silence. Mani's playing was never about ego. He didn't pose. He didn't grandstand. He walked. Those basslines walked alongside you — through teenage nights, cheap beer, long conversations, the optimism of youth and the ache that comes later when you realise how fleeting it all is. He was the spine of The Stone Roses, holding together beauty and swagger, psychedelia and street-level soul. Without him, the songs don't fall apart — but they don't breathe the same either.

I think about "I Wanna Be Adored" and how that bass feels like a heartbeat you can lean on. I think about "She Bangs The Drums", how joyful it sounds without ever tipping into stupidity. And of course "Fools Gold" — a song that didn't just define an era, but a way of moving through the world. That was Mani. Groove as philosophy. Cool without cruelty. Confidence without arrogance. When The Stone Roses fractured, like so many beautiful things do, Mani didn't disappear. He just kept going. Sliding effortlessly into Primal Scream, where he somehow became essential all over again. Different band, different energy — same grounding force. He could move between Madchester euphoria and industrial menace without ever losing himself. That's rare. That's instinct.

As fans, we talk about frontmen and guitar heroes, but Mani was proof that the foundation matters. He showed you don't need to shout to be heard, that holding things together can be as powerful as tearing them apart. His bass wasn't decoration — it was direction. Knowing now that he'd been quietly struggling with lung problems, that he died peacefully in his sleep, adds another layer of sadness. There's something cruel about a man so associated with breath, rhythm, movement, being taken by something that steals air. And yet, there's also something strangely gentle about the way he went. No drama. No spectacle. Just slipping away, as understated as he always was.

I think about his life beyond the music — about the love he had for his wife Imelda, about the loss he carried after she died, about the way grief reshapes you whether you're famous or not. It makes his playing feel even more human in retrospect. Like every note carried more than we realised at the time.

Mani didn't just help make great records. He helped make moments — the kind that stick to you. Nights where the song came on at exactly the right time. Drives where the bassline felt like company. Times when you didn't know what you were feeling, but the music did. Now, knowing he's gone, I keep going back to those songs. And the strange thing is, they don't feel like relics. They feel alive. They feel steady. They feel like him. Mani may have left the room, but the groove didn't.

Rest easy, Mani. Thanks for carrying us all those years.

Rhyan Paul

SERIE BOOTLEGS

Por Sob 2026



At the end of the year, things always turn up in drawers that have been sitting there for decades, and during a deep clean I've been doing, a show has just surfaced that I never expected to come across. Our beloved Duff and Matt from Guns N' Roses, together with Steve Jones from the Sex Pistols, and the great bassist John Taylor from Duran Duran, joined forces back in 1995 to raise some money for a friend of Matt's who had cancer, in order to help pay for treatment. That night at the Viper Room in Los Angeles marked the starting gun for what would soon become known as Neurotic Outsiders. They only released one album—but what an album.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. Before its release on Madonna's label (Maverick) in September 1996, they played a good number of shows as a resident band at the LA club, shaping what would become their debut between punk cover versions. Without even having anything recorded, they set off on a small tour during 1996 across several North American cities and even a few European ones, taking advantage of downtime in their respective bands: Guns N' Roses were on standby due to internal issues, the Sex Pistols had wrapped up their twentieth-anniversary tour, and Duran Duran were on a break in activity. At the same time, several members—Taylor and Duff among them—were returning to sobriety after years of excess.

So, with this line-up, they all went back to their roots: direct, punk-driven songs, full of adrenaline and high quality. On some nights, Iggy or Billy Idol joined the party—who better to make it complete? What we're bringing you in this issue is one of the few shows I've been able to find over the years. It's not complete, unfortunately, but even so it's twelve straight-up tracks that transport you to a small club in Pontiac, Michigan. What you hear here is completely real—nothing has been touched up. It's direct hits, energy flowing straight from the stage. Turn it up and enjoy this nineties gem buried in the sands of time. They didn't get together again until 1999, and later in 2006 for a few one-off shows. The band dissolved in 1997 due to the projects the four musicians were involved in. But anyway—turn it up and let this small sample of what those shows were like really shake the place!

And now I'll leave you with another little gem. Redd Kross have just announced their tour of Spain for 2026, specifically in May. It's an extensive tour that I hope you won't miss—they've got several dates, and surely one will be close to you. What I'm sharing here is a full concert recorded this past September during their joint tour with Melvins across the United States, specifically in Madison, Wisconsin. It's a long tour covering plenty of cities, but even though this show sits halfway through it, there's not a hint of fatigue—quite the opposite: electricity and more guitar slashes like blades cutting through big pop melodies. What can I say about this band that we don't already know? The magic and the electricity are there from the very first song to the final guitar strike that closes the show. It's a clean, high-quality recording. Turn it up, and what better way to end the night than with a big dose of energy.



Enjoy it as much as I did.


Si te gusta leernos, también
nos puedes escuchar
Rock Bottom Magazine
PODCAST
RBM
ESCÚCHALO EN
ivoox

SHE GOT THE TV EYE...



Historically, film and television adaptations of Stephen King's work have had wildly uneven luck. We've enjoyed masterpieces like Misery, Carrie, The Green Mile, The Shining (even if King wasn't happy with Kubrick's take, the result was monumental), or The Shawshank Redemption; but we've also had to endure disasters like The Dark Tower (what a waste—HBO should do something great with that material), Dreamcatcher (Jason Lee's grotesque scene is "unforgettable"), or the series Under the Dome, alongside many titles that hover around mere adequacy. In the case of It, King's 1990 novel that introduced the endearing Pennywise, attempts to bring it to the screen have been constant. While the 1990 miniseries was a first attempt that already started to disturb the sleep of those who hadn't dared read the novel, we had to wait until 2017 for a truly high-level adaptation. And once again, brought to us by HBO.

So much so that, just two years later in 2019, it got a sequel, It: Chapter Two. Pennywise—also the name of a well-known Californian punk band—had settled into the collective horror imagination, alongside Dracula, Frankenstein, Freddy Krueger or the Werewolf. And when it seemed the It universe had already given all it had to give (no small feat), along comes It: Welcome to Derry in 2025, undoubtedly one of the best television productions of recent years—not just in horror, but overall. Welcome to Derry is not a nostalgia exercise, nor a conventional prequel. It's an immersion into what King proposed in his novel: the real horror isn't the clown, it's the normalisation of evil. Pennywise exists because Derry allows it, and the city itself is the true protagonist of this magnificent series—Derry as a sick town, with It as its symptom.

One of the defining traits of King's Derry is its role as a narrative epicentre. In several of his novels, the town functions as a node where dark forces, bad human decisions and an atmosphere of fatalism converge. The series understands and amplifies this genealogy: Derry isn't just a setting, it's a character—with memory, wounds and unresolved debts. In Derry, tragedies don't disappear; they accumulate. Every family carries a story never fully told, and every silence feeds the reincarnation of evil in new forms. Welcome to Derry establishes a direct kinship with It and 'Salem's Lot: both depict communities where monstrosity thrives thanks to collective denial and fear of difference—the vampire or the clown are, in the end, just symptoms. The series avoids cheap scares and embraces a denser, atmospheric, almost psychological terror that King has always treated as a process rather than an interruption. Here, fear doesn't burst in—it seeps in.

Created by Jason Fuchs, the series gets anxiety under your skin from the very first moment. There's no respite, even if you don't fully understand what's happening. That vertiginous opening keeps you on edge throughout the season, with dazzling visual and narrative power. Cracks open not only into the twisted clown's underworld but into the community of Derry itself—looking like something out of an idyllic Back to the Future 1955 Hill Valley advert while The Chordettes' "Mr. Sandman" plays (not by chance), yet behind the scenes, the true evil is being forged.

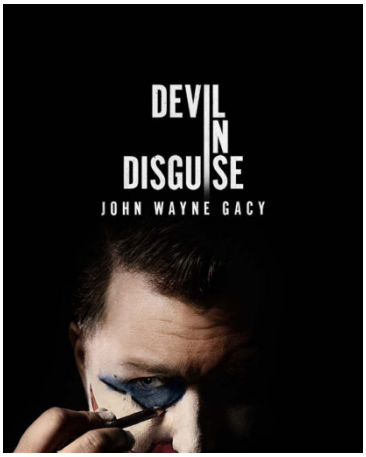
Narratively, Welcome to Derry is built on well-drawn human characters: children alone in the crowd; the military, always moving through half-truths; the Native community, guardians of the great secret… Everything simmers slowly, producing sequences that are both mesmerising and anxiety-inducing. We won't spoil anything, but some scenes are already television history. Idol Rich—enough said. What a guy.

It's also impossible not to feel the reverential respect Fuchs shows for King's macrocosm, famous for interconnecting his own universes. Derry itself is a recurring character, and although the series isn't written by King, encountering familiar elements makes you feel "at home". I won't spoil anything, but the obvious connection with The Shining is BRUTAL—and that's just the most evident example.

Welcome to Derry understands that monsters matter less than the context that creates them. The clown is terrifying, yes (watch Bill Skarsgård), but what really gets under your skin is Derry's inability to face what it has allowed for generations. The series respects and updates this idea without betraying it—no small feat in television adaptations. Ultimately, it's a series that provokes not just fear (though there's plenty), but deep unease—especially when you see a red balloon drifting by. Watch out.

Javistone

"Devil in Disguise: John Wayne Gacy"



Lately we've been "enjoying" several Netflix productions that recount the stories of famous serial killers. We had the excellent Dahmer about Jeffrey Dahmer; a less interesting one about the Menéndez brothers; and the most recent, about one of the great butchers of recent history, Ed Gein, in the failed Monster. The list of killers in Uncle Sam's land is long (you only have to look at the clown—this one without makeup—who's running the place now), but curiously, not long after Monster was released, we came across another work about one of the brightest stars in the serial killer firmament: John Wayne Gacy, notorious for counting his victims by the dozen and for his fondness for dressing up as a clown.

John Wayne Gacy was, quite simply, a sadistic piece of shit, incapable of the slightest empathy, probably suffering from some kind of (undiagnosed) psychological disorder that made him despicable beyond all limits—the man who inspired Stephen King to write It, one of the iconic clowns thanks to whom the term coulrophobia, fear of clowns, became widespread. Perfectly understandable after learning about Gacy, Pennywise, or Krusty. Devil in Disguise, from SkyShowtime, manages to approach this monster in an aseptic way, without falling into the grotesque or the easy option. There's no blood here, no horror scenes—"just" thirty-three official victims and not a single murder shown on screen. Violence is presented through a character who suggests a type of murderous madness but who, as the title rightly says, disguises itself—not necessarily under clown makeup, but under the appearance of a normal person: your neighbour, your boss, your partner. A fucking devil disguised as normality, exploiting it to satisfy his basest, most depraved and bloodthirsty instincts, with what's most disturbing being Gacy's own justification of himself, bewildered by his peers' lack of understanding.

The series plays with timelines, starting from the disappearance of a young man, Robert Piest, which leads Illinois police to arrest Gacy after discovering countless bodies buried beneath his house. Through detective Rafael Tovar (a brilliant performance by Gabriel Luna), all the rot



Paulie's Corner
Grand Moff Tarkin "Star Wars"



Increíble que el bueno del Grand Moff Tarkin no haya aparecido en esta sección antes, pocos personajes tan sádicos, fríos e hijos de puta como él han podido aparecer por las pantallas del cine o de la televisión. Un personaje que conocimos en 1977 en la primera entrega del universo Star Wars, "La guerra de las galaxias: Episodio IV - Una nueva esperanza" a través de una interpretación majestuosa en manos del actor británico, el coloso Peter Cushing, y que incluso superaba el desprecio que despertaba el mismísimo Lord Vader.

Tarkin, cuyo nombre es Wilhuff, nace en el mundo fronterizo de Eriadu, un planeta duro que no ayuda a que se desarrolle ningún angelito, que además termina ingresando en la academia de la República en la que destaca y asciende rápidamente hasta llegar al puesto de comandante. Como tal estuvo en las Guerras Clon en las que sobresalía por su eficacia pero, sobre todo, por la brutalidad con la que ejercía las operaciones. Y es que el bueno de Tarkin opinaba que la mejor herramienta para establecer y mantener el orden en la galaxia no era otra que el miedo, un instrumento mucho más fiable que la aburrida diplomacia. Una vez que el Imperio galáctico se establece tras la ejecución de la orden 66 con la que se acaba con la orden Jedi, Tarkin es nombrado Grand Moff, autoridad máxima en regiones enteras del borde exterior, con línea directa con el canciller Palpatine, que lo tiene en alta estima. Obviamente su poder en aumento hace que sus formas sean aún más severas y frías, su obsesión por erradicar la disidencia sobrepasa lo sádico y su implacable sentido del deber hace de él un ser terriblemente temible. De hecho, tal y como se ve en el "Episodio IV" debe ser el único que le echa huevos a Vader, poca broma esa. De hecho, se da el lujo de darle órdenes al Lord Sith más temible del universo, incluso muestra un absoluto desprecio por las antiguas técnicas de su orden.

Su historial es realmente aterrador. En la segunda temporada de la espectacular "Andor" cuentan cómo, aún siendo comandante, durante una protesta pacífica en el planeta Ghorman, un planeta famoso por sus tejidos, en lugar de entablar una negociación (los manifestantes se quejaban de los abusos económicos del Imperio), Tarkin decide "aplacar" la manifestación… haciendo descender su nave (de dimensiones considerables) sobre la plaza a sabiendas de que ahí se encontraba una multitud de ciudadanos indefensos, provocando una masacre terrible, imaginaos la chamusquina. Pero el "Incidente de Ghorman" se quedó en nada cuando una vez que ya tenía operativa la Estrella de la Muerte, decide probarla sobre el planeta Jedha, concretamente sobre la Ciudad Santa. Su devastación es casi instantánea pero de tal magnitud que la onda expansiva se ve incluso desde el espacio. Además, comprobada la eficacia de la estación, desplaza a Krennic (otro angelito) con una frialdad que hiela la sangre. Dicho esto, aún así, lo de Jedha queda en un juego de niños cuando al intentar sacarle información a Leia amenaza con disparar contra el planeta Alderaan, planeta natal de la princesa, al que ordena disparar aun habiendo conseguido la información. La aniquilación instantánea de un mundo entero y de sus miles de millones de habitantes hiela la sangre a pesar de ser una película.

La paradoja final es que Tarkin, en un exceso de confianza en sí mismo, termina siendo destruido junto a la Estrella de la Muerte en la batalla de Yavin a manos de la Alianza Rebelde. Un villano histórico, sin duda.

Javistone

surrounding Wayne begins to surface. Wayne spent years luring young men, then sodomising and murdering them, in a toxic mix of repressed homosexuality, childhood abuse and a rotten psyche. Through constant flashbacks, the series tries to make us understand what happened to each victim, while, as the police and judicial process unfolds, John Wayne Gacy develops a personality utterly incapable of understanding what he has done wrong. An immense Michael Chernus makes us feel as if we're dealing with the real Gacy, making us feel in our guts the desperation of dealing with someone like this—at times intelligent, occasionally charming, but always calculating, enigmatic, capricious, voluptuous and, truth be told, immensely charismatic. I repeat: Chernus is outstanding (nominated for several awards—inevitable), and what he does is deeply unsettling. And he does it without humanising the character, something that Monster did with Ed Gein, romanticising him and revelling in violence. Not only Chernus and Luna shine; Michael Angarano, as Gacy's first lawyer, is fantastic; Chris Sullivan (you have to pinch yourself when you realise he's Toby Damon from This Is Us) is brilliant as the prosecutor, stealing every scene he's in; Marin Ireland, as Robert's suffering, broken mother… With performances like these and restrained direction, Devil in Disguise works, even if it sometimes feels a bit uneven from episode to episode.

All in all, Devil in Disguise is a brilliant piece of work, without doubt one of the best series of the year. It presents one of the most disturbing and notorious figures in recent US history (incredibly, his paintings are collectors' items; he corresponded with people like Lux Interior or G.G. Allin; John Waters owns a painting by Gacy; and Marilyn Manson's original keyboardist called himself Madonna Wayne Gacy in his "honour"), and it renounces spectacle in favour of a more honest, colder and therefore more devastating portrait. When it ends, an unease remains: the certainty that evil rarely announces itself with fanfare—it prefers to whisper, blend in, and exploit the cracks of a system that always believes it has everything under control. And that, precisely there, is where the series hits hardest: in showing that normality is the abyss's best hiding place. What's truly disturbing isn't the exceptional, but the everyday—when terror appears out of nowhere.

Javistone

"Sueño de trenes"



Train Dreams is one of those films that moves forward without raising its voice, convinced that beauty and emotion don't need grand fireworks to cut deep. There's a serene, handcrafted beauty that advances through glances, silences and small gestures, as if every shot had been patiently polished, respecting the weight of time and the fragility of memory. It's cinema that trusts the viewer, that doesn't hold your hand to tell you what to feel, but leaves you space to inhabit the story.

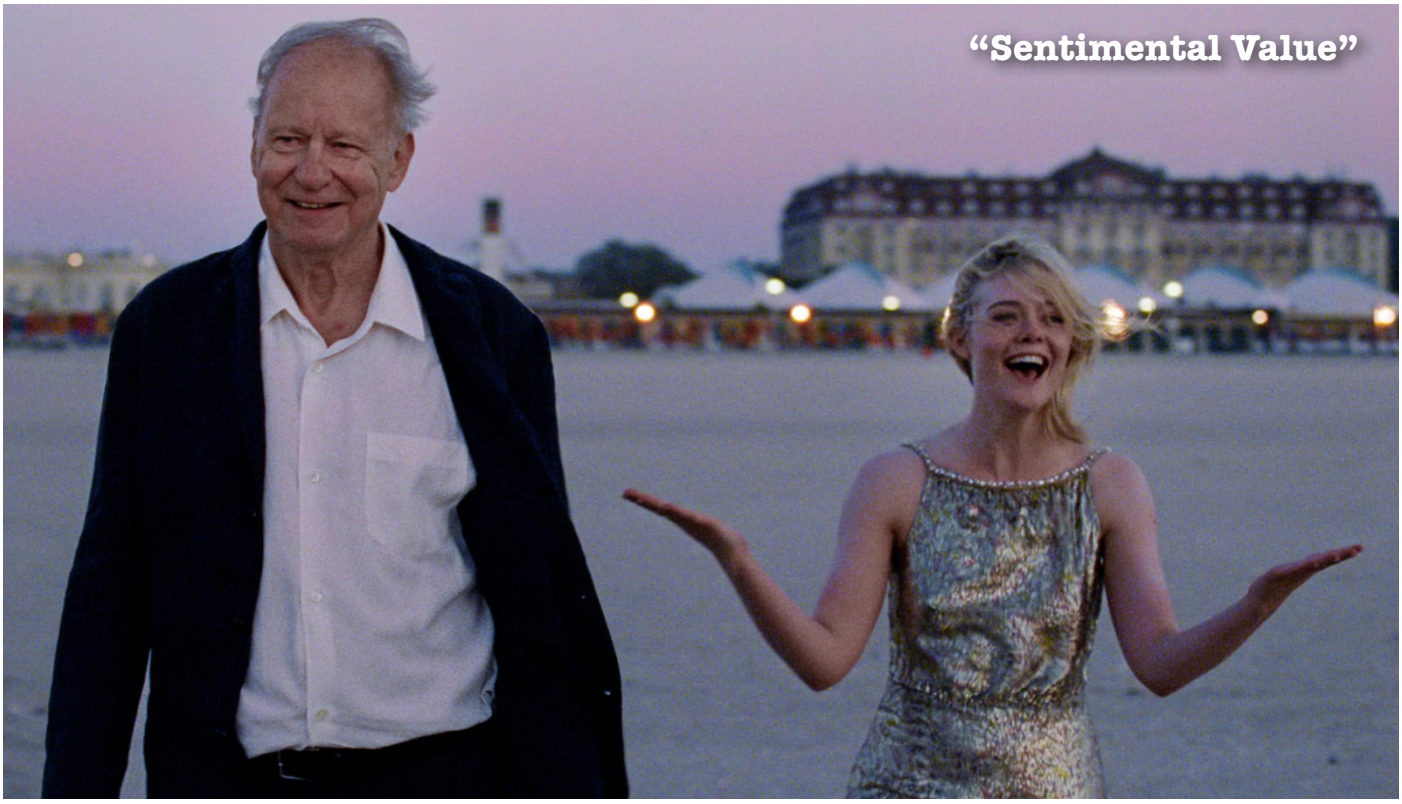
There's something about **Carlos Boyero** that puts many people off, but it's hard not to take notice when something genuinely moves him. One of his reviews in El País was enough for me to head straight to the platform in question (like Boyero, I believe Train Dreams deserves a big screen, not Netflix) and to feel every sensation he described. The film tells a simple life, marked by work, loneliness and the inevitable imprint of loss, doing so with admirable restraint—renouncing grand narrative devices and emphatic dialogue. Here, words matter less than the sound of wind through trees, the distant clatter of a train, or the stillness of a landscape that seems to observe its characters—and above all, less than the silence of loneliness.

Watching it, I couldn't help thinking of the wonderful book That Was My Steak, Valance!: The Counterculture Western in 20 Films by Andrés Rus and our dear Javier Sanabria, which centres on the twilight western. Twilight is what dominates Train Dreams, set in the final breaths of a way of life quietly coming to an end, while the life of a protagonist unfolds—one you suffer and laugh with, share his solitude and his muted but piercing pain. What moves most is the way the film portrays the everyday with touching subtlety, because the everyday contains everything: the ordinary and the extraordinary, happiness and sadness, family and solitude, life and death. Joel Edgerton delivers a superb, restrained performance, anchored in a deep gaze.

Visually, the film is extraordinarily delicate. Nature isn't mere scenery; it's another character, a silent witness to the passage of time and the inner transformations of the protagonist and of a society that surrounds him but doesn't embrace him, changing without regard for him. Some shots feel like moving paintings, but never lapse into empty prettiness—every frame serves the story and its melancholic, contemplative tone.

A film that stays with you long after the screen fades to black, like the distant echo of a train cutting through the night—especially when it bids farewell hand in hand with Nick Cave's "Train Dreams", letting the protagonist's story drift away gently, like a train leaving the station you've stepped off. The train has passed, the days too—but the images of Train Dreams remain with me.

Javistone



The director of the acclaimed The Worst Person in the World has returned this year, and with great force, with Sentimental Value. After the major successes of Sinners, One Battle After Another, and the already phenomenal Marty Supreme starring our Brad Pitt, Timothée Chalamet, this Norwegian film, which has not received a major promotional campaign, has quietly made its way among the standout films of the season. It already showed promise at Cannes and has not disappointed, having now appeared three times on the shortlist for the upcoming Oscars.

When people ask me what it is about, I usually don’t quite know how to describe a film that relies so heavily on the camera to tell its story, but I will try for you. Everything takes place in Oslo, where we meet our protagonist Nora and her sister Agnes. After the recent death of their mother, their absent father decides to try to make up for his abandonment by attempting to reconnect with his daughters. The plot begins when the father, Gustav, offers a role to his daughter, who is a theatre actress. When she rejects it, Gustav looks for an alternative in a famous actress. From this premise, the film explores themes of depression and personal growth in a powerful way. The greatness of this film lies in its simplicity. It does not try to be grand, it does not try to make you jump out of your seat; it tries to understand and move you through its rawness and realism, making you feel everything that happens to its protagonists.

From the very beginning, we are introduced to a narrator who recites a line that is the key to the entire film: “The house was poorly built from the start and, as a result, over time cracks began to appear in its walls, as an inevitable consequence of its weak foundations.” Through this, the film presents the metaphor of the house, which is central to the story. The metaphor compares the foundations on which the family was built, leading to people who have cracks, who are broken, who were not built properly. There is a magnificent shot in which, through light, a crack is projected onto the wall of the family home. **Joachim Trier** talks about how objects tell stories and define us, because a simple crack, a mark on a wall, or an old vase are not there because of natural forces; they carry sentimental value. For this reason, relationships with surroundings, context, and family history intertwine and emerge through the images.

As for the backbone of the film, the protagonists, I could talk about them for hours, but unfortunately I will have to be concise. **Renate Reinsve** reunites with Trier and once again delights us with a sublime performance. The Norwegian actress conveys through her expression the harsh life of this young woman and how broken she is. Her character does not feel loved due to the absence of a father figure and her bad luck in love, and we see how she leans on her sister, Agnes. Inga Ibsdotter Lilleaas makes a strong debut in a major film and exceeds expectations; we will see her on all the nomination lists. Her character has gone through the same as Nora, but she is doing better, she has an orderly life, and the reason for that is wonderful—but to understand it, you will have to judge for yourselves. What can be said about the incredible **Elle Fanning**, who is everywhere and deservedly so. She does not appear much, but when she is on screen she steals the show and gives us a scene worthy of being framed—goosebumps. Finally, the legendary **Stellan Skarsgård** delivers the performance of his career, an impeccable portrayal that has been the subject of jokes by his sons, the brilliant Bill and Alexander, who compare his performance to his real life due to his hectic lifestyle and his children’s acting careers, much like in the film. Stellan’s character is selfish; he planted the crack in his own house, but he tries to fix it because he is an intelligent character and, above all, he knows his daughters, despite the harm he has caused them.

Although, for me, it does not have a clearly defined climax, I would like to mention some of its standout scenes without spoiling anything for those of you who still plan to go to the cinema. The beach scene between Gustav and **Rachel Kemp** (Fanning) is beautiful and visually shows that the cinematography is a character in its own right. I loved the final scene and its nuances, and above all what I mentioned at the beginning: the film speaks for itself, it does not need words. And finally, the best scene of all, the conversation between Nora and Agnes towards the end of the film—absolutely beautiful.

An experience that I feel has changed me and made me appreciate many things. Without a doubt, the film of the year, and one that will be remembered for a long time.

Francisco La Rubia

Ian Haugland (Europe)
Four Decades Surviving the Final Countdown



Some time ago we managed to talk with Ian Haugland, the upbeat drummer of the Swedish band Europe. A band that achieved massive success in the 1980s, disappeared during the 1990s, and returned with renewed strength in the new century—still going strong today, celebrating the 40th anniversary of the release of their legendary The Final Countdown. The team at Metal N' Rock Radio got in touch with him to produce a monographic feature on the Swedish band and, along the way, publish this interview in our beloved Rock Bottom Magazine.

In the mid-80s you became a full member of Europe between Wings of Tomorrow and The Final Countdown, and during that period there is a noticeable change in the band's sound. For example, you are the only member besides Joey Tempest to sing on a song, "Carrie". To what extent do you think your arrival was a cause or a consequence of that change? Have you ever thought about re-recording your first two albums?

On the first two albums, Joey played all the keyboards, both in the studio and live, and keyboards were mainly used to "bring life" to the arrangements rather than being a carrying element in the song structure. When Mic (and I) became full-time members of the band, keyboards became a more significant and important creative source for the band's sound, and Mic—being a brilliant musician, songwriter and arranger—really became the spark that lit the fire. We re-recorded "Seven Doors Hotel" from the first album in 1985 as the B-side of the first single version of "Rock the Night", and we also re-recorded "Open Your Heart" from Wings of Tomorrow for Out of This World in 1988, but at the moment there are no plans to re-record those albums—we are focusing on writing songs for the band's next album.

When The Final Countdown became a worldwide hit and the band was subjected to constant media overexposure for many months, were you living the "rock star dream" or did you become disillusioned by all that pressure? You had a large female fan base and appeared on the covers of teen magazines alongside Modern Talking or Spandau Ballet. Did the band see this as a factor in your success, or did you ever feel it was getting out of hand? Because that led part of the rock audience to see Europe as not a "real" rock band—did you feel that? Did you feel the need to show who you really were?

The whole The Final Countdown experience was like a crazy rocket ride—everything happened so fast that we didn't have the chance to fully grasp how much success we achieved in such a short time. Of course, we were living the decadent rock star dream in every sense—we were young, full of testosterone and self-confidence, and very fortunate to have the world at our feet. I think the media did their best to present us as a "boy band" of the era, but anyone who attended our concerts or parties saw and felt that Europe was a band that truly rocked the world.

On your next album, Out of This World, you worked with a major producer like Ron Nevison, and even the cover photo was taken by Lynn Goldsmith. It sold well and had considerable impact, but logically it fell short of the overwhelming success of your previous album. Were you disappointed, or did you understand that this was normal after something as exceptional as The Final Countdown? How did management, record labels, etc. react? And as a curiosity—what do you think of the Out of This World cover?

We were very aware of the high expectations from the record company and the fans, but I don't think that affected us negatively at all—and working with producer Ron Nevison gave us even more confidence. Personally, I think Out of This World is one of the strongest albums we have ever made. We had songs like "Superstitious", "Sign of the Times", "Ready or Not" and "Let the Good Times Rock"—all classic tracks. Even though it didn't meet the label's sales expectations, we managed to make one of the strongest follow-up albums of the 1980s. I think the album cover is fine—five young rock gods that girls wanted to have and guys wanted to be! (Laughs).

In autumn 1991 you released Prisoners in Paradise and, like many rock albums by bands that had succeeded in the 80s, it went largely unnoticed outside your fan base. However, it's a very good album; some of us consider it superior to your previous records. Were you looking for that less polished production with Beau Hill, or did you foresee that this kind of melodic sound was coming to an end? Was Bob Rock ever considered to produce the album?

Prisoners in Paradise is probably my favourite album in many ways as well. Initially, we planned to rent a mobile studio and record it live without an audience in some cool theatre or something like that. We just wanted to refresh our sound and try to capture that "live on stage magic" that is so hard to find in a conventional studio. Unfortunately, the record company didn't like

the idea, thought it was too bold, and refused to support it. We tried to get Bob Rock as producer, but he was busy doing Metallica's Black Album, so we ended up working with Beau Hill. He was a great guy and producer, and I think he did a great job for us. Looking back, though, maybe we should have pushed harder for our live-recording idea—I personally think that production direction would have worked better in the 1990s.

With this 1991 album you did a short European tour in 1992 and then the band quietly disappeared. Was there a specific moment when the band got together and made that decision, or was it something you had already been considering? What did you think when you realised Europe was over? Many 80s bands either split up or tried to jump on the grunge bandwagon, changing their style and image. Did you ever consider that option? Seeing that, in every case, the result was insignificant or ridiculous, do you think you made the right choice?
Once the Prisoners in Paradise tour was over, we decided it was time to stop. We were exhausted after a decade of constant touring, record company pressure and management issues. We never considered adapting to the "grunge wave"—instead, we all agreed to take a lunch break… a very long lunch break!

After Europe's split in 1994, half the band—John Leven, Ian Haugland and yourself—became Glenn Hughes' backing musicians on From Now On, a revival album for Glenn Hughes that, fortunately, showed no grunge influence at all. How did that collaboration come about? What did it mean to you as a musician and as a fan? You also worked on projects like Brazen Abbot or Last Autumn's Dream—was that a way of staying active during difficult times?
One day I got a call from Glenn's manager saying they had fired the drummer and asking if I might be interested. I've always been a huge fan of Deep Purple, Trapeze and Hughes & Thrall, so it was a great honour for me to be part of the band. Shortly after joining, we went on tour in Japan, where we recorded the live album Burning Japan, which in my opinion is one of the best live albums of all time. It was an amazing experience playing all the classic Purple songs with one of the original members—and a huge confidence boost. During the 1990s we were involved in many different projects like Brazen Abbot, Clockwise and Last Autumn's Dream. I think it was good for me to broaden my horizons and learn to work with different musicians and approaches.

Considering that you, Ian and John had almost never stopped working together, how did the idea of reviving Europe come about? Was the New Year's Eve 1999 show the confirmation?
The Millennium show was definitely the first step towards the reunion in 2003. I guess we learned that every time we get together on stage, something very special and inexplicably amazing happens between us—something worth holding on to with tooth and nail.

In 2003 you returned with the classic line-up, but without nostalgia for the 80s sound, which was a risky move that could have alienated old fans. In fact, the album title itself was a statement of intent. How did you reach the conclusion that you couldn't fall into revival?
It would have been very easy for us to just go out and do the whole "nostalgia trip", playing the old hits and making The Final Countdown Part Two, but that was absolutely not what we wanted to do. We always felt that Europe's driving force was the willingness to explore new musical directions and territories, and to turn it into a musical journey that our fans could join. We love playing both new and old songs live, and it usually turns into an exciting, spicy, multi-flavoured rock 'n' roll stew.

Your second album of this new era, Secret Society, is considered by many of us to be our favourite 21st-century Europe album. You produced it yourselves, but you didn't repeat that formula—why? The only producer you've repeated with is Dave Cobb, a regular in American and country music. Why do you think you feel so comfortable with him?
Secret Society turned out to be a great album—one of our favourites—but it was extremely hard work for us to both play and produce it. To give 100%, you really need to focus on one or the other, which is why we haven't produced ourselves again since then. Besides being nice, cool and fun to work with, Dave Cobb is a great producer who always brings out the best performances from the band and has a great ear and ideas for getting the most out of a song.



> ***(With "The Final Countdown")..., we were living the decadent rock star dream in every sense—we were young, full of testosterone and self-confidence, and very fortunate to have the world at our feet!***

You've recorded six albums since your return, all with different sounds, but there is a segment of fans who miss the more melodic side of 20th-century Europe. Will you ever record something like that again, now that you're comfortable with a more classic hard-rock sound?
Personally, I think every Europe album is melodic in its own way—melodies have always been a key ingredient in our music. We never really decide in advance what the next album will sound like; we let the music guide us along the way.

How do you feel when you think that the band is over 40 years old and you're still doing this, being the same people who recorded The Final Countdown?
I think it's absolutely amazing that we're still together making new music and touring the world after all these years. It's even more incredible that throughout our lives we've managed to write songs that became soundtracks to so many people's lives around the world. I can only say that I feel truly humble and blessed by that.

How did the videos you recorded every Friday on your YouTube channel during lockdown come about? Who chose the songs and based on what criteria? What was life like for a musician during that period—were you restless?
The lockdown sessions were basically a way for us to have fun and stay connected with fans worldwide. We didn't really have any criteria for choosing songs, as long as we had fun playing them. The pandemic was a really tough time—not being able to play live in front of our fans and audiences almost drove me crazy—so it's exciting to be back on the road this summer celebrating the 40th anniversary of The Final Countdown.

One last question: a few years ago Europe was hired to play at the wedding of a famous Spanish footballer and a well-known TV presenter here in Spain (Pilar Rubio and Sergio Ramos). Are these kinds of performances common for the band, or was this a one-off?
We don't do that kind of show very often—only when there's a special occasion. And that definitely was one!

Metal N' Rock Radio
Foto de Rhyan Paul

NOVEDADES

Dom Mariani: “Apple Of Life” (Alive Natural Sound / Popstock!)

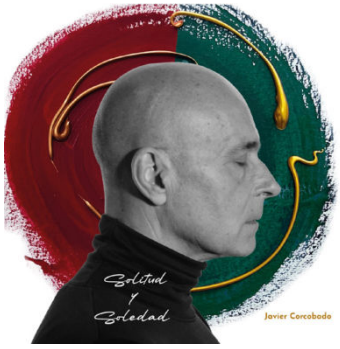


We are not going to fool you. We generally love Australian music. Among its most prominent names, for this writer, Dom Mariani has always stood out. He is a power-pop icon on the same level as The Chevelles, Hoodoo Gurus or Paul Kelly. But Dom is much more than that. Yes, he has led essential bands such as The Stems, DM3 or The Someloves. But his reach and songwriting go even further, and he already has half a dozen albums with the excellent psychedelic hard rock outfit Datura4. He has also had several other worthwhile adventures, and now, many years later, he has decided to resume his solo career with this highly recommended Apple Of Life. He had already made his solo debut in 2004 with the excellent Homespun Blues & Green, produced by the great Mitch Easter (R.E.M., Let’s Active). A fine power-pop album. Even then, Jeff Baker assisted him with many of the compositions. This time, Baker only contributes to two of the eleven new and outstanding tracks. Musicians of the calibre of Tony Italiano and Stu Loasby also return. But the one who shines brightest on the new album is Dom himself, handling a wide array of instruments, all the compositions, and the brilliant production. From “Breakaway” to “Jangleland”, this is pure delight for power-pop lovers, enriched by details such as Luke Dux’s pedal steel or Bob Patient’s Hammond organ and piano. A treat from a true great.

Txema Mañeru

Javier Corcobado: “Solitud y Soledad” (Intromúsica)

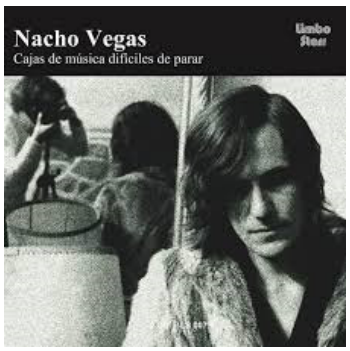
What a magnificent way to celebrate the 40th anniversary of his first album—with this double LP on different-coloured vinyl! His debut came with Demonios Tus Ojos and, after passing through the excellent Mar Otra Vez, he embarked on an extensive career of more than 35 years under his own name, with various line-ups backing him. This splendid double vinyl marks his official 20th album and includes a total of 20 songs. The ten tracks on the first LP are new and highly varied. It opens with the title track, a romantic and beautiful piece that



ends with Tormenta-style guitars reminiscent of Swans or The Stooges. The second LP features ten singles spanning all periods of his career, accompanied by duets as interesting as those with Nacho Vegas, Alaska, Andrés Calamaro, Aintzane with G de Gloria, Marc Gili (Dorian) and Jorge Martí (La Habitación Roja). The latter two are also label-mates on Intromúsica and, incidentally, Crear, celebrating La Habitación Roja’s 30th anniversary, is another of the year’s best albums. The new versions of “La Libertad”, “Desde Tu Herida” or “Carta Al Cielo” are a joy. He remains in love with Elvis, Raphael, Waits, The Stooges, Gardel, Velvet Underground, Spacemen 3 or Sandro—and it shows. Completely in shape and completely relevant.

Txema Mañeru

Nacho Vegas: “Cajas de Música Difíciles de Parar” (Limbo Starr)



What a luxury! One of the key works by Asturian singer-songwriter Nacho Vegas, and his first double album, now presented in an edition that will be a delight for his many followers and for collectors alike. Issued as a triple dark-green vinyl set, with finely remastered sound. Limbo Starr take advantage of the fact that his new album is about to be released—and we are very much looking forward to it. This treat brings together several songs that would later prove essential in his career, with echoes of greats such as Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, Townes Van Zandt or Swans, to name just a few. Nearly two hours of pure magic and deep darkness, further enhanced by an exceptional bonus track in this edition: the blazing “El Fulgor”. The experience opens with the expansive, psychedelic, oppressive “Noches Árticas”, already moving within those territories between Nick Cave and Michael Gira’s universe. We could dissect all 21 tracks (now expanded), but it suffices to recall wonders such as “En El Jardín De La Duermevela” with its unease, or the absolute classic “En La Sed Mortal”, marked by its sadness and the accordion so present throughout the album. There are several slow-motion waltzes, like the powerful story told in “Historia De Un Perdedor”, or the expansive folk-punk finale of “La Canción De La Duermevela”. It was voted best album of the year by Rockdelux and the third best of the decade—and we are not surprised at all.

Txema Mañeru

Fermín Muguruza: “Madrid 15-02-2025. Akelarre Antifascista” (Elkar)



A truly great live album, serving as the crowning achievement of his 40th anniversary tour. Released as a double CD with booklet or a triple vinyl set, featuring a total of 39 songs spanning his entire career. Most of the tracks are from his solo work, but there is also a generous selection from Kortatu and Negu Gorriak. Collaborations abound, including Dut and The Suicide Of Western Culture, alongside the many and magnificent contributions of Begoña Bang-Matu, Tremenda Jauría, Karlitos Animal (Non Servium), Quinndy eta Kuma, Itziar Ituño (yes, the actress and also a fine singer with her band Ingot), Watani Group from Palestine, and the beautiful Spanish verses of Jon Maia. As always, he is backed by his extensive, complete and powerful band. Recorded in Madrid in front of more than 15,000 people, the sound is forceful and the setlist packed with essential classics such as “Hay Algo Aquí Que Va Mal”, “La Línea del Frente”, “In-Komunikazioa”, “Big Beñat”, “Nicaragua Sandinista” (with Tremenda Jauría), “Radio Rahim”, and the final celebration with Kortatu’s “Sarri, Sarri”, joined by Itziar Ituño. It is also worth recommending a similar release in double CD and triple LP format titled La Línea Del Frente – A Tribute To Fermin Muguruza (Sabor

Discos / Lucha Armada). This one features 34 tracks, naturally with several overlaps. Among those paying tribute are Massilia Sound System, Amparanoia, Esne Beltza, Karamelo Santo, Zea Mays, Los Argonautas, Tremenda Jauría and La Basu. Both releases come with excellent and comprehensive booklets.

Txema Mañeru

Vidala: "Una Historia Americana" (Frémeaux & Associés)



No follower of the finest Latin American singer-songwriter music should miss this little gem. Seven outstanding French musicians and singers performing some of the best and most popular songs by Violeta Parra, Víctor Jara and Mercedes Sosa. There is hardly any need to explain further. These are liberating songs, rich in symbolism and, in some cases, historical resonance. Who has not been moved by "Si Se Calla El Cantor", the powerful and uncompromising "A Desalambrar", the romantic "Te Recuerdo Amanda" (the latter two among Víctor Jara's most absolute classics), "Siembra", "A Víctor Jara" (their own contribution and tribute), "Que Viva La Libertad" or the legendary and deeply emotional "Gracias A La Vida"? Séverine Soulairès' powerful voice and guitars stand out, but there are several other fine singers and moving spoken passages such as those delivered by Sophie Bonnin. Emotion and class in abundance.

Txema Mañeru

Maria Iskariot: "Wereldwaan" (Montgrí)

Without a doubt, the independent and self-managed label Montgrí is devoted to some of the best bands in the country connected mainly to punk and related sounds. That does not stop them from releasing artists as unclassifiable as Lorena Álvarez or reviving veterans such as Manos de Topo. Now, with sound judgement and total logic, they present their second international release after the very special Austin TV. This time it is the Dutch band Maria Iskariot, who have clearly hypnotised, captivated and seduced the label. It was not difficult, given their truly punk proposal overflowing with genuine rage. They say the spark for this project came after seeing a video of the band performing their raw track "Leugenaar". Yes, they sing in Dutch (or more precisely, Flemish), but it is easy to internalise their powerful message simply by paying attention to the sound and the fury they unleash. Leading the project is the multifaceted



Helena Cazaerck—a journalist, poet and political activist brimming with charisma. Others joined her and her chaos, and together they have built something truly special and powerful. Very punk, and very current.

Txema Mañeru

Los Radiadores: "¡Están Vivos! En el Fillmore Huertano" (Osadía Ediciones / Bonavena Música)



The Valencian band had to release a live album at some point, and now they have. Riding the wave of their excellent Sorbos de Electricidad (Bonavena Música), they have brought to the stage a flawless fifteen-year career, more than 150 concerts, five LPs and three EPs. They do so with an impressive presentation in Digibook format, including two booklets—one wonderful, featuring concert posters, and another with a beautiful artwork—making it a visual delight as well. Recorded with great sound at the Fillmore Huertano last year, the album is released featuring 15 of their best songs. The guitars of Tamarit and Nova collide, once again bringing to mind The Clash, PVP, Siniestro Total, Ramones or Parálisis Permanente. In fact, it is striking that the album's only two cover versions are by Eduardo Benavente's band. On one hand, they deliver a sinister yet forceful take on "Esto No Es". And to close, they tackle "Quiero Ser Tu Perro" by The Stooges, also famously recorded by Parálisis Permanente. They kick off, as they like to, with "Contra el Asfalto". There is no shortage of rebellious punk like "Moriré Más Por Ti", confessions such as "Manual de Supervivencia", the very punk "Ya No Somos Jóvenes" or "La Hora De Las Confesiones". In "Luna Roja", their beloved Joe Strummer and Joey Ramone loom large. Congratulations on the career and on this spectacular, hard-hitting live album.

Txema Mañeru

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PODCAST

LIBROS

“Error de continuidad”, Ernesto Garratt (Ediciones Lastarria y De Mora)



The Madrid-based publisher Ediciones Lastarria y De Mora is a guarantee of quality, specialising in Latin American literature, and once again it does not disappoint. This Error de continuidad, by Chilean author Ernesto Garratt, is a fantastic example of exactly that. I am not sure whether to describe it as entertaining, because there are so many nuances that labels such as “entertaining”, “tragicomedy” or “bitter” fall short of doing Garratt’s work justice. While the excess of local expressions may occasionally distract Spanish readers, the narrative is so fluid that it is impossible not to be drawn in from the very beginning, following the misadventures of Daniel Villanueva from the moment he hurls, with unusual force, a rabbit—his autistic daughter’s pet—against a wall. What seems like a strange starting point (because it is), in the hands of a continuity specialist in low-budget Chilean films, takes on an unexpected coherence—precisely one of continuity… or not. I can say little more without spoiling the plot, which, as mentioned, plunges into a journey of inconsistencies where Scarlett Johansson mingles with Back to the Future (beware—Eric Stoltz as Marty McFly), Star Wars, or even Verano azul. Threaded throughout are barely concealed critiques of Chilean society, dismantling with sharp irony the rigid social structures that shape life in post-Pinochet Chile. An exquisite book—at times hilarious, at times bitter—without question, essential reading.

Javistone

José Galván: “Extraños en la Noche. La Historia de UFO y Michael Schenker” (Lenoir)

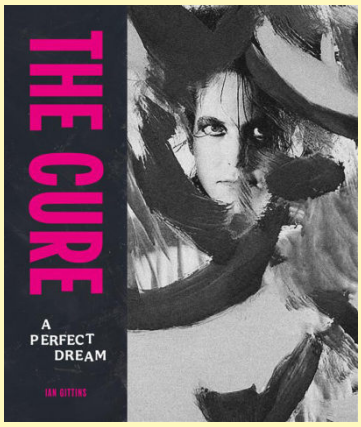
The author makes it very clear that the bond between the British band UFO and the German guitar ace (one of the greatest of all time) Michael Schenker is indisputable. It is true that it is impossible to think of UFO without



also thinking of the unmistakable voice of Phil Mogg, the only constant presence across the band’s many line-ups. Schenker is a guitarist with unmatched brilliance and melodic sense, who would also carve out his own path, particularly at the helm of the Michael Schenker Group. All the classic albums are discussed here: Phenomenon, Force It, No Heavy Petting, Lights Out, Obsession, Mechanix, Walk On Water, Covenant, Sharks, You Are Here, and the legendary Strangers in the Night, already referenced in the book’s explanatory Prologue. Of the latter, Heavy Rock magazine once said it was “an album Frank Sinatra would have liked to record”. With a fine sense of humour, no less.

Schenker’s own catalogue is also covered, including The Michael Schenker Group, Save Yourself, M.S.G., Resurrection, Gypsy Lady, Immortal, Assault Attack, and the incredible One Night at Budokan. Naturally, there is ample space devoted to the darker side of the story: alcohol, drugs, walkouts, fights, and several spectacular failures across six decades of history. Schenker emerges as a perfectionist obsessed with assembling a band capable of blending power and melody with elegance. Elegance is also evident in the presentation, with five pages of UFO photos and sixteen of MSG. Added to this are three pages featuring UFO album covers and four more covering the rest of the saga. The beautiful cover illustration is once again by the ever-reliable Miquel Serratosa. Chapters analysing “The UFO Crew” are included, along with an extensive discography and the now-standard QR code with music and additional information.

The book bears the signature of the prestigious José Galván, who in this case delivers a substantial 440 pages. A true expert in the genre, he has previously authored three other highly recommended volumes for Lenoir: El Legado de Duane on the Allman Brothers, Un Mundo Púrpura. Biografía Completa de la Saga Purple on Deep Purple (with two editions,



the second expanded), and more recently Bajo el Arco Iris. Ritchie Blackmore’s Rainbow, a worthy companion to the Purple tome.

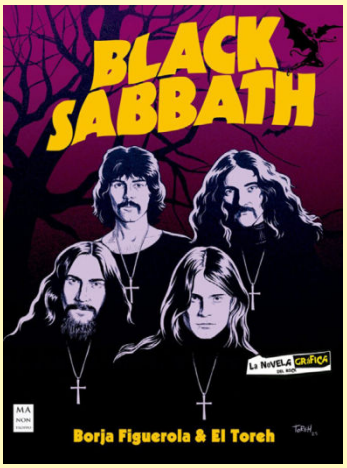
Txema Mañeru

Ian Gittins: “The Cure: Un Sueño Perfecto” (Blume)

This is an updated edition of Ian Gittins’ excellent book, first published in 2018. It arrives at a time when this great and classic band is approaching its 50th anniversary and just over a year after the release of their latest—and unexpectedly excellent—album, Songs of a Lost World, which this expanded edition now reaches. We are talking about absolute reference points in alternative rock and post-punk. A total of 256 large, colourful and visually striking pages devoted to Robert Smith’s band, who have sold over 30 million records worldwide. All of this comes with the authoritative voice of Ian Gittins, who has interviewed The Cure and written about their albums for more than thirty years in prestigious publications such as Melody Maker, Time Out, Q and The Guardian.

The photographic section is once again a delight, featuring images that even span full pages. Among them, one stands out showing Robert Smith alongside Lou Reed, David Bowie and Billy Corgan. A truly unique band that may not have enjoyed continuous mainstream success, but has had countless remarkable moments. Their live performances, meanwhile, have consistently risen above mere excellence. A band that has always evolved while maintaining its gothic and emotional essence.

The book also recounts moments of tension and fierce internal disputes, including a hard-fought legal battle over profits and ownership of the band’s name. Added to this are accounts of alcoholism, drug addiction, and countless long, dark nights of the soul. Naturally, there is extensive coverage of key albums such as Seventeen Seconds, Pornography, Disintegration, and the more commercial



yet brilliant The Head on the Door. An ideal companion for revisiting these records, and it makes sense that The Cure are one of the few bands featured in Blume's lavish book catalogue despite not having emerged from the prolific 1960s.

Txema Mañeru

Borja Figuerola / El Toreh: "Black Sabbath: La Novela Gráfica" (Redbook)

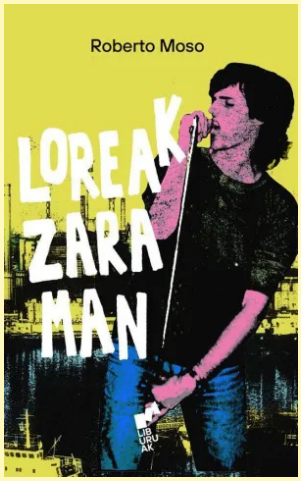
It is unclear whether the creation of this long-awaited and beautiful graphic novel was prompted by the death of Ozzy Osbourne or had already been in the works for some time. Borja Figuerola's strong writing had previously been combined with El Toreh's spectacular artwork in an earlier volume of this stylish and youth-oriented collection, starring Iron Maiden. Borja was also responsible for Redbook's biography of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, as well as their corresponding graphic novel. Coincidentally, Ozzy Osbourne himself had previously been the subject of another appealing graphic novel, by David Braña and Ángel Bernuy, a little over four years ago. Black Sabbath, for their part, also rightly featured in the Mitos del Rock & Roll collection.

Focusing on this graphic novel, it offers a thorough analysis of the rise of the Birmingham band to the Olympus of rock: the legend of Black Sabbath. Borja does not shy away from dissecting the excesses driven by internal chaos, as well as the genius of Ozzy and Tony Iommi in particular. He also precisely captures the decisive moments that forged their distinctive sound, consecrating them as the undisputed fathers of Heavy Metal, with capital letters. Their legacy and the many great bands that followed in their footsteps are also explored here. They were fierce fighters who embraced the sinister and the horror-infused side of rock 'n' roll, something we also relish in both the text and El Toreh's superb black-and-white illustrations.

It is also worth recommending the graphic novel released simultaneously on QUEEN, featuring contributions from various prestigious international authors—more than fifteen volumes have already appeared in the collection. This particular publication is special, as it comes in a larger format, with hard covers, more pages and more text than ever before, reaching 162 pages on luxury paper. Between these two current options, I personally choose the godfathers of Heavy Metal.

Txema Mañeru

Roberto Moso: "Flores en la Basura" (Liburuak)



This book is one of the most important works ever written in relation to Basque Radical Rock. It is the second book by Roberto Moso, singer of Zarama among many other roles, and perhaps the most significant he has written. He had previously published the highly recommended Puto Boomer with Liburuak, already notable for its sharp sense of humour. This book takes as its starting point the formation, life and breakup of his band Zarama, but it also serves to trace his personal growth on every level. It connects directly with Basque Radical Rock and is an ideal complement to revisiting Javier "Jerry" Corral's successful Juventud y Rebeldía.

Within the pages of Flores en la Basura we also encounter Eskorbuto, La Polla Records, their main "rivals" Hertzainak, and many other smaller bands with whom they shared stages. The prologue is written by another historic figure, Roge Blasco. The book includes a short comic and several curious photographs. Eskorbuto are given a full, extensive chapter under their own name, packed with anecdotes. Towards the end, there is a section titled "Tribute to The Who", recalling not only their attitude but also figures such as Jimi Hendrix and The Yardbirds. The story is told of how they nearly smashed a guitar but instead destroyed a beautiful and valuable Farfisa organ. Angus Young and Bon Scott are also remembered, along with a reflection on their "healthy" rivalry with Hertzainak for the crown of Basque-language rock bands—Roberto fairly acknowledges how Hertzainak eventually surpassed them. The book closes with a final "encore" consisting of two epilogues: "Volver a Tocar", about their reunion, and "The Last Waltz", a cinematic ending referencing great films and concluding with words from Billy Wilder's Sunset Boulevard. A brilliant decision to bring this key book back into circulation, especially for Basque music, as it was very hard to find. Part of the Bihotza (Heart) collection.

Txema Mañeru

Victoria Bermejo: "Conocerlo Es Amarlo. Las Entrevistas de Cairo" (Efe Eme)



Continuing with quality comics, this beautiful book centred on the legendary comics magazine Cairo is well worth mentioning. It appears within Efe Eme's InterMITENTE collection. Among its eight issues, four contributions by Raúl Núñez stand out, should you wish to explore further.

"Conocerlo Es Amarlo" was the name of the magazine's interview section, one of the most innovative in 1980s comics publishing. Its subtitle was La Línea Clara and it was directly aligned with the classic Franco-Belgian school of comics. A solid prologue is provided by Álvaro Pons. The interviewees are treated as expert, established artists, despite most of them being beginners at the time. The list includes: Coll, Daniel Torres, Gallardo, Guillem Cifré, Ignacio Molina, Micharmunt, Mique Beltrán, Montesol, Pere Joan, Ramón de España, Roger, Sento and Tha. Each chapter features excellent titles, full of humour and wordplay. Photographs of all the artists are included, along with the covers of most issues of Cairo. A highly enjoyable 158 pages featuring Victoria Bermejo's section, offering insight into the creators of what was aptly named the "Neotebeo". These are serious interviews, but also rich in subtle humour, opening new paths in comics away from swords, fantasy, eroticism or superheroes. A dozen young creators plus the master Coll. Fans of high-quality comics—especially La Línea Clara—still miss this great magazine and many of its standout authors.

Txema Mañeru

The Waterboys at Roig Arena: A long night of sea-swell songs and weathered joy



By the time Mike Scott and his rotating constellation of Waterboys walked back off the Roig Arena stage on 5 December 2025 (one of two sold-out nights at the venue after the band first played the auditorium on 28 November), it felt like Valencia had been given a concentrated dose of everything that makes this band enduring: theatrical drama, folk wind, rock thrust and the oddly consoling gravity of songs that insist on being sung back. The shows — part of a run that included dates in late November and early December and with a bigger Fisherman's Blues Revue announced for 2026 — were classic Waterboys medicine: rowdy, reverent, occasionally magisterial and always led by Scott's restless, literate presence.

Formed by Scottish songwriter Mike Scott in 1983, The Waterboys are less a fixed lineup than a long-running project with a fluid roster; Scott is the only permanent member. Their sound has travelled a long arc — from the "Big Music" anthems of the mid-1980s (the era that produced This Is the Sea and the towering single "The Whole of the Moon") to the raggle-taggle folk and Irish-tinged reinvention of Fisherman's Blues (1988), through multiple stylistic shifts since. Across four decades the band draws on post-punk drama, Celtic and American roots, and a songwriter's appetite for the cinematic and the confessional. Recent years have found Scott balancing archival celebration (reissues, anthologies) with new work — most notably ambitious projects like the 2025 concept album Life, Death & Dennis Hopper — while continuing to tour with musicians who can move easily between fiddle-led reels and big-guitar crescendos.

It's hard to imagine a more appropriate setting for this kind of expansive, multi-mood concert than the Roig Arena. Opened in September 2025 and funded and championed by local magnate Juan Roig, the venue is Valencia's new flagship indoor arena: modular, huge (advertised capacities range up to roughly 20,000 for 360° shows and about 15,000 for seated sporting events), and designed to stage everything from basketball and the Copa del Rey to large-scale music events. For artists, the arena's technical kit and configurable spaces mean that a Waterboys show that moves between intimate, folk-room textures and full-on rock climaxes can be presented without losing either detail or scale. In practice at these shows, the Roig Arena's acoustics and the auditorium configuration used for the two Waterboys performances mostly succeeded in keeping the band's quieter moments audible and their bigger moments thrilling.

If you've followed The Waterboys through their many reinventions you know the scoreboard: their concerts live or die by the way arrangements breathe — whether anthemic synths and trumpet lines from the Big Music era swell into communal epics, or whether the band can pivot into low lights, fiddle and accordion for songs that require a different kind of attention. The Roig Arena presentation managed both. The nights alternated between glorious, full band surges (a muscular "The Whole of the Moon" that landed with the expected roar) and hushed, almost sacred readings (a spare "How Long Will I Love You?" and plaintive readings from the Fisherman's Blues songbook). The setlists across the dates leaned into variety rather than predictability, mixing chestnuts like "Glastonbury Song," "This Is the Sea" and the crowd-rousing "Don't Bang the Drum" with gems and deeper cuts.

Musically the band onstage felt unusually tight for a lineup that can change from night to night. Mike Scott remains a commanding frontman: theatrical and impulsive in equal measure, never shy of address or anecdote, and still able to wring emotional nuance out of familiar phrases. The rhythm section provided both swagger and subtlety, while multi-instrumentalists moved between guitar, keys, fiddle and mandolin with the kind of ease that makes transitions feel organic rather than staged. A highlight across the shows was the way the band threaded violin and traditional instrumentation into larger rock arrangements — a reminder that the Waterboys' blend of rock and Celtic hues is not a gimmick but a central compositional idea.

Setlist archives from the nights show a pleasing mixture: opener staples and mid-set slow burners appeared alongside show-closers that were crafted for singalongs and catharsis. Songs that frequently made the set included "Glastonbury Song," "How Long Will I Love You?," "Medicine Bow," "Fisherman's Blues," "This Is the Sea," and a potent rendition of "The Whole of the Moon." The band also slipped in rarities and covers (on one night the band touched on Dylan-adjacent Americana moments and a surprising nod to a guitarist's roots in Steve Earle's repertoire appeared on the bill for future shows under the Fisherman's Blues Revue framing). Those who treasure variety left satisfied; those there for the classics got them served in generous helpings.

Mike Scott's voice — worn and weathered but characterful — has lost little of its drama. Where it has matured is in the way he chooses to inhabit songs rather than merely deliver them; phrasing was often conversational and theatrical in turn, pulling the audience into the lyric's story. Instrumentally, the band's arrangements at Roig

Arena were astute: loud when the song demanded it, restrained when it required tenderness. The mix was mostly sympathetic to the band's shifting textures: fiddle and acoustic guitar came through with clarity during intimate passages, while the electric guitars and brass swelled cleanly in climactic moments. A few times — typical in converted arenas — the low end threatened to blur during the biggest crescendos, but these were brief and didn't materially damage the drama.

There's a particular alchemy to Waterboys crowds: they're intergenerational and unusually participatory. At Roig Arena the audience ranged from longtime fans who knew the lyrics line-for-line to younger attendees drawn in by the band's renewed visibility and recent records. Across both nights, singalongs to the major refrains turned the arena into a kind of communal chorus; when Scott coaxed stories from the crowd the response felt sincere rather than performative. After the shows, the exit streams were full of people trading favourite moments and setlist takes — the sign of two shows that landed deeper than a one-off ticket purchase.

Production choices were economical rather than indulgent. Lighting emphasized mood shifts: warm amber and narrow beams for intimate numbers, wide washes and strobes for the climaxes. Visuals were used sparingly, allowing the band's musical dynamics to remain the focal point rather than relying on spectacle. That restraint served the Waterboys' aesthetic well; their music lives in narrative and texture more than in flash, and the Roig Arena staging respected that.

These Roig Arena concerts arrived at an interesting moment for the band. On one hand, Scott and co. are caretakers of a back catalogue that contains songs many consider classics of late-20th century British/Irish rock. On the other, they're still actively working — releasing ambitious new material and planning themed revues (notably the Fisherman's Blues Revue slated for 2026) that suggest Scott is more interested in re-excavating and reframing his material than in fossilising it. The Valencia shows felt less like rote nostalgia and more like living performances: the band continues to interrogate its past while still making music that can surprise.

If the night had a flaw it was the occasional tension between arena scale and the band's quieter instincts. There were moments when a song's intimacy might have been better served in a theatre or smaller hall; the Roig Arena configuration used for the Waterboys largely solved this, but not perfectly. A couple of transitions felt slightly long, and on occasion the setlist choices leaned just a little toward crowd-pleasing safety instead of radical recontextualization — tiny complaints in the context of two very strong shows, but worth noting for purists who prefer the band's more exploratory detours.

Taken together, the Waterboys' recent Roig Arena concerts were an emphatic reminder that Mike Scott's project remains one of modern rock's most interesting balancing acts: simultaneously a band with a revered past and a restless, living creative engine. The combination of respectful production, a flexible and skilled band, and a venue capable of holding both intimacy and scale made for nights that felt important — not because they were spectacular in a flashbulb sense, but because they confirmed that songs with genuine narrative and emotional heft still land in large rooms when performed with conviction.

For those who have loved The Waterboys for decades, the Valencia shows offered catharsis and fidelity; for newer listeners, they were an effective gateway into a catalogue that continues to reward repeated listening. And for the Roig Arena, hosting well-executed, sold-out nights by bands like The Waterboys is an early statement of intent: this is a place where careful programming and solid production can turn a long career into renewed communal memory.

Text & photos by Rhyan Paul

Larkin Poe, Razzmatazz (Barcelona): "If God Is a Woman, the Devil Is Too"

Sisters Rebecca, Jessica and Megan Lovell, natives of Atlanta, Georgia, began studying music at a very young age. Passionate about bluegrass and American roots music, they formed The Lovell Sisters in 2004 and released two albums. In 2009, Jessica decided to step away from music, and Rebecca and Megan went on to form the band Larkin Poe, taking the name of their great-great-grandfather, a cousin of writer Edgar Allan Poe. Since then, they have released eight albums, several EPs and toured extensively around the world, revisiting a more accessible, easy-listening blues with a rock spirit, without leaving behind bluegrass or country influences.

There were many occasions when we tried to see them live, and finally we managed to do so on November 15 at Barcelona's Razzmatazz club, a venue I personally hadn't returned to in almost a decade. Before the Lovell sisters took the stage, we were treated to the elegant rhythm and blues and soul of Son Little, the stage name of Aaron Earl Livingston, a musician from Philadelphia who has collaborated with The Roots. His performance evoked memories of Michael Kiwanuka or Gary Clark Jr., delivered with an intensity that immediately drew us in.

At exactly 8:30 p.m., a pre-recorded voice thanked us for being there in the packed venue and invited us to enjoy the evening. The lights came up to reveal a floral, distinctly Southern-looking stage, accompanied by a carousel of classic songs (Pete Seeger, Dolly Parton, Tom Petty and Jerry Reed) playing as the band took their positions. Rebecca and Megan then came out and immediately took over the stage, launching into "Nowhere Fast" from their album Bloom, which they were touring in support of (and which we reviewed in the previous issue). It must be said that the sisters' stage presence is enormous: Megan appears more shy and restrained, while Rebecca is incredibly engaging and cheerful. Between them, there are countless gestures, knowing looks and signs of genuine passion and sisterly love that make it impossible not to smile throughout the show. Finally, siblings from Atlanta who openly show affection for one another. "Mockingbird" follows, then "Easy Love Pt. 1", both also from Bloom, with Rebecca firmly established as master of ceremonies, interacting repeatedly with the audience. Megan, meanwhile, never stops smiling, especially when "Summertime Sunset" arrives and makes it clear that behind the sisters there are three highly skilled musicians: Brent Lyman on bass, Benjamin Satterlee on drums, and Lucas Pettee on keyboards, whose jaw-dropping solos engage in a cosmic duel with Megan's lap steel guitar. This is a band that clearly has countless hours of work behind them. An absolutely committed audience—noticeably with a strong female presence—youthful energy in abundance, and a real desire both to enjoy themselves and to entertain others are the key ingredients of a concert that runs flawlessly from start to finish.

Two new songs from their latest album, the energetic "Bluephoria" and "If God Is a Woman", both introduced very effectively by Megan (who highlighted her sister's achievement in barely stepping off the stage during her pregnancy and returning to the same working rhythm just two months after giving birth), mark what was, for me, the standout moment of the show. After a short pause and a brief speech by Rebecca, in which they praised the Southern values they were raised with and the music they listened to as children, the band set aside their instruments



to improvise an acoustic set. With guitar, mandolin, banjo and percussion, they delivered three bluegrass versions of "Southern Comfort", "Little Bit" and "Devil Music" (with a dedication to Ozzy included) that completely turned the room upside down, earning the loudest ovations of the night. From there on, it was full speed ahead and smooth sailing into the most rock-oriented part of the concert, with "Bad Spell", "Pearls", "Wanted Woman" and the closing "Bolt Cutters & The Family Name".

An outstanding evening offered by a young band that conveyed its enthusiasm at every moment and managed to bring an authentic Southern honky-tonk atmosphere to a Barcelona night.

Marcos Sánchez

Interview with Kelly Walsh (Ex-wife of CJ Snare from Firehouse)

Living Rock as a Family



At first glance, the name Kelly Walsh may not ring any bells, but a little digging reveals her strong connection to the world of rock. Kelly was married for several years to CJ Snare, the former vocalist of the American band Firehouse, who enjoyed major success in the early 1990s. Kelly spent many years touring with the Virginia-based band. The Metal N' Rock team got in touch with a friendly and approachable Kelly, who kindly agreed to answer a full set of questions that we are delighted to share with our flagship magazine, Rock Bottom Magazine.

How and when did you meet CJ and Firehouse? How did Firehouse come into your life?

I met CJ on the night of 21 April 1991 in Vancouver, Canada, at a very popular rock club called Club Soda. Firehouse were playing there the night before leaving for Japan. They had not toured much in Canada yet, so we did not really know who they were. At that time, Vancouver was a very popular place to record rock albums. All the major bands of the era were recording at Little Mountain Sound with producers like **Bob Rock, Mutt Lange** or **Bruce Fairbairn**. **Bon Jovi** recorded Slippery When Wet, **Mötley Crüe** recorded Dr. Feelgood, and **Aerosmith, Metallica, AC/DC** and many others were around. Everyone frequented Club Soda, so we were used to seeing big rock stars there. Firehouse did not really impress us much that night, haha. There is an interview with CJ in Metal Edge magazine where he talks about the night we met as the worst show he ever played—but he met me, so it was not a total loss, he said (laughs). We used 42191 as a code for our accounts for years after that.

You mentioned that you toured with the band for several years. What was it like being on tour with a hard rock band? We remember seeing Firehouse at Rockfest in Nottingham in 2008 and expecting to see them at the after-party, but they did not show up.

Well, let's just say I have seen it all. We toured with some of the biggest rock bands of the era and yes, I have stories you would not believe. I am not sure who was worse—the girls, the bands, or the crew! But I will save the details for another day, or maybe a book (laughs). That is the unspoken oath band members make. I will tell you one story, though. We were sitting in catering before a show where we were playing with Poison and Damn Yankees when suddenly a fistfight broke out. An unnamed guitarist who was filling in for C.C. DeVille while he was in rehab was caught fooling around (for lack of a better word) with a certain fool's wife—and got caught! It was insane! Believe it or not, when we toured with bands like **L.A. Guns**, **RATT** and other wild Los Angeles bands, things got very crazy. I was on tour most of the time, so things on our bus were kept to a minimum. L.A. Guns used to call our bus "the church bus"! Only God knows what went on when I was not there! We toured with Tesla for over a year and I have to say they were the nicest guys ever. Poison were more withdrawn and kept to themselves, but they were always kind. The first band I toured with when I met CJ was Warrant. I had always been a big fan. They were pretty nice—Jani, the singer, was quite wild and eccentric, as you might imagine. He was at the height of his fame on the Blood, Sweat and Beers tour. Firehouse were just starting out, so they opened before Trixter, although they quickly became more popular than Trixter. I saw Jani Lane eating a whole turkey with all the trimmings in the dressing room more than once (laughs)! I actually met and became friends with John Corabi when we toured with RATT. I used to take him on the bus and paint his nails black (laughs). He was a great, laid-back guy—almost a hippie. A total contrast to the Firehouse guys. We loved his stories and his company, and he often rode the bus with us to the next show.

You briefly appeared in the music video for "Here for You". How do you remember that experience? Did you ask to be in it? Have you appeared in other music videos?

"Here for You" was a song CJ wrote for our daughter Heather. They were going to shoot the video in Los Angeles with a big director named Nigel Dick. He had done videos for Guns N' Roses and Def Leppard, so he was really good. When bands choose a director, they all submit what is called a "treatment". It is basically a storyboard with the director's vision of how the video will look. Nigel had a girl connecting with CJ as he sang the song. CJ was the one who pushed for me to be that girl. I had worked as an actress, commercial performer and model, so Nigel thought it was a good idea. I had a great time shooting the video! I had been involved in other shoots with the band, so I knew the process. For the record, the video for "Reach for the Sky" took twenty-four straight hours to film!

During your touring years with Firehouse, you must have crossed paths with many musicians and bands, like Poison in 1993. Who did you get along with best or become closest friends with?
Believe it or not, I am still very close friends with some crew members. One of my best friends to this day was Nickelback's production manager for more than a decade. I am also still good friends with Brett Michaels from Poison and with the former guitar tech who started as Bill Leverty's guitar tech in Firehouse. We love telling old stories and laughing! I saw the band when they came to CJ's celebration of life in Orlando after he passed away. It was great to see everyone. I still refer to Allan, the current bassist, as the new guy—Perry Richardson will always be my favourite. I stay in touch with many fans who have become friends over the years on Facebook. They have been loyal for over thirty years!

After two hugely successful Firehouse albums, grunge and alternative rock arrived, which seriously affected bands like Firehouse and led to a decline in their popularity. What did CJ think of this shift in the music market? Did he seem worried about changing audience tastes?
Oh yes, I remember CJ recording vocals for the second album, Hold Your Fire, and the record label asked him to tone down his technical singing! When bands like Nirvana, Pearl Jam and others with a garage sound arrived on the scene, we did not like it and did not understand why anyone wanted to play music that sounded so bad. They literally went back to 1970s technology with dirty guitars and onstage apathy. But like all movements, grunge had its moment and did not last very long—although I must admit I am now a Pearl Jam fan.

We have seen that your daughter Heather is also a singer. We assume having a singer in the family influenced her. How did you feel about Heather also becoming interested in music?
CJ always told Heather that she sang much better than he did because she could sing anything, while he had to write music specifically for his voice. He was extremely proud of Heather and her talent. He saw her perform many times in Florida with her band Audio Exchange. She also sang with him on stage in Florida. Heather toured with us from the time she was four weeks old—we had our own tour bus. CJ was very family-oriented and always wanted his family with him. There is a video on CJ's Facebook page of Heather singing "Yesterday" with CJ playing piano. CJ also has two younger sons from another relationship, Connor and Hunter, who are passionate about music. Connor, the older one, is a very talented singer and has sung at Carnegie Hall with his choir, and Hunter is an incredible guitarist who can play the entire Firehouse catalogue.

We remember the tribute concert for CJ a few days after his passing, where Heather even sang a song. We imagine it must have been very emotional for both of you. What do you remember most about it?
The fact that Heather was able to keep her composure, sing that song and connect with the audience is a true testament not only to her professionalism, but also to the love she has for her father, her hero. I cannot imagine how she managed to get through it. I still cry buckets when I watch it.

Do you think it is appropriate for Firehouse to continue as a band after CJ's death? What was your relationship like with the rest of the band? Are you still in touch with them?
The band had to continue—this is their job, and contrary to popular belief, most musicians are not rich and need to tour to pay the bills. On the other hand, they were incredibly lucky to find Nate Peck as their new singer. Not only does he sing CJ's parts beautifully (which is very difficult), but he is also a genuinely nice person with zero ego. The first time I heard him sing live, I asked Heather, "Is he singing, or is that backing track?" I was completely blown away. I saw the band, including Nate, at CJ's celebration of life. We had not seen each other for quite a few years. They were absolutely devastated when CJ passed away so suddenly. Even though he had been ill in recent years, they were all looking forward to his return.

During your tours with Firehouse, you must have visited many cities and countries. Which audiences surprised you the most? Which countries or cities did you like best, or gave Firehouse the warmest welcome? Have you ever been to Spain?
For a long time, all we did was tour. I do not think I ever made it to Spain, unfortunately, but it is still on my bucket list. I loved touring Asia—the fans were and still are amazing! They sang every lyric to every song, even though they did not speak English! My favourite place was Thailand, and I hope to go back someday. CJ loved Japanese and Asian culture and spoke quite a few words and phrases in the language. He even published his chicken curry recipe in a rock and roll cookbook! I also loved Brazil—"I Live My Life for You" was used in a Brazilian soap opera for a long time.



Finally, tell us a bit about yourself, Kelly. What do you do now? What is your occupation? When you lived with CJ, did you move to the United States? If so, what differences do you see between your native Canada and the US?
I met CJ in my early twenties in Vancouver, Canada, and moved with him to Florida, where our daughter Heather was born and still lives. I travelled with the band for about ten years. It was the best time of my life and I still cherish many memories. When our daughter was born, CJ arranged a tour bus for the three of us so we could always be together and he would not miss anything. After the rise of grunge and when touring slowed down for a few years, I got my real estate licence, which I still hold. I actually helped CJ buy his last homes when he moved back to Florida. I recently moved back to Canada because I cannot stand what is happening in the United States. I will return when things improve there in a few years. I truly appreciate these great questions—thank you for making me relive unforgettable moments through this interview.

Metal N' Rock



AT POINT-BLANK RANGE

JAVIER SANABRIA'S FILM SECTION



Vietnam: The War That Came Home



For years, the United States fought a war it did not quite know how to explain. Vietnam did not fit the old heroic narratives; it did not allow for clear maps or victorious endings. And worst of all for the Yankee Empire, it slipped into American living rooms through television: millions of Americans witnessed, night after night over dinner, a war that the world's leading power was unmistakably losing. Unlike the Second World War, there was no epic distance, only shattered bodies, jungle, friendly fire, and a persistent, insidious sense that they had gotten themselves into something that had spiralled out of control. Accustomed to victory, Americans struggled to process defeat. When the war ended, the country was left with the uncomfortable certainty that something had broken, but without a clear language to explain it.

The United States arrived in Vietnam convinced it was about to shoot another western. There were good guys (white), bad guys (yellow), a clear moral frontier, and the childish certainty that force would ultimately restore order. The problem was that Vietnam did not read the script. There was no defined front, the enemy did not wear a uniform, and the jungle did not care about technological superiority. Helicopters, napalm, and tonnes of propaganda collided with a conflict that stubbornly resisted simplification. The war dragged on, became tangled, and began to enter American homes at dinnertime. For the first time, images did not support the official narrative: Washington said one thing, television showed something entirely different. The screen displayed corpses, razed villages, soldiers unable to explain what they were doing there. "Victory" ceased to be a useful word.

Vietnam was also an administrative war, full of reports, statistics, and euphemisms, where losing ground was called a "strategic withdrawal" and killing civilians was "collateral damage". When it ended, all that remained was an awkward, fearful retreat and the feeling of having fought for years without understanding why. The country emerged with wounded pride, shattered trust in institutions, and a new manual for survival: distrust, doubt, suspicion. Cinema also took time to learn the lesson. Hollywood, ever attentive to box office figures and the social mood, was slow to react. War films avoided the conflict for a while, as if naming it meant losing it again. Yet while Vietnam remained off-screen, it began to seep in elsewhere. Not in the form of helicopters or jungle, but in the very texture of a genre that, almost without realising it, started to behave differently: the urban thriller of the 1970s.

In that essential handbook on 1970s thrillers published by the Nosferatu Collection (seek it out, restless reader, it is worth it), Roberto Curti notes that these films do not represent Vietnam directly, but absorb it as atmosphere, as internal logic. The war reappears transformed into paranoia, distrust, purposeless violence, and an increasingly murky relationship with authority. It is less a memory than a residue: Vietnam and defeat cling to the stories, making them harsher and more uncertain.

In Vietnam, the enemy was not easily identifiable; they knew who it was, but could

not see them. How do you shoot at someone invisible? There were no defined fronts or reliable uniforms. This experience finds a natural echo in the cities that populate the 1970s thriller. New York, San Francisco, or Los Angeles cease to be recognisable spaces and become opaque territories, full of corridors, grey zones, and diffuse threats. We have spoken several times about The French Connection (William Friedkin, 1971), a story that operates within this logic. Popeye Doyle behaves as if he were permanently on a mission, always on the brink of losing control, advancing through intuition and violence. There is no clean structure supporting his crusade: the enemy escapes, the system does not respond, and the ending offers no relief. More than victory, all that remains is exhaustion.

Something similar occurs in Alan J. Pakula's thrillers, such as Klute (1971) or The Parallax View (1974), though from a quieter register. The city watches, listens, observes. There is no jungle, but the same feeling of not knowing where the threat will come from. Everything seems connected by invisible threads, and as a spectator you share the characters' persistent unease.

Vietnam was also a crisis of trust. One could say the average citizen felt that the real enemy was within. Official lies, leaked documents, images contradicting government statements gradually eroded the idea of reliable authority. The 1970s thriller absorbs this fracture and turns it into narrative material.

Returning to The Parallax View (released here, awkwardly, as The Parallax View), the conspiracy has no clear face. There is no recognisable villain and no destination to reach. The further the investigation progresses, the more abstract the web becomes. The protagonist (a superb Warren Beatty) believes he is approaching the truth, but finds only a machinery that functions without needing to be understood, and which feels no threat despite his attempts to expose it.

These films, along with others such as Capricorn One or Three Days of the Condor, are less concerned with denouncing a specific plot than with installing a sense of suspicion and abandonment. No one appears to be in control, and precisely for that reason it becomes futile to look for those responsible. The experience too closely resembles that of a war in which each official explanation was contradicted the following week.

Here too we find disoriented heroes: the protagonist of the 1970s thriller is no longer a restorer of order. At best, they are someone trying to stay afloat. At worst, a figure who worsens the chaos they aim to combat. In all cases, they are citizens crushed by powers they cannot understand. Night Moves (Arthur Penn, 1975) is exemplary in this sense. The detective played by Gene Hackman moves from one scenario to another without ever fully grasping the case. The investigation disperses, the clues lead nowhere, and the ending leaves a sense of absurdity that connects directly with the idea of a pointless mission.

Even in films that seem to advocate an authoritarian response, such as Dirty Harry (Don Siegel, 1971), this weariness is evident. Harry Callahan does not trust judges, politicians, or procedures. His constant recourse to violence does not stem from certainty, but from the suspicion that nothing else works. Yet this violence, which in the western can feel cathartic, does not function in the same way here. One of the most persistent traits of this cinema is the absence of moral closure. Violence does not cleanse, does not restore order, does not re-establish balance. It simply happens and leaves debris behind. There is no sense of learning or progress. Experience accumulates, but teaches nothing. Something very close to the logic of a prolonged war that offers no clear lessons.

But let us talk about three films in which Vietnam exerts a direct influence: Taxi Driver, Rolling Thunder, and Cutter's Way. One year after the Vietnam War ended, Martin Scorsese directed Taxi Driver, written by Paul Schrader, striking a nerve in a nation still reeling from defeat. Travis Bickle (De Niro at his peak) returns from Vietnam to find a city he does not recognise—or perhaps it was always like this, and he can no longer see it differently. New York appears to him as a diseased body that needs cleaning, though it is not clear of what or why. Insomniac, isolated, incapable of communication, Travis observes, accumulates resentment, and confuses discipline with violence. The war is barely mentioned, but it is present in his way of thinking: the world divided into targets, action as the only possible outlet, the certainty that chaos can only be confronted from outside the system. The result is not redemption, despite the semi-happy ending, but an uneasy truce. The man is unhinged, and he will do it again.

Schrader has been accused of many things, including harbouring fascist fantasies. What did he do after Taxi Driver? He took everything to the extreme with Rolling Thunder. In this country it was titled El ex preso de Corea, a fact I will ignore. Directed by John Flynn in 1977, a typical craftsman of punchy, rough-edged cinema, it connects directly with post-Vietnam unease. In Rolling Thunder, Charles Rane returns from Vietnam with a plaque in his hand (a hand later replaced by a hook—if you have not seen it, get on it) and finds his family murdered by a group of thugs. Mexicans, of course. He has survived years of captivity and torture, but returns to a country that does not know what to do with him. The domestic violence unleashed by the plot does not function as classic revenge, but as a reactivation of skills learned in war. Rane does not adapt to civilian life; he applies the lessons he was taught: be a killing machine. The trauma is not verbalised—he has no tools, no education for that—but he knows how to execute, so that is the path he takes. Vietnam appears as a brutal pedagogy still operating on American soil, where institutional justice is slow, confused, or simply absent. The film advances with the logic of a mission that never truly ends. Extremely grim.

And to close this Trilogy of Discomfort, we cannot forget Cutter's Way (Ivan Passer, 1981), based on the novel Cutter and Bone by Newton Thornburg, published here by Sajalín—do not miss it, reader. The protagonist, Alex Cutter, is a Vietnam veteran who returns as a wreck: lame, one-eyed, alcoholic, living in a rage that finds no outlet. The conspiratorial investigation he undertakes with his friend seeks less to solve a crime than to confirm his intuition that the system is rotten and no one will pay for it. Cutter moves like a veteran without a war, someone who has accepted defeat before even beginning. Vietnam hovers over the film as an unspoken explanation, a point of origin for a radical distrust of power, wealth, and any promise of justice. There is no possible victory, only the anticlimactic ending you expect from the first minute.

In these three films, as in the others mentioned, what stands out about the 1970s thriller is its way of being political without slogans. There are no explicit speeches or clear positions. Politics appear in form, in structure, in the discomfort the stories leave behind. Narratives fragment, endings become open or outright frustrating, and characters act without conviction. There is no room for heroism; we are lost from the outset. All of this responds to a worldview that no longer believes in closed narratives or definitive solutions. Vietnam did not need to appear on screen to be present. It was enough to assume that the world had grown darker, less legible, that institutions offered no guarantees, and that violence had ceased to be a reliable tool.

When, in the 1980s, American cinema returned to Vietnam explicitly, it did so from other places: catharsis, belated epic, fantasies of redemption—all false. But the most lasting impact had already occurred earlier, in these films that absorbed the conflict without naming it.

The 1970s thriller did not explain Vietnam or resolve it. It simply lived alongside it, dragging its confusion, its fatigue, and its distrust. Perhaps that is why it remains so unsettling. Because it offers no answers, and because it resembles too closely a war that never truly went away.

Nuestros favoritos de 2025

Albums:
“Heavy Heads”, Montefurado
“…Is Forming”, The Crystal Teardrop
“Trouble in time”, Zalomon Grass
“I heard She Lost You”, Simmcat
“Gimme joy”, The States
“II”, Weedpecker
“Leo & Leo”, Leonor Watling/Leo Sidran
“Mousterizer”, Wet Leg
“Sharp Objects”, Spiders
“Skeletá”, Ghost

TV Shows:
“Andor”
“Superstar”
“Task”
“Devil in disguise”
“It: Welcome to Derry”

Concert:
La Perra Blanco (Festival CSB).
The Tambles (Guarida del Ángel)
Los Enemigos (La Guarida del Ángel)
091 (Granada)
Mientras las abejas duermen (6 Grupos 6)

Books:
“Caballos salvajes. Gram Parsons”.

Movies:
“Sueños de trenes”
“Becoming. Led Zeppelin”
“Frankenstein”
“A Complete Unknown”
“Los 4 Fantásticos”



Marcos Sánchez:

Albums:
“Darling Blue”, Marcus King Band
“Hard Headed Woman”, Margo Price
“The Horse and the Hill”, Montana Stomp
“Apple of Life”, Dom Mariani
“Hotel Morgan”, Morgan

Movies:
“A Complete Unknown”
“Superman”
“The Brutalist”
“Frankenstein”
“Los pecadores”

TV Shows:
“Tulsa King”
“Landman”
“The Morning Show”

Concert:
Hellacopters (Azkena)
Manic Street Preachers (Azkena)
Bywater Call (La Guarida)
The Tambles (La Guarida)
La Perra Blanco (CSB)

“¿Quién cojones son Buenas Noches Rose?”
“Deliver me from nowhere”
“Becoming. Led Zeppelin”

TV Shows:
“Poquita fe”
“Respira”
“Task”
“Bienvenidos a Derry”
“El cuco de cristal”

Concert:
Sex Museum
Fermin Muguruza
Mississippi Queen & the Wet Dogs
Deaf Devils





Books:
“Caballos salvajes. Gram Parsons”
“Diario de una Estrella de Rock. Ian Hunter”
“Ronnie Lane Ohh La La!”
“Roy Ellis: The Boss Skinhead”
“Una canción hizo la diferencia”

Jesse

TV Shows:
”Poquita fe”
”Pluribus”
”Entrepreneurs”
”Yakarta”
”El centro”
”Blue lights”
”Mobland”

Ada Salas

Concerts:
Robert Finley, Sala Mom
Margo Price, Azkena RF
La Perra Blanco, CSB- SOLERA VIVA
Larkin Poe, Razzmatazz
Robert Jonn and the Wrec, ARF
Morgan, Cartuja Center
Carlos Santana, Tio Pepe Festival
Bywater Call, La Guarida del Ángel
Derby Motoreta Burrito Kachimba Sala Momart
Reckless Kelly, ARF

Sob 2026

Albums:
“Skeleta”, Ghost
“The Horse and the Hill”, Montana Stomp
“Parasomnia”, Dream theater
“Wish you were here 50 aniversario”, Pink Floyd

Concerts:
Ghost, Lisboa
Y&T, Madrid
MSG, Madrid
Helloween , Madrid
Robert Finley, Sala Mom

Néstor Mandela

Spanish Albums:

“Working Class R’n’R”, The Bo Derek´s
“Lo Inmediato“, Cabron Dandy
“Flipe VI”, El Gobierno
“Heavy Heads”, Montefurado -
“XX Ta Bortz Urte Zuzenean”, Petti & Etxeko Uzta

International Albums:

“The Boat Outside Your Window”, Thalia Zedek Band
“Live In Oslo”, Daniel Romano
“Out In The Street”, Angel Face
“Apple Of Life Dom Mariani
“Wasp In A Jar”, The Vapors



La Perra Blanco at the CSB Festival, the best performance of the year (Photo: CSB–Solera Viva)

"...we are ugly but we have the music".

ROCK BOTTOM MAGAZINE



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Montana Stomp

Gallop on, gallop on... until they're buried in the sea!