FULL FLOWER MOON BAND EMANUELA HUTTER THE FLAMING SIDEBURNS LAS ROBERTAS THE FIXED TRIO JOHN BUSH AZKENA

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

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The Flaming Sideburns

Keeping the Flame of Rock 'n' Roll Alive

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THANK YOU.

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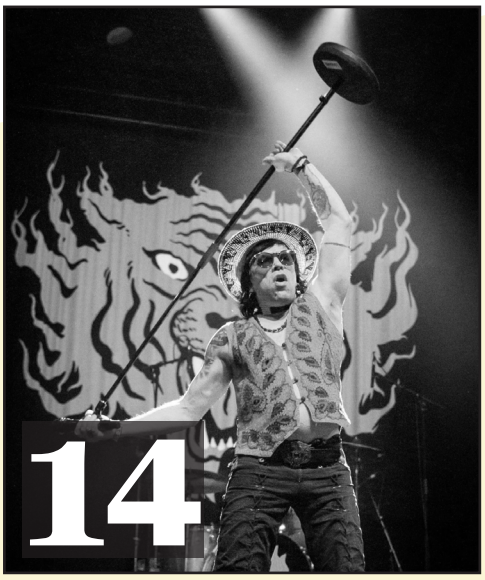
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by J. The Perfect Drug

WHY DO I LOVE MUSIC?

TAKING REFUGE IN A SONG

The world has never been a kind place since the arrival of Homo sapiens. Admittedly, the world before the last meteorite probably wasn't exactly easy either, considering the number of creatures ready to eat you around every corner, but there is no doubt that human beings have turned this planet into a place where beauty has had to coexist with violence, arrogance and the insatiable appetite of our species. Perhaps we have lived through a period of relative calm in the West, somewhat detached from injustice and from major political, or otherwise international, upheavals. Yet it feels as though, ever since COVID showed us how fragile we are and reminded us how stupid we can be as a society (let alone as individuals), everything has been falling apart at a terrifying speed: atrocious far-right policies gaining ground across much of the world; corruption that seems like a metastasis infecting the entire system; leaders blinded by ego with the blood of innocents on their hands; social media platforms that, instead of bringing us together, have brought out the worst in us; a planet rebelling against a species that has only been around for a few hundred thousand years...

I open the newspaper every day and the level of sadness that overwhelms me is devastating. It is hardly surprising that we all try to escape from that reality however we can, that we seek refuge in anything capable of distracting us for a while, even if only for a few moments. It makes sense that fentanyl is wreaking havoc, that antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications have never been prescribed in greater numbers, or that streaming platforms are working overtime to satisfy the endless demand for entertainment.

Pain is a legitimate feeling, just as the desire to escape from it is legitimate. Personally, I have no interest in getting anywhere near fentanyl, at least for now. If you asked me, I would tell you that I seek refuge in a song. For two or three minutes, for as long as the song lasts, I am free. There are no chains, there is no reality, only fantasy, the fantasy that someone has created and shared with the world, a spark of beauty, of art, making this sick planet a little easier to endure.

A few days ago, while listening to Néstor Mandela's essential podcast "Coge el tren", I discovered Cat Clyde and her song "Dark Back". I immediately fell under its spell and once again felt liberated, if only for a few moments, from the sense of defeat that seems to take hold of me almost every day. Why do I love music? Because it sets me free. And you?

SEEKING REFUGE

Full Flower Moon Band

“It’s Rock and Roll, Baby”

Australia is always a reliable source when it comes to rock and roll. The number of bands and artists coming out of there is astonishing. They seem to do their own thing and never stop producing interesting music. We do things our own way too, and if some time ago we introduced you to the wonderful The Neptune Power Federation from Sydney, now it’s Full Flower Moon Band’s turn, straight out of Brisbane. Their latest album, “Megaflower”, was released in 2024, but it only recently reached my ears and I fell completely under its spell. A young band overflowing with talent, great songs, a powerful sound and plenty of personality, with Kate “Babyshakes” Dillon serving as the kind of frontwoman who simply cannot be ignored. Pop, rock, psychedelia, raw energy and, according to those who have seen them live, an absolute steamroller on stage.

Tell us, how did Full Flower Moon Band come together?

We’ve all lived together at different times in Brisbane, so I asked Marli, Luke, Caleb and Christian to join the band because they’re the biggest and wildest rock stars I know.

Brisbane is a small city compared to Sydney and Melbourne. There are fewer people and fewer venues. I think that concentrates the dreams of everyone who wants to be in a band into a stronger, more intense experience. It’s good.

The band revolves around Kate “Babyshakes” Dillon, an alter ego you created. Did you need to create another version of yourself with different possibilities? What is the latest outrageous thing, or uncomfortable truth, that Babyshakes has allowed herself to say that Kate would never say at a family dinner?

I usually say that having an alter ego as a writer is nice, and it is, but lately I’ve also been thinking that it makes enjoying music as a fan feel freer. Both the listener and I know that this is art, not a diary entry.

I tried to analyse your sound and found it completely impossible, which is wonderful. The closest comparison that came to mind was Austin’s The Black Angels, who are not exactly an easy band to define either. What do you think goes into the blender when you sit down to write and record?

Thank you, that’s very kind of you. The Black Angels are coming to Australia soon and I’d love to see them live this year because I’ve been thinking about them lately while writing, but unfortunately I’ll be away. I change my influences with every album, but generally speaking I listen to folk and rock artists from the sixties and seventies, with a touch of rock, psychedelia and grunge from the nineties through to the 2010s.

You released several singles and the EP “Death or Hell” in 2021. Then came “Chinatown”, an album that many people outside Australia may never have had the chance to fully discover, and later “Diesel Forever”, which feels like the moment

when people really started paying attention to you. But with "Megaflower", the sound seems to open up completely: there's proto-punk, psychedelia, pop melodies, hard rock and even moments that feel almost hippie-like. How do you see that evolution yourselves?

I agree with what you've said. Although albums carry a terrifying sense of permanence, I really like a quote from Frank Lloyd Wright: "A doctor can bury his mistakes, but an architect can only advise his client to plant vines." I interpret that to mean we should plant metaphorical gardens around our work to soften its flaws. I think some of my records require a similar philosophy and have become more appreciated over time because our discography continues to grow. People tend to look back on your work more kindly and forgive those parts that perhaps you weren't able to fully capture at the time. That's why making records is addictive to me. It's not just about creating a collection of songs that live together; it's also an opportunity to reinterpret your past work.

Those who have seen you live say your shows are unpredictable, chaotic and even cathartic. What does the live experience mean to you? I read that on one occasion you had technical problems and ended up alone on stage with your guitar. Do you hate those moments or, deep down, do you enjoy it when the plan falls apart and you get to show what you're made of without a safety net?

Technical things, like the power going out or a drum kit collapsing, are situations that both the audience and the band experience together, and that creates a beautiful story. And yes, I probably enjoy pulling out a few old showbiz tricks. However, I do have my demons, but only with things I could have controlled. For example, if I feel I chose the wrong setlist, or if my guitar cable gets tangled and I can't reach the microphone to sing. (Laughs)

People also talk about the way you point your guitar like a weapon, the emotional striptease, the sweat. Is the way you move on stage carefully choreographed, or is it pure possession? When do you decide it's time to put your foot on the monitor?

Who have you been talking to? (Laughs) Just kidding! When people ask me this kind of question, they like to hear that it isn't rehearsed or choreographed. During rehearsals I stand completely still. My performance is the result of years spent on stage. It's stagecraft. Early in my career I was more self-indulgent, but now, when I put my foot on the monitor or turn my guitar into a machine gun, I do it because I think it's what you need.

You toured all over Australia as support for The Black Crowes. What was it like touring with the Robinson brothers? Did you learn anything good or bad from watching how they operate on and off stage?

I was incredibly excited to tour with a band of that calibre simply so I could observe everything and be close to it. I had never seen behind the scenes what it takes to tour at that level, and The Black Crowes are masters of it. For example, they brought all of their microphones and amplifiers from the United States, and every night they had countless guitars ready at the side of the stage. I love Chris. He told me to always use stage monitors and avoid in-ear monitors if we wanted to remain rock and roll. And I replied: understood, boss.

In interviews you often talk about defending the idea of the album as a complete work, something that stands out in a world where everything is measured in "engagement", clicks, short reels and standalone singles. How do you convince a teenager today to sit down and listen to a complete album that lasts less than forty minutes?

By making an album so good that they want to sit down and listen to it.

You've toured Europe and already played in Spain. Last year you completed an extensive tour of our country. What was the experience like?

As we had never played in Spain before and most of the shows were on weekdays, I was sceptical and thought nobody would come. However, across the eleven shows we played in Spain, we were completely overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of Spanish audiences. The Australian rock scene schedules almost all of its gigs at weekends, so we were amazed. Also, Spanish hospitality was second to none. And I haven't stopped talking about the food we were served. I went home and tried making tortilla de patatas, but mine turned out far too oily.

There's a lot of humour in songs like "Super Like" and "Illegal Things". Has rock lost the ability to laugh at itself?

Do you think people sometimes take the bloody noise we make too seriously? When rock laughs at itself, it's one of my favourite things. But for those moments to exist, there has to be both light and darkness. So no, I don't think there's too much "serious noise", but my goodness, I do enjoy having fun with it.

To finish, it feels as though "Megaflower" doesn't close one chapter but opens the door to something even harder to define. What kind of mutation is Full Flower Moon Band going through right now, and what are your immediate next moves?

Yes, once again I've gone back into the studio, and I'd say I've mutated once more. I'm always going to take big risks at every stage of the band's journey... but it will always be rock and roll, baby.

Thank you very much. We hope to see you back in our country soon.

Thank you for having me.

Javistone

Emanuela Hutter
Beyond Stereotypes

Some artists spend half their lives trying to build a personality of their own, while others simply have one. Emanuela Hutter clearly belongs to the latter group. As the frontwoman of The Hillbilly Moon Explosion, she has achieved something that appears simple but that very few people manage: starting from sounds deeply rooted in tradition and creating an identity that has never depended on nostalgia or on obsessively reconstructing the past. Her music may contain elements of rockabilly, blues, country, vintage pop or psychobilly, but it always ends up sounding unmistakably like her.

After several years without releasing a solo record, Hutter returns in 2026 with “Goose Bumps”, an album that favours simplicity, atmosphere and emotion over any kind of artifice. It is a work in which the songs breathe naturally thanks to the production of Jimmy Sutton, a key collaborator in shaping a sound that avoids excess and overproduction, leaving room for melodies, nuances and silence. It is an approach that the singer herself contrasts with certain aspects of her previous album, “A Girl Like You”.
The songs on “Goose Bumps” are populated by stories of love, desire, lingering memories and characters who seem to live alongside their own contradictions. There is sensuality in “Kiss Me”, unease in “The Voices”, cinematic echoes in “Everybody’s Valentine”, and a quiet melancholy running through much of the album. Yet Hutter avoids easy answers and prefers to let the songs suggest questions rather than provide explanations.

We spoke with her about the importance of not over-explaining emotions, the difference between using classic influences and falling into revivalism, the impact of Jimmy Sutton and JD McPherson on this new work, and the creative philosophy that has guided her entire career: making exactly the music she wants to make without worrying too much about other people’s expectations.

“Goose Bumps” arrives several years after “A Girl Like You”. When you look back at both records, what things do you still recognise in the Emanuela from back then, and what feels completely different today?
I think the songs and their themes are similar, if not identical. The big difference is in the production of the songs. I think the 2017 album was slightly overproduced. Maybe not all the songs. The piano tracks are still nice to listen to because they capture the essence of the song. The rock tracks, however, now feel far too overloaded and distract from the original melody.

> ***For me, it’s always been incredibly important to be able to play and record whatever I want, without worrying about what the audience expects or what the record label wants. I’m not in this to please anyone. I simply want to turn my ideas into music.***

The album conveys an interesting feeling: it is warm and elegant, but it also seems inhabited by emotionally defeated characters. Were you interested in working with that contradiction?
These contradictions stem from the story and the emotions it has left behind, which I incorporate into the song. I don’t do this deliberately.

Your music has always mixed psychobilly with other less obvious styles, but it never sounds archaeological. How have you built such a personal identity out of such different influences?
It just turned out that way because I deliberately include elements from different influences I like in my songs. And I try to avoid stereotypes.

Many retro artists seem obsessed with reconstructing an era. However, “Goose Bumps” sounds more like an updated emotional memory than pure nostalgia. Are you genuinely interested in nostalgia, or is it simply an aesthetic tool for you?
The sense of nostalgia arises naturally from the song’s subject matter.

Your way of singing conveys emotional distance, but also a great deal of intimacy. Are you interested in not explaining everything to the listener?
Absolutely.

There is something almost psychological and uncomfortable about “The Voices”. Are you more attracted to songs that leave questions than to those that offer answers?
Yes, exactly. I don’t like giving answers.

“Kiss Me” is pure sensuality, it has a bluesy rhythm reminiscent of Muddy Waters, but your voice makes everything sound even more sensual. What can you tell me about this song?
It’s an old song of mine. I wrote it 20 years ago. And I’ve played it live from time to time. With different musicians. It always sounded a bit different, apart from my voice. That’s just the way it is.
“Everybody’s Valentine” has a clearly cinematic aura, almost like a melancholic spy film. Do you visualise scenes or characters when you write or perform?
JD McPherson and Jimmy Sutton wrote this song for me. My only request was that they write something a bit dirty.

You close the album with “Quiet”, a much more reflective and restrained song. What does this track mean to you within the emotional journey of “Goose Bumps”?
Another old song. A love song about a love story that will never end.

The album is produced by Jimmy Sutton and also features the collaboration of JD McPherson. Two essential names when it comes to understanding contemporary roots music. How much have they really influenced the final sound of “Goose Bumps”?
JD contributed that one song. But Jimmy was in charge of producing the tracks – and his influence on the sound was enormous. He allowed the songs to retain their lightness and simplicity so that the essence of the songs, the atmosphere and mood, would take centre stage and not be overshadowed by the accompanying instruments. Jimmy Sutton managed this perfectly. He didn’t overproduce anything. Before we started recording, I sat down with Jimmy and went through all the songs - just guitar and vocals. Then we discussed how we could record them. As far as the texture of the songs is concerned, and the approach to creating them, we were very much in agreement.

We recently interviewed La Perra Blanco, who has also worked with Jimmy Sutton and JD McPherson. It is interesting to see how very different artists are using classic elements without falling into simple revivalism. Do you think the real challenge today is sounding human and contemporary, rather than simply “retro”?
I’ve never been keen on this retro craze. I think the more important question is what suits the song and the person performing it.

After “Goose Bumps”, what creative stage is The Hillbilly Moon Explosion currently going through?
I’ve written four new songs that I want to record with the Hillbillies. Oliver also wants to write more songs for the next release.

When you look back on your career, what weighs more heavily for you: having built your own universe, or never having fully entered the mainstream?
For me, it has always been incredibly important to be able to play and record whatever I want. Without worrying about what the audience expects. Or what the record label wants. I’m not in it to please anyone. I just want to turn my ideas into music.

Javistone

Degusta Fest, Armilla (Granada)
May 15-16, 2026

degusta fest Armilla

Decibels and Fine Dining in Granada's Spring

The legendary Armilla fairgrounds (those asparagus festivals!) once again became the epicentre of an ambitious musical venture in 2025 with the first edition of Degusta Fest. The idea, combining fine dining with musical excellence, was well received: they went straight for the jugular by booking high-profile names (Pixies, Nada Surf, The Jesus and Mary Chain), in a proposal that balanced musical mythology with an updating of concepts. Leaving aside the gastronomic aspect (it's not that we're not food lovers, it's just that we're not here for that), the musical side, and the central pillar of Degusta Fest 2026, once again relied on offering a well-balanced two-day bill, with newer artists opening each day for others who are already deeply rooted in the sentimental memory of those who refuse to abandon rock and its many offshoots, fleeing from these new forms of music (if we can even call them that) that stalk us not only through the foul tastes of today's teenagers, but also through media bombardment, made even more painful when it comes from people who once knew how to separate the wheat from the chaff, quality from fashion. But that would require a very different kind of review, loaded with depth charges aimed at those sectors now so comfortably installed in the kind of idiocy that suckles at the udders of people who, in their eagerness to respect every new trend, end up losing respect for themselves.

That said, and since the intention here is once again to champion real musicians, rock culture and good vibes as the perfect combination of riffs and beer, topped off with paella, premium burgers and anthems from better days, let's talk about things that are genuinely worthwhile. Degusta aims to survive amidst all the chaos because it possesses excellent taste when it comes to assembling a line-up. The proof was this 2026 edition, which brought us an explosive cocktail of artists working incredibly hard in difficult times, accompanied by figures who simply came to give us the pleasure of the familiar and the timeworn, which is no small thing.

The opening day of Degusta Fest 2026 began under grey skies, with clouds hanging over the venue and a cool atmosphere that seemed to slightly dampen the usual euphoria of a festival's opening hours. The honour of inaugurating this edition fell to Vera Fauna, a band from Seville that has spent some time carving out a place for itself within that difficult-to-classify new Andalusian scene. Their music combines contemporary pop, touches of disco, indie impulses and a musical outlook that alternates between modernity and classicism, with a slightly southern personality, almost costumbrista at times. Interesting, if you are capable of overcoming the prejudices we often impose upon ourselves by refusing to engage with musical hybrids containing elements outside our own world.

Their performance, however, left mixed impressions. Although part of the audience was already singing along to some of their early songs and clearly welcomed the concert enthusiastically, the set never quite took off or generated the feeling of a major festival opening. At least from my personal perspective, the performance felt somewhat cold and lacked the ability to break through the restrained atmosphere with which the day had begun.

Next came one of the bands I was most eager to see: Hinds. The Madrid outfit arrived surrounded by a certain expectation regarding their live show, always unpredictable and packed with attitude. After a few sound adjustments (understandably so, considering this was a festival with only one stage), and while Cornershop played from the DJ corner and later Fontaines D.C. blasted through the same stage, Hinds came out determined to give everything they had in an intense, powerful, entertaining performance that was far more explosive than the beginning of the day had suggested.

They sounded like an absolute cannon from the opening songs onwards, maintaining a constant energy and barely allowing a single moment of rest on stage. The guitars grew increasingly prominent as the set progressed. The addition of keyboard layers gave the sound greater depth and variety, while Carlotta and Ana's voices constantly played off one another with highly effective contrasts: one higher-pitched, brighter and more nervous; the other deeper and more solid, creating a balance that has become a defining characteristic of the band's identity. A lovely touch (although it has become something of a tradition) was treating us to "Spanish bombs", which always sounds better in Granada. Fantastic.

The voltage increased considerably once Ash took to the stage. Incredibly, the indie punks, as I like to call them, remain in enviable shape. Not only because they managed to spark the beginnings of a few mosh pits near the front, but because they also proved to be an absolute whirlwind led by Tim Wheeler and a Flying V guitar that practically burst into flames. Mixing recent material with the band's classics, Ash rose perfectly to the occasion, proving themselves equally capable of commanding a large stage like this one or a much smaller venue, recalling their appearance at Lemon Rock's stage exactly one year earlier.

As sunset approached, we began preparing ourselves for the day's two main courses (forgive the gastronomic comparison, but it fits perfectly), both eagerly anticipated for very different reasons. On one hand, Carlos Ares represented something of an unknown quantity for many attendees, myself included. Several friends had recommended that I not miss him. Regardless of individual tastes, his stage presentation alone immediately made

me raise an eyebrow, suggesting that we were about to witness something rather unusual. I must admit, however, that every reference I had previously encountered regarding his music had failed to generate even the slightest interest in me. Yet as soon as the show began and I saw that entire constellation of people and instruments spread across the stage, my curiosity was awakened. Knowing absolutely nothing about his music, which is ultimately what matters, he nevertheless managed to entertain me, leaving me wide-eyed at the spectacle unfolding before me. Personally, it struck me as a very well-executed blend of folk and indie, regardless of my own preferences, as I've already said.

What surprised me most was seeing such a large proportion of the audience completely captivated. I suspect his strength lies in connecting different styles and generations because, although the most ecstatic audience members were largely among the youngest present that afternoon, I also witnessed more than a few veterans enthusiastically singing along to some remarkably powerful choruses during a performance that felt suspended somewhere between collective catharsis and visual excess: lights, colours and instruments whose names I couldn't possibly identify here. Forgive my ignorance.

And as midnight approached, Lori Meyers took to the stage with the bulk of the audience already firmly on their side. The story with the band from Loja is simple: it doesn't matter when you read this, the result is always the same. Half seriously, half jokingly, they have earned their place through sheer hard work, even managing to connect with audiences who have historically remained distant from indie music. They possess a kind of distinctive genetic code, and that was once again evident on the Degusta stage. They delivered exactly what was required, opening with "Hacerte volar" and moving through highlights such as "Impronta", "El tiempo pasará" and the inevitable "Emborracharme". To top it all off, they even brought along a new song, "Malafollá". It's not exactly the most original subject matter, and we can hardly criticise them for celebrating Granada's unique character, but I don't think the song has much more to offer than that. Still, it works perfectly as a final blast of complete and utter irreverence.

Saturday's programme awakened in me an irresistible desire to reconnect with Los Coronas, a band I had not had the chance to see for far too long. Facing considerable heat, perfectly understandable given the clearer weather and such an early slot, the few brave souls who gradually positioned themselves in front of the stage as Fernando Pardo and company began deploying their arsenal were rewarded with one of the finest performances of the festival. Pardo quickly managed, through his particular sense of humour, to transform what could have been a difficult start to the day into a magnificent session of borderland rock delivered by a band honed by years of experience. Special mention must go to Loza on drums, a spectacle in his own right. They left the stage to the audience's admiration before rushing off to perform another show in Marbella that very same night. Tremendous.

After them, and still under considerable heat, came another band I've seen several times and which always leaves me wanting more: California's Redd Kross. They delivered a performance very similar to the one I witnessed at Azkena a couple of years ago, with the MacDonald brothers dressed in outfits somewhere between extraterrestrial and Hawaiian, displaying plenty of attitude and a healthy sense of humour throughout the set. But, just as on that previous occasion, the setlist leaned more heavily on their recent work, and if there's one reason I love Redd Kross, it's their output from the 1980s. Even so, they remain impossible not to love, especially when they unleash songs of the calibre of "Jimmy's Fantasy",

> ***Degusta aims to survive amid all the chaos, largely because it has impeccable taste when it comes to putting together its line-up. The 2026 edition was proof of that, serving up an explosive mix of artists who have been working incredibly hard to earn their place in difficult times, alongside established names who came simply to remind us of the enduring pleasure of the classics.***

"Mess around" and "Pretty please me". There were also perfectly logical nods to their idols. Both The Beatles and KISS were present in spirit on the Armilla stage. A very good performance, but the truth is they would absolutely destroy if they embraced a more nostalgic setlist.

If there was one name drawing the attention of the festival's indie faithful, it was The Charlatans. They were also the reason why several well-known members of Granada bands could be spotted among the crowd, representing a genre for which the English group has served as a standard-bearer for four decades. I am about as far removed as possible from being a follower of the genre in its most canonical form. If indie classicism exists, however, The Charlatans embody it perfectly, led by a Tim Burgess who, to be fair, appears to have been frozen in

time. They opened with their latest single, “We are love”, before gradually warming up their audience during a journey back to the languid days of 1990s Britpop. With the crowd already won over before they played a note, and despite my own distance from the genre, I must admit they sounded excellent, driving the audience wild with the closing pairing of “The only one I know” and “Sproston Green”.

I knew absolutely nothing about La M.O.D.A., so I was genuinely blown away by what I saw. Something similar had happened to me the previous day with Carlos Ares. These are projects that transcend music itself, and in this particular case, rather than relying on elements of fantasy, they place considerable emphasis on humour. The sound was excellent, built around a kind of musical hybrid in which a rock foundation is complemented by blues and folk influences, creating a curious and highly enjoyable amalgam that the audience immediately understood and enthusiastically embraced.

The act that was probably the festival’s biggest attraction, Primal Scream, had already provided an interesting appetiser earlier in the day at Marcapasos Records. A sizeable queue of fans had gathered there to meet Bobby Gillespie, who had come to Calle Duquesa to sign records and copies of his autobiography, “Un chaval de barrio”, displaying a much better mood than his reputation might lead one to expect. A few hours later, he stepped onto the Degusta stage in a fully nocturnal, ultra-festive atmosphere, with a densely packed front section ready to embark on a journey through the backstreets of the legendary “Screamadelica”, undoubtedly the T-shirt most frequently worn by the festivalgoers gathered to celebrate a band that knows exactly how to turn a venue upside down.

The concert opened, just like the album itself, with “Movin’ On Up”, and from that moment until the cathartic finale of the inevitable “Rocks”, ninety minutes later, what followed was a whirlwind of guitars, rhythms and sweat, a lot of sweat.

It was a magnificent way to close a festival that, through a relatively restrained approach and a commitment to offering quality music alongside excellent food, continues to establish itself as an important fixture in the spring calendar of southern Spain.

We sincerely hope that this commitment continues. Several names have already been announced for the 2027 edition (Peter Hook, Rinôçérôse, among others), so we fully expect to be there once again to tell the story.

Text Jesús Sánchez
Photos Javier Rosa

The Flaming Sideburns

“During the 1990s there was a huge movement toward unity among countries and cultures here in the North, gradually, step by step. In my opinion, that process reached its peak right around the turn of the century because I feel people wanted to break down language barriers through more human means than those we rely on today, not with the help of computers. And, most importantly, I believe part of our society wanted to bring the good old, non-commercial rock and roll back into our lives.”

The Flaming Sideburns... finally in Rock Bottom Magazine! The legendary Finnish band, probably the country’s most famous alongside Hanoi Rocks, belonged to that legendary wave of wild rock and roll that emerged in the late ’90s and early 2000s, together with a horde of ferocious acts such as Backyard Babies, The Hellacopters, Gluecifer and Turbonegro. Their 2001 album “Hallelujah Rock’n’Rollah” is a devastating timeless masterpiece, featuring that iconic opening in which Eduardo narrates a goal in Spanish with his distinctive Argentine accent, a majestic collection that, in fact, turns no fewer than twenty-five years old in 2026. But we have taken the opportunity provided by the release of the B-sides and outtakes compilation “Scandinavian Riot” to get in touch with Eduardo. Having the chance to talk with him was an absolute privilege..

It is a real pleasure to have The Flaming Sideburns in our pages. Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with us. You have just released a new album, "Scandinavian Riot", a collection of rarities, demos and more. Could you explain what it consists of? I believe it is the beginning of a series of albums of this kind, is that correct?

"Scandinavian Riot" released this year, is not actually our new album, but a compilation of songs we recorded between 2000-2003, available on very limited 12" vinyl by Chaputa! Records. It is the second album of a 12" LP trilogy that covers three different decades of Flaming Sideburns history. The first issue came out last year and it was called "Alternative Passages (2017-2007)".

The songs that make up "Scandinavian Riot", have you re-recorded them or re-produced them? Because honestly, it sounds like a coherent whole. It does not feel at all like the typical B-sides or outtakes album.

Thank you, it is absolutely great if the listener feels like that after going through this whole record, because actually there are two line-ups featured on it, our first on side A and our second on side B. And no, we did not re-record anything, but it was a long process anyway, putting the right pieces together and then putting them in the right order! For this, we had to rely on our producer, Jürgen Hendlmeier who also did the right mastering for the whole album.

One of the surprises is "Zombie Shitheel", which closes the album, a tribute to Finnish underground icon Ilari "Claude" Peltola of Smack and The Fishfaces. What can you tell me about this version? It sounds more like cabaret than garage rock. I love the way you sound.

"Zombie Shitheel" was definitely a lost gem and not many that many people know about it yet! In our case, it was another case of a song we spontaneously recorded simply as a chill out from the rest of the material we were working on at the time, and one we afterwards also lost track of completely! We only tried it on two consecutive takes, but since I had messed up with the lyrics and accidentally with the order of the song on this first one, it had remained unreleased for 24 years! This take is much shorter than it should have been. We added the honky-town piano afterwards partly because you can hear me opening a new beer can right at the same time the solo goes on - so we are trying to somehow cover up a little bit that noise, because it was all recorded live with one microphone. My 86-year old fellow Argentinean piano player José "Chiqui" Sileoni did the right job for us again here. No wonder, having already played live during the 60's in Spain with none other than Julio Iglesias - before being a famous artist - and then even recording in Finland with Remu Aaltonen of Hurriganes on their last album, released in1984, before I met him in the early 90's.

In 2017 you took part as a band, and Eduardo also as a solo artist, in another tribute to Ilari "Claude" Peltola. What can you tell us about him for those of us who are not familiar with his legacy?

Finnish music culture of the 60's, 70's & 80's include very high profile - and international - rock music artists, most of them unknown to the big masses nowadays. Hurriganes and Hanoi Rocks are prime examples for this. Smack is another one. Smack's first album was released in North America and Brazil during the 80's and in Spain during the 90's. Their singer, Claude, who only sang in English but wrote poetry also in Finnish, died just a few years older than Jim Morrison and Kurt Cobain and is considered a local shaman. He left a really big influence on our generation. May I mention that Nirvana also covered Smack's song "Run Rabbit Run" during their former early years, way before being a famous act.

What is the current status of the band? Are you active these days?

Our current line up includes Rami Helin on bass since 2021, right after the release of our last studio album "Silver Flames". The other four of us are the same members as in the original line-up. Yes, The Flaming Sideburns has always been active, ever since 1996. We played our first ever show on late December of 1995 and we have never ever disbanded, although we've had a few quiet years in between.

Is there any chance of a tour in our country or a new album of original songs in the not-too-distant future?

Yes, of course there is. We were supposed to perform in Spain on the 6th of June this year but it got cancelled, and it was not due to ourselves! We are really always more than willing to tour Spain and a new album with new songs is coming our the way at some point, not so far away. Certainly for 2027!

If you don't mind, we would like to talk about your career. The first question is specifically for Eduardo. It is unavoidable, and you have probably been asked many times before, but... what does it feel like to be an Argentine rocker in a scene like the Finnish one? Argentina has always had a very strong musical tradition, Soda Stereo are the biggest band in Latin America, it is possibly the most Stone country in the world... What was it like arriving in Finland?

Well, I think I got all the recognition I deserved from the work I have done here. It is actually a very healthy and friendly scene for me being here. There are always ups and downs, like everywhere. Main thing is I am happy we can continue just being The Flaming Sideburns. That's enough for me. When I arrived here there was no technology as we know it today, that was very different. Also winters were way much tougher than what they are now, easily minus 25 C degrees every year! I am half Finnish by my mother's side anyway and I still have relatives here, although I was raised in Argentina. So when I moved here, I already had a pretty good idea beforehand of the artistic freedom I could expect by living in an exotic corner of the world that nobody almost knew about back in those days. The scene was way different than in Argentina, but mostly because of size differences. Argentina has more than 46 million people, while in Finland there is less than 6 million nowadays.

> ***"The 25th anniversary edition of Hallelujah Rock'n'Rollah, released by Svart Records, came out this summer in Finland, and Kike Turmix is also mentioned in the liner notes of the reissue. An outstanding album, and truly fantastic times!"***

More than thirty years have passed since the band was formed in Helsinki in 1995. What do you remember about that first chemistry?

Well I think it's like if we don't really think too much about it, because it never went away, anywhere! It's still here and we still enjoy this special chemistry the original line-up had, as long as we play together. Even if one of the original members is no longer with us, because we were lucky to find the right replacement. Rami Helin our bass player, has been involved with the band ever since we met him during the Hallelujah Rock'n'Rollah recording sessions, 25 years ago. Some of us had already recorded with him, me included. Rami is also a multi instrumentalist musician and has his own solo career going on.

While late-1990s rock was moving towards Britpop and nu metal, you embraced a much rawer, garage-rock sound. Was that a conscious reaction, or simply your natural way of understanding rock and roll?

Yeah, natural way of understanding Rock'n'Roll. You said it!

Another unavoidable question... what the hell happened for bands from Northern Europe to suddenly start appearing and completely blow our minds and make our lives better? I remember seeing Gluecifer, Baby Woodrose, Backyard Babies and

Turbonegro when I was 17 years old, in small, sweaty clubs... that was pure rock and roll. How did you experience that period? What explanation can you give for it?
It was amazing, all of sudden we could see all this new bands coming from abroad, playing small clubs in your own town, almost every month. All places packed. We were REALLY lucky to be part of all that action.

I don't know the reason, but I feel like there was a pretty huge unification movement between countries and cultures here in the North during the 90's, like, little by little and step by step. In my opinion, the culmination for this process came to a meeting point right at the change of the century. Because I feel people all over here wanted to break down the language barriers we had by our own, in a more human way than today, and not with the help of computers. And most important of all, I think a certain part of our society back then wanted to bring good old sweet uncommercial rock & roll music back to our lives. Fortunately for all of us, this whole idea caught on fire at different regions of our world, at the same time, although it did not last that long. But the damage was done and it left a big mark for future generations.

Back then, this musical movement also felt as if it would be the Next Big Thing, and there was a local market already waiting for it. I think it will always be like that. And let's not forget, it does not really matter where you come from. Everyone can enjoy this music.

I have to say that I did not get to see you until you played in Jerez at the Serie Z festival in 2012, and I think you gave a fantastic concert, but I was far too drunk to remember it properly. What do you remember about that performance?
Serie Z 2012 it was a great honor for us being down there! I remember we built the whole Spanish tour around that festival and it was of course a very important gig for us, and we were also in a very good shape. We performed "Swimming in Bombay" on that tour, and also other songs that are not usually on our live set (like for example "Ninety Nine Degrees"). I met Blaine Cartwright from Kentucky Bridgeburners/Nashville Pussy after our show and he was a great guy! We also hung with Wishbone Ash the headliners on that day, because they had a Finnish guitar player in the band too!

"Hallelujah Rock'n'Rollah" is still considered by many to be one of the great albums of European rock. In fact, I believe you have released a reissue of the album overseen by Jürgen Hendlmeier. I treasure that record. How do you view the historical weight of that album today?
This record shaped our whole career. It was a big seller, even if I did not realize it back then. It did not sell a 100 000 records in Europe but it was a big seller for us all the way! And a year later it was separately licensed to North America under a different name and with a few changes on it. Svart Records 25th anniversary edition for Hallelujah Rock'n'Rollah just came out in Finland this summer and Kike Turmix also gets a mention on the reissue's inner notes! Excellent album & fantastic times!! We are very happy that it finally came out again sounding the way it was meant to be like in the first place! Our producer Jürgen Hendlmeier did again a wonderful job picking up a few of the slightly different mixes that were originally left out from the original release.

How did the idea come to you of opening the album as if it were a football match broadcast? I think it is glorious, and "Loose My Soul" is such a powerful way to start a record. For a Finnish listener, hearing someone sing in Spanish must sound... strange? Exotic? Please tell us how that came about.
Producer Hendlmeier, football fan hailing from Germany cut the intro from the middle part of the song, which I had improvised on top of the guitar solo and put it as a starter to the actual song. It was originally just a joke, but the joke stuck! What I did not expect was for him to choose Loose My Soul as the first song for the whole album. Because of the Spanish intro, I felt a little bit ashamed of mixing a football match nobody understood about with good Rock'n'Roll music at first. But sometimes the magic of art comes from things we do not understand.

Tell us something... Why do you call the police in Bilbao in "Flowers"?
Oh my god, long story! I was detained by the police in Bilbao, on the 26th of December of 2000. We were playing with The Hot Dogs at Café Antzioka on that night and before the show, while we were loading our gear to the theatre - situated in the middle of the city - I was a bit drunk and unfortunately jumped on top of a car behind of our van, as a demonstration, because we were working as fast as we could, had flown all the way from Finland on that same evening, not eaten yet

and this one driver on the car was inpatient with us because we were cutting the traffic and he was in a rush. I accidentally left a small trace on his new car and had nowhere to run!

A local police patrol came, put me on handcuffs and off they put me behind bars at the police station. But I noticed most of the jails at this station were empty on that night, probably because it was still the X-mas season. They didn't quite know what to do with me, so after I woke up in my cell these two cops asked me if I could sing them some James Brown. I told them that I could, and surely I did!! They were helping me with some percussion on the table and a chair.

After that they told me they were letting me go and that they could show me my way to the venue with the only condition that I would walk. So these two officials went showing me Bilbao by feet and they stopped for a smoke at a park while they told me to just keep on walking straight. I had no watch with me, no cell phone and no sense of real time, plus I really thought they were playing a trick on me, but it was not the case.

So, with "Flowers" I am kind of thanking Bilbao and these policemen down there on that night, because they actually let me do the show on time, plus they understood I was not a serious criminal. Not everybody treats you always nice when you tell them you come from South America.

How do you see the European rock scene? Are you familiar with the Italian band The Peawes? To me they seem like the clearest heirs to your sound. Do you see any bands that have picked up your torch?
I think that the European scene is very fine nowadays! There are still a lot very good bands around, specially in Spain! Let me mention Cápsula, The Jackets and The Braindrops. But no, I just found out myself about The Peawes thanks for that!! I could also say that at this very moment up here, Lovers Left Alive from Helsinki are still carrying the torch. But there are, have been and will always hopefully be many others unknown artists too carrying that torch.

After all these years, what do you think remains intact in The Flaming Sideburns?
Our integrity & all of the songs we have recorded in our career.

Thank you very much for your answers and, above all, for your music.
Thank you for your effort!

Javistone

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

ROCK BOTTOM MAGAZINE

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 €

Las Robertas

All We Need Is Now

Las Robertas are arriving in Europe thanks to Spinda Records, one of those labels that has spent years demonstrating a special talent for discovering artists who operate far from the most travelled paths. From Costa Rica, the quartet led by Mercedes Oller presents "All We Need Is Now", an album that confirms why they have become one of the most interesting bands on the Latin American alternative scene. With a career spanning more than fifteen years, five studio albums and the distinction of being the first Costa Rican band to perform at Coachella, Las Robertas have built a distinctive identity by combining psychedelia, dream pop, shoegaze and alternative rock without ever losing sight of the song itself.

The band led by Mercedes, Meche, has developed a sound that looks both to the psychedelia of the 1960s and the alternative scenes of the 1990s. Their songs contain echoes of The Velvet Underground, Mazzy Star and My Bloody Valentine, but always filtered through a unique sensibility that has allowed them to establish a perfectly recognisable identity. “All We Need Is Now” also represents a new step in that evolution, a record produced entirely by the band themselves, more reflective, more detailed and driven by a sonic exploration that expands their creative universe even further.

With the album’s release approaching, we spoke with Mercedes Oller about the origins of Las Robertas, the evolution they have experienced since Love Is the Answer”, the philosophy behind the songs on “All We Need Is Now”, the Costa Rican music scene, their historic appearance at Coachella, their relationship with Spinda Records and the plans that will soon bring them back to Europe. A conversation that allows us to discover first-hand a band that has spent years breaking down barriers from one of the least visible, yet most fertile, corners of Latin American rock.

First of all, congratulations on the album. I absolutely loved it. It’s been a long time since I heard a record that sounded so fresh and exciting.
Hello Javi! Thank you so much. We’re really happy that you enjoyed the album.

Tell us, how did Las Robertas come about?
We have to go all the way back to mid-2009! That was the year I started the project. At the time I had the idea and the strong desire to start an all-girl band, so I began contacting different people and asking whether they would be interested in joining the project. After that process, the first line-up of the band came together, and by October 2009 we played our live debut. Since then, the band has never stopped evolving or performing.

Why did you choose that name for the band?
The name comes as a tribute to all the girl bands that made history, such as The Ronettes, The Crystals and The Shangri-Las. They were hugely important in the history of music and rock and roll. They were pioneers who opened the door and inspired many women to play music. In fact, even before I started the band, I already had that name in mind.

This is your fifth album, no less. How do you think you have evolved as a band? What differences do you find between 2023’s “Love Is the Answer” and this latest work? Could it be that “All We Need Is Now” sounds a little more reflective?
The process behind both albums was completely different. To give some context, “Love Is the Answer” was made under the production, mixing and mastering guidance of Owen Morris (Oasis, The Verve, New Order, etc.). Everything happened very quickly: writing, recording and working with Owen and his direction. The recording itself took longer because it happened at the beginning of the pandemic, a time full of uncertainty and waiting until everything was finally ready. I think the songs on “Love Is the Answer” were more concise and direct. With “All We Need Is Now”, the path was entirely different because we produced everything ourselves, and we included songs we had already been playing live that were written after “Love Is the Answer”. We had much more time to experiment with sounds and incorporate even more instruments such as keyboards. Since the process took longer than “Love Is the Answer”, I do think it sounds more reflective and deeper. We recorded many more layers of percussion and vocals compared to the previous album.

The press release states that “All We Need Is Now” brings together nine songs centred on living in the present, overcoming fear and personal healing. What do you mean by that? What is the meaning behind the album title?
It refers to a way of living and seeing life. I can speak from a personal perspective. It helped me a lot to begin practising these kinds of philosophies that involve understanding that we have control over absolutely nothing, neither external events nor even our own inner world, and that we should live with gratitude. I think sharing this way of approaching life through an album or through songs can reach the people who need it most.

As I mentioned before, I think the album is magnificent. There are songs that instantly get under your skin, such as “Like a Flower”. It has an immersive, almost magical sound, with a production full of nuances that make it grow and grow.
“Like a Flower” is basically about being reborn, blooming and living freely without restraints. I think the concept of the lyrics is reflected directly in the music, that sense of freedom that keeps expanding, which becomes apparent through the arrangements of the instruments. The song eventually took a direction strongly focused on the guitar arrangements. Initially, they weren’t arranged that way, but during rehearsals we started exploring the dynamics between Russell’s and Fabián’s guitars, very much in the style of the Grateful Dead, while keeping the dream-pop foundation the song had from the beginning.

Another song that immediately captures you is “It’s Alright”. You sing “open your eyes”, “everything is alright”… it almost feels as if it wants to hug you.
That song is literally that. It comes to comfort you, to embrace you, to tell you that everything will be alright and that everything will pass. I think it can apply to any difficult situation where it feels impossible to see a way out. If you focus your energy where it should be, you’ll start seeing situations and life from a different perspective. I think we often feel trapped or frustrated, and this song arrives as a way of releasing those feelings as well.

The album artwork was created by Costa Rican artist Juliana Quesada, who uses the image of the Morpho butterfly, your national symbol, as a representation of transformation, fleeting beauty and connection with the present.

> ***The band’s name is a tribute to all the girl groups that made history, such as The Ronettes, The Crystals, and The Shangri-Las. They played a hugely important role in the history of music and rock and roll. They were pioneers who paved the way and inspired countless women to make music.***

Juliana, the artist behind the artwork, answers this one: “I was really excited when they asked me to create the artwork because I admire the band so much and the theme aligned perfectly with my work. Meche loved a photograph I had taken of a butterfly with a star in the middle, and we adapted that concept to the Morpho butterfly and to psychedelia. I normally work with analogue photography and use multiple exposures to create unexpected effects. This was my first time trying the technique digitally, and I enjoyed having more control over the final results. There’s no Photoshop editing involved, only a small amount of colour correction, but the composition itself was created in-camera. I prefer experimenting during the creative process rather than in post-production. I think the final result is beautiful because it fits so well with the sound of the album and with elements of our country. Meche always encourages me to experiment and create, and it was very special to work on this artwork together with her.”

Historically, the Latin American countries most associated with pop and rock music have been Mexico, Argentina and Colombia. You are the first Costa Rican band we have featured in the magazine. What is the music scene like in your country?
It’s actually quite interesting because Costa Rica has many valuable things to offer, beyond its nature and biodiversity, despite being a very small country. Musically speaking, there are countless projects, and that’s without even touching on other artistic disciplines. The amount of talent and the number of musicians is impressive for such a small nation.

There are projects of every kind: classical, reggae, rock, metal, alternative, cumbia, experimental music, pop, folk and much more. The alternative scene now encompasses many styles and bands, and at the moment there is a very strong post-punk and shoegaze movement, which is probably the most dominant current within alternative music. There isn’t really a specific scene for the style of music we play, but that doesn’t stop us from

performing at all sorts of local events.

Which Costa Rican artists would you recommend?
I'd recommend projects by friends as well as projects involving members of Las Robertas: Infierno de Dante, Monte, Buaya Darat, Sofi Paez, Ave Negra, Menesses, Ardid, Los Cuchillos, Las Pyramides, Un Rojo Reggae Band, Canina, Voodoo, MFLA and Abbie. I'm definitely forgetting many others, but these are the first ones that come to mind.

In terms of broader references, your sound carries traces of British 1960s psychedelia, bands like The Velvet Underground, more recent acts such as Brian Jonestown Massacre, and even newer artists. In fact, you remind me of a band we recently interviewed, The Crystal Teardrop, whom I highly recommend. What would you say are your clearest influences?
Here's a list of influences, in no particular order because they are all equally important: Jesus and Mary Chain, The Byrds, Grateful Dead, The Beatles, the all-girl bands from the 1960s that I mentioned earlier, The Breeders, Lush, Ride, Mazzy Star, Oasis, The Charlatans, Stone Roses, My Bloody Valentine, Smashing Pumpkins, Chapterhouse, Primal Scream and Slowdive. It's a huge blend of alternative 1990s scenes mixed with bands from the psychedelic sixties. We'll definitely listen to The Crystal Teardrop. Thanks for the recommendation!

You were the first Costa Rican band to perform at a festival such as Coachella. What was the experience like?
That's right! Every year the festival includes independent bands from the Latin American and Spanish scenes. Previous editions have featured bands such as Los Blenders, Las Ligas Menores, Mint Field, Bratty, Girl Ultra and many more. This is all thanks to the Sonora stage, which focuses on curating more independent artists and ensuring diversity within the line-up, as all festivals should.

Coachella is an enormous event. It was surreal to perform there while also seeing huge artists on those massive stages. You run into famous people, actors, models and all sorts of celebrities. Honestly, it's crazy, especially for an independent band like ours, sharing space with something so different from the environments we're used to playing in.

I can't help asking how your path crossed with Spinda Records. Did Berto's work with bands such as Las Nubes or Fin del Mundo have anything to do with it?
That happened thanks to Carlo Bruno from Brain Productions. He works with Fin del Mundo and with us as well. Carlo and Berto work together, and that's how we entered the world of Spinda and met Berto. We're extremely grateful and happy to be working with someone like him. We've worked with several labels since the release of our first album, and I can honestly say that working with Berto has been a pleasure.

We're fans of both of those bands and have spoken with them. It seems that rock music is in very good health throughout Latin America and that women are taking an increasingly prominent role, although I think that can be said about the rest of the world as well. In the 1990s it wasn't nearly as common to find women leading rock bands with such visibility. What do you think?
I love Fin del Mundo and Las Nubes too! It's very encouraging to see so many more female-led projects nowadays. I think it's the result of years of progress, during which many of the stigmas, although they still exist, have gradually lost strength. Women have become more empowered and more informed thanks to the ongoing feminist struggle. That has created opportunities and visibility for so many women, whether in the arts or elsewhere.

We must continue making the work of female artists and colleagues visible. That's why opportunities and representation for women-led projects are so important in cultural spaces such as festivals, booking agencies, promoters, record labels and similar environments.

What plans do you have? Will Berto be bringing you to Spain and Europe soon?
We'll be playing several dates in Spain and France this July! The tour begins on 25 July at Binic Blues in France. In Spain, we'll play on 30 July at Rock and Blues in Zaragoza and on 31 July at Sala Upload in Barcelona. For the remainder of the year, there are plans to perform in South America and Mexico if everything goes well. In 2027 we'll return with a much more extensive European tour.

Thank you very much. We hope to see you in our country.
Thank you, Javi, for listening to the album and taking an interest in our project! We hope to meet you soon, whether in Spain or Costa Rica. Let us know if you ever come to visit!

Javistone

SERiE BOOTLEGS

By Sob 2026

In this issue we're going to revisit some unusual and highly curious events that took place many moons ago. While the world was falling apart in Europe, Americans carried on doing their own thing. Back in 1940, if you tuned into CBS on the East Coast radio stations, you might have stumbled across this little gem, now largely lost to time, which I'm taking the liberty of bringing back to life in this wonderful publication. Here's a small piece of history, and I hope you enjoy it as much as I do. Poor Woody, if he could see that his fascist-killing machine has now been taken hostage.

Woody Guthrie & Friends, *Back Where I Come From*, CBS Studios. New York, NY (August 19, 1940)

New York, "CBS Radio Forecast" Series No. 10: this series was an attempt to "test new radio ideas". Each programme served as a pilot for a proposed new radio series. Hosted by Clifton Fadiman, with scripts by Alan Lomax and Nicholas Ray, and featuring Woody Guthrie, The Golden Gate Quartet, Len Doyle, Burl Ives, Josh White and Willie Johnson.

Set List:

1. Intro
2. Intro Pt. 2
3. Introduction - "The Weather"
4. "Sign of the Rain" - The Golden Gate Quartet / "Er-i-e Canal" - All
5. Woody Guthrie on the Subway and the Weather
6. Talk
7. Woody Intro / "So Long It's Been Good to Know You" - Woody Guthrie and Cast
8. "So Long" (Cont.) - Woody and Cast / "Foggy Dew" - Burl Ives
9. "Noah's Ark Sermon" - Willie Johnson & The Golden Gate Quartet
10. "So Long" (Outro) - Woody and Cast

The second show in this issue is dedicated to the great Roy Orbison, who experienced a remarkable renaissance during the late 1980s. Hollywood's revival of the 1950s and 1960s brought him back to the forefront, and a musician of his stature hardly needs an introduction. Shortly after that resurgence came the final blow: his death. Young, far too young, the world stopped turning for him. And, as he deserved, he was honoured with a heartfelt tribute. This is the complete show from that night in California.

A Tribute to Roy Orbison, Universal Amphitheatre, Los Angeles, California (February 24, 1990).

Presented here is this multi-artist tribute to

Roy Orbison, part concert and part television recording, organised at the request of his widow, Barbara Orbison, to honour her late husband, who had passed away at the end of 1988. The evening featured a number of pre-recorded biographical and tribute videos interspersed with more than thirty live performances, some accompanied by celebrities sharing memories of Roy. Interestingly, most of the musical performances, though not all, consisted of Orbison songs or songs closely associated with him. The exceptions included artists such as Iggy Pop performing "Home", Bonnie Raitt and John Lee Hooker playing "I'm in the Mood", B.B. King delivering a superb rendition of "The Thrill Is Gone", and a reunion of three-fifths of The Byrds (Roger McGuinn, David Crosby and Chris Hillman), who performed their own mini-set at the end and brought Bob Dylan on stage as a special guest. The Byrds reunion with Dylan became the major talking point of the event and, although Bob was not exactly at his peak, McGuinn, Crosby and Hillman sounded magnificent. The performances by Dwight Yoakam and Levon Helm were also excellent. Another highlight was "Dream Baby (How Long Must I Dream)", performed by three quarters of Talking Heads together with Wendy & Lisa from Prince's Revolution.

Finally, a contemporary show. As you've probably noticed lately, the formula has been one old show, one from our younger years, and one current performance. The contemporary selection this time is none other than the guitar god Eric Clapton. After securing tickets in Madrid to see a true master at work, and with every seat sold out, the night promised to be epic. But, as you all know, the concert was cut short just before the encores.

Eric Clapton in Barcelona, 2026

Following his appearance in Madrid and the controversy we all know about, the tour continued on to Barcelona. The show was identical, except that here he actually performed the encore that those of us in Madrid missed out on. It was a classy evening and a highly elegant concert, although a significant portion of it was acoustic, something that certainly did not detract from the overall result. Even so, a few more electric sections would have pushed the performance to an even higher level.

Then again, I'm hardly the person to find fault with an Eric Clapton concert. We should simply be grateful that we had him standing in front of us delivering such an incredible performance. Enjoy it while you can, because I doubt we'll be seeing him around these parts again.

Long live Slowhand.

I hurt myself today

A Section by J. The Perfect Drug

They Don't Make Music Like They Used To

I'm taking advantage of this space that Mr Stone and the good people at Rock Bottom Magazine have kindly provided to vent some of the bile that builds up inside a person and needs to come out before it explodes and makes a terrible mess of everything. For the last few days, we've all been treated to the spectacle of a certain Puerto Rican gentleman who, judging by what I read and see, is considered the supreme totem of contemporary music.

Reggaeton is a genre that is completely alien to me. I'll admit it. I've made virtually no effort to get close to it, nor have I wanted to dissect it in order to discuss it. I know nothing about its branches, origins or historical development. Quite simply, it doesn't interest me in the slightest. My closest encounter with it has been listening to two albums by Rosalía, who I'm not even sure makes reggaeton, which should give you an idea of the extent of my knowledge.

The fact that a style of music I don't relate to becomes fashionable stopped bothering me years ago. Everyone is free to destroy their ears with whatever they like. I still blast Fun House at full volume despite my ENT specialist's warnings, and if people want to get their kicks listening to that gentleman, good luck to them. I'm not even going to get into the fact that it's impossible to understand a word he says (Bobby McFerrin was already doing the whole mumbling-without-actually-singing-any-words thing back in the 1980s, admittedly with rather less sensual effects on the audience), nor the fact that, artistically speaking, there's nothing there to get your teeth into. Nor will I dwell on how every tune seems identical to the one before it.

The masses losing their minds over this sort of rubbish is nothing new. It happened with New Kids on the Block decades ago and the world kept turning. We didn't all become idiots, or at least not especially so. But seeing this man sell out seven consecutive nights, one show per day, where the concept of "outrageously expensive" ticket prices no longer seems sufficient, where every celebrity in the country is desperate to appear on a stage shaped like a porch while everybody wiggles around and the illustrious star mumbles away... Come on. The fact that people enjoy it doesn't bother me. The fact that it's being described as some unprecedented spectacle, the like of which has never been seen before, and that the media treats it as though it were the culmination of the entire history of music... that's where I draw the line.Does nobody remember U2's groundbreaking Zoo TV Tour? And if we want something more recent, we have Ghost's absolutely spectacular tours. Does the artistic complexity and genuinely transgressive vision of Tobias and company have any equal? Even Rosalía has an artistic concept, one I'm not particularly familiar with, but at least it's clear that it exists. Watching the press bend over backwards in an effort to appear cool is embarrassing. And as an added bonus, I heard a young woman on Cadena SER insulting anyone who doesn't enjoy reggaeton, throwing around the usual labels such as boomers, old men, and so on, as though there weren't women of all ages who can't stand it either.

And then there's the familiar mantra: "People keep saying they don't make music like they used to. Well, tough luck."
My dear, before turning on the microphone, try reading a little. They still make music like they used to. It's just not fashionable anymore.

And I'll leave it there, because I don't want my first contribution to Rock Bottom Magazine to be my last, but as Freddie Mercury used to sing, "you can kiss my ass goodbye".

200 Podcast Episodes

CARRETERA PERDIDA

"Books, Records and Films Matter", Javier Sanabria

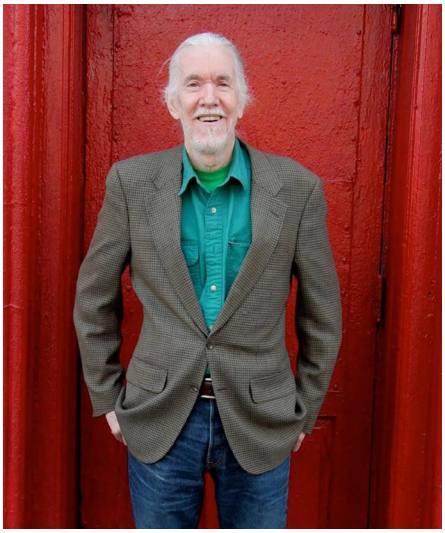
What can I say about Javier Sanabria and his podcast Lost Highway at this point? That he's someone I admire greatly and care about deeply? That I consider his podcast a bloody marvel, an oasis of talent, good taste and passion? Well, yes, all of that is true. From the day we met, during an interview he conducted with me, there was an immediate connection that remains to this day. By then, I was already a regular listener to his podcast, and I even did my small part to help him acquire the equipment he needed to keep it going (just don't tell anyone). I've wanted for a long time to pay him the tribute he so richly deserves, but the broadcast of his 200th episode (which he has already surpassed by now) provided the perfect excuse to put him on the other side of the microphone and interview him myself. Curiously, and much to my surprise, it's the first time anyone has ever decided to do so.

Among the vast sea of podcasts flooding every platform, “Carretera Perdida” is, by a long way, one of the most accomplished, original, and thoroughly researched you’ll come across. Music, cinema, and literature flow in abundance through Sanabria, who devours books, records, films, and cool festivals with insatiable enthusiasm. I’ve shared beers with him, seen The Monkeys with him, attended book launches together, and we’ve even stood side by side in reverential silence before the Guernica, two days before Patti Smith did the same. But I’d never taken the step of interviewing him, and at last I’ve settled that debt. Javi talks to us about his early days in radio, his passion for cinema, for the Stones... in what is less a conventional interview than a conversation between friends, as it could hardly have been otherwise.

I’d wanted to do this for a long time. You know how much admiration and affection I have for you and for your show. We never quite got around to it because you started contributing to Rock Bottom, and it felt a bit odd interviewing one of our own contributors. But now that you’ve reached 200 episodes, well, 201 by now, it seemed like the perfect moment.
You know the affection and admiration go both ways. You and I actually met doing exactly this, only the other way around: I was asking the questions and you were answering them. I can’t remember whether it was when you published the blog book or the first yearbook, but that’s where the collaboration came from. I honestly don’t know how many interviews I’ve done in my life. It’s something I’ve always loved doing, but this is the first time anyone has interviewed just me. We once did a fake interview on my show when Andrés and I published our book, but this is genuinely my first proper interview.

I don’t believe it.
That’s exactly how it is. I’ve got no reason to lie to you, Javier (Laughs).

Yesterday I went back and listened to the first episode of “Carretera Perdida” that you’ve uploaded to iVoox.
Wow... that’s pure archaeology.



Michael Lydon

It hasn’t been that many years, has it? Four or five?
No, no. It’s been a lot of years. It must be eleven or twelve, since around 2014. There was an earlier stage of “Carretera Perdida” that I did on Radio Enlace, and there are no surviving recordings of that, which actually suits me just fine because everything was still very tentative back then. In that very first programme we interviewed Michael Lydon. Andrés was living in New York at the time and met him there. He was one of the first journalists at the original Rolling Stone, the San Francisco one, the real one. So he told me, “I’ve got access to a guy who was at Altamont.” And I thought, “Bloody hell, we have to do this.”

When I heard that, I was hugely impressed. That guy witnessed everything.
He has a book published here in Spain, “The Rolling Stones Discover America”. The foreword was written by a certain Javier Sanabria, because everything stays in the family around here (Laughs). It’s a diary of the ‘69 tour, and it’s brilliant because it all builds towards Altamont, something we’ve all read about a thousand times. But he was actually there, and he said that right from the beginning the whole atmosphere gave him a really bad feeling, and he eventually got out of there completely terrified.

Didn’t he get into a fight with one of the Hells Angels?
Well, not exactly. He got hit. According to what he told us, one of them didn’t like the way he looked at him and punched him in the face. Just imagine the atmosphere: the hippies already in the twilight of the movement, the Hells Angels completely off their heads, dodgy synthetic drugs... Honestly, it could have turned out a lot worse.

It was almost a miracle.
Yes. I mean that the artists got out alive. Jefferson Airplane were beaten up on stage. It’s the kind of disaster that makes you wonder how anyone thought it could be organised that way. They crammed hundreds of thousands of people in there. It was staggering irresponsibility.

But the Rolling Stones at that time thought they were untouchable.
Absolutely.

The phrase “a foolproof plan” was probably invented by Mick Jagger when he hired the Hells Angels to handle security (Laughs).
Inspired by the brilliant ideas of his friends in Grateful Dead, who weren’t exactly the most organised people in the world either.

Listening to that first episode made me smile because you’re still using pretty much the same theme tune, and you sounded much more cheerful back then.
I have an explanation for that. “Carretera Perdida” was originally a kind of spin-off from the segment I used to do on “Carne Cruda”. There I only had ten minutes to squeeze in every bit of information that came into my head. Just imagine it: I turned up with a million ideas buzzing around my brain, and “Carne Cruda”

> ***In that very first episode, we interviewed Michael Lydon. Andrés was living in New York at the time and met him there. He was one of the first journalists at the original Rolling Stone, the San Francisco one, the real deal. So Andrés said to me, “I have access to a guy who was at Altamont.” And I thought, “Fuck, we’ve got to do this.”***

is a programme that moves at an incredibly fast pace, almost like a bebop concert. On top of that, it was my first experience in radio. I’d never done radio before, so I jumped straight in at that speed.

You were completely fired up.
Exactly. I’d never done a one-hour programme before, and instinctively I wanted to keep that same pace. Until you realise you’re overwhelming people, that you need pauses. At the beginning, the information was also much more fragmented. Later on I started writing my scripts more carefully, giving the programmes a better structure, and that inevitably leads you towards a calmer tone.

Do you ever listen back to your old programmes?
Never. I hate it. It’s one of my flaws, but I just can’t listen to anything I’ve done in the past.

Well, I actually enjoy listening to mine.
I know plenty of people who love listening to themselves (Laughs). But I work much more on intuition than on analysis. When I finish a programme, I already know whether something hasn’t quite worked or whether an idea that seemed brilliant ends up falling flat. Sometimes you come up with what feels like a stroke of genius while you’re walking down the street, and then, when you try it on the radio, it simply doesn’t work at all.

I can already see where you’re going with the whole feedback thing.
Exactly, because then there are things you think don’t work, and it turns out people absolutely love them.

Your start in radio was with Javier Gallego on “Carne Cruda”, wasn’t it?
Yes. I met Javi through Ana Alonso, who was working at Cadena SER at the time. He was just about to launch “Carne Cruda” on Radio 3, and it all coincided with a very turbulent period at the station.

What was going on there?
Changes in management, endless internal politics... People like Diego Manrique were being pushed aside, and there was a kind of

changing of the guard. Right in the middle of all that came "Carne Cruda", which became a huge success because it coincided with the 15M movement and all that political and cultural ferment.

You were already leaning that way before then.
Yes. As I always say about Javi, we'd already been coming into the corner sideways long before that (Laughs). He started calling on friends to contribute different segments, and one night, in a bar in Madrid where they were showing glam rock videos from the seventies, we were killing ourselves laughing at the way Slade looked and all those bands dressed like Scottish dockworkers covered in glitter. That very night he sent me a text message saying, "Why don't you tell this kind of crap on the radio?" And that's how it all started.

And had you ever thought about doing radio yourself?
Never. I listened to a huge amount of radio, especially Radio 3, and I'd studied journalism, but I'd never seriously considered doing it. I was just that annoying guy who was always recommending records and books, nothing more.

Now I understand why we get on so well (Laughs).
Exactly. Like-minded people always end up finding each other.

And your debut was straight on Radio 3.
Yes, without any previous experience. I was thirty years old and didn't have the slightest fucking idea what I was doing. I'd never written a script, I'd never presented on air... nothing.

But there was something natural about it.
I suppose so. I never tried to develop a "radio voice" or anything like that. The most surreal part was that a BMW used to come and pick me up from home.

You're kidding.
No, honestly. They didn't pay me, but they picked me up in this luxury car, drove me to the Casa de la Radio, I'd do my ten-minute slot, and then they'd drive me home again. And, of course, that injects a seriously addictive poison into your system.

That reminds me of one of my own stories. I was living in Madrid, playing in a truly dreadful covers band, and one time we played at a local fair in Vallecas... they picked us up in a luxury car (Laughs). I swear, and it was arranged by the parish itself. We were just four complete nutcases, and people were asking us for autographs as soon as we got out of the car.
That's because a limousine automatically turns you into a rock star.

The best part is, they paid each of us a hundred euros, fed us, and kept the drinks coming. We had to play two sets because we only knew five or six songs.
So you played them once fast and then again a bit slower (Laughs).

Things moved incredibly fast at Radio 3. It came quickly, took off quickly... and then they more or less froze you out.
Yes. That story has been well documented by now. We were about to start our third season when, one week beforehand, they told Javi the programme wasn't continuing. We already had interviews lined up, the team was in place, everything was ready to go. Then they came up with ridiculous excuses, like saying it was an incredibly expensive programme. Meanwhile, I'd spent years there earning next to nothing.

Just like at Rock Bottom Magazine, then. A real road to riches.
Exactly. I make more from Rock Bottom than I ever made at Radio 3 (Laughs). But in the end, it was all internal politics and jealousy, basically.

You and I also share a past in community radio. We both spent time at Radio Almenara.
Yes, although at different times.

I ended up there after taking the radio workshop at Chaminade School, which was one of the best things that's ever happened to me. I had a programme called "Judas' Revenge".
Do you still have any of that?

Of course. I've got it all on cassette tapes. I listened to some of it recently with my daughter, and she couldn't believe it.
Then publish it. Make a podcast with the old Javistone.

Yeah, sure, because I've got so much spare time...
And while you're at it, translate it all into English. That way you'll never sleep again (Laughs).

After that I ended up at Radio Almenara thanks to JF León.
Yes, in La Ventilla.

That's where I did "Return to Manderley", which obviously took its name from "Rebecca". In the same way that "Carretera Perdida" immediately makes people think of David Lynch.
Actually, the title mainly comes from the Hank Williams song "Lost Highway". I liked that double reference: Lynch on one side, and dark country on the other.

People also strongly associate you with cinema.
That's inevitable. I originally wanted to make a music programme, but I ended up talking about films and books as well because they're the things I consume all the time. In the end, just as they say in "High Fidelity", books, records, and films matter. They're where you find something to lean on.

And before Radio Almenara came Radio Carcoma?
Yes. That's where the programme really took on the shape it has today. I was still doing my ten-minute slot on "Carne Cruda", but I needed something that was entirely my own. At Radio Enlace I learned the basics: recording, editing, putting a programme together. But it was at Radio Carcoma that I started building something more substantial, with contributors, a sound engineer, and the whole setup.

And it was live as well, which gives it something special.
Absolutely. The magic of radio lies in broadcasting live, walking the tightrope. A song starts before it's supposed to; you have to pull a fader down on the fly... all of that creates an adrenaline rush that an edited podcast simply doesn't have.

Even if nobody's listening, that feeling is still there.
Absolutely. That's how I learned. And that's why I still understand radio in that way.

So when does the real sense of community around "Carretera Perdida" begin?
At Radio Carcoma. That's when I started inviting friends to contribute: Andrés Rus, Víctor Abad, Tusset, Carlota... It finally started to feel like a proper programme. And it was great fun making it with friends. In the end, that's what all of this is about: surrounding yourself with people who share your cultural obsessions. The friends you share those passions with are the ones who end up staying with you for life.

Then the pandemic arrived, and that had quite an impact on "Carretera Perdida".
It did. By then we'd already started recording the programme in a professional studio in Madrid, the very same one where "Carne Cruda" was made. We were paying for the studio, the sound engineer... it was a significant investment. Then the pandemic hit and everything fell apart. We couldn't get together, I didn't have the equipment to produce it from home, and I seriously considered calling it a day.

But then you launched a crowdfunding campaign.
What I did was almost an act of desperation. I basically launched a crowdfunding campaign to buy equipment. I approached that whole support campaign with a real sense of anxiety because, well, I was asking people for money, and that's something those of us without much money find incredibly uncomfortable. I don't know about people who have plenty of it, but those of us who don't have much feel deeply awkward asking for financial support. But Carlota convinced me. And so did Román, Mr. Tóxico, who was one of the programme's contributors at the time. They both told me, "I'm sure there are people who'll want to support this and help keep it going."

So it was like throwing a message in a bottle into the ocean, and the response was incredible. Loads of people contributed, including many

I had absolutely no idea were even listening. You and I have talked a thousand times about feedback and how unpredictable it can be. But it's true that when we asked for help and said, "Either you give us a hand or the programme disappears because we simply don't have the means to keep making it," people really came through. It was an amazing boost, and it gave us a huge sense of validation for what we were doing.

That was back in 2021, and it allowed me to buy everything I needed: headphones, microphones, cables... I've been using exactly the same equipment ever since to produce the programme from home, which is much more convenient. At the beginning, I really wanted the podcast to sound genuinely professional, something that would set it apart from the typical homemade show where a few friends get together over beers and one microphone is far louder than the others, or one barely works at all. We managed to achieve that quality from home, and that's what has allowed me to keep doing it ever since. I make it exactly where I want to make it, right here, without having to move around much. Then, of course, Zoom came along and all the other tools that made doing interviews much easier. Above all, they let me record whenever I want, because that's one of the constants of "Carretera Perdida": I make the programme when I have both the time and the desire to do it. If three months go by without a new episode, it's simply because I either don't have the time or I'm not in the right frame of mind for it.

Talking about equipment and technology reminds me of when I interviewed César Martín, who you've interviewed as well. I remember he criticised the way blogs had democratised journalism to some extent. But there's no question that technology has done exactly that for radio through podcasts. I love radio, but for whatever reason I've focused on the magazine, on the written side of things. But the truth is, making a podcast is incredibly easy nowadays, as long as you've got some basic equipment.
That's all I have myself: a microphone, an audio interface... And then I use free software to mix everything together. To be honest, I'm pretty hopeless when it comes to that sort of thing.

The only really good piece of equipment I own for podcasting is the microphone Dolphin Riot gave me. A big hug to our good friend Dolphin. May God keep him in His glory... in Texas (Laughs). The fact that you can now produce something with this level of quality democratises creativity, the ability to make things. That's wonderful. But let's get back to the subject of feedback...
The thorny subject.

That first episode we were talking about earlier has around 950 listens, and you said it's probably about fourteen years old. Do you remember how many comments it has?
Wow... two or three, if I'm lucky.

It has three, and one of them is yours.
Well, there you go. I usually reply because it's easy enough for me. I only upload the programme to iVoox. We can talk later about Spotify and Alibaba and the Forty Thieves if you like. But because the show is hosted on iVoox, they notify you whenever someone leaves a comment, so I get them straight away. And, honestly, the least I can do is reply to those three people who take the trouble to write something. Most of the comments are complimentary. Every now and then, though, you release an episode and the usual smart-arse or miserable sod turns up with one of those supposedly constructive criticisms. Those are the ones I particularly enjoy telling to fuck off. Basically: look, I haven't got the slightest idea who you are, and I certainly didn't ask for your advice. So why don't you go and make your own podcast, and then we'll compare them if you like?

There's a problem with free content: people don't value things when they don't have to pay for them.
The fact that it's free, and we've talked about this a lot in relation to the magazine as well, means you're offering something simply because it comes from within you, regardless of everything else. One day may come when nobody listens anymore, and I'll shut it down because it no longer makes much sense. But it's still nice to know that what you're doing reaches someone.

When you see that some episodes have had more than three thousand listens on iVoox, and then there are all the other platforms where I've got no way of knowing the figures... I'm not looking for a pat on the back or for people to tell me, "Hey, this is brilliant, you're doing a great job..."

Although there's nothing wrong with people doing that. It's nice when someone tells you you're doing something well and that they're enjoying it.
It's just that I've got a strange relationship with vanity. Of course I've got an ego, like everybody else, but at the same time I don't really know how to deal with praise. I don't deal with criticism particularly well either, but that's just a flaw in my own personality. Still, when someone comes up to me and says, "I've been listening to your programme for eight years," I think, well, that's great, I'm glad you're telling me now, but over all that time you could have taken the trouble to say, "Hi. I really liked this episode," or "I liked that one," or "I'm getting a bit bored with the direction the programme is taking now," or whatever. Anything. Just let me know you're there.

Because what you know is that there are hundreds, maybe thousands, of people listening. But, hell, you know this as well as I do, it takes up a huge amount of your time. We're both reasonably functional adults now, and you've got a family as well. What I mean is, I'm giving up doing other things in order to make this. Yes, I do it for myself, and I've always been the first to say that. I've got no problem whatsoever carrying on even if nobody listens. But, come on, if you're there, if you're listening, at least give it a like. Especially on iVoox, where they're constantly ranking podcasts and telling you, "Your podcast has moved up however many places," as though it were some kind of competition, and all of that depends on people pressing one simple like button.

In other words, if you've got a podcast that only

fifteen people listen to, but all fifteen click “like”, that podcast suddenly gets more visibility than mine, even though mine might be listened to by hundreds of people. Instead, this strange symbiotic relationship has developed where one person creates something, someone else enjoys it... and says absolutely nothing. Come on, just like you said, at least say “hello”.

Speaking of that, in the editorial of issue 51 of the magazine I mention that I recently went to see Gluecifer at the Sala Custom. They played a fantastic show. When it was over, I was standing there with the cover we’d done for them, hoping to get everyone’s autograph, but especially Biff’s, because I’d seen him live so many times. In fact, I even showed him the photo I’d taken of him at the concert in Sol back in ‘97, when they were wearing those red lamé shirts. It was such a great picture...
We were both at that concert without even knowing each other, Javier (Laughs).

The bass player came out first. The drummer didn’t really pay much attention to us. Then Captain Poon came over, and not only was he incredibly kind, he also acknowledged the work we do and said it was genuinely important, which really struck me and left me feeling incredibly grateful. In the end, Biff never came out. But the funny thing was that there was a girl standing behind me. I started chatting to her, because I end up talking to absolutely everyone, something that Jesse finds incredibly annoying (Laughs). She was from Seville, if I remember correctly, and suddenly she said, “Actually, I know who you are.” I asked her, “How do you know me?”. “You’re the guy from Rock Bottom.” And I thought, Bloody hell... how do you know me? “Because I read your magazine.” That’s the really rewarding part. Someone saying, “I know you. I follow your work. I read what you write.” It’s wonderful to know people read me regularly, that they’re genuinely interested in what I have to say. You know that about a year ago we were seriously considering shutting the magazine down... and she said to me, word for word, “Never stop doing it.”
Bloody hell, that’s fantastic.

It really was. I floated all the way home after hearing that. But then you think, I’m not asking anyone to finance the magazine or pay for my trips to the Azkena Rock Festival every year. Just a simple “I really liked this,” or “I wasn’t so keen on that...”
Anything at all. Look, I’m not going to pay for advertising. I don’t want to spend any more money. But simply sharing this programme or sharing the magazine on your social media, even if you’ve only got four followers, helps get things moving. You’re doing your small part to help it reach more people, and it costs absolutely nothing. Literally nothing. It’s pressing one bloody button, while you’ve spent hours editing a magazine, proofreading texts, organising interviews, dealing with all the graphic design... I honestly don’t know how many hours you put into producing the magazine every two months. Actually, don’t tell me, because it’ll just stress me out.

Well, I do it whenever I can squeeze it in.
Exactly. You can’t just wake up one morning and say, “Today I’m dedicating one hundred percent of my day to Rock Bottom Magazine,” or to “Carretera Perdida”. If you manage to find three uninterrupted hours, you count yourself lucky and think, “Right, maybe I’ll have enough time to finish the script for this episode.” Sharing the programme once you’ve listened to it literally takes three seconds. Three bloody seconds. You don’t even have to write anything. Just share it. Twitter, Facebook, whatever.

Right then, here’s an original question... Why do you make “Carretera Perdida”?
I’ve got this obsession with the things I love: I have to tell someone about them. I just can’t keep them to myself. And once again, I think that’s simply a flaw in my personality. I’m one of those people who goes on and on. I’m a complete enthusiast. The more I discover, the more I listen, the more I read, the more films I watch, the more enthusiastic I become. So I need some way of getting all of that back out of my head, everything that excites me. On top of that, I care deeply about my friends, and I can’t spend all day bending only their ears with this stuff (Laughs). I need more people to inflict it on. So it’s a mixture of this urge to share the things you love and, as I said at the beginning of the interview, none of this came naturally to me. I’d never written for the press. I’d never worked in radio, and I started very late. I was already thirty when I first got into radio. But once the bug bites you, the wound gets infected and there’s no cure for it. I honestly think that if the day ever comes when absolutely nobody listens to “Carretera Perdida”, I might still keep recording it and leave the episodes sitting there, simply because I enjoy doing it for myself. Just sitting in front of a microphone and talking about the bands I’ve been listening to over the past few weeks, the book I’ve just read...

Because it’s something that sets you free.
Absolutely. You just can’t keep it inside. It’s far too good to exist only for me. Then there’s a certain amount of vanity when someone comes along and says, for example, “I discovered this band through your programme.” That makes me feel good. Something that reached me has somehow passed through me like a prism, gone back out into the world, and someone else is now enjoying it because of me. In the end, it’s all about enjoying yourself, enjoying the things you love, and helping those things reach more people. There are people who trust our judgement, and that’s important.

There’s an expression I absolutely hate: curator.
The whole idea of a curator comes from the artistic term curator. Originally it belonged to the world of the fine arts, painting and so on. But that idea started being used in the United States, which is where all these insufferable buzzwords seem to come from. It became the label for people who organised, say, a festival by selecting bands according to a particular theme or artistic criterion. Then it spread to the typical connoisseur who does the same thing with a certain type of music. Jazz comes to mind. And now every idiot who listens to Radio 3, starts a podcast recommending bands like Siloé and Arde Bogotá, suddenly thinks of himself as a curator.

One of the defining characteristics of “Carretera Perdida” is that constant drift towards cinema, the idea that music isn’t the only thing that matters. Where does your fascination with film come from? You and I belong more or less to the same generation. We spent our Saturdays watching Dogtanian and the Three Muskehounds, followed by hundreds of westerns and adventure films. That kind of cinema had a huge influence on our generation. But your love of film has a very distinctive flavour, almost from another era. Our generation grew up loving John Wayne and Errol Flynn, yes, but you’ve obviously taken it much further than that. I’m looking at your bookshelves now, and they’re packed with books about cinema.
When we were kids, apart from playing football in the street, films were our main form of entertainment. And they were something everybody shared. I watched films with my parents, with my grandmother, with my brothers. It was simply part of everyday life. For many, many years it was nothing more than entertainment. Just like watching cartoons on television, or sports, or whatever else happened to be on. But there’s one thing I don’t think people give Popular 1 enough credit for, and that’s César Martín’s fascination with cinema, especially classic American films.

That’s true.
Exactly. When I was a kid and I started reading Popular 1, I was familiar with some of those references because I’d seen those films at home. But there were so many others that fascinated me precisely because they were completely unknown to me. With records, you could get hold of some of them. Someone would copy the latest Guns N’ Roses album for you, or the The Rolling Stones, or Public Enemy. But there was all this cinema people kept talking about, and we’re talking about the 1990s, before the internet, that exerted this enormous pull on me. I had a vague idea of what it was, but I didn’t really know it. Then I started studying Journalism, and at the Faculty of Information Sciences there was the famous film room, where they had practically every film imaginable on VHS. You’d sit down at a little desk with a small television and a pair of headphones, and that’s where you’d watch them.

Paradise.
Just imagine it. The first time I walked in there, I hadn’t got the faintest idea what I was about to discover. I picked up the catalogue and saw they had fifty or sixty John Huston films, every

single film by Billy Wilder, every Frank Capra film, every Roger Corman film... I remember thinking, "Bloody hell... what is this place?" I spent hour after hour after hour down there watching films. To be honest, university didn't go particularly well for me because I spent all my time downstairs watching cinema. I became a cinephage.

A cinephage?
Yes, absolutely. All I did was watch films, one after another. I needed to absorb them. I saw many of them back then, and over the years I've watched them again, enjoying them much more, in a far more relaxed way, because at first all I wanted was to see the film, to experience the story. Later you begin analysing other things. You start to understand them. I even enrolled in optional courses on audiovisual communication, visual language, film analysis and all that. I was completely blown away. It was as if someone were teaching you grammar after you'd spent your whole life speaking without really understanding what you were doing.

Well, you've just reminded me of something. When I moved into Chaminade Hall of Residence, I finally got to do a couple of things I'd always dreamed of. The first was joining the radio studio and making radio programmes. Nobody asked me for anything. It was simply, "Do you want to do it? Then come in." The other was the film club. We chose films to screen from actual film reels. Everyone picked one film. And my very first, and in fact my only, film, the one I was responsible for screening, was, quite fittingly, "Lost Highway", by David Lynch.
Bloody hell...

I'll take that memory to my grave. Do you know what it feels like to thread up the reels for "Lost Highway"...?
Wow.

There were two reels, and you had to switch them halfway through.
Really?

Yes. They taught us how to do it properly, because it's not as simple as putting on a DVD. I'd completely forgotten about that until just now. The whole thing had something of Cinema Paradiso about it.
It's incredibly fascinating. I still enjoy modern cinema a great deal, but it doesn't captivate me the way it used to, mainly because of the issue of genres. Films today are much harder to define. Although, to be honest, I sometimes feel the same way about music.

I've always found the parallel between cinema and music fascinating. In Spain, for example, we've had internationally recognised filmmakers, but not internationally recognised musicians to quite the same extent. And yet cinema, above all, speaks English. There's something interesting about music and film because they've always been two cultural currents flowing alongside one another.
For example, when it comes to music, I'm constantly trying to discover new bands, but also entirely new styles. I'm far more curious with my ears than with my eyes. These days I'm much more demanding about the films I watch. I still enjoy them, but they rarely grab me enough to make me want to write about them. Maybe it's simply a matter of context. Not long ago I wrote that article about thrillers from the 1990s, and those are films that belong to our generation, films we actually saw in cinemas rather than discovering decades later.

Needless to say, I loved that article. I hadn't told you before, but I really did.
I know that when you don't like something, you tell me as well.

I've never said to you, "This article is absolutely dreadful. I'm not paying you for this."
You always pay me exactly the same, no matter what I write: precisely zero fucking euros. We need to get that printed on T-shirts. And give one to Steve McDonald. Bloody hell, he's playing here in Madrid tonight, and I'm not even going.

I was at the Azkena Rock Festival with two T-shirts and a copy of "El Patio" by Triana, planning to give them to him after that conversation you and I had with him. But it turned out to be impossible.
Why didn't you just throw them at him?

It never even crossed my mind.
You could've pulled a Clapton and thrown it onto the stage (Laughs).

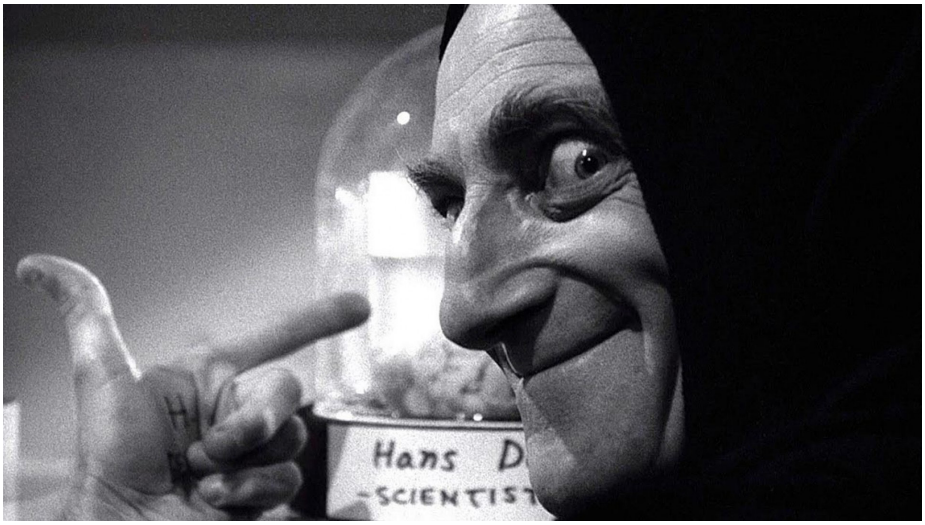
It honestly didn't occur to me. Anyway, what I really wanted was to say hello to him. Besides, Josh Homme, from Queens of the Stone Age, was standing backstage watching the show. Just imagine it, my desire to get backstage multiplied by two thousand. Anyway, let's get back to music and cinema.
I absolutely love watching old films. I enjoy current TV series as well, of course. I watch contemporary films too, but I like putting things into context. I enjoy reading about them. We were talking earlier about Peter Biskind's book. I spent years reading and writing about westerns. We did those features that eventually became the book I published. And lately I've been immersed in thrillers from the sixties and seventies, which fascinate me because I can place them within a broader context. That's how I like approaching these things. I always want to understand why. Why do these films share so many common threads?

You have a natural talent for putting things into context.
Well...

No, seriously. You have an extraordinary ability to contextualise everything. Every single detail.
That's just practice, knowledge, reading, and thinking carefully about what you've read, rather than simply consuming it and moving on.

I genuinely find your writing astonishing because you're able to see the whole picture, as they say in English.
I don't think it's necessary, or even essential, to enjoy a film, a book, or an album. But I do think it helps. Some people naturally want to fit the pieces into a wider context. As far as cinema is concerned, I think that's genuinely important. I have endless conversations with people who argue that films shouldn't reflect the era in which they're made, that they should simply be windows into another world. But the truth is that every great film, every film that transcends ninety minutes of entertainment, carries meaning within the historical and cultural context in which it was created. Just like music. Just like books. The difference is that films tell their stories visually. Music tells stories too, but far less directly.

Music is much more emotional.
Exactly. It conveys feelings and emotions. A film, on the other hand, tells a story, and the way that story is told matters enormously. And behind it there's an immense amount of work. A huge number of people. A filmmaker, whether it's Frank Capra or Pedro Almodóvar, is someone who's lived a great deal, who



possesses an enormous cultural background and a language of their own. Then there are the screenwriters as well. They're all different ways of seeing the world. It's not the same thing, even if you enjoy it just as much. And for me, when it comes to finding pleasure in what we read, write, listen to, or watch, that's incredibly important. I have a wonderful time listening to a Poison record...

Nobody's perfect, Javi.
Well... or a Queens of the Stone Age record...

Don't compare Poison to Queens of the Stone Age.
I'm not comparing them. I'm saying they're both people living rock and roll.

This interview is about to end very abruptly (Laughs).
Well, or Gluecifer, for example. What's the singer of Gluecifer thinking about when he writes "Get the Horn"? He's thinking about having a good time. And that's what rock and roll is about. Going out, partying, enjoying yourself with your friends. I love that. But cinema, even when it's sleazy and excessive, is something else. It's built in a much more complex way, with different influences and a different cultural standpoint.

Rock and roll is charming precisely because it ought to be simple. Once people start overcomplicating it...
Exactly. That may have its appeal, but I listen to Yes and I feel like shooting myself. I'd much rather listen to Ramones. Put on "Hey Ho, Let's Go", and I'm happier than I ever would be with some overblown progressive mental exercise. My idea of rock and roll is something much simpler.
Let's finish with two incredibly original questions. Give me your three favourite films and your three favourite albums.

Are you seriously asking me that? It's the worst question in the world.
I've never actually asked anyone before.
All right then. The first film I have to mention is "The Wild Bunch", by Sam Peckinpah. It's a film that completely changed the way I looked at many things, and it's still one of my all-time favourites. I also associate it with a wonderful memory. I watched it with my father back when Spanish television still used the age-rating diamonds.

Yes, they used to appear in the top left corner of the screen. Try explaining that to kids today, who just open Netflix.
Exactly. To me, those diamonds meant, "This is going to be serious stuff." My father and I watched countless westerns together, which is probably where my passion for all this began. When the film started and he saw the two diamonds, he said, "I don't think you should be watching this one." Naturally, I protested, and in the end we watched it anyway. The film opens with this unbelievable shootout. Even today I still think it's extraordinarily violent. After that opening, though, the story slips into this ghostly, poetic, slow-moving atmosphere. It's about a group of men who no longer belong anywhere, running without really knowing where they're heading. I remember thinking, "My dad exaggerated. Apart from the beginning, it isn't really that bad." But then the ending arrives. The final shootout in "The Wild Bunch" left me completely stunned. I still think it's one of the most brutal scenes in the entire history of cinema. When the film finished, I simply couldn't process what I'd just seen. For years afterwards I was almost afraid to think about it. Then, over time, I revisited it several times and came to see it as an absolute masterpiece. It contains all that unmistakable masculinity of American cinema from the sixties and seventies, but deep down it's a film about loyalty and about standing by the people you love. And it's also full of deeply poetic moments.

What year was it made?
Around 1969. It was also one of the first films to use slow motion in depicting violence in that way, probably influenced by "Bonnie and Clyde".

Give me another one.
The second would be "Young Frankenstein". It's a film I could happily watch almost every single day. Mel Brooks's humour can sometimes be very broad. It either works for you or it doesn't. But here everything falls perfectly into place. The cast is wonderful. Gene Wilder is extraordinary, Teri Garr is utterly charming, and even the smallest supporting roles are unforgettable. Gene Hackman's cameo as the blind hermit is absolutely brilliant. It also connects beautifully with the classic horror films of the 1930s, which I absolutely adore. Even though those films have inevitably aged a little, I still enjoy them enormously.

The bloopers from "Young Frankenstein" are incredible. I watched them recently and couldn't stop laughing.
Absolutely. But the film itself still makes me laugh just as much.

And the third?
I'll go for something more modern and say "Lost Highway", by David Lynch. I went through a period of complete obsession with Lynch. I think he's the definition of a total artist, an absolute genius. I love every one of his films, even the strangest and most challenging ones. Not long ago we rewatched all three seasons of Twin Peaks at home, and exactly the same thing happened to me all over again: I found myself completely absorbed by his universe.

I've never watched "Twin Peaks".
Well, it's an incredible experience, especially the first and third seasons. The second has a few weaker stretches, but even so it's absolutely worth watching.

I imagine it's like The Sopranos. You have to give it your full attention and really immerse yourself in it.
Absolutely. You can't have it playing in the background while you're doing something else. It's a completely immersive experience.

The more times I watch "The Sopranos", the more I hate Tony Soprano, even though at the same time I absolutely love him.
Exactly, because he's a psychopath and a narcissist, but the series seduces you into wanting to believe him. And I think Carmela is a fascinating character. She's probably the only person who truly understands who Tony really is, even though she chooses to look the other way.

Let's move on to albums.
The first would be "Sticky Fingers", by The Rolling Stones. Most people choose "Exile on Main St.", which is also an astonishing record, but for me "Sticky Fingers" became an obsession. It's one of those albums that finishes and you immediately put it on again. It's probably the Rolling Stones album I've listened to more times than any other in my life. The second would be "Angel Dust", by Faith No More. That album completely changed the way I listened to music. For those of us who grew up in the early nineties, that whole alternative rock movement was like an earthquake. It was also the first band I ever saw live. "Angel Dust" still strikes me as an incredibly complex, baroque, strange, wild, and beautiful record all at once. I honestly don't understand how they managed to make all those pieces fit together so perfectly. And Mike Patton... nobody has ever sung quite like him.

Some albums are simply bigger than you are.
Absolutely. Even today I keep discovering new things every time I listen to it. The third would be "Inercia", by Lagartija Nick. I could have said "Omega", but "Inercia" completely changed my perception of Spanish music. During the nineties I certainly listened to Spanish rock, but none of what was being made here interested me nearly as much as what was coming from abroad. Then that album came along. I don't even remember how it ended up in my hands, but it must be the Spanish album I've listened to more than any other. From that moment on I began looking very differently at countless bands and entire scenes I'd previously ignored. Over time I also came to understand bands like Los Planetas, and that whole generation, much better. And I'm incredibly glad I discovered that record at precisely that moment in my life.

Well, I'm going to say something publicly: in 2026 I'm finally starting to like Los Planetas.
Well, that's your gain, because they've made some incredible records. We rock fans have carried a lot of prejudice against them over the years.

I didn't really have any prejudice. I just never connected with them. But now I'm finally starting to get it. Well then, my dear Javier, it's been a pleasure.
The pleasure has been mine, you already know that.

Javistone

A brief introductory note. At the very moment we are finishing writing the text you are about to read, we receive the announcement of the closure of one of Madrid's most prestigious venues on the national circuit, Gruta 77. Gruta has been a parish home for several generations of rock and roll hordes. Without making any great claims in terms of size, its stage became, throughout a history that now comes to an end, an essential piece of scenery for direct communication between artists and audiences.

Small venues survive with great difficulty, and many times we fail to appreciate the work that goes on behind them and the consequences of their disappearance. It has been on these small stages scattered throughout Spain where each of us has stored cathartic experiences, feeling physically struck by the sweat and the watts unleashed by dozens of artists who came to show us, face to face, their work. It is possible that large events also create magnificent memories, but seeing Mick Jagger from a hundred metres away will never be better than watching other, less celebrated artists, but equally part of our lives, giving everything they have half a metre from our heads. Long live Gruta 77 from all of us at Rock Bottom Magazine, and thank you for having been there. And now, yes, let's move on to Lemon Rock.

It was on one of the last rainy afternoons of March in this exceptionally wet year. During one of our trips outside for a smoke, in the middle of a long after-lunch conversation following a delicious meal at Lemon, we met a tall man dressed in leather whose face was not entirely unfamiliar to us; we had probably crossed paths at one concert or another. He stood beneath a small balcony opposite the main entrance and was trying to roll a cigarette (or something similar) in the rain. We struck up the typical small talk about the weather and, among other things, he told us that the rain was the least of his concerns because, in a couple of hours, he would be watching one of his musical idols perform a foot away from his face. "Yes," I told him, "that's one of the great advantages this place offers. Not long ago I saw one of the greatest legends of New York punk sweating beneath a towel while climbing the stairs to the Lemon concert hall. A memorable image. It was like watching someone you admire walk into your own home. Because that's what this is all about," I continued telling the tall man. Small symbolic moments that build a special affection around a business which, for many people, is currently part of the very best that a city as dynamic as Granada has to offer. For both its residents and those who come to spend a few days here, Lemon Rock has become the ultimate intergenerational meeting place. A venue so beautiful and classy was little more than a dream for our city just a few decades ago.

Returning to sweaty punk legends, can you jump around and shout sewer-born anthems inside a seventeenth-century mansion and have it all feel like part of an experience that is completely natural and healthy? The answer is yes. The answer is Lemon Rock. New York's CBGB was all very well, but, friends, times sometimes change for the better, fortunately in this case. A wonderful place capable of connecting generations, fans and artists, and of giving Granada a new and incredible space in which to once again enjoy the magic of small venues. Face to face with genuine legends from whatever genre you can think of.

Lemon Rock is almost hidden among the narrow streets of Granada's most traditional quarter, the neighbourhood between Gran Capitán and Calle Tablas. Not so many decades ago, you were practically leaving the city behind and entering the fertile plains surrounding Granada. But ever since modernity took hold of Granada, this area has always concealed charming places, some now gone, others still holding out, all closely linked to the history of music, leisure, going out and coming back, drinking and enjoying oneself in Granada's university-centred evenings and nights.

A place which, to us, sometimes borders on the unreal: walking through its doors is an adventure that may begin with a perfectly poured beer, continue with a juicy burger and a couple of substantial cocktails, breathe in the sunset from its terrace and finish by sweating through all those jumps and shouts in its concert hall. The Lemon is an all-in-one cultural space. We could say that it gathers modern art on its walls, breathes literature through the many book presentations it hosts, respects both artists and audiences and, above all, is a magnificent place in which to enjoy concerts under unbeatable conditions.

At Rock Bottom we have always championed a broad conception of pop culture, beyond passing trends. For that reason, and with a certain local pride on our part, we wanted to bring to these pages and to our readers an explanation of what Lemon Rock is, and the story behind the consolidation of one of those places that, alongside the obvious historic names of Granada's nightlife, has become not

only a reference point for musical programming but also for everything that surrounds the good life we all aspire to: atmosphere, art, gastronomy, history… everything converges at Lemon.

From ageing rockers to young dance enthusiasts, from Erasmus students to old-school punks. Even prime ministers. Everyone has a place in this historic house. The bait: good food, a non-stop festive atmosphere without forgetting the chill spirit of some of its cosy corners, as well as an astonishing musical programme. Obviously, a concept like Lemon Rock does not appear out of nowhere. Behind its current success there is a story that began many years ago and a person who has maintained a logical, steady course and who steers the ship with skill. We sat down for a long conversation with Vicente Luna, the driving force behind Lemon Rock. Naturally, he is the person who guides us through the history of the venue and its evolution.

We are now in 2026, Lemon has been around for more than a decade and has become a national and international reference point...
Well, we are living through a somewhat complicated era in terms of the many venue closures taking place, and those of us who remain are fortunate enough to host an incredible number of legends, in our case throughout eleven years. We are in a place where you have that closeness with musicians who usually play much larger venues and who come here to perform while looking people directly in the eyes, with excellent sound and a very warm atmosphere... that leaves an impression and makes them talk about it amongst themselves.

We've been amazed by some of the names that have played here over the last year, names such as Manitoba, Lemonheads, Ash, Sharp Pins, The Hangmen...
Yes, and for example, last week Callum Beattie played here. He is number five in the UK this year and has had two number-one records in Scotland. He comes backed by some very important people, just like Laurie Wright, who has toured with Pete Doherty and is backed by Rod Stewart and Noel Gallagher.

What we really appreciate is that there is room for every genre here, but before reaching this point there is a long story behind it. Lemon did not come into existence by chance. How did the idea of combining hospitality and music in such a special place come about?
I spent some time in Edinburgh twenty-five years ago, and one day while walking along Main Street we went into a bar and there was one of those Scottish noblemen wearing his kilt and a thousand layers of ties, with curly white lordly hair, and to his right there was a punk kid, completely drunk. Both of them were happily watching a rock and roll band while eating... it really caught my attention. I came from Granada venues such as Sugarpop, and I saw the idea of turning that madness into a concept as something perfect, and then adding art to it as well. So I took over this seventeenth-century mansion. The whole concept is mine, with contributions from world-class artists such as Sergio García (who has done several covers for *The New Yorker*), and who, incidentally, is going to create another mural here.

Transforming a place like this into what we know today must have been hard work, but wonderful at the same time, and then giving it shape.
Of course. There was the gastronomic side going one way, the musical and artistic side going another, and then bringing everything together... honestly, it was not easy with all the regulations and all the madness involved in a listed building.

But in the end you forget all the difficult moments and the times that required the greatest effort, and you are left with the most beautiful things. And what is beautiful is the moment we are experiencing now in terms of cultural cycles. For me, the gastronomic side is particularly important. For example, we are the only restaurant in Andalusia with three protected designations of origin: Pajuna beef, Segureño lamb and Castril kid goat.

> ***Up there you'll also find jazz, indie, world music, and above all the large mural dedicated to The Stooges and Fun House, one of the greatest albums of all time. I even searched for rugs with patterns similar to the ones in the studio where it was recorded. We also have the large mural inspired by that song, "1970". That corner gives the whole room its meaning.***

You actually started out as a hostel and later transformed the concept.
We were already an important cultural space back then. What we did was expand the different areas after the pandemic, because of social distancing and all that... we redesigned everything. Look, this sofa area, completely conceptualised. There you have Otis Redding and Marvin Gaye, matching carpets, record covers and so on. That's something that caught our attention, the fact that it is also partly an art gallery. At the moment we are in the "Soul" room, as a tribute to the genre, featuring the work of Raúl, El Niño de las Pinturas. We have areas dedicated to rock, or garage, which is precisely the courtyard area where the owner of the house used to keep his horse (laughs). Upstairs we also have jazz, indie and world music, and above all the large mural dedicated to The Stooges, to *Fun House*, one of the greatest albums in history. I even searched for carpets with upholstery similar to those in the studio where it was recorded, and we have the huge mural dedicated to that song, "1970". That corner gives meaning to the entire room.

And moving on to the concert hall itself, I wanted to ask you about the soundproofing and the fact that it has such a powerful sound despite being located in what we might call quite a "residential" environment.
Well, that area was the most damaged part of the house, and precisely for that reason everything was designed using a great deal of steel, sound absorbers and acoustic insulation. Then the sound production is handled by Carmen and Charly, who do an incredible job. And having people who have performed in front of thousands of people come and play in a venue this intimate, with that sound, so close to the audience... it's a luxury.

And the fact that the dressing room is at the opposite end of the building is very unusual.
Almost everyone loves it. They see it as something very respectful. For artists, it means being closer to the fans. We try to make them as comfortable as possible and, since they usually spend some time here beforehand, having dinner and so on, they become very

familiar with the whole concept. Then, when they step onto the stage, they already feel like part of it. Also, afterwards they all stay to sign records and meet the fans.

Being able to sit at a table with people you admire must be quite a thrill...
Well, that is precisely what makes you forget the difficult moments. At this very table where we are sitting, for example, I have a wonderful memory of having dinner with Robert Forster from The Go-Betweens, one of the bands of my life.

And is there any artist you would personally love to see come through here?
Jarvis Cocker from Pulp is another dream of mine, and I know he is aware of Lemon Rock and that one day it will be possible. Things so surreal have happened here that I can even imagine Iggy Pop himself coming through here one day (laughs).

Do you see Lemon Rock as a concept that could be exported outside Granada?
No, not at all. People from elsewhere have come and proposed it, but no. It's a project that is far too personal, and it is very much a Granada project. That's not the path to follow. There is already a huge amount of work here and I also need to have some free time, it's been almost eleven years of work already!

That's exactly why we wanted to ask you, how did you celebrate the tenth anniversary, which unfortunately we missed?
We threw a huge party, the Soundhood SON Estrella Galicia Festival, with dinner, drinks and concerts by Ash, Tim Burgess, Prima Queen and many others. Jota (Los Planetas) and Antonio Arias (Lagartija Nick) were also DJing. There were nine concerts and eight DJs spread throughout the entire building. Only one hundred tickets were put on sale.

Who takes care of your programme and booking schedule?
Both Carmen and Teté are responsible for the programming. There are a lot of women working at Lemon! They are already closing deals for future events. They also handle social media and so on. By the way, the next thing we have coming up is Pacífica, an Argentine all-female band. We will also have the band of Wilco's drummer, and personally I am very excited to announce that one of my favourite Spanish indie bands, perhaps among the very first of the genre in our country, El Inquilino Comunista, will be playing here.

Well, thank you very much, Vicente. We wish you all the luck in the world, because your success also means that we will continue to spend many incredible nights here.
Thank you! See you soon.

Marina González Vaquero and Jesús Sánchez

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The Fixed Trio

“Right now, we’re experiencing a sense of well-being and camaraderie among the majority of musicians here in Granada, and it’s leaving all of us quite amazed. It hasn’t always been like this, unfortunately, but right now... it is.”

From Granada and brought to us by The Borderline Music comes the second album from The Fixed Trio, one of those records that grabs you from the very first listen. I swear I’ve had it on repeat in my car ever since I received a copy of “Our Guilty Pleasure”. Right from the start, when an album opens with something like “Pain and Sexy Fire”, you have no choice but to pay attention immediately. What a song! That was the moment I realised there was something here I was really going to like, and I wasn’t wrong. A collection of songs of an exceptionally high standard, packed with intensity and power, pure rock and roll that brings together sounds from the ’70s and the ’90s while tipping its hat to the great bands of those decades..

Inevitably, “Animal Grace”, where they weave in Black Sabbath’s “War Pigs”, is another of the standout moments on “Our Guilty Pleasure”, a record that showcases a band clearly on the rise with a sound that, despite drawing from many influences, demonstrates a strong identity of its own. What a band, people... Don’t hesitate to give them a listen (it’s not yet available on streaming platforms, but it will be very soon) and make sure you catch them live if they’re playing in your city, because the tour that will take them across half the country, and abroad as well, where they are already building a reputation through relentless touring, is not going to take any prisoners.

First of all, congratulations on the album. These days a huge number of records are released and, generally speaking, there are many excellent productions with great sound and strong production values, but often the songs themselves are lacking. In your case, I can honestly say that “Our Guilty Pleasure” is a spectacular collection of songs.
Thank you very much. We’ve put a lot of love and dedication into this album, so it’s wonderful to see that it’s being so well received.

To start with, tell us how The Fixed Trio came together.
The Fixed Trio came together very naturally. Three friends who met when they were fifteen years old decided to try their luck and have some fun playing music. We’re still the same today. The years have passed and things have become more serious, but fundamentally we’re still the same people.

You sound like a lot of things, but not like any one thing in particular, which I think is fantastic. What do you think you sound like? What are your shared influences? And don’t say Black Sabbath, we’ll get to them later.
Honestly, we hope we sound like The Fixed Trio (Laughs). Even though we have a lot of influences, we always end up giving songs our own style. Influences? Tons of them. Some of our pillars have been artists ranging from The Black Keys to Stevie Ray Vaughan, as well as Marcus King Band and The Black Crowes. We’re also inspired by bands from other genres, such as Incubus and Red Hot Chili Peppers, particularly because of their attitude and the sense of unity they project on stage. We love many different genres and, even more than that, we love bringing them together and creating music from that mixture.

You’re from Granada, a city with a tremendous musical tradition. Do you have any local references?
Of course. Granada is a city overflowing with music and great musicians. We don’t have one specific local reference; fortunately, we have many. Not all of them are older than us either. We’re also very inspired by the new generation of younger musicians. But you could say that everyone from Los Lagartos and 091 to younger artists such as South Maz, D. Latorre and Paulina Del Carmen are references for us, among many others.

How do you see the Granada music scene? Some time ago we spoke with the people from El Niño Delta and they spoke very highly of it.
Well, the simple fact that there are people making music at the level of El Niño Delta already says a lot about a city. We send them a big hug. Right now, we’re experiencing a level of well-being and camaraderie among most musicians that has left us all pleasantly surprised. Unfortunately, it hasn’t always been this way, but right now it is, and we’re grateful for it. Hopefully it will stay that way for a long time.

Let’s talk about the album. What differences do you see between your 2023 debut “Talladega” and this new record, “Our Guilty Pleasure”?
Everything. “Talladega” and “Our Guilty Pleasure” are like black and white. “Talladega” was a much more overproduced album, more focused on production and sound. “Our Guilty Pleasure”, on the other hand, was created with much more emphasis on meaning, on the relationship between the songs and on the natural, direct sound of a power trio. It has more soul.

Our Guilty Pleasure opens with a song that completely blew my mind, and it does every time I hear it. “Pain and Sexy Fire” is INCREDIBLE. Between the percussion, the tempo changes, the backing vocals and those brutal riffs, bloody hell... How did it come about? What was going through your minds when you wrote it?
It came about the same way ninety per cent of The Fixed Trio songs come about: by improvising and letting ourselves go with the flow. On this album we were heavily influenced by bands such as The Black Crowes (“Amorica”), Greta Van Fleet (“Anthem of the Peaceful Army”) and Marcus King (“Young Blood”). And as for “Pain and Sexy Fire”, all we can do is thank The Black Crowes (Laughs).

I really like the way you play with dynamics. Both “Our Guilty Pleasure”, the song, and “Sacred Cross” can be slightly misleading at first, but they build towards tremendous crescendos. One would assume that comes from a lot of rehearsal and improvisation. Is that the case?
Quite the opposite. “Sacred Cross” was conceived as a collaboration with our great friend Mario Andreu, and we originally recorded it with the intention of letting it fade out gradually. But by pure chance we gave the take an ending, and thank goodness we did, because later, when recording Mario’s guitars and vocals, it opened the door for that dynamic build-up that closes the song and of which we’re very proud. We really enjoyed recording it.

“Love. Fever. Blues” has a very seventies riff that is incredibly addictive. There’s something of Grand Funk Railroad about it.
Well, that’s another song born from someone saying, “Look, guys, what a riff I’ve got”, and then everybody starts playing over it until the magic happens (Laughs). Later on, Juan Justicia gave it meaning through the lyrics and harmonies. It’s a song we really enjoy playing live.

“Animal Grace” is the beast of the album, although my personal favourite is still “Pain and Sexy Fire”. But writing a ten-minute song and then suddenly introducing a Jimi Hendrix-style riff, linking it to “War Pigs” and making it sound absolutely thunderous... that’s quite an achievement. How did the idea come about? Why that particular song?
“Animal Grace” was actually the first song we wrote, and it motivated us to continue with the other nine. Since we always include a cover version on each album, we decided it was time to take on Black Sabbath. We had already played “War Pigs” before and knew it inside out, so why not record it? Better yet, why not combine the two? So we jumped in without thinking twice (Laughs).

I believe you have dates in Europe coming up. What are your plans? How did you manage to break into the European circuit?
By working very, very hard and writing to a lot of people until, out of every hundred emails, two reply. Even so, with “Hey My Friend” we were already able to play in London and Liverpool, which showed us it was possible and that people liked what we were doing. Fortunately, this year things have been easier, and we’re incredibly excited about it. Being able to take our music to new territories means a great deal to us.

You have an extensive tour across Spain. Is this your first tour on such a scale? I imagine playing live is what you enjoy most. Tell us about your wildest concert to date.
You could say so, although we’ve spent many years constantly playing live and we’re very grateful for that. This time, however, the tour has been planned specifically around “Our Guilty Pleasure”. Fortunately, we’ve experienced all sorts of things, but we still have particularly fond memories of our first appearance at the Cazorla Blues Festival. It was a turning point for the band. We had an amazing time and it was a fantastic show.

Javistone
Photos by Claudia Lakoree

"Masters of the Universe" (1987)

Coinciding with the release of the new He-Man adventures on the big screen, which, incidentally, hold absolutely no interest for me, let's take a look back at the film that the legendary Cannon production company delivered in 1987. Yes, we're going to talk about that ill-fated Golan-Globus project called Masters of the Universe.

It was 1987 and the company run by the Israelis Menahem Golan and Yoram Globus, namely Cannon, was spending money like there was no tomorrow. Not long before, they had tried to make the big leap by signing Stallone for Cobra and Over the Top, with enormous production costs. Since those films didn't perform badly, they decided to go one step further by producing the fourth Superman instalment, which, incidentally, was dreadful, and the film that concerns us here, based on Mattel's action figures, which had already inspired an animated series a few years earlier.

Incidentally, Mattel closely supervised the production and imposed a strict rule that there could be no deaths in the film, very much in the style of The A-Team. With a record-breaking budget for Cannon of 22 million dollars, Masters of the Universe went into production. The response was fairly lukewarm, grossing only 17 million dollars and leaving fans of the franchise somewhat disappointed. Even with that budget, they were unable to recreate the action on Eternia properly because the costs were getting out of hand, so they came up with the idea of having most of the film take place on Earth. Such was the ambition of the Israeli partners that they had almost secured a sequel, but the project collapsed after the box-office disaster. For that continuation they already had a script, part of the sets under construction and director Albert Pyun attached to the project.

As for the filming itself, we had an imposing Dolph Lundgren as He-Man and, to be fair, he absolutely nailed it. The Swedish actor, who had just made a huge impact as Ivan Drago in Rocky IV, had to undergo an intensive English course because he barely spoke the language. In fact, in the fourth Rocky film he only had four or five lines of dialogue. On top of that, the blond Swede received sword-fighting lessons so that he would be more convincing as the lead character. Lundgren himself thought that what he was filming was complete nonsense, but over time such a cult following developed around the film and everything connected with it that he changed his opinion. In fact, it has been reported that he has a small cameo in the new adaptation.

Moving on to other important characters, we had Frank Langella playing Skeletor. Langella wanted the role from the very beginning and even wrote much of his own dialogue. The female lead was a stunning Courtney Cox, very young at the time and before so much cosmetic surgery altered her appearance to the point where she is barely recognisable today. Other interesting performers included the ever-alluring Chelsea Field as Teela and a magnificent James Tolkan as the sceptical police officer, a character that I personally love. We should also not forget the villainous Evil-Lyn, portrayed by Meg Foster and her mesmerising blue eyes.

As mentioned earlier, after the fiascos of Superman IV and Masters of the Universe, Cannon's days were numbered. The company survived until 1994, when it released its final film, Hellbound, starring one of the studio's biggest stars, a certain Chuck Norris. To make matters worse, the two partners eventually fell out and, by the beginning of the 1990s, ended up releasing two different films based on the Lambada dance craze. What a horror.

Fans of the Masters universe missed many elements from both the toy line and the television series, but the budget simply would not stretch any further. That is why they replaced the character of Orko, who spent the entire time flying around and could not realistically be brought to life on screen, with a small creature called Gwildor, who, incidentally, bore quite a striking resemblance to the Duchess of Alba. Speaking of this character, he was one of the three figures Mattel released to promote the film. The other two were Saurod and Blade.

To finish: even though it was poorly made and time has not been kind to it, it is still a film for which I have a great deal of affection. Right now, the score by the great Bill Conti, who composed the soundtrack, comes to mind, and I think I would enjoy watching it again far more than spending nine euros on the new version currently playing in cinemas, which, to make matters worse, runs for almost two and a half hours. Please, I beg film producers to keep movies to a maximum of two hours, for God's sake!

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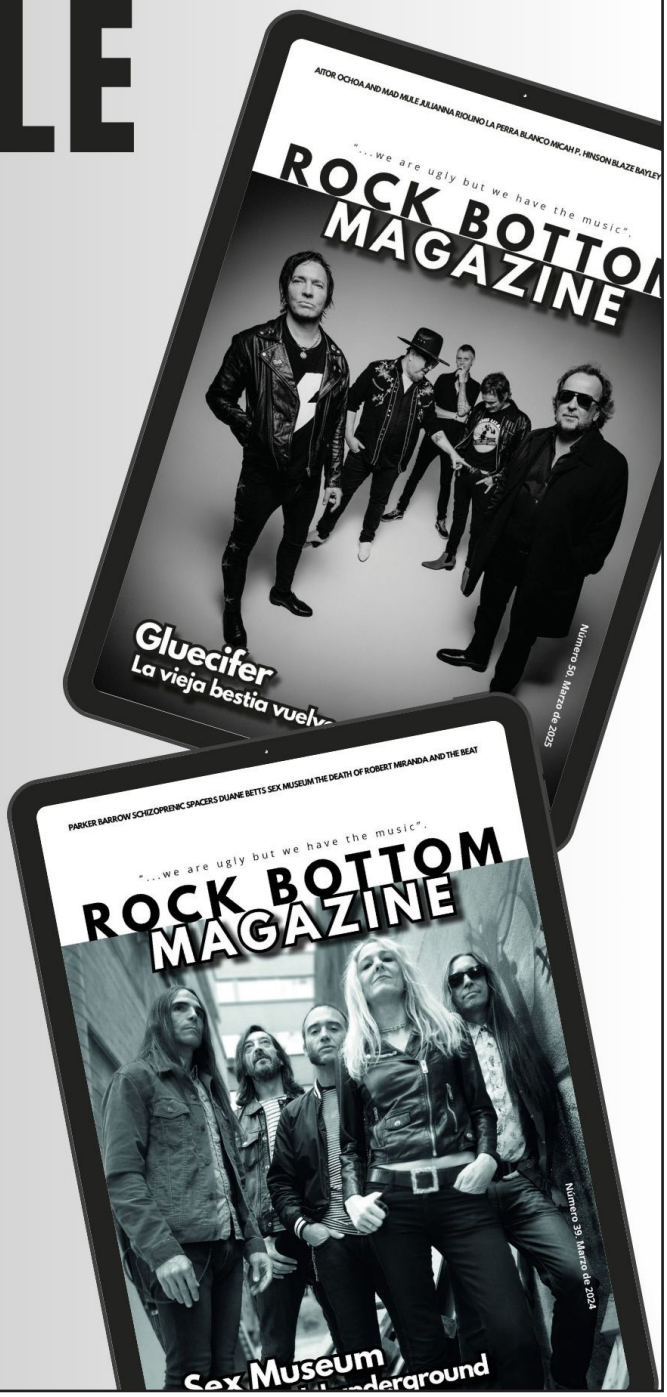


BEST EPISODES IN THE HISTORY OF TELEVISION?

This is a terribly cathodic (and chaotic) magazine, which makes perfect sense considering that most of us grew up watching Los Electroduendes and listening to La Bruja Avería praise television and its harmful effects on our young and impressionable brains. We grew up with television, and television grew up with us, there's no doubt about that. Television series, forever living in the shadow of the big screen, eventually reached a point where they looked at their older sibling and said, "Move over, here I come", before swallowing it whole. Entertaining television had always existed, but what happened with the arrival of streaming platforms marked a before and after that changed everything. Nowadays, the money and the talent are, above all, in television, while cinema seems increasingly lost, constrained and unable to provide convincing answers to the creative onslaught unleashed by the "small" screen (you should see the television our colleague Jesse has bought himself...).

Yes, at Rock Bottom Magazine we love talking about television series. What can we do? They have accompanied us throughout the last twenty-five years, and many of us finally began to watch television in its original language, or to watch episodes whenever we wanted and whenever we could. I remember that, around the year 2000, my parents gave me the first season of The Sopranos on DVD. When I realised that Tony Soprano had the voice of the "new" Homer Simpson (following the recent death of the great Carlos Revilla), I swore I would never again watch anything dubbed. A promise that I obviously failed to keep, although it did become the rule rather than the exception. Being able to watch series in their original language made them infinitely more attractive, especially considering that some television dubbing was absolutely dreadful. Twin Peaks immediately comes to mind, for example, or instances that bordered on the surreal, such as Gilmore Girls translating Steely Dan as... Los Pecos! The truth is that, as I was saying, over the last twenty-five years we have witnessed a truly overwhelming avalanche of television series. Everyone will have their favourites and, within those, their favourite episodes. We have tried to pay proper tribute to those episodes that we have enjoyed over and over again, within series that have become an indispensable part of our lives.

"Jurassic Bark", "Futurama"

It's not unusual for a comedy to contain moments of overwhelming emotion, but there are special cases where, amid bizarre characters, impossible situations, and garish colours, there's room to grab you by the gut and leave you emotionally shattered, episodes that I would almost say become a kind of collective trauma that endures for years, even decades. "Jurassic Bark", from Futurama, belongs in that category. Aired during the fifth season of the series created by Matt Groening, the episode revolves around Seymour, Fry's dog, the pet left behind in the twentieth century when his owner was accidentally frozen and woke up a thousand years later. At first glance, the premise doesn't seem particularly remarkable, and you imagine it will get lost amid Bender's unstoppable wit, Professor Farnsworth's delirious inventions, or Dr. Zoidberg's outrageous antics... but "Jurassic Bark" turns into an unexpected emotional ambush: even a cartoon like Futurama is capable of showing you a portrayal of pain and loneliness, and making you feel them as if they were your own. While the story unfolds through small doses of humour and nostalgia, and you think you're simply watching another of Groening's absurdities, the episode moves steadily towards one of the most unforgettable endings in television history. Throughout the episode, Fry spends his time singing "Walking on Sunshine", by Katrina and the Waves, as a reflection of his cheerful, carefree personality. That final sequence, however, with the brutal contrast of "I Will Wait for You" (a song about waiting, absence, and love suspended in time), needs neither grand speeches nor melodramatic devices. Seymour, waiting for years outside the pizzeria where he last saw Fry, is a devastating image precisely because it appeals to feelings we all know: unconditional

love. The knowledge that few things are as painful as imagining what happens when we disappear from someone's life without being able to say goodbye. "Jurassic Bark" turns that idea into an almost unbearable emotional experience. Futurama delivered an episode capable of standing shoulder to shoulder emotionally with any prestigious drama. It didn't need live actors, bombastic music, or tear-jerking speeches. Just a dog sitting and waiting.

The Perfect Drug

"The Rains of Castamere", "Game of Thrones"

Game of Thrones is a series that has, in some ways, lost a certain place in the collective imagination. A series based on George R. R. Martin's dense novels, whose early episodes unfolded at a measured pace, allowing the characters the necessary time to develop their personalities, a rhythm that gave the production the feel of something crafted with great care, far removed from the excessive, and at times even clumsy, action of its final stretch, considering that this part has still not been officially published by Martin to this day. And yet, before it turned into The Walking Dead 2.0, the series delivered a production that came close to mastery on countless occasions. In the sixth episode of the fourth season ("The Laws of Gods and Men"), an unleashed Peter Dinklage, a true acting giant, gave us an immense, monumental performance in a monologue that begins with him trying to defend himself through intelligence and sarcasm, but ends with him tearing down the sham of the trial in an absolutely brutal outpouring of rage, humiliation, and wounded pride. "Blackwater", the ninth episode of the second season, is also among my favourites, once again with Dinklage leading an episode filled with battles and edge-of-your-seat emotion. But if there is one episode that pushes you to the limit... and beyond in Game of Thrones, it is undoubtedly "The Rains of Castamere", better known as "The Red Wedding".

As a rule, the great characters in television series are expected to endure, but Game of Thrones quickly showed us that no one was safe. If the honourable Ned Stark was beheaded to our astonishment, here we see what was meant to be the celebration of the union between two families, the Starks and the Freys, suddenly transformed into a massacre unlike almost anything ever seen on screen. It is not just the violence, but the way the loathsome Walder Frey's sinister plan gradually unfolds. The moment when Catelyn Tully (the magnificent Michelle Fairley), Lady Stark, begins to realise that the doors have been closed, that the musicians have replaced the joyful wedding tune with "The Rains of Castamere", the anthem of power that recalls the massacre the Lannisters carried out against House Reyne when it rebelled against them... Fairley's face is the face of horror even before the slaughter begins, as she realises, in a fraction of a second and without the slightest hope, that betrayal has caught them completely off guard. The song functions as a death sentence already pronounced. The moment it begins to play, Catelyn understands before anyone else that the Starks are already dead. In fact, the first act of violence is carried out against the character played by Oona Chaplin (daughter of Geraldine Chaplin), Robb Stark's pregnant wife, who is stabbed in the stomach over and over again, an image that is genuinely difficult to process... That is the moment when horror takes hold not only of the grim setting on screen, but also of your own living room. Unthinkable, unexpected, brilliant, excessive... every adjective you could apply to this sequence, both on its own and within the series as a whole, falls short. An episode that caused genuine shock across the entire world.

Javistone

"Dinner Party", "The Office"

When the subject of the greatest TV episodes was suggested, this was the first one that came to mind. At home, we're rewatching the series for the umpteenth time, and every time we get to this episode, I squirm and burst out laughing at the same time. If there is one episode capable of condensing all the awkwardness, sadness, and comic brilliance of The Office, it is "Dinner Party", the thirteenth episode of the fourth season. First aired in April 2008, it still appears time and again on lists of the greatest television episodes of all time, and I don't think that's by chance. Some episodes encapsulate a series, but this one lays it completely bare.

By the fourth season of The Office, Greg Daniels' American adaptation had long since stopped being the successor to Ricky Gervais and Stephen Merchant's British version and had become something altogether different. The American series is more emotional, more ensemble-driven, and far more interested in the contradictions of its characters. The Dunder Mifflin office had already become one of those fictional places viewers know almost as if they had worked there for years. We knew who its inhabitants were, their quirks, and the cracks they tried to hide, and "Dinner Party" capitalises on all of that groundwork. It does so in a setting away from the office itself, which, in some way, serves as a refuge for its employees; outside it, they are simply human beings with all their flaws... (and what flaws they are!). The premise is simple: through a bit of trickery, Michael Scott finally manages to get several of his co-workers to accept an invitation to dinner at the apartment he shares with Jan Levinson. From the very beginning, it is obvious that nobody wants to go. And once they get there, everyone realises that leaving will be far more difficult than they had imagined.

What makes the episode so fascinating is the way it turns an ordinary situation into an exercise in narrative precision. Every detail, every conversation, adds tension and induces second-hand embarrassment. Every seemingly innocent remark reveals an uncomfortable truth. Every passing minute gives us a deeper understanding of a relationship that has been sustained for far too long by conflict, dependency, and self-deception. Because, in reality, "Dinner Party" belongs to Michael and Jan. Over the years, The Office had built one of the most dysfunctional and unforgettable relationships in television. A story marked by power imbalances, impossible expectations, and a profound inability to understand one another; the collapse has been looming for a long time, and at last all those tensions take centre stage.

Steve Carell is magnificent, probably delivering one of the finest performances of the entire series. His Michael desperately tries to project normality while everything around him falls apart, in a display of comedy worthy of Peter Sellers. He keeps seeking approval even when the situation has become completely unsustainable. He tries to please his "friends" (they aren't, they're his employees) when there is no longer anything left to save. But if this episode has earned its place in the collective memory, it is to a great extent thanks to Melora Hardin. I believe her portrayal of Jan is one of the most underrated performances in television comedy of the 2000s. Hardin never slips into caricature, instead creating a character who is domineering, unpredictable, and abrasive, yet also profoundly sad and frustrated. Every gesture seems carefully calculated, every silence carries weight, and with each glance she changes the emotional temperature of the scene. She achieves something extraordinarily difficult: she makes us understand Jan even when it is impossible to justify her.

We do not even need Jim and Pam to contribute anything; they are simply there pulling faces, hostages to a situation that is far beyond them. At least they steal Hunter's CD (I still find myself humming "That One Night" quite often). Not even Dwight's hilarious arrival overshadows, in the slightest, the shipwreck of Michael and Jan's relationship. That is why I still believe "Dinner Party" represents one of The Office's creative high points. Not only because it is extraordinarily funny, but also because it demonstrates just how far a series set in the office of a paper company could go. Beneath the jokes lie complex characters, damaged relationships, and an extraordinarily perceptive

observation of life's small everyday tragedies. And rarely has all of that been concentrated so perfectly as it was during that dinner nobody wanted to attend, yet which millions of viewers still remember almost twenty years later.

Javier Sanabria

"The Marine Biologist", "Seinfeld"

The premise, as is so often the case with the finest stories from the series created by Larry David and Jerry Seinfeld, is absurdly simple: Jerry runs into an old college classmate and, without giving much thought to the consequences, tells her that George Costanza has become... a marine biologist! The problem, of course, is that George is not a marine biologist. He doesn't even have a steady job. But when the woman expresses an interest in seeing him again, the lie begins to grow until it reaches absurd proportions. What makes the episode extraordinary is that it represents the purest essence of Seinfeld. There is nothing here but a chain of ridiculous events driven by deeply flawed characters. George, arguably one of the greatest antiheroes in television history, agrees to keep up an impossible lie simply because he cannot resist the opportunity to impress someone. The episode also works as a masterclass in narrative construction. For twenty-two minutes, the writers carefully place seemingly unrelated pieces that fit together perfectly in the final act. Every conversation, every situation, and every small detail seem to be leading towards a single goal: setting up one of the most memorable closing scenes ever written for a television comedy.

And it is precisely that ending which turns "The Marine Biologist" into a masterpiece. George gathers his friends and recounts his encounter with a stranded whale. The sequence is constructed as though it were the climax of an epic film. Suddenly, the series' most cowardly, insecure, and neurotic character adopts the tone of an old sea captain preparing to confront the forces of nature. "The sea was angry that day, my friends...", he begins, before launching into a monologue that grows more compelling with every passing second until it culminates in a revelation as absurd as it is brilliant. The scene is a lesson in pacing, performance, and comic writing. Everything works: the perfectly judged pauses, the expressions on the characters' faces, the gradual build-up of tension, and the final punchline. It is no coincidence that, more than thirty years after it first aired, it remains one of the most frequently quoted moments in the history of American television.

But perhaps the true greatness of "The Marine Biologist" lies in something even simpler: it is an episode capable of making viewers burst into laughter even when they know every twist of the story by heart. Its effectiveness remains completely intact after multiple viewings, a quality reserved only for the greatest works of comedy. Television in its purest form. A twenty-two-minute masterpiece that proves perfection, at least in comedy, really does exist.

J. The Perfect Drug

"Everyone's Waiting", Six Feet Under

Almost twenty years later, the final episode of this unconventional series, which captivated so many of us, remains permanently etched in my memory. It was the spectacular conclusion to five seasons in which emotion and feeling gradually took hold of our souls, week after week, all thanks to the Fisher family, you know... Nate, David, Ruth the matriarch, the ghostly father Nathaniel, and the incorrigible Claire, along with a colourful and unforgettable supporting cast (ah, Brenda Chenowith, what a fascinatingly provocative character...). More than the episode itself, which ran for an hour and a half, what has become part of our lives is the unforgettable seven-minute closing sequence, with Sia's "Breathe Me" as its guiding thread, becoming the very reason the scene exists: a heart-wrenching ballad that goes straight to your heart, and around whose melody director Alan Ball built those magical minutes. Claire Fisher (yes, the family's youngest, rebellious and defiant daughter) drives her car aimlessly while a series of glimpses into the future gradually reveal the ultimate fate of the different members of the family. In truth, it is better experienced than described...

"I wrote that scene to fit that song, with that music in mind. No, I didn't synchronise every shot to the song, because you can't really do that. But every shot was very specific. It's not as though we shot loads and loads of footage and cut it down to those seven minutes. We knew exactly what we wanted those seven minutes to be" (Alan Ball). One of the greatest endings in television history, and to this day, it still has not been surpassed.

J.L. Crespo, "ZepiSoul"

"The One Where Everybody Finds Out", "Friends"

If you're as much of a Friends fanatic as I am, you'll probably find it quite difficult to choose the series' greatest moment. But there are, without question, several episodes that are indisputably part of sitcom history. One of them is the brilliant "The One Where Everybody Finds Out", the fourteenth episode of the fifth season. In it, Phoebe accidentally discovers that Monica and Chandler are secretly dating

when she spots them together from the apartment of the neighbour known as "Ugly Naked Guy", prompting one of the show's most memorable lines (setting aside the overused "We were on a break!", of course...): "My eyes! My eyes!".

Rachel already knows the secret, but Ross, who is visiting the apartment because he is considering renting it, is still completely unaware. That is why they distract the prospective tenant with a hilarious dance. Rather than telling him outright, Phoebe and Rachel decide, much to Joey's dismay, since he has been keeping the secret for far longer than he would have liked, to have some fun and put the new couple to the test. Phoebe then begins shamelessly flirting with Chandler in an attempt to make him uncomfortable enough to admit the relationship. However, Monica and Chandler realise that the girls know the secret and decide to play along. The situation escalates into a hilarious "battle" of deception in which even the audience has to stay sharp to work out "what they know that the others don't know that we know"… or something like that. It all culminates in a fake date between Phoebe and Chandler, where the tension reaches breaking point. Chandler can no longer keep pretending and finally blurts out in front of everyone: "Because I'm in love with Monica!" The group then realises that their relationship is far more serious than they had imagined.

It goes without saying just how wonderfully iconic Friends became. With characters who are very different from one another yet perfectly complementary, sharp dialogue, and everyday situations filled with humour, it is one of the very few series to have connected with several generations of viewers over the past few decades. Its success lies in the simplicity of portraying a relationship that becomes more than friendship, it becomes family, taking viewers on an emotional journey that offers an escape from the complications of real life. Love, friendship, independence, insecurity, and the search for one's place in the world remain just as recognisable today as they were in the 1990s, preserving the secret behind the show's enduring appeal.

Ada Salas

"Bloody Mary Hour", The Ministry of Time

Perhaps one could argue that this is not one of the greatest television episodes of all time, but without a doubt, "Bloody Mary Hour" contains one of the most sublime, moving,

and magnificent moments television has ever produced. While the episode as a whole is another entertaining web of Ministry missions to fix mishaps in the past that could alter the course of our country's history, it is not until the very end that Julián takes Federico García Lorca to the year 1979, to the caves of Sacromonte in Granada, so that he can witness Camarón de la Isla performing "La leyenda del tiempo", based on Lorca's own verses. Federico is initially astonished to discover that Julián knows by heart a poem he himself had only mentally sketched out the day before. Then, in order to show him just how important his life and work would become, and how many people would wish they could prevent his tragic death, he is persuaded to walk through the Ministry's doors and discover that, by the late 1970s, with the dictatorship finally over, his legacy had transcended to a level he could never have imagined. The emotional power of that moment, the look of wonder on Federico's face, makes him understand everything in an instant, leading him to utter what has since become one of the most iconic lines in the history of Spanish television: "Then I won, not them". It is impossible not to be moved every single time by that scene, as Lorca decides to let history take its course and allow whatever is meant to happen to happen, because even in death, his art and his legacy will be eternal, outlasting both his murderers and fascism. Art in its purest form.

Javistone

"Made in America", The Sopranos

I don't think I'm exaggerating when I say that the final episode of The Sopranos has been the most controversial ending in television history, at least when it comes to series. Countless conspiracy theories have been written about it, not to mention the controversy surrounding its original broadcast in the US, and more than one fan, and I won't name names, thought there had been a transmission failure. I've mentioned on other occasions that The Sopranos is in my Top 5 TV series, alongside The Wire, Northern Exposure, Six Feet Under, and Dexter. Well, I could also include Weeds, Mad Men, and Breaking Bad. And honestly, that final minute, which brought six fabulous and magnificent seasons to a close, left me speechless...

As the episode unfolds, everything seems to point towards a happy ending after all the hatred, deceit, violence, passion, and betrayal we have 'enjoyed' over the years. A family dinner is arranged at Holsten's, a restaurant in Bloomfield, New Jersey, the Soprano family's favourite. Tony arrives first, chooses a table, and heads to the jukebox to select that immortal anthem, "Don't Stop Believin'". He sits down, and a strange man wearing a cap, his head lowered, takes a seat at a table in the corner. Carmela, Tony's wife, arrives, and shortly afterwards a suspicious-looking man walks through the restaurant door, followed by AJ (the family's eldest child), who sits at the counter. Despite the apparent normality, tragedy hangs in the air and the tension is almost palpable. The suspicious man exchanges a chilling glance with Tony Soprano before getting up and heading towards the restroom, while Meadow, their daughter, struggles spectacularly to park outside the restaurant. The entrance door opens, Steve Perry sings "Don't Stop", Tony looks up and... ten seconds of black screen.

At the beginning I mentioned the fan who thought that abrupt interruption was caused by a fault with the television. Well, yes, I was one of them. In fact, my first thought was, "What the hell is this?!" But once the initial shock had worn off, I realised that sometimes it is better not to be given all the answers, but instead to create your own version of the story, quite literally, in your own head. Ever since then, I've preferred endings that make me think rather than the typical neatly wrapped-up happy ending. I can't help it, The Sopranos made me that way!

There are countless theories and interpretations surrounding those famous three and a half minutes, but I don't want to drag this out. You can easily search online for everything that "that damned little episode" generated, because there are hours' worth of speculation to explore. I'll stick with my own interpretation, though if you twist my arm just a little... perhaps I'll tell you...

Some will win, some will lose,
Some were born to sing the blues,
Oh, the movie never ends,
It goes on and on and on... ("Don't Stop Believin'", Journey*).*

J.L. Crespo, "ZepiSoul"

"Jedha, Kyber, Erso", Andor (Season 2)

Anyone who enjoys the Star Wars universe knows that few things are greater than the original trilogy. That the prequels were an unnecessary embarrassment, from which I would barely salvage the second half of Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith (2005), is an indisputable fact. That they tarnished what had until then been an impeccable legacy, while also turning something that still retained a sense of being a special, almost intimate universe for those of us who grew up with it into a fast-consumption product, with no lasting impact and no real depth... that too. The sequels were an improvement, but they fell into equally unforgivable mistakes: a lack of planning, absurd characters, completely implausible plot twists, and an endless reliance on nostalgia. Better than the prequels? Without question. But they were still a long way from being outstanding films.

Was there really nothing over those forty years that lived up to the original trilogy? There certainly was. Rogue One: A Star Wars Story confirmed what we all already knew: there is

life beyond the Skywalkers, and even beyond the Jedi. It is a glorious epic that explains where the Rebellion truly came from far better than the tedious tangle of intergalactic politics that dominated the prequels. Rogue One was a wonderful rarity within a cinematic universe filled with flawless, triumphant heroes. Rewatching Rogue One means returning to the authentic spirit of the Star Wars that captivated us all. And one of the greatest achievements of Andor in general, and of this final episode in particular, is the way it completely redefines Rogue One: A Star Wars Story. Until now, that film functioned as an outstanding war story within the saga. After Andor, it acquires an infinitely more complex emotional dimension. We no longer see Cassian Andor simply as an efficient rebel willing to die for the cause. It is only now that we truly understand everything he has lost, everything he has left behind, and everything he has had to destroy within himself in order to become that man.

The series turns heroism into something exhausting, traumatic, and morally ambiguous. There is nothing romantic about resistance. There is paranoia, fear, guilt, and psychological exhaustion. And that is precisely why Cassian's final sacrifice becomes so much more powerful: we now understand the burden he carries on his shoulders when he ultimately gives everything. The episode also confirms something extraordinary: Andor probably features the finest writing any Star Wars screen production has ever had. The dialogue is sharp, natural, and rich with meaning. The characters speak from their wounds, their contradictions, and their personal interests, often confused even to themselves.

The portrayal of the Empire is particularly brilliant. For decades, Star Wars presented the Imperial villains as iconic figures, almost cartoonish and devoid of soul, always hidden behind armour and helmets that made them little different from the droids serving the Confederacy of Independent Systems before Order 66. Andor, in addition to showing us their human faces, transforms them into something far more disturbing: bureaucrats, technocrats, and civil servants convinced they are defending order. The series understands that the true horror of authoritarianism often comes disguised as administrative efficiency. What in the original trilogy sometimes feels almost like an adolescent adventure becomes, in Andor, a reminder that fascism is not defeated through physical courage alone, but also through solidarity, memory, and humanity. That is why characters such as Dedra Meero and Syril Karn are so fascinating. They are emotionally empty people, absorbed by structures of power that ultimately consume them. The final episode brings that idea to a magnificent conclusion by showing where Dedra ultimately ends up.

Visually and emotionally, the episode builds tension to almost unbearable levels. The gradual transition towards musical textures that increasingly evoke Rogue One serves as an extraordinary emotional bridge between the two works. Throughout, the viewer constantly feels that destiny is drawing near, that the tragedy has already been written, and yet cannot look away. The final shot is devastating for precisely that reason. It does not seek to conclude the story with triumphant heroism, but with a mixture of sadness, love, and continuity. The struggle goes on. Until the very end.

Javistone

"New Canaan, CA", Carnivàle

Strange, hypnotic, unsettling, and utterly captivating, Daniel Knauf's creation remains, more than twenty years after its premiere, one of the most ambitious and singular productions HBO has ever made, which is saying something.

And if there is one episode that perfectly encapsulates everything that made the series so remarkable, it is "New Canaan, CA", the final episode of its second and, sadly, last season. HBO cancelled the production shortly after the second season had begun, even though the original plan envisioned six seasons divided into three distinct chapters. Despite the series premiere becoming, at that time, the most-watched episode in the network's history, the audience eventually declined enough to make a production filmed almost entirely on location financially unfeasible.

Over the course of two full seasons, the series had slowly built towards the confrontation between Ben Hawkins and Brother Justin (that acting giant known as Clancy Brown), two figures destined to embody opposing forces: good and evil, light and darkness. What is admirable is that "New Canaan, CA" never turns that confrontation into a grandiose spectacle. Everything unfolds in a grimy, physical, deeply earthly way. The final battle between Ben and Justin, set among cornfields, mud, and blood, possesses extraordinary visual power because it feels both biblical and utterly wretched at the same time. As though the Apocalypse had accidentally descended upon Depression-era America. The series had always blended the spiritual with the decaying, the mystical with the grotesque, and here it probably reaches its highest expression.

But "New Canaan, CA" works not only because of that long-awaited confrontation. It is "merely" the culmination of countless small moments and minor characters: Samson, Jonesy, Libby, Rita Sue, Stumpy... they all become part of a kind of collective final act. Even the con artists, the drunks, and the survivors ultimately come together around something far greater than themselves. That wretched yet deeply endearing humanity was always the true soul of Carnivàle. And then there is Sofie. Probably one of the episode's most disturbing and fascinating aspects is the character's final transformation, magnificently portrayed by Clea DuVall. The revelation of her role within the series' mythology makes the ending even more unsettling than expected. Because just when the story seems to be heading towards a conventional resolution between hero and villain, the series reminds the viewer that evil never truly disappears. It merely changes shape. The closing image of Sofie approaching Justin while the corn withers around them

remains one of the most desolate images fantasy television has ever produced. Just when it seems that relief has finally arrived, there is none, only more death and further signs of an endless battle.

Visually, the episode is astonishing. Carnivàle always possessed extraordinary cinematography, but here it reaches an almost unnerving level of beauty. The muted colours, the dust hanging in the air, the carnival lights contrasting against the darkness of the fields... everything seems to belong to a fever dream. Some shots resemble religious paintings weathered by the passage of time. Few final episodes leave such a profound feeling of emptiness and fulfilment at the same time. Perhaps because Carnivàle never wanted to provide answers. It only wanted to drag you into its dust, its shadows, and its apocalyptic visions. And it most certainly succeeded.

Javistone

"King-Size Homer", The Simpsons

The first ten seasons of *The Simpsons* are an essential part of Western popular culture over the past few decades. Back when Matt Groening was still fully involved with the series, and in Spain Homer was voiced by Carlos Revilla, *The Simpsons* became something close to a religion. The number of sublime moments Homer and the rest of the characters wandering around Springfield gave us during those years is simply impossible to match.

When I had to decide which episode to choose, I had plenty of contenders. The monumental "Duffless", how could you possibly top that? "Marge vs. the Monorail", "Cape Feare", or the sublime "Homer's Enemy", featuring the unforgettable Frank Grimes (or "Grimey", as Homer calls him, much to Frank's despair)... They are all just a small sample of the masterpiece *The Simpsons* was during that era: a comedy, yes, but also sharp, intelligent, and fiercely critical, with layers of social commentary that were almost unimaginable for an animated television series.

In the end, though, if I have to pick the one episode I find myself remembering over and over again, it has to be "King-Size Homer", in which our yellow hero decides to gain as much weight as possible so that, under company regulations, the nuclear power plant will be forced to let him work from home. Watching his excitement as he imagines how much better life would be if he were as big as a walrus but could stay home while working is both heartwarming and hilarious.
Seeing Dr. Nick Riviera, famous for having virtually no moral scruples when it comes to recommending absolutely anything, is priceless. He explains that any food capable of making a paper bag turn transparent is packed with fat, then encourages Homer to get creative if he really wants to put on weight. It is comedy gold. When Homer realizes he needs larger clothes, his best idea is to buy an oversized floral muumuu that looks more like a Hawaiian curtain than an outfit. Then comes the moment when he steps on the scales, only to discover he still has not reached the required weight, until Bart points out that his belly is caught on the towel rack, making the reading lower than it should be. Or when Homer decides to go to the movies (during working hours, of course, because apparently being obese still allows him to leave the house), only to be refused entry because he cannot fit into a standard seat, prompting him to cry out to the audience, "Fat people have feelings too!"

But nothing tops his supposedly foolproof plan to have a drinking bird toy do his job at the power plant by endlessly pressing the same key on his computer.

A brilliant, laugh-out-loud episode that still has me in stitches every single time I watch it.

Javistone

"Tick, Tick, Tick, Boom!", Gilmore Girls

There are episodes that, without relying on major plot twists, become an inseparable part of a series' identity. "Tick, Tick, Tick, Boom!", from the fourth season of Gilmore Girls, is one of them. While talking to our colleague Ada Salas (an absolute Lorelai-and-company devotee) about which episodes were her favourites, because I simply couldn't decide on one myself, she reminded me of this particular episode. I immediately went back to watch it again, much to the delight of both myself and my daughters. All it takes is mentioning Kirk's missing Easter eggs for any fan of the series to know exactly what you're talking about, while simultaneously bursting into laughter at the memory of Kirk and Taylor frantically wandering the streets of Stars Hollow searching for those wretched, foul-smelling Easter eggs. Few stories that seem so utterly insignificant have managed to remain in viewers' collective memory for so many years.

The premise, as so often happens in Stars Hollow, is delightfully absurd. During the town's annual Easter egg hunt, Kirk is put in charge of hiding the eggs all around the town (Kirk is capable of doing everything and nothing). The problem arises when he realises he forgot to make the map showing where he had hidden them. His expression is priceless as he slowly falls apart, looking as though he himself were just another lost egg. What initially appears to be a simple oversight gradually turns into a small community crisis when, weeks later, strange smells begin to emerge from different corners of the town. The explanation is as simple as it is unpleasant: some of the eggs were never found and are now rotting beneath benches, bushes, flower beds, and impossible-to-find hiding places. The situation immediately infuriates Taylor Doose (can you imagine Stars Hollow without the insufferable Taylor? Certainly not!), who treats the matter as a full-blown municipal emergency, while Kirk spirals into an increasingly desperate state of anxiety.

What makes this storyline so wonderful is that it perfectly encapsulates everything that made Gilmore Girls such a special series. While other productions relied on extraordinary events to capture viewers' attention, Amy Sherman-Palladino was capable of creating unforgettable situations from everyday conflicts pushed to absurdity and flirting with the surreal. The series understood something fundamental: the true interest does not necessarily lie in the objective importance of the events themselves, but in how the characters react to them. A handful of rotten eggs should not matter all that much, but when the people dealing with them are Kirk, Taylor, Luke, or Lorelai, the result automatically becomes something far more entertaining. The episode also serves as a reminder of just how much of a comic treasure Kirk Gleason became in early twenty-first-century television. What originally began almost by accident as a way of filling casting gaps eventually evolved, thanks to his humanity, his innocent clumsiness, and his wonderfully chaotic behaviour, into an indispensable part of the soul of that little town

supposedly located somewhere in Connecticut. But beyond the humour, the storyline also contains one of Gilmore Girls' most endearing qualities: its constant sense of community. Although Taylor loses his patience and turns the whole affair into a personal crusade, the town ultimately reacts exactly as Stars Hollow always does, functioning like one large dysfunctional family in which everyone becomes involved in everyone else's problems. Perhaps that is why we still remember this episode more than twenty years later. Not because the missing eggs constitute one of television's great stories, but because they represent everything that made the series unique: its distinctive humour, its impossible characters, its sharp and intelligent dialogue, and above all, its ability to find humanity and warmth in the most absurd situations. In the end, when people think of Stars Hollow, they do not remember great dramatic moments. They remember Kirk running desperately through town trying to find eggs he should never have lost; Lorelai drinking coffee while teasing Luke; Rory greeting Miss Patty; or Sookie, with her eternal smile, buying fruit from Taylor's market. And that, perhaps, says far more about the essence of Gilmore Girls than any major plot development ever could.

Javistone

"Episode 6" (Season 2), Fleabag

There are extraordinary series that run for years and multiple seasons, building complex universes and introducing countless characters. And then there is Fleabag, a series that needed only twelve episodes across two seasons to earn a privileged place in television history. It achieved that without huge budgets, without special effects, without impossible storylines, and without ever pretending to reinvent the medium. It did so through intelligence, emotional honesty, and writing so precise that every line seemed to be placed exactly where it belonged. Looking back, it is difficult to find another recent series capable of condensing so much pain, so much humanity, and so much humour into so little time, and doing so with such effortless naturalness.

What is most remarkable is that, on paper, the premise seemed relatively simple. A young woman living in London goes through a personal crisis while trying to survive a dysfunctional family, a succession of disastrous romantic relationships, and a guilt she has been carrying for far too long. From the very first episode, however, it became clear that Phoebe Waller-Bridge was playing in a league of her own. Fleabag did not simply speak to the audience, it turned that conversation into the very heart of the series. Every glance at the camera, every sarcastic remark, every spontaneous confession served to create an intimacy that was almost uncomfortable. We were not merely spectators, we were accomplices. We were inside her head. For two seasons, we became accustomed to that dynamic. Whenever a situation became uncomfortable, Fleabag sought refuge in us. Whenever she did not want to confront what she was truly feeling, she would turn her head, break the fourth wall, and share a sharp observation. It all seemed like a brilliant comic device, an ingenious way of telling the story, until the second season revealed that it had actually been concealing something far deeper.

The arrival of the Priest brought not only extraordinary chemistry between the two characters, but also one of the most astonishing moments in television history when, without any warning, he notices something that nobody else ever does. Every time Fleabag turns her head for a brief moment to address the audience, he notices it. Every time she retreats into that private space she has built between herself and us, the Priest seems to see her mentally disappear. "Who are you talking to?" he asks, bewildered, leaving her completely thrown.
That constant breaking of the fourth wall was not merely a narrative device. It was an emotional barrier, the mechanism Fleabag used to keep herself safe from the world, to avoid fully confronting her pain, her guilt, and the possibility of genuinely connecting with other people. We were her hiding place. That is why the final episode works so beautifully. On the surface, it tells the story of an impossible love, one of those relationships destined to fail. The Priest admits that he loves her, she admits she loves him too, but both understand that they cannot be together. It is a scene that is painful, beautiful, and devastating all at once. Yet the true emotional blow comes afterwards. It comes at the bus stop.Fleabag is left alone. For a few moments, it seems as though we are simply witnessing the end of a great love story. But then something far more important happens. Fleabag turns to the camera once again and looks directly at us, just as she has done throughout the entire series. She smiles with a mixture of sadness, gratitude, and serenity. Then she gives a small shake of her head. No. Not anymore. She doesn't need us to follow her. It is impossible not to be moved because we understand exactly what that gesture means. After spending two seasons beside her through her worst decisions, her darkest moments, and her few hard-earned victories, she no longer needs us. The woman who had used the audience as a refuge has finally learned to inhabit her own life. The fourth wall disappears in the most unexpected way, leaving the astonished and emotionally devastated viewer witnessing one of those sequences that become genuine works of art precisely because of, or perhaps thanks to, their simplicity. As the protagonist walks away and the camera remains still, we realise that we are not watching the end of a television series, but saying goodbye to a friend.

J. The Perfect Drug

"Got a Light?", Twin Peaks

"This is the water, and this is the well.
Drink full and descend.
The horse is the white of the eyes and dark within."

I don't think I've ever felt so perplexed, so astonished, so utterly bewildered watching

a television episode in my life. A creature straight out of hell, looking like a coal miner covered in soot, a hobo escaped from a nightmare, recites those words about the water and the well in what is... Lynch's attempt? ...to explain the origin of Bob, to give a historical dimension to the Evil at the heart of Twin Peaks. The idea of the atomic bomb is fascinating because, until that point, the series had only presented evil as the result of the actions of certain individuals. Here we finally discover that Evil is something abstract, that violence, corruption, and destruction are part of its very origin. Well, at least that's how I interpreted it. You probably came away with a completely different conclusion.

Ah, you have no idea what I'm talking about? Well, let me explain. I'm talking about "Got a Light?", the eighth episode of the third season of Twin Peaks, or the pinnacle of television surrealism. When it aired in June 2017, the episode landed like a bombshell. Twenty-seven years had passed since the premiere of Twin Peaks, and television was living through a golden age dominated by sprawling serialized narratives, complex antiheroes, and streaming platforms. Yet David Lynch returned with a proposal that, surprise, surprise, went in an entirely different direction. And no episode of The Return represents that ambition better than this one. To understand its impact, you first have to remember what Twin Peaks itself represented. The series transformed 1990s television by demonstrating that mystery, surrealism, absurd humour, and melodrama could all coexist within the same work. Decades later, its influence remains visible in countless series that inherited its aesthetic and narrative ambition. But The Return was not trying to recreate that phenomenon. As a one hundred per cent Lynchian work, free from outside interference, its goal was to venture even deeper into its darkest territories.

The episode opens with the detonation of the first atomic bomb in New Mexico in 1945. From there, Lynch constructs a sequence that I honestly find difficult to describe. For several minutes, the camera moves into the explosion itself. We travel through clouds of fire, masses of smoke, flashes of light, and abstract forms while Penderecki's Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima transforms the experience into something profoundly disturbing, a descent into the deepest recesses of a nightmare.

From that point onward, the episode unfolds according to a logic (ahem!) that resembles the most unsettling dreams, recognisable at times, yet always on the verge of collapsing. Ghostly figures appear, along with entities whose nature is never fully explained. A strange creature vomits up a dark mass from which emerges an image reminiscent of Bob, the great embodiment of evil within the Twin Peaks universe. To the surprise of precisely no one, none of this is presented as a definitive revelation. Everything functions instead as a suggestion, an intuition, or a threat. The final section of the episode is particularly disturbing. At a remote radio station in the middle of the night, a blackened-faced Woodsman appears, repeating the hypnotic phrase I mentioned earlier while a mysterious broadcast spreads through the airwaves. The sequence unfolds like a fever dream. Everyone seems trapped in a state of collective sleepwalking. Time itself becomes strange. The threat is impossible to measure. As in our worst nightmares, danger is everywhere and nowhere at once.

When I watched this episode, I realised that it transcended genres altogether, that it was something almost impossible to process. Perhaps what impressed me most about "Got a Light?" is precisely its ability to generate terror without relying on almost any of the genre's usual mechanisms. Forget jump scares or explicit horror. Its power comes from the atmosphere, the sound, the silences, and the constant feeling that the world is slowly ceasing to obey the rules that once made it comprehensible. That is why it belongs on this list. It remains one of the most singular episodes ever broadcast on television. It not only expands the mythology of Twin Peaks, it also pushes one of Lynch's greatest obsessions to its ultimate conclusion: the existence of something dark and incomprehensible lurking beneath the surface of everyday reality. For one hour, you feel as though you are staring directly into that abyss.

Javier Sanabria

John Bush, Honesty on Stage

John Bush is one of those names within the hard rock and heavy metal scene who commands the admiration of a large portion of the genre's followers. He thought he was making the definitive leap forward with Anthrax, only to run into the difficult reality of the 1990s if you weren't coming out of Seattle. People may like him more or less, that's ultimately a matter of taste, but his persistence, perseverance and honesty have made him one of the most beloved figures in the genre. The team at Metal N' Rock Radio got in touch with him to fire off a battery of questions just before the release of the new album by his lifelong band, Armored Saint. Naturally, this was an interview that had to appear in the pages of Rock Bottom Magazine.

Last May, Armored Saint released your new studio album, "Emotion Factory Reset". What we've heard so far sounds very promising; it's your first studio album in six years. What can we expect from it?
You can expect another classic Armored Saint album, rooted in heavy metal and hard rock, but with the sound of a 2026 record. Sophisticated songwriting that expands the signature Saint sound. The fact that we're still able to create songs this good at this stage of our lives amazes me.

Armored Saint started out in Los Angeles in the early 1980s, releasing several albums that have become cult classics. It was a time and place where bands like Mötley Crüe and Ratt were the biggest sellers. Did it hurt you to emerge in the same city and at the same time as such successful bands?
We came along a little later than Mötley Crüe, but we played a lot of shows with Ratt, as well as other classic Los Angeles bands such as W.A.S.P., Great White and Dokken, among others. We always delivered great performances regardless of who we were playing with, and thanks to that, Saint rose quickly through the local music scene.

This year marks the 35th anniversary of "Symbol of Salvation", which we consider your finest album and an almost unsurpassable classic. It was the last one before the band split up. Did you sense that something was changing within the music industry? We also remember your appearance in the film "Hellraiser III". What do you remember about that cameo?
"Symbol" came out in 1991, so the grunge movement was just starting to hit hard. That made things even more difficult for the band. That said, the album remains a cornerstone for us and only gets better with age. Like a fine wine! Filming "Hellraiser" was a lot of fun, especially meeting the actor who played Pinhead.

In 1992, you joined Anthrax. Was it a difficult decision to leave the band that had been your life? Did you have to think long and hard about it?
It was extremely difficult. My connection with Saint runs very deep and goes back to our childhood. I felt a tremendous amount of guilt about leaving. However, looking back, I believe it was the right decision for my life.

With Anthrax, you released several incredible albums that we love. It would be difficult to choose one over the others. During that period, you experienced the major changes that took place in music, particularly in the mid-to-late 1990s. Album and ticket sales dropped, and Elektra barely promoted "Stomp 442"... How did you experience those difficult years for metal bands?
For me, it was actually quite easy because, even though things didn't work out perfectly for the band, it was still far bigger than anything Saint had achieved. I've been saying for years that the most important thing in a band is controlling the quality of the music you make and believing in it, regardless of sales figures. This is the music business and, honestly, very few bands achieve massive success. Once a record is finished, I stand behind it and know deep in my heart that it was the best I could do at that moment. I will always feel that way.

You've probably been asked countless times about the possibility of joining Metallica. When did that opportunity arise? Do people still bring it up? Do you often think about how different your life might have been if you had joined Metallica?
Oh man, people remind me of it all the time!

The offer came when they were recording "Kill 'Em All". It was incredibly flattering, to say the least, but it simply wasn't my destiny.
Can you imagine a heavy metal world where James Hetfield isn't Metallica's lead singer? Neither can I.

At the beginning of the century, following the September 11 attacks and the subsequent anthrax and other substance

attacks, Anthrax found itself facing pressure from some quarters in the United States to change the band's name. How did you deal with that situation? Did you feel much pressure from institutions?
No institution whatsoever campaigned for the band to change its name. Some journalists asked whether we were going to do it, but we never considered it. Obviously, if a lot of people had died from anthrax, the situation would have been much more difficult for the band, but fortunately that wasn't the case.

In 2005, you left Anthrax following Joey Belladonna's return. Who suggested bringing Belladonna back into the band? When you first heard those rumours, did you already see yourself leaving? Later on, you returned for some shows and festivals. Did you think you would come back after leaving in 2005?
Around 2004, the band seriously considered doing a reunion tour. I didn't blame them. Honestly, I probably saw it coming from day one. At the same time, my first child was born, so in a strange way it balanced things out for me personally.

Was it difficult?
Absolutely.

With Armored Saint, you've spent 35 years with the same label, Metal Blade, and the same line-up, something very unusual in the music industry. What do you think is the secret behind that longevity?
Metal Blade has always supported Saint, even during the years when we were signed to Chrysalis. We're incredibly fortunate to feel like family with Brian, Tracy and everyone else there. That same family bond exists within Saint. We've been through so many adventures together that very little could ever break it. I suppose we still feel we have unfinished business. As long as we keep making amazing records and crushing it live, we'll keep going.

We were pleased to hear that you also did voice-over work for commercials. How did that opportunity come about? Did fans recognise you? What did they say?
Doing the Burger King commercials in the mid-2000s was an absolute blast. And they paid really well! Unfortunately, all good things come to an end. The company ended its relationship with its advertising agency, and suddenly I was out of a job. I loved those commercials. They were funny and clever. For me, Burger King just isn't the same without the King.

What can you tell us about your visits to Spain? One of the best concerts we've ever seen was at Piorno Rock 2003 in Granada. We also remember seeing you with Anthrax at Espárrago Rock in Jerez in 1999, an incredible show. By the way, you mentioned being in Granada. What was that experience like?
Spanish audiences are undoubtedly among the best and most passionate in the world. Sadly, Armored Saint has only played in Spain once, at the Barcelona festival in 2016. Just once, which is ridiculous and really frustrates me. Every Anthrax show I've played in Spain has been incredible, and I absolutely love being there. Hopefully we can fix that with this new album. The performance in Granada was amazing. I also remember visiting the city with my wife at another time and we absolutely loved it. We would definitely love to return to Spain with Armored Saint.

Metal N' Rock Radio

KEEP THE SOUL ALIVE

BY JL. CRESPO ZEPISOUL

Wigan Casino, the Temple of Northern Soul

I believe I've mentioned this before on occasion (and I sincerely apologise for repeating myself), but the reason I threw myself headlong into Northern soul was watching Elaine Constantine's film Northern Soul in 2014. I'd already had some contact with this musical and dance movement during the 1980s and 1990s, but never to the point of obsession, as happened after seeing the film. That obsession, incidentally, led to a reference book ("Northern Soul: Keeping the Faith", published by Ovejas Negras in February of this year), in which I analyse the movement and its importance within British culture, and which perhaps, fortunately for me, someone may already have on their bookshelf or may even have read.

Among everything faithfully portrayed by the British director, one name became etched, at the risk of sounding exaggerated, into my mind with fire and steel. I don't know whether it was the sheer phonetic power of W-I-G-A-N C-A-S-I-N-O, the scenes on its dancefloor so brilliantly depicted (they could not, of course, be filmed in the original venue, so a perfect substitute was found in King George's Hall), the drug dealing and record trading at makeshift stalls in the corridors, the music... whatever the reason, I became obsessed with anything connected to that club. And here is some of the result...

Before going any further, it is necessary to talk about Twisted Wheel because, from 1963 to 1971, it was the main focal point from which the Northern scene emerged. Located in Manchester, it was a converted warehouse with a series of basement rooms housing the stage, the DJ booth, which was enclosed within a cage, and the dancefloor. The walls were decorated with iron wheels (twisted wheels) that gleamed against the brickwork.

The music played there was far removed from the standards of other clubs around the country because the Wheel's DJs imported large quantities of singles from North America, most of them obscure and virtually unknown tracks, or records that had only been local hits. The aim was to avoid the typical Motown soul or R&B that dominated radio stations and nightclubs throughout England. The all-nighter sessions also began there, starting around 11 p.m. and continuing until approximately 8 a.m. Young soul fans from virtually every corner of Britain made pilgrimages to the club by car, hitchhiking, or coach at weekends to dance and sweat in the legendary venue. The Twisted Wheel closed its doors in early 1971 due to ongoing problems with drug use and trafficking, both inside and around the premises. A local by-law preventing venues from operating for more than two hours into the following day (as happened on Saturday nights) also forced its closure.

Two years later, in a town roughly an hour from Manchester, another club opened: Wigan Casino. In the early hours of Sunday, 23 September 1973, several hundred young people gathered outside the doors of a large ballroom (previously known as The Empress), and as soon as it opened they raced down a narrow flight of stairs towards the dancefloor. Over the sound system came "Put Your Arms Around Me" by The Sherrys. The first all-nighter at Wigan Casino had begun, the future temple of Northern soul.

The venue's manager, Mike Walker, arranged for a local DJ to play that historic first night. That fortunate individual was the outstanding Russ Winstanley, who owned an impressive collection of imported American singles, most of them completely unknown to the public and even to fellow DJs and future members of the Wigan team such as Kev Roberts and the great Richard Searling. His combination of mid-sixties rarities with classics and stompers (songs with particular drive and rhythm for dancing) became a defining characteristic, both for Winstanley and the other selectors.

It is important to mention Simon Soussan, a Franco-Moroccan smuggler from Los Angeles with a remarkable ear for uncovering hidden gems from small American record labels to

supply the Casino's DJ booth. During those early years, many of the records played had been discovered by him, including genre classics such as "I'll Always Need You" by Dean Courtney and the huge favourite "I Gotta Find Me Somebody" by The Vel-Vets. According to legend, Soussan 'borrowed' in 1977 one of the only two original copies of "Do I Love You (Indeed I Do)" by Frank Wilson from Motown executive Tom De Pierro. The following year, 2,000 pirate copies were issued under the name Eddie Foster (an example of a cover-up) on In Records, although Simon always maintained that he had purchased the single legally. This monumental track also became part of the Wigan archive.

Week after week, attending Wigan became essential and a pilgrimage for every soul fan who considered themselves genuine. The closure of venues such as the Catacombs, the Va Va's in Bolton and The Golden Torch drove all those youngsters towards the Casino as the principal venue of reference. There was competition from another legendary venue in the same county of Lancashire, the Blackpool Mecca, led by Colin Curtis and Ian Levine, but its more disco-oriented rhythms encouraged a stylistic shift that eventually evolved into disco music. Furthermore, there were no all-night sessions there, making Wigan Casino the almost exclusive reference point for Northern soul.

The sense of brotherhood among Northern followers was unmistakable, despite a certain rivalry between regulars at Blackpool and Wigan. The former mocked the Casino dancers' iconic look of loose, wide-legged trousers and sleeveless tops, yet at the same time organised trips from the Mecca once their night sessions ended at 2 a.m., because in less than an hour they could be sweating once again on the dancefloor of Wigan Casino.

The young people who spent all week waiting for Saturday and their favourite all-nighter were children of the working class, apolitical and with no appetite for revolution. Their only concerns were their flared trousers, preferably white sleeveless shirts, Italian shoes, a tin of talcum powder for gliding across the dancefloor and another container, filled with amphetamines, in their sports bag to keep them going through the night. And, of course, a packet of chewing gum to disguise the jaw-clenching nervousness caused by the pills.

The club's stature continued to grow over the years, and artists such as Edwin Starr, Tommy Hunt, Betty Wright and Jackie Wilson

appeared on its stage, delivering explosive performances that remain etched in the memories of that generation. Even James Brown turned up one night hoping to perform, but his exorbitant fee and the funky sound, completely at odds with the music played there, led Winstanley to politely decline his "invitation". The period between 1975 and 1978 represented the venue's golden age, and its reputation spread worldwide to such an extent that Billboard magazine allegedly named it "the best nightclub in the world", ahead of Studio 54, although no evidence exists to confirm that this supposed award was genuine.

The venue also featured a second room, Mr M's, where oldies (mainly mid-sixties tracks, largely obscure or previously unreleased, favoured by the movement's more traditionalist wing) were played, similar to those heard at the Twisted Wheel or The Golden Torch, including the classic "There's Nothing Else To Say" by The Incredibles. The records selected there catered to a less radical audience than those spending the entire night on the main dancefloor, creating a balance between the obsessive soulie hunting rarities and the ordinary youngster who simply wanted to hear the classics. This further enhanced Wigan's reputation.

Renowned documentary filmmaker Tony Palmer travelled to the town in 1977 to discover what motivated young people from all over the country to travel hundreds of miles to reach a nightclub where dancing continued until daylight. "This England" was the result, contrasting the decline of a former mining and textile centre such as Wigan with the young people who had found an escape from their bleak small-town lives. Essential viewing, I tell you!

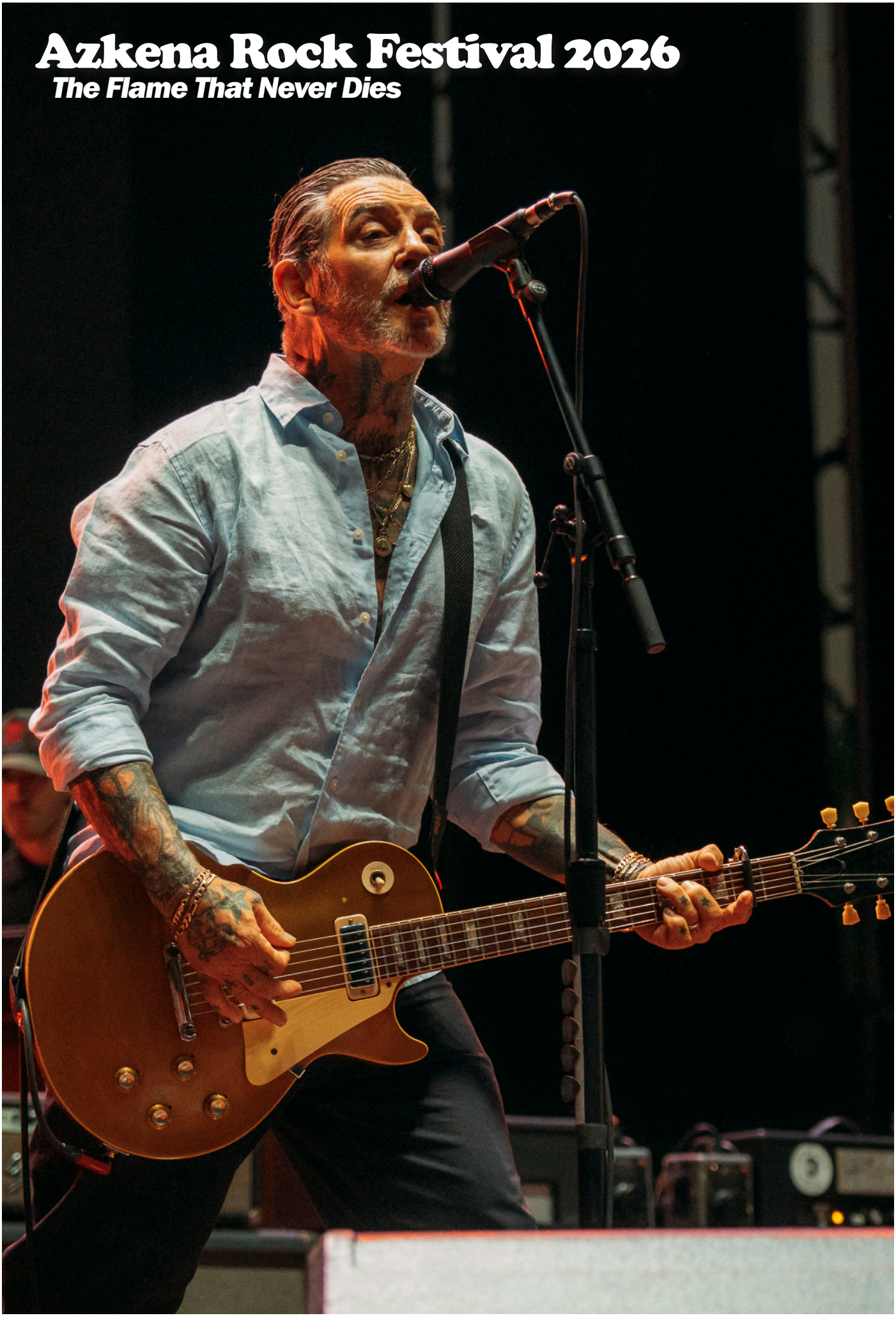
We are now moving dangerously close to the end of the 1970s, a period when the Northern flame had reached its peak and decline seemed inevitable. The local council, owner of the building, wanted to reclaim the venue for other purposes. During this final phase of Wigan, one must not forget the legendary three before eight, three songs that signalled the end of the Saturday night session, introduced in 1975 by DJ Dave Evison: the spine-tingling "Long After Tonight Is Over" by Jimmy Radcliffe, "Time Will Pass You By", the moving melody by Tobi Legend, and finally, to welcome Sunday morning, "I'm On My Way" by the Italian-American singer Dean Parrish.

On 16 May 1981, the 500th all-nighter took place. By that date, more than one million people had descended the stairs of Wigan Casino. And the ending that had long been hanging in the air finally arrived on 6 December 1981, when its doors closed forever. The man entrusted with this emotional farewell was Russ Winstanley, who had to play the "Three Before Eight" three consecutive times due to the insistence and collective frenzy of a crowd unwilling to let the night end. As a farewell gift, Winstanley randomly selected one final record from his box to bring the evening to a close. That record was "Do I Love You (Indeed I Do)", the song that had arrived at the Casino almost by smuggling and which, from that moment onward, became one of the unquestionable classics of the genre. Once it ended, the lights came on, the exit doors opened, and the tears and nostalgia began for an era that would be difficult ever to experience again.

Months later, a mysterious fire reduced the building to its foundations. Today, the site is occupied by a shopping centre, where a small plaque commemorates the glory of those years: "Wigan Casino. On this site stood the world-famous Northern Soul Club. 1973–1981."

Azkena Rock Festival 2026

The Flame That Never Dies



The Azkena Rock Festival, Spain's most iconic rock festival and a true international benchmark, is moving confidently towards what will be its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2027, having just completed one of its strongest and most memorable editions in recent years. While the line-ups of previous editions generated considerable controversy among its loyal followers, this year's 2026 edition enjoyed an unusual degree of consensus beforehand, something that was clearly reflected in the attendance, which was noticeably higher than in recent years. In our opinion, this year's line-up felt far more balanced, featuring a wealth of highly appealing mid-tier acts and placing a much stronger emphasis on guitar-driven music than in previous editions, precisely what many festivalgoers, particularly after last year's event, had been asking the organisers to deliver.

As for the festival itself, it continues to build on its greatest strengths: comfort, cleanliness, a fantastic atmosphere, virtually no queues or long waits, plenty of drinking water stations, and enough bars to keep things running smoothly, even improving on previous years in terms of speed and service. There are, however, some recurring shortcomings: the need for more rest areas, exorbitant prices, a food offering that borders on the ridiculous, and a few incomprehensible scheduling decisions.

Even so, we once again enjoyed a dream weekend in our own personal guitar paradise, a place we return to every year with unwavering devotion. It is not only an opportunity to experience the finest live music imaginable, but also an annual meeting point where we reunite with friends and acquaintances from the music scene whom distance prevents us from seeing throughout the rest of the year. But this is about music, and about concerts, so after allowing ourselves this brief introduction, it is time to tell you which performances stood out as our favourites.

Thursday 18

The festival's opening day is always special. There is excitement, nervous anticipation, and countless reunions. It is usually a long day, with many attendees having travelled great distances (in our case, Puerto de Santa María – Seville – Bilbao – Vitoria), and all those emotions tend to blend together. At least for me, it always takes a while before I fully switch into "concert mode". That was certainly the case during the first performance we attended, by the American singer Robert Finley. We also had the advantage of having seen him perform a few months earlier in Madrid, so we already knew what to expect. The Louisiana native once again delivered, as he invariably does, a genuine soul-blues masterclass, displaying remarkable elegance and class while placing particular emphasis on his latest album, Hallelujah! Don't Let the Devil Fool Ya (2025), without neglecting material from his earlier releases.

After that, we headed over to the Respect Stage for the first real knockout performance of the day. DeWolff returned to the festival to prove once again that they are one of the finest European rock bands around today. Dressed in brown suits worthy of Gram Parsons and backed by two outstanding backing singers who had us completely captivated, the Van de Poel brothers (Luka on drums and Pablo on guitar and vocals), together with Robin Piso on keyboards, took over Mendizabala from the very first notes of the powerful "Night Train", launching us into a vigorous blend of soul, blues, and seventies rock that defines these Dutch musicians, who might just as well have been born in Alabama, home to the city of Muscle Shoals, which they pay tribute to both on their latest album and through their unmistakable sound. It was a short, festival-oriented set with barely a moment to catch your breath, crowned by the wonderful coda that is "Rosita", a song that could easily have been written by The Allman Brothers, with Pablo eventually abandoning the stage to sing among the audience. The first truly outstanding concert of the weekend.

By then, the adrenaline was well and truly flowing, so we returned to the God Stage, where Imelda May was waiting to present the rockier side of her catalogue, accompanied by guitarist Darrel Higham. It was a performance that steadily gathered momentum, with the Irish singer showcasing her magnificent voice through a carefully selected setlist. However, she took a while to establish a real connection with the audience, or at least with me, something I have experienced with her before. I honestly don't think the main stage suits her at all, with the band spread so far apart (the guitarist seemed to be performing in Narnia), and I believe her songs would benefit enormously from a much more intimate setting. Even so, thanks to sheer professionalism and a couple of excellent cover versions ("Train Kept A-Rollin'" will always bring the dead back to life), the performance ultimately turned out to be a respectable one.

Then it was back to the secondary stage for one of the most eagerly anticipated performances on the entire bill. Southern heavyweights Corrosion of Conformity returned to Mendizabala, this time with a sound mix worthy of the occasion, to unleash a sonic storm of considerable magnitude upon everyone in attendance. With their trademark no-frills approach, Pepper Keenan and company

came out with knives between their teeth, determined not to leave a single survivor in what became a brutal performance and a masterclass in sludge and stoner metal. The North Carolina band's setlist combined songs from their latest album, Good God, Bad Man, which they are touring in support of, with earlier classics, particularly from Deliverance, keeping the audience headbanging almost nonstop throughout the show.

Anticipation reached fever pitch for the return of The Hives, now back at the festival as headliners and enjoying a surge in popularity that continues to surprise many people. The Swedes injected a welcome dose of freshness with a celebratory performance in which their energetic, guitar-driven garage rock had the front rows, at least, bouncing in mosh pits and dancing almost from the very first verse. It was a carefully assembled setlist that drew material from across their entire catalogue without becoming trapped in nostalgia, while still delivering the songs that have long since become classics, keeping the crowd jumping throughout every number despite the, at times, rather excessive amount of between-song banter from frontman Pelle Almqvist.

Despite the accumulated fatigue from the opening day, we made one final effort to head back to the Respect Stage and catch the British veterans The Adicts, and we certainly did not regret it. True survivors from the first wave of British punk, "Monkey" Warren and his accomplices won us over with their fast-paced melodies, theatrical gags, and timeless songs on what is their farewell tour after almost fifty years together. Generational anthems such as "Don't Exploit Me", "Johnny Was a Soldier", "Fucked Up World", "Troubadour", "Chinese Takeaway", and "Viva La Revolution" were sung back word for word by an audience completely won over by the charisma and attitude of one of those truly essential bands. It provided the perfect ending to what was, for me, the finest Thursday since the festival returned to its three-day format.

Friday 19

Friday also promised to be an intense day, packed with worthwhile performances. Things got underway at 1:30 p.m., when Canada's Bywater Call took to the Virgen Blanca stage and left everyone gathered there speechless, despite the blazing midday sun. Familiar faces to us (we've had the pleasure of seeing them twice before in Jerez), this band, led by the magnificent voice of Meghan Parnell, formed in 2017 and already boasting four releases, including a live album, had thoroughly earned their place on the Azkena bill. Some even suggested they should have replaced Counting Crows, who were forced to withdraw from the festival barely a week before it began. It wasn't to be in 2026, but considering the band's steady growth, the quality of their live performances, and the excellent impression they left on everyone who attended, I'm convinced it won't be long before we see them performing on one of the festival's three main stages.

Vitoria offered no respite. If the midday heat had been unbearable, a huge storm early in the afternoon forced the cancellation of Madrid band Black Maracas' performance and caused significant delays to the schedule on the La Salve Stage. Both The Damn Truth and Hallas were affected by the disruption, yet each still delivered an excellent performance in their own very different style, once again demonstrating how the Azkena line-up manages to remain coherent despite its remarkable eclecticism. Then came one of the festival's biggest surprises, despite the fact that many people had already highlighted them as one of the must-see acts on the bill. Hailing from Nashville, Old Crow Medicine Show made their live debut in Spain carrying the reputation of being one of the leading names in modern bluegrass and alternative country with a distinctly rock-oriented edge. For many of us, however, who attended more out of curiosity than genuine familiarity with their music, what we witnessed felt like being punched squarely in the face.

With an attitude and energy that had us completely hooked from the very first note, Old Crow Medicine Show came out determined to own the Respect Stage and get everyone dancing as though they were the Pied Piper of Hamelin. Irresistible, wearing smiles from start to finish, displaying incredible chemistry with the audience, and armed with a rock-solid setlist, the show quickly turned into one huge celebration, reaching its peak when they invited the young Bridge City Sinners, who were due to perform the following day at Trashville, to join them on stage. The undisputed winners of the day.

Still buzzing from that adrenaline rush, we made our way to the main stage, where the mighty and long-awaited Sugar were just beginning their set. Bob Mould is one of those figures who helped shape American rock throughout the 1980s, laying the foundations for the extraordinary explosion of the genre in the following decade. After his indispensable years with Hüsker Dü, Mould formed Sugar and created one of those records that never leaves you: Copper Blue, a unique and timeless album. Thirty-one years later, following an outstanding solo career, the guitarist and singer has reunited Sugar to revisit that era while also introducing new material from the band. With all that in mind, finally seeing Sugar and Bob Mould live for the first time was, for me, an accumulation of wonderful emotions. That perfect balance between melody and distortion remains completely intact, the songs still sound massive, and Mould exudes charisma wherever he goes. A truly outstanding performance.

I would have liked to have enjoyed The Temperance Movement's set more thoroughly, but at some point we had to give our legs a rest, grab something to eat, and make sure we secured a good spot for the following concert. Even so, watching them from a distance confirmed that the Glasgow band has lost none of its edge and continues to sound superb.

As for what happened next, I could easily fill an entire issue of Rock Bottom writing about it. Vincent Damon Furnier, better known as Alice Cooper, delivered an indescribable spectacle of class, artistic excellence, rock in its purest form, and theatrical brilliance. I should point out that I'm not a devoted Alice Cooper fan. I don't own his complete discography, although I do have several of his albums. I've never been a "big true fan", but I have enormous respect for him, he is, after all, one of the great icons of rock's golden age. I'd never seen him perform live before and,

although I was aware of certain aspects of the show, I had deliberately avoided watching any footage beforehand. In other words, I arrived almost completely unspoiled. With flawless sound, phenomenal musicianship (the band's performance is simply jaw-dropping), and an astonishing production, Alice Cooper, who also proved to be in remarkable physical condition and astonishingly energetic at seventy-eight years of age, demonstrated through his performance how rock can embrace theatricality, even circus-like elements, without sacrificing a single ounce of its aggression. I had previously seen other rock productions with varying degrees of theatrical presentation, KISS, Rammstein, and Marilyn Manson among them, but without judging the quality of anyone's catalogue, I have to say that what Alice Cooper delivers belongs to an entirely different league.

Saturday 20

At first glance, Saturday looked like the "quietest" day in terms of the number of concerts, although there were still several bands well worth seeing, along with a few surprises we certainly hadn't anticipated. We began, once again under a blazing sun, at the Respect Stage with the Texans Vandoliers. Here I'd like to make a brief aside, in case anyone from the festival organisation happens to read this magazine (which I thoroughly recommend, although certainly not because of this article alone): someone really needs to take another look at the scheduling on that stage. Every year, two bands end up roasting there in direct sunlight under unbearable heat. It's inhumane.

With that said, let's get to the concert itself, which turned out to be one of the festival's biggest surprises. Thanks to the radio show Radio con Botas, of which we are devoted listeners, we were already familiar with Vandoliers' albums and songs, as well as the story of their singer and frontwoman, Jenni Rose, who recently came out as a trans woman, dedicating both her songs and her latest album to her transition and to her struggle with gender dysphoria. It therefore came as no surprise that both the reception of the album and this tour, her first as a woman, should carry such special significance for her.

She made that very clear during the performance, and it was equally evident that the Azkena audience had nothing but support for her. The band delivered a raw, deeply emotional show, and the crowd responded with complete commitment, singing along to the songs and showing Jenni an extraordinary warmth and closeness. "We support you, Jenni. We don't care about your gender, we care about your music, and we're delighted that you're making it as the woman you are." That was the unspoken message of solidarity the audience conveyed, and the band repaid it by leaving absolutely everything they had on stage. Magical. And it's moments like these that make me love Azkena.

Sometimes the sheer number of bands means that two or more performances overlap, forcing you to make difficult choices. That was exactly the case with '90s veterans Superchunk and the explosive Split Dogs. In the end, we opted for the British band, fronted by another formidable woman, and their uncompromising blast of punk rock.

After them, the trio of feline-fronted bands was completed by the gothic/glam sounds of Starbenders, who were also touring in support of a new album. We didn't stay for their full set, though, as we wanted to secure a good spot for the day's main attraction. To the opening strains of Bowie's "Rebel Rebel", Mike Ness and his Social Distortion bandmates walked onto the stage, Ness sporting white trainers and a light blue shirt that made it abundantly clear that times have changed. Our former inmate has reformed. Time has passed. He has overcome cancer, and although he tells us he was "born to kill", he no longer does so at gunpoint, but through ideas. With a more measured pace and a calmer stage presence, though no less charismatic for it, Mike Ness guided us through material from his latest album with the authority of someone who has stared death in the face. Ness no longer needs speed or aggression to get his message across. Instead, he lets the lyrics flow over riffs that remain every bit as sharp as ever. The set felt all too short, but it left behind that lingering taste of oak and the warmth in your throat of a sip of bourbon, both dry and smooth at the same time, like a kiss. Through his songs, Ness shares a lesson in life, one that almost slipped away from him, but which he now savours at a different pace. One song followed another until we reached the final catharsis, where the truth emerged through those songs that have long since been tattooed on our hearts. You simply have to love Mike Ness.

After Mike Ness's display of sheer honesty, few could have predicted what was about to happen next. Throughout the entire weekend, there had been a sense of uncertainty surrounding Jason Isbell & the 400 Unit. Which side of the brilliant Alabama songwriter would we see? We were about to find out. By the first song, you could already cut the silence with a knife, and by the second, everyone around us had begun exchanging smiles. "What is happening here?" The magic had arrived. With an indescribably pristine sound, the guitars of Sadler Vaden and Jason himself painted impossible melodies that drifted effortlessly over piano chords of a beauty bordering on the forbidden.

After the exquisite "Gravelweed" came "Decoration Day", the first of several songs from Drive-By Truckers, a band that reached a truly unique level when Jason Isbell was among its ranks, making us all dream once again of what an extraordinary group they had been. Before we had time to catch our breath, "True Believer" and "Bury Me" transported us into another dimension, one where you realise there is no escape. It is in that precise moment that everything suddenly makes sense. You understand that the entire universe can exist within a single city, a single geographical point, standing in front of one stage. You realise why rock is the greatest music ever created, and you find yourself thanking the entire cosmos for giving you the chance to experience it.

When that wonderful tribute to the greatest American rock band in history, "Danko/Manuel", merged into "King of Oklahoma", the ecstasy had already reached levels bordering on the pornographic. The sound remained immaculate, the vocals crystal clear, the guitars absolutely sublime, while the rhythm section matched every beat of your heart. There is nothing more beautiful in this world. Don't even try to argue otherwise. "Cover Me Up" and "This Ain't It" brought the concert to a close, a performance that will undoubtedly go down in Azkena history.

After what we had just witnessed, we needed a moment to catch our breath and give our already battered, exhausted legs a rest, including one calf muscle that had started causing me serious problems. It was also the perfect opportunity to buy our tickets for next year's edition, the festival's twenty-fifth anniversary, which came with a commemorative merchandise gift box to mark the occasion. Meanwhile, we enjoyed, from a distance, the wonderfully uncompromising assault delivered by Discharge, the legendary band that blended the sheer heaviness of metal with the speed of hardcore better than anyone else. I would have loved to stay and watch Therapy?, but by then we simply had no energy left beyond saying goodbye to our friends until the next edition and getting some much-needed rest before the journey home.

And so another edition of the most important weekend of the year for those of us who love rock came to an end, while a new countdown quietly began, leading us towards what promises to be a truly historic twenty-fifth anniversary edition.

Marcos Sánchez

This series, created, written and directed by Steve Conrad, is a genuinely unusual piece of work. Conrad's career as a director includes "gems" such as "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" and "The Pursuit of Happyness", but here he shows a much surer touch, handling a story that twists and turns emotionally at every step thanks to a remarkably original script. Its greatest strength, however, lies in its outstanding ensemble cast. Actors of the calibre of Richard Jenkins (magnificent in 2007's "The Visitor"), Peter Sarsgaard, David Harbour, Jason Bateman and the stunning Linda Cardellini (who would've thought she'd end up playing sexy middle-aged characters back when we watched her in the wonderful "Freaks and Geeks"?) make this a highly recommended series.

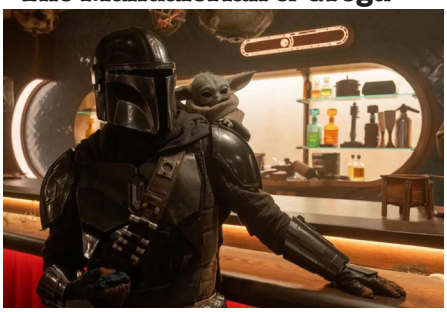
What begins as a straightforward noir story, with the death of a scruffy-looking man found in an abandoned swimming pool beside a gay magazine opened to an "Indiana Jones" feature, gradually spirals into something much darker. Appearances begin to give way to a series of revelations, some mundane and others... rather less so. What initially seems like a routine investigation becomes increasingly complicated by a growing number of baffling details, much to the frustration of Jenkins' character, a police detective whose confusion grows alongside the case, when all he really wants is to wrap it up as quickly as possible.

Through a constant stream of flashbacks woven into the investigation, we see how the friendship between Clark Forrest (a brilliant Jason Bateman, what an actor), a successful weatherman and seemingly perfect family man, and Floyd Smernitch (a superb David Harbour), a sign language interpreter whose life feels like one long exercise in frustration, trapped in a depression with no clear way out, first begins. Yet his new relationship with Clark somehow starts to bring his life back to life. Hope, trust, friendship, understanding... Conrad skilfully uses the show's bleak tone to help us feel the suffocation experienced by its characters, especially Floyd, Clark and Carol (Linda Cardellini, Clark's wife), all of whom are struggling just to keep their heads above water. Their triangle develops into a complex emotional game, a trio of deeply disillusioned people, each dealing with their own version of a midlife crisis, haunted by what they once were and never will be again, what they have become and never expected to be, as well as a profound sexual dissatisfaction that eventually pushes them into increasingly unlikely situations.

And yet, despite all of that, despite the grey visuals, the brutalist police station, the interrogations and the sadness that permeates the entire series, that harshness is constantly contrasted by the tenderness with which "DTF St. Louis" treats its characters and the way they treat one another. The scenes between Floyd and Richard, in particular, possess a beautiful warmth, such as the moment when they start rapping about Clark's ridiculous bicycles. Or the love that gradually develops between Clark and Floyd. Watching Floyd manage to connect with his stepson, who appears to be somewhere on the autism spectrum, is genuinely moving. At some point along the way, this strange blend of detective drama and dark comedy gives way to something deeply sincere, and our pity gradually turns into genuine empathy, because loneliness is, inevitably, where the road ends for all of us.

Javistone

"The Mandalorian & Grogu"



Why do you go to the cinema, dear reader? As far as I'm concerned, I go to have a good time, a concept that can encompass many things, from being scared, intrigued or amused, to even having one's spirits lifted, if necessary. But sometimes you go simply to be entertained. And "The Mandalorian & Grogu" is tremendously entertaining. Obviously, we can discuss, and we will, whether it was the right decision to bring Din Djarin and Grogu's story to the big screen, a story that had been working wonderfully on Disney's platform season after season, but it seems that Lucasfilm decided to turn what was meant to be a fourth season of "The Mandalorian" into a theatrical release with the idea of attracting those who had not followed the series.

As a concept, it is an absolute disaster. If you are not interested in watching the adventures of the galaxy's most famous Mandalorian and his mini Yoda from the comfort of your sofa, you are certainly not going to travel to the nearest cinema (which is usually not close by), pay for a ticket (which is usually not cheap) and sit through a story centred on characters who mean nothing to you. Because, let's be honest, the feeling you get while watching "The Mandalorian & Grogu" is that you are watching an extended episode of "The Mandalorian", only with the production values and experience of a cinema screen. I would be very surprised if it manages to attract new fans either to the franchise or to Star Wars, but for those of us who have enjoyed the series, the film is first-rate popcorn entertainment. Seeing those X-Wings on the big screen, presented with the restrained tone that has become characteristic of that great pillar of the Star Wars universe that Jon Favreau has turned into, those galactic landscapes and, in general, such a measured use of special effects, all contribute to productions that feel like cinema made with purpose and good taste. It is obvious that the film feels like a condensed season or, as many have pointed out, more like an extended episode. As I said, narratively it does not have the structure of a feature film; it jumps from one situation to another, which constantly reminds you that this is not a conventional cinematic experience. But as a succession of adventures, it works perfectly.

Do not expect major revelations, cameos or anything of that sort. This is not a film that can be slotted between the trilogies, as we can very much do with "Rogue One" and even with that masterpiece called "Andor". "The Mandalorian & Grogu" is a work that stands on its own, and that is something to be appreciated. It is refreshing not to keep bringing back the same characters and planets, in other words, not to rely constantly on nostalgia. The Star Wars universe is so vast that there is an Expanded Universe full of new and fascinating stories waiting to be explored without the need to bring back not only the Skywalkers, but even the Jedi themselves (once again, I refer you to "Rogue One"). For that same reason, the one thing that feels entirely unnecessary to me, and by far the weakest aspect of the whole film, is the inclusion of Jabba the Hutt's son, whose face is based on Jeremy Allen White ("The Bear"). It feels completely unnecessary and jarring.

Ultimately, this is a film that allows you to enjoy the adventures of the Mandalorian and Grogu, this time on the big screen, although it might be worth considering whether this franchise still has much further to go. While it has worked remarkably well so far (nothing like the lamentable "The Book of Boba Fett", what a way to destroy a myth; the unnecessary "Obi-Wan Kenobi"; or the absurd "The Acolyte"), nothing lasts forever, and either they find a way to reinvent the story or they run the risk of falling into repetition, something we would be grateful for them to avoid.

Javistone

Eleven ("Stranger Thing")

I'm going to say something unpopular: Eleven is probably the most overrated and irritating character in "Stranger Things". Yes, I know, psychic powers, childhood trauma, secret laboratories, nosebleeds, intense stares into the distance and that pitiful "papa" whining. Very dramatic, but someone had to say it. Because although the series is supposed to revolve around what she represents, it often feels as though the rest of the characters are merely extras waiting for Eleven to furrow her brow and solve whatever problem happens to be at hand. And, of course, that makes it very easy to build an "epic" character. Throw in some emotional music, a couple of grim flashbacks and suddenly you've got the audience crying on Twitter.

The problem is that Eleven spends every season behaving in exactly the same way. She barely speaks, stares oddly, suffers tremendously, gets a nosebleed and saves the day. Then once again she stares oddly, suffers tremendously, gets a nosebleed and saves the day. Repeating that over and over again is not depth, it is simply recycling the same trick until it wears out. On top of that, she has this permanent aura of the misunderstood martyr that eventually becomes exhausting. Bloody hell, how many of us didn't come home from the park with a bleeding nose and skinned knees? Or broken teeth? And yet we didn't bring a bloody Demogorgon home with us, at most a box full of silkworms, much to our mothers' delight. Every scene in the series seems designed to remind you just how terrible her life has been. And yes, obviously her childhood was awful, but in the end she was the one who "created" Vecna, so let's not overlook that, shall we? Hey, Eleven, what about that?

On top of everything else, the character is dull beyond belief. She has none of Steve's irony, none of Dustin's natural charisma and none of Hopper's humanity. Even a permanently bewildered Winona Ryder seems to have more substance than she does, despite never having the faintest idea where the blows are coming from. Some people behave as though Eleven were the most complex female character in television history, when in reality she often feels more like a narrative device with legs. She isn't frightening. She isn't moving. And she certainly isn't the soul of the series. That said, she deserves an Oscar for nosebleeds, she does those brilliantly.

Javistone

PROJECT HAIL MARY

Borrowing the spectacular space travel of "Interstellar", the alien communication of "Arrival" and the purest kind of Gosling-style comedy, the already acclaimed Phil Lord and Chris Miller bring the novel "Project Hail Mary" to the big screen in excellent fashion. As one of my most anticipated films of the year due to my particular fondness for Ryan Gosling, I never expected the tremendous reception it has received. In its opening weekend alone, it became the biggest release of the year so far, taking in 130 million dollars.

In addition to its warm reception from audiences, critics have placed it on a pedestal. As a result, despite having only just been released, its presence in the upcoming awards season is already beginning to take shape. I predict it will secure nominations in several categories, although it seems fairly unlikely that it will make the kind of huge impact achieved by "Sinners".

Beyond its cultural impact, the film is not solely about humanity and its essence, as I initially thought. "Project Hail Mary" champions unity and kindness regardless of the individual, the group, the race or, in this case, the species. Through its understated and anti-climactic humour, it unravels those values within its protagonist and succeeds in aligning the story with his character development in a completely satisfying way, portraying through him and the character of Rocky the purest form of courage and the gentlest altruism. The kind of courage that is often rooted in fear, and not in a negative sense, because sometimes fear is necessary in order to grow stronger through it and face adversity head-on.

From a technical standpoint, the film operates on another level. Its spectacular score and the cinematography of the brilliant Greg Fraser do not disappoint, with Fraser himself admitting that this was the most difficult film he has ever worked on. It is a visual feast, offering images that leave you spellbound and practical shots that will go down in history. When every detail of what appears on screen is treated with such care, it shows, and it shows enormously. The sense of dedication and affection invested in the project is so evident that even the astronauts of Artemis II have referenced our beloved Rocky and his "Amaze, amaze, amaze!!".

Nor would this project be anything without the great Ryan Gosling. His comedic performance places him among the very best comic actors working today. Considering "The Nice Guys", "Barbie" and "Crazy, Stupid, Love", this may well be the finest of them all. Although I personally prefer his dramatic performances in films such as "Blade Runner 2049" and, of course, "La La Land", this could ultimately be the role that finally earns him the statuette. The perfect complement to the Oscar-nominated actor is another Oscar nominee, the incredible German actress Sandra Hüller, from whom we are going to see a great deal more in the near future and who, as always, is excellent here.
To move and amuse an audience while telling a story is no easy task. We should be grateful that films like this continue to be made, quality blockbusters that are not produced by the major studios. We should be grateful for our culture and for the opportunity to watch films. Cinema is something extraordinary because, after all, how would you explain to an alien that we cry while watching a rock projected onto a screen?

Francisco La Rubia

THE DRAMA

After waiting several months for its release in Spain, we can finally enjoy A24's latest film. Led by Zendaya and Robert Pattinson, Kristoffer Borgli does what he enjoys most: surprising and innovating through crazy and uncomfortable ideas. Any couples who went to see it thinking it was a rom-com (romantic comedy) are likely to have been disappointed, but those of us who knew what was coming thoroughly enjoyed it.

Scandinavian filmmakers are on an incredible run, and our dear director Kristoffer Borgli is yet another example. After working with Nicolas Cage on "Dream Scenario", he returns with one of the most eagerly anticipated films among cinephiles in 2026. We have had to wait months to see it because of the dreadful distribution we receive in Europe, but the wait has been worth it.

A romance that appears simple on the surface, yet comes with a very interesting twist. "The Drama" examines who we are, who we have been and, through that, asks us who we will become. These are the driving forces behind the film, which encourages us to reconsider whether our past actions define us. At the same time, it shows us how we alter our perception of others the more we get to know them, appointing ourselves as moral judges despite being no different ourselves. Through this, it invites us to acknowledge our mistakes and understand that the way we respond to them is what will ultimately determine who we become. On top of all this, Borgli adds a clear layer of criticism aimed at the American system and contemporary society. The usual subject matter, perhaps, but it works.

As for the cast, I can only say that we are very fortunate. We have had the privilege of living in a generation where Zendaya and Robert Pattinson appear in several projects every year. Watching them is both a luxury and a privilege. In my opinion, they both belong among the most talented performers of our decade and, above all, among those who make the greatest impact through their roles. We should also be grateful for their excellent agents. I greatly enjoyed seeing Alana Haim, PTA's discovery, outside one of his films, and she is excellent here. A small role is played by Hailey Benton Gates, who always makes an impression whenever she appears, as she already demonstrated in "The Moment" and "Uncut Gems".

I had a great experience watching "The Drama". At one point I thought it might begin to lose momentum, but the exact opposite happened: the further it progresses, the more curious ideas it explores. At the same time, it frustrates you, shakes you and moves you with a powerful message and, above all, with its beautiful sense of "hopecore", the kind that never feels forced. With that combination of beauty and harshness, this portrayal of reality feels remarkably accurate, because perfect stories exist not when everything is beautiful, but when everything is authentic and true to what you genuinely feel.

Francisco La Rubia

The Molotovs

Deleste Festival (Valencia) 2026

There was a moment early in The Molotovs' set at Deleste Festival 2026 when it became obvious that Valencia was witnessing a band on the brink of something much bigger. The sun was still hanging over the Jardins de Vivers, the crowd still drifting in from beers and food stalls, and yet within minutes the young British trio had transformed the festival into a full-blown mod-punk riot. For a band whose average age barely scratches the mid-twenties, The Molotovs already perform with the confidence of seasoned veterans. Sharp suits. Razor-wire riffs. Basslines that bounce like they've been stolen directly from a 1979 London club. At Deleste, they didn't simply play songs — they attacked them. And the audience loved every second.

The Molotovs arrived in Valencia carrying a growing reputation as one of the UK's most explosive young live acts. Still in their teens when they first started making noise on the British underground scene, the band quickly built momentum through relentless touring, sweaty club gigs and old-school street-level hustle. Their roots in busking and DIY touring are still visible in the way they command a crowd: instinctive, fearless and constantly feeding off audience energy.

What makes The Molotovs fascinating is how unapologetically British they sound. Their DNA is pure mod revival chaos — The Jam, Buzzcocks, The Undertones, The Specials and early punk running through every chord change. Matt and Issey Cartlidge grew up immersed in their parents' record collections, absorbing the energy and attitude of late-70s Britain before reshaping it for a new generation. And yes, the comparisons to The Jam are unavoidable.

At Deleste, the ghost of Paul Weller was everywhere — in the clipped guitar stabs, the hyperactive bass playing, the vocal sneer and the sheer velocity of the set. Some critics see that as imitation. Others see it as revivalism done properly. Even online discussions about the band remain split between accusations of "pastiche" and admiration for how thrillingly they recreate that era's energy. Live, though, those debates become irrelevant. Because The Molotovs understand something many modern guitar bands have forgotten: rock'n'roll is supposed to feel dangerous, immediate and slightly out of control.

From the second they launched into the opening track, Deleste's atmosphere shifted. The festival crowd — which throughout the weekend moved between electronic elegance, post-punk moodiness and psychedelic experimentation — suddenly found itself caught inside a furious blast of two-minute anthems and mod-punk adrenaline. The guitars came fast and sharp, never wasting a note. The rhythm section hit with relentless urgency. Every chorus sounded designed to be screamed back from the front row of a tiny Camden pub at 1am. Even under the open Valencian sky, The Molotovs somehow made the performance feel claustrophobic in the best possible way — sweaty, chaotic and packed with tension.

What impressed most was their stagecraft. Despite their youth, the band already possesses that rare ability to make a festival crowd feel like part of the show rather than passive spectators. They move with total conviction, constantly pushing forward, never letting the energy dip for even a second. And Deleste was the perfect setting for them. Unlike giant corporate festivals where emerging bands can disappear into oversized stages and distracted audiences, Deleste's boutique format gives acts space to connect properly. The palm-lined setting of the Jardins de Vivers creates intimacy even with thousands in attendance, and The Molotovs used that intimacy brilliantly.

You could feel new fans being created in real time. One of the most refreshing things about The Molotovs is their total rejection of irony. So much modern indie rock arrives wrapped in self-awareness and emotional detachment. The Molotovs don't do detachment. They play like they genuinely believe guitar music can still change lives, start fights and soundtrack youth culture again. That sincerity matters. Especially in 2026, when many young rock bands feel trapped between algorithm-friendly indie pop and nostalgic cosplay, The Molotovs charge straight through with sweat, speed and conviction. Their set at Deleste wasn't polished perfection — and that was exactly why it worked. It felt raw. Human. Alive.

The crowd response said everything. By the final songs, the front rows were bouncing wildly, beer flying everywhere, heads nodding in unison to riffs that sounded like they'd been teleported directly from the height of Britain's punk and mod explosion. And perhaps that's why The Molotovs are connecting so powerfully right now. They aren't reinventing the wheel. They're reigniting a feeling. A feeling that music should be loud enough to shake your chest. Fast enough to make you move. And real enough to leave bruises. At Deleste Festival 2026, The Molotovs delivered exactly that. Not just one of the weekend's biggest surprises — but one of its most exhilarating performances.

Text and photos by Rhyan Paul

Primal Scream

Deleste Festival (Valencia) 2026

Under the palm trees of the Jardins de Vivers, with the Valencia heat still hanging in the air and plastic cups flying skyward, Deleste Festival 2026 delivered one of those moments that felt bigger than a festival set. When Primal Scream walked onstage on Saturday evening, it wasn't nostalgia. It was confrontation, celebration, chaos and communion rolled into ninety glorious minutes of noise, politics, swagger and psychedelic groove.

Frontman Bobby Gillespie still cuts a magnetic figure. Dressed like a revolutionary rock'n'roll preacher, Gillespie stalked the stage with the same cool menace that has defined Primal Scream since the early '80s. Age has done nothing to soften the band's edge. If anything, Deleste proved that Primal Scream remain one of the few legacy acts capable of sounding genuinely dangerous in 2026.

The Glasgow band's story is one of the great shape-shifting journeys in British music. Formed in 1982 after Gillespie's stint drumming for The Jesus and Mary Chain, Primal Scream began life as jangly indie outsiders inspired by The Byrds before detonating into something altogether more radical. Then came Screamadelica in 1991 — the album that changed everything. Produced alongside sonic visionaries like Andrew Weatherall and The Orb, the record fused rave culture, dub, gospel, psychedelia and rock'n'roll into one euphoric masterpiece.
More than three decades later, those songs still feel untouchable live.

The moment the opening groove of "Movin' On Up" hit Vivers, Deleste exploded. Arms raised, voices screamed back every lyric, and suddenly the festival transformed into a giant outdoor acid-house revival. "Loaded" arrived like a sun-drenched hallucination, all swagger and groove, while "Come Together" turned the gardens into a communal rave cathedral. But Primal Scream have never been a greatest hits jukebox. What makes them vital is their refusal to stand still. Throughout the '90s and 2000s they mutated constantly — from the Stonesy sleaze of Give Out But Don't Give Up to the noir-dub atmosphere of Vanishing Point and the furious electronic aggression of XTRMNTR.
That darker side erupted magnificently at Deleste.

"Swastika Eyes" sounded utterly feral, a brutal collision of industrial beats and political fury. Gillespie, never shy about his activism, used the moment to make a visible statement of solidarity with Palestine, continuing the band's long tradition of mixing radical politics with rock'n'roll theatre. The genius of Primal Scream has always been contradiction. They are glamorous but confrontational. Hedonistic yet deeply political. Capable of making music that feels both euphoric and apocalyptic at exactly the same time. At Deleste, that tension made every song feel alive.

The band themselves were razor sharp. The guitars came in waves — part Detroit garage rock, part acid-house meltdown — while the rhythm section locked into hypnotic grooves that shook the Vivers ground. Tracks like "Jailbird," "Country Girl" and "Rocks" landed with filthy swagger, sounding less like heritage rock songs and more like bar-fight anthems blasted from a warehouse sound system.
What made the performance special was how naturally it fitted the Deleste atmosphere. Unlike sprawling mega-festivals built on chaos and exhaustion, Deleste thrives on curation and connection. One stage. No clashes. Palm trees swaying above crowds genuinely locked into the music. Primal Scream understood the assignment perfectly.

This wasn't a polished legacy set from musicians cashing in on past glories. It was loud, messy, emotional and thrillingly human. Even now, after more than forty years of constant reinvention, they still play like a band with something to prove. And maybe that's why Primal Scream continue to matter while so many of their contemporaries fade into nostalgia circuits. Their catalogue refuses to age because it never sits still. One album sounds like gospel ecstasy, the next like a riot unfolding in a nightclub basement. Even recent fan discussions online still passionately debate whether Screamadelica, Vanishing Point or XTRMNTR is their true masterpiece — proof of how deep and influential the band's catalogue remains.

As the final feedback rang out across Valencia's night sky, Deleste had its defining image of 2026: Bobby Gillespie standing centre stage, arms outstretched, grinning at a crowd utterly lost in the noise. Some bands play festivals. Primal Scream consume them.

Text and photos by Rhyan Paul

Tío Pepe Festival 2026

Where music finds an exceptional setting

Every summer, the Tío Pepe Festival confirms why it has become one of the great cultural highlights of Andalusia's summer calendar. Within the incomparable setting of the González Byass wineries, music and entertainment find a stage where historical heritage, winemaking tradition and gastronomic excellence coexist naturally. Anyone who long ago lost count of the concerts they have attended can confidently say that there are few events as special as the Tío Pepe Festival. Having seen giants such as Ben Harper or, above all, Simple Minds, who filled stadiums decades ago (I need only point to the recording of the legendary "Live in the City of Light" from 1986), in such an idyllic setting is something that cannot be said every day.

This year's edition, as could hardly be otherwise, once again presents a programme as diverse as it is appealing. True legends such as Deep Purple will take to its stages, and there is little need to stress the importance of such a legendary band. Joining them will be artists who form part of the musical memory of several generations, including The Corrs, Loquillo, Luz Casal, M-Clan, La Guardia and Javier Ojeda. The line-up is completed by one of the finest tribute acts on the international scene, God Save the Queen, capable of recreating the world of Queen with remarkable fidelity, together with the intelligent and approachable humour of Manu Sánchez, possibly one of the sharpest and most insightful communicators in our country (the term "comedian" hardly does him justice).

Flamenco, an inseparable part of Jerez's heritage, also continues to occupy a privileged place within the festival. The presence of José Mercé, one of the greatest voices this land has ever produced and an indispensable figure in flamenco singing, represents that connection between the identity of Jerez and an event that has successfully projected itself internationally without losing its roots.

As I said at the beginning, those of us who have had the opportunity to attend previous editions know that the Tío Pepe Festival possesses an atmosphere that is difficult to find at any other venue. Memorable performances by Ben Harper, Santana, Simple Minds, The Beach Boys and Coque Malla remain etched in the memory, nights that demonstrated the organisers' ability to give every concert a unique and special dimension. The closeness of the artists, the charm of the courtyards, the nighttime lighting and the aroma of the wine casks create a distinctive atmosphere that turns every performance into an unforgettable memory. In addition, the festival goes far beyond music thanks to its gastronomic offering, with a carefully selected range of proposals to accompany every evening, always paired with the prestigious wines of González Byass.

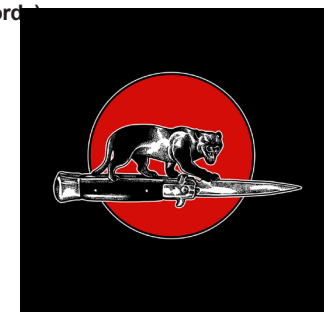
The Tío Pepe Festival has succeeded in establishing a festival model with a level of quality that is difficult to match. Year after year, it proves that Jerez is not only a land of wine and flamenco, but also a meeting point for great national and international artists. A festival that continues to write, summer after summer, some of the brightest pages in the cultural calendar.

Javistone

https://www.veraneaenlabodega.com/

NEW RELEASES

"Cat Fight", Jim Jones All Stars (Silver Arrow Records)



For years now, the name Jim Jones has been a safe bet for anyone who loves the roots of rock. Whatever project he is involved in, you know he is never going to disappoint. With his latest outfit, the All Stars, and thanks to the addition of an outstanding horn section, he has spent some time experimenting and diving into rhythms much closer to rhythm & blues and soul, while never abandoning his garage rock roots or that cheeky, almost punk attitude that has defined his career from the very beginning, always following in the footsteps of greats like The Stooges and Little Richard. That is exactly what you get on his latest release, Cat Fight, a powerful blend built around a collection of razor-sharp riffs, pounding piano, and that horn section which, from the opening track "Make It Rain" right through to the album's closing song "Let U Go", makes it clear that this record is going to be a celebration of Rock 'n' Roll. It is an album overflowing with attitude that, rather than chasing modern trends, a mistake many artists make, takes us back sixty years to a time when music still had colour. That self-imposed mission is reinforced on other tracks such as "Exiled", "I'm On Fire", and "Goin' Higher", where it becomes obvious that the priority here is to recover the soul of the music and, why not, get it dancing again, all without ever losing the signature style we have come to love.

The album also reveals a more subtle side through slower-paced songs like "Gashman" and the experimental "Bekolah", because a wise man called Jim once said that you cannot spend all day shouting, sometimes you simply feel like exploring different things. Although the sound is perhaps slightly less raw than on the previous record, the album is produced by Chris Robinson, singer of The Black Crowes, who also contributes backing vocals. Robinson had previously worked with Jim Jones during his time with Thee Hypnotics, producing the band's final album, The Very Crystal Speed Machine, in 1994. The record also features contributions from friends such as Chuck Prophet, who adds some fine guitar work, and the wonderful Motown vocalist and songwriter Gloria Jones, well known on the British soul scene of the 1960s and 1970s, and the first artist to record the now legendary 1964 hit "Tainted Love".

Ultimately, this album is not trying to reinvent Rock 'n' Roll. Instead, it reminds us what Rock 'n' Roll should sound like when it is made with genuine soul. If there is one thing that makes Jim Jones unique, it is that he records the music he himself would want to hear, then simply waits to see whether the audience feels the same. It does not get any more straightforward than that.

Vanesa González

Santi Vega: "Un Instante Infinito (Piano Solo)" (Ritual Groove / Karonte)

For many years now, Karonte has been delivering a large portion of the finest jazz being made in this country. Both in the realm of more traditional jazz and in the most advanced and adventurous sounds. Santi Vega is regarded as one of our finest pianists and has now been at it for more than thirty years. He has composed numerous highly recommendable film soundtracks and has won prestigious awards such as the Second National Contemporary Jazz Award for Large Orchestra for his work "Surcos". Back in 1995, he released the moving and striking "Piano Solo", a concept that he now expands upon with "Un Instante Infinito". More than 78 minutes of original compositions, with the sole exception of the beautiful "Ritual Prayer" by his admired Keith Jarrett, one of his main influences. Once again, this is an album featuring nothing but his piano and one that could easily have been released on the prestigious ECM label. In addition to ECM and Jarrett, we find other interesting points of reference such as Aaron Parks, Frederic Mompou, Debussy, Brad Mehldau and even Chopin in those moments closest to classical music. This latter influence can be heard particularly clearly in "Preludios". Apart from the closing track, "Bebé", all the pieces exceed six minutes in length, while the beautiful "Habana Vieja", with its unmistakable Cuban accents, runs for more than ten. Total beauty and tranquillity from the opening notes of "Madre". Jazz with a capital J for piano lovers!

Txema Mañeru

"Cabinet of Curiosities", Tori Sparks

Following the success of "Roots Music Revival", which marked Tori Sparks' return to her roots, the singer arrived in 2026 with a new experimental work presented across several volumes: "Cabinet of Curiosities". A project very different

from anything we had previously known from the artist and one she has divided into five volumes, or mini-EPs, each containing four songs. The result? A journey through nu-jazz, blues, trip-hop, rock and electronic music. According to Sparks, the album's title was inspired by the collections of natural specimens that were so popular in Renaissance Europe and which bore the same name, something that perfectly reflects the stylistic variety found across each of the volumes we have heard so far. Throughout the first two volumes, we encounter a collection of songs exploring both electric and acoustic blues, while also evoking old Memphis through gospel-style choirs and lyrics that display remarkable sensitivity towards contemporary social and political issues, with the collaboration of the Tennessee Mass Choir. The third volume, which appears set to continue the versatility that the Chicago native has been steadily demonstrating, arrives on 12 June and will be the last instalment until after the summer, when she will delight us with the final two chapters of this ambitious project.

Ada Salas

The While: "The While" (Rock Indiana)

The While is the project formed by members of The Genuine Fakes, a fabulous Swedish band devoted to bright and vibrant power pop, with several highly recommended albums released through Rock Indiana. They have also long enjoyed the blessing of a true legend in this style of music, Ken Stringfellow (The Posies, R.E.M.). Alongside them is Fredrik Norberg, vocalist and guitarist of Popsicle, an even more veteran band and one clearly well versed in the genre. The album features ten original songs and gets off to a wonderful start with "Cherries" and its excellent melodic sensibility. It reaches a peak at the end of side A with the seven-minute "Different Light", a track that truly lives up to its title by being both different and utterly captivating. A melodic slow-burner with a genuinely angelic chorus that brings you closer to the positive light conveyed by their rich music. "Crispy Blue" contains some of the album's finest and most electric guitar leads. "Bitten" opens side B with those delicious bittersweet touches and its irresistible power-pop

spirit, giving it a special shine. The album also closes strongly with the waves of glorious pop that make us float and swim through the intensity of "Waves". A delightful discovery for the world of pop music!

Txema Mañeru

Chambao: "25 Aniversario" (Colores Nuevos Records / Satélite K)

This is one of those celebratory musical artefacts that speaks for itself. La Mari and her Chambao are celebrating twenty-five years together and she has decided to re-record twenty-five of her most popular songs, joined by many of the most recognisable voices in Spanish music from the last fifty years. Both the sound and presentation are first-rate, and the double-CD edition comes housed in a beautiful triple digipak accompanied by a colourful 28-page booklet filled with photographs, illustrations and comprehensive credits. Among the more veteran contributors (and, in my humble opinion, the most prestigious) shine names such as Joan Manuel Serrat, Kiko Veneno, Estrella Morente and Miguel Poveda. There are also other highly respected artists connected to flamenco, including Tomasito, Rosario La Tremendita, Manuel Carrasco, El Canijo de Jerez, Miguel Campello, Javi Medina and Diego Pozo. Nor are major mainstream stars absent, with appearances from Ricky Martin, Alejandro Sanz, Rosario Flores, Pablo Alborán, Malú, Estopa, Pau Donés, Rosana and Rozalén. The worlds of hip-hop and reggae are well represented by label mates such as Green Valley (whose new album is already available), SFDK and Kase.O. The album begins with La Mari alone on "Es Para Ti" and concludes under sunny skies alongside Green Valley on "Resiste". She's done it!

Txema Mañeru

George Kaplan And The Spies: "Wanted!" (Soulblonding)

To be honest, I had forgotten the name Gerard Molina. What I remembered somewhat better, and quite fondly, was his previous band, Cool Frog, who deserved far better luck in their day. Now, together with his brother, who was also the drummer in Cool Frog, and Joaquín Sánchez (bassist for Xavi Túrnez), both of whom also contribute excellent backing vocals, he returns with this new and appealing adventure. It is easy to be reminded both of his previous band and of the artists who inspired him to create it, including Nick Lowe, Elvis Costello, Tom Petty, The Nerves, The Jam and The Kinks. The Barcelona-based musicians continue to sing in excellent English, telling stories drawn from real life through songs as attractive as the opening track and first single, "Cockroaches", which sounds like early Jam mixed with the best of Supergrass. Other advance tracks include "Emma Fetcher", with touches of both Buzzcocks and The Undertones and superb backing vocals, and the melodic perfect storm that is the wonderful slow number "Storm Above The Road". These are songs that can evoke the finest moments of Paul Collins' Beat as well as other previously mentioned masters of 1960s pop and the most select examples of 1980s new wave. More than fifteen years ago, when reviewing Cool Frog's two excellent albums, we mentioned The Clash, The Specials, Dr. Feelgood and bands closer to their own environment such as Top Models, Brighton 64 and Tokyo Sex Destruction. All of those fine influences remain very much alive, and this "Wanted!" is absolutely worth seeking out and listening to.

Txema Mañeru

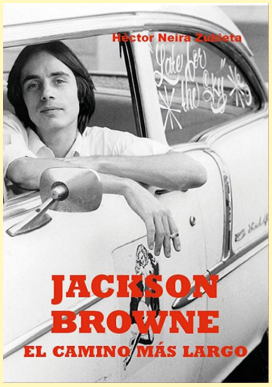
Lagunak Sessions: "Catalunya Harmonica Summit" (Gaztelupeko Hotsak)

For more than two decades and across more than 200 albums, Gaztelupeko Hotsak has been showcasing the very best blues produced during all that time. And not just in the Basque Country! They have brought us much of the finest blues being made throughout Spain, as well as some notable and distinguished international references. Just listen, for example, to the debut of The Donkey Riders featuring Iker Piris (The Románticos, The Wilsons Organ Trio), Jon Aira (Mojo Hand, The Fake Cousins) and Andy Martin (Buddy Miles). Lovers of traditional blues and, above all, harmonica blues will be thrilled by this "Catalunya Harmonica Summit". Leading the project is Javier Laguna, a dedicated scholar and passionate enthusiast of the blues, and especially of the harmonica. Alongside him are Marta Suñe (Sweet Martha & The Blues Shakers), David Sánchez (The Low Down Groovers), M A Lonesome, Víctor Puertas and guitarist and singer Johnny Big Stone, among others. Handling the production, and responsible for the majority of the compositions, is Greg Izor. One example is "Le Rêve Bretagne", a superb relaxed instrumental. "Lonesome For A Dime", by Buster Benton, also begins as a slow soul number, featuring the excellent voice of Johnny Big Stone, before evolving into a fine Texas shuffle with Javier and Marta on harmonicas. Louisiana swamp blues arrives in the tremendous "Invisible" by the great Johnny Sansone, featuring Víctor Puertas (The Suitcase Brothers) on harmonica and vocals. Other strong and festive covers include "Linda Lu" (Ray Sharpe) and "Angeline" (Gary Primich). Excellent results from a collection of blues harmonica players, with original choices of material, although the spirit of Jimmy Reed drifts through many of the album's twelve tracks!

Txema Mañeru

BOOKS

Héctor Neira Zubieta: "Jackson Browne. El Camino Más Largo" (Lenoir Ediciones)

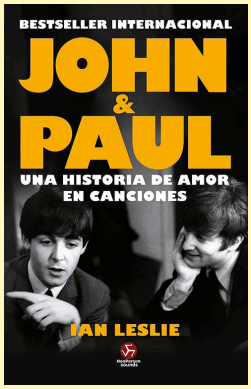


A book about the fascinating story of the "German" Jackson Browne, written in Spanish, was long overdue! Five years ago, he surprised us with an outstanding and unexpected recording comeback in the shape of "Downhill From Everywhere". In this literary and musical follow-up, Héctor Neira revisits the fifty-five years of Browne's musical journey. A story that began with the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band. Four years earlier, the Bilbao-born author had published the highly recommended volume "Simple Minds: Viajes, Sueños Dorados y Canciones de Amor", also through Lenoir Ediciones. Browne worked alongside other great artists such as Nico and Tim Buckley. He has always been a gifted songwriter too, with compositions later popularised by The Byrds, Linda Ronstadt, Tom Rush and the famous "Take It Easy", which the Eagles turned into a classic. Naturally, these 220 lively and engaging pages devote plenty of space to key albums in his career such as "The Pretender" and "Running On Empty". A central figure in Californian soft rock, Browne also spent long periods in Barcelona and developed friendships there that allowed him to incorporate other sounds into his records over the years. At just sixteen, he wrote a beautiful song such as "These Days". Yet in the new millennium he has continued to produce albums of the calibre of "Naked Ride Home" and the already mentioned "Downhill From Everywhere".

The book opens with an excellent foreword by expert Julio Ruiz. Following a strong introductory chapter on Jackson as both artist and individual, entitled "That Boy Next Door", comes the central body of the work, analysing his albums one by one in chronological order. Each chapter includes the corresponding album cover reproduced in full colour. There are also eight pages of glossy paper featuring high-quality colour photographs. Particularly noteworthy is the chapter "Fifteen Songs Across Fifteen Albums", ideal for examining the quality and depth of Browne's lyrics. Added to this is an engaging interview with devoted fan Álvaro Urquijo, current leader of Los Secretos. The icing on the cake is a chapter entitled "20 Curiosities About Jackson Browne", which delivers exactly what its title promises. It is only fair, and entirely deserved, that he has spent more than two decades in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame!

Txema Mañeru

Ian Leslie: "John & Paul. Una Historia de Amor en Canciones" (NeoPerson Sounds / Alfaomega)



The truth is that it was much more a love story than a story of hatred, despite what many critics have insisted on emphasising over the years. There was not even that much musical distance between the two. That becomes abundantly clear throughout these fascinating 456 pages packed with anecdotes and revelations. What we have here is a revealing look at the artistic relationship that changed the musical and cultural history of the world. A relationship that lasted for twenty-three years of their lives, even though they spent only six of those years as a band. Ian Leslie's authorship is crucial to the quality and interest of the book. He has written numerous books about music in which psychological analysis and human behaviour take centre stage. As a result, we revisit their lives from a different and far more compelling perspective.

Here we find the story of two young men who fused their souls and multiplied their talents in order to create one of the greatest bodies of musical work of all time. At the same time, it is a love story, filled with nostalgia, laughter, pain and joy. The Beatles shook the world during the 1960s and, to this day, new generations continue to fall in love with both their songs and their story. Their bond was tender and turbulent at the same time, deeply infused with nostalgia. In "John & Paul", Leslie follows the songs they wrote and traces the shared journey of these fascinating men before, during and after The Beatles. The result is a heartfelt biography that differs from the usual approach. It is hardly surprising that the book has become a bestseller. The eight pages of photographs are also a welcome addition. We are talking about an absolutely essential reference work, described by the Evening Standard as a masterpiece and already a classic. Also worth highlighting are the words of the great musician and producer T-Bone Burnett in The New York Times: "I'm sorry John isn't here to enjoy this book. I hope that if Paul reads it, he feels the appreciation, gratitude and intelligence it contains." And that is not a remark from just anybody! The journey begins with "Come Go With Me" and concludes with "Here Today".

Txema Mañeru

Tomás Crespo / Xavier González: "Foo Fighters. El Poder de Dave Grohl" (Ma Non Troppo / Redbook Ediciones)

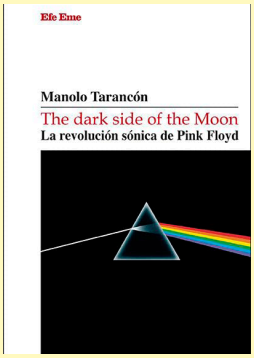
Dave Grohl is one of those people who is hard not to like, even if you are not particularly fond of either Foo Fighters or Nirvana. Right from the start, I love his modesty and lack of pretension. He demonstrates it in the opening dedication of this book: "If I'd imagined we would last more than a month and a half, I would have chosen a different name." Yes, he has always had a sharp and refined sense of humour as well. I am more of a Nirvana fan than a fan of his current band, but I recognise that Foo Fighters are one of the biggest bands on the planet of the last forty years. Furthermore, everything they have overcome and the hardships life has thrown at them make their story all the more admirable. Across 224 pages filled with illustrations and photographs, the book traces their entire career, from their beginnings after the end of Nirvana to becoming a worldwide phenomenon and one of the greatest stadium bands in history.

The statement printed in capital letters on the back cover says it perfectly: "From the ashes of Nirvana to the roar of Foo Fighters: the story of how rock rebuilds itself... and endures." And endure they certainly do! With a brand-new album freshly released, they continue to demonstrate that they remain in top form. Grohl moved from behind the drum kit to the front of the stage, becoming the band's principal songwriter, singer and guitarist. The book examines all the key moments of their career and discusses at length their most emblematic albums, the evolution of their sound and the cultural impact of the band. Tomás Crespo and Xavier González (who is not even a Nirvana fan) construct a close and well-documented portrait of the band's spirit. There are also two strong introductory forewords by Joan S. Luna (Mondo Sonoro) and Jordi Meya (RockZone). Naturally, the book includes numerous QR codes that provide access to images and music from the band, as well as from major artists connected to them throughout their career. Incidentally, there is an extensive chapter devoted to Nirvana and, within its closing pages, deserved praise is also paid to our beloved Foo Fighters. There have been many books about Nirvana and Kurt Cobain, but something dedicated exclusively to "The Power of Dave Grohl" was absolutely necessary!

Txema Mañeru

Manolo Tarancón: "The Dark Side Of The Moon. La Revolución Sónica de Pink Floyd" (Efe Eme)

Manolo Tarancón continues to demonstrate that, in addition to being a great musician, he is also an excellent music writer. You can listen to his own albums such as "Imperfectos" and "Historias Mínimas", as well as read his previous book for Efe Eme, "Conversaciones Con Xoel López". You can also find his writing in most recent issues of the highly recommended quarterly publication



"Cuadernos Efe Eme". The "Colección Elepé" reaches its twentieth volume with a historic band and album, following recent instalments devoted to "London Calling" (The Clash), "From Elvis To Memphis" (Elvis Presley), "Quadrophenia" (The Who) and "Rumours" (Fleetwood Mac). "The Dark Side Of The Moon", together with its iconic cover artwork, more than deserved its place in this select club, even if I personally prefer Pink Floyd's "Wish You Were Here".

Across these 200 pages, you will immerse yourself in the story of this landmark album, which has sold more than 45 million copies. Its "Brief Introduction" is not particularly brief and already establishes the key themes surrounding the band, the album, its history and its enduring significance. Tarancón sees the genesis of the record in its predecessor, "Meddle", and particularly in its legendary extended composition "Echoes". Other chapters emphasise the importance of the recording studio during the making of the album, as well as the contributions of sound engineer Alan Parsons, vocalist Clare Torry and the beautiful saxophone work of Dick Parry. Another section highlights the creativity of the lyrics, exploring their themes in considerable depth. These themes include time, money, politics, death and madness, even touching upon Syd Barrett's legendary visit to the studio. Tarancón also offers a strong personal interpretation of the album and is commendably bold in analysing the influences behind its creation, including Bob Dylan and, above all, The Beatles.

The book also examines the visual importance of the album and the light-show experience that characterised Pink Floyd's concerts. The quality and quantity of the photographs are excellent. Tarancón discusses the legendary Pompeii performance, reviews the critical reception of the album and explores the most significant and comprehensive expanded reissues alongside the original release. Nor does he neglect what came afterwards, covering the already mentioned and celebrated "Wish You Were Here" as well as the equally historic double album "The Wall". This is therefore a complete immersion into a monumental work that marked a turning point not only in Pink Floyd's own career but in the history of rock music as a whole. At last, The Dark Side of the Moon within our reach!

Txema Mañeru

Guillermo Casanova

Guillermo Casanova belongs to that lineage of musicians who understand the song as a place where anger, struggle, memory and dignity can still coexist. After years of urgent electricity in key bands from Spain's underground scene, he has now found in folk, and in narratives of the open road or urban suffocation, a different way (perhaps a more direct one) of continuing to tell and sing about the same struggle.

You come from very physical and electric bands such as El Gobierno, Los Chicos and, to a lesser extent in terms of electrified sound, Los William Folckners. What led you to start writing songs on your own from a more stripped-back and narrative perspective?

Actually, I've always started from that place, because I usually begin songs at home, alone, searching for riffs. It started out as a way of passing the time, or procrastinating on household chores and academic responsibilities… and it has ended up becoming a somewhat more systematised process in which, whenever I pick up the guitar, instead of practising scales or technical exercises, what I do is compose riffs, link them together, create structures and search for songs. So everything I've ever written for any band began at home and unplugged. In reality, "Guille Casanova" as a project consists of presenting that process which takes place in my room in a more direct way.

Could it be that your current songs contain echoes of Bob Dylan, Woody Guthrie or Billy Bragg? What did you find in them that you did not find in classic band-oriented rock?

Of course! All three artists have influenced me, although it's true that my interest in acoustic music comes much more from folk blues, Delta blues, ragtime, and people like Mississippi John Hurt, Skip James, Elizabeth Cotten, Blind Willie McTell, Son House, Big Bill Broonzy, Mississippi Fred McDowell, Bukka White or Lead Belly, who travelled with Woody Guthrie. I first came into contact with that kind of blues during my teenage years through Led Zeppelin III, which remains my favourite album by the English band. Of the three names you mention, I think Dylan is the most important influence: he opened my eyes to Ireland, to people like The Dubliners and The Clancy Brothers, and also introduced me to American songwriting, country music or whatever you want to call it. I'd say Steve Earle, who is also a leftie, influences me much more than Billy Bragg. I like Bragg, but I need to listen to him more; once I discovered the American source, I paid less attention to the British artists. My reference point as a communist troubadour is, and always will be, Víctor Jara (although I'm also very fond of Atahualpa Yupanqui and Chicho Sánchez Ferlosio). But without question, the strongest "white" influence would probably be Townes Van Zandt. And to mention more recent artists, Colter Wall, Sierra Ferrell and especially Elliott Smith and Jesse Welles.

Do you think a song can still be a real political or emotional weapon in 2026, or does contemporary noise consume everything too quickly?

I think a song by itself is not particularly useful beyond serving as a release valve for the person who writes it and, with some luck, for the person who listens to it. I think the notion that aesthetics are a vehicle for challenging power and therefore transforming reality is a self-indulgent liberal lie. Easy cosmetic cover for the misguided idea that you emancipate yourself through consumption, something that is comically false, and it's tragic to find adults who still swallow it. I'm not denying that enjoying art helps us exercise and expand a freedom that we do not find under the weight of obligations, and that it allows us to triangulate the world, deepen our understanding of it and reflect on our place within it. Art, making art, is extremely

important because it teaches us how to fail and reminds us that we can set our own rules. But we need to be careful here because I'm talking about the sphere of production, whereas when we talk about a song challenging paradigms, we are often simply describing, in a rather uncritical way, our participation in the sphere of consumption. To talk about emancipation, we need to talk about forms of socialisation that differ from the market structures that drive all the social relationships we know. It's normal that we struggle to think beyond them, but we need to think about the kinds of relationships we build around popular art. And I think it is deeply misleading to place the emphasis on the work itself, on the product, on aesthetics, on the cool things we consume and the artists who create them. That is the wrong approach. Culturally speaking, what Bukaneros (despite all the criticisms that can be levelled at an ultras group) or Orgullo Vallekano do in my neighbourhood is far more uncomfortable for those in power than all the clever punk parties and all the fanzine fairs in Madrid put together. It's worth keeping that in mind, and I say that as one of those clever people who makes fanzines.

If we understand art as a pivot around which social relationships are generated, and stop fetishising the product or the work itself in order to focus on the kinds of relationships created around them, we will clearly see that "bohemian" or underground scenes unconsciously reproduce bourgeois culture: cultural devices are used as elements of distinction and status; we find social hierarchies driven by models that are indistinguishable from those of the marketplace; income level and postcode still largely determine a band's ability to position itself and endure; what is considered "cool" functions as a system of social discipline through a doctrinal conception of taste that is, once again, heavily determined by social class; competitive mindsets and entrepreneurial skills prevail; aesthetics are fetishised as a distinguishing factor, expressed both through clothing and collectible objects (records, books, comics), which serve to perform a kind of social or class transcendence... and all this despite the fact that the songs themselves may speak about revolution, class struggle, gender issues, anti-racism and so on! In the end, however, it is merely a coating, a shell applied to a leisure activity that remains strongly linked to class and in which the structures and social norms of the petty bourgeoisie are reproduced on a smaller scale. By this I do not mean that all of this should be abandoned, quite the opposite: we have no choice but to operate through the mechanisms we know. But we should avoid getting carried away and remain aware of reality, rather than reproducing social dynamics uncritically if we genuinely seek political meaning. The theatricalisation of dissent is a very effective form of controlled dissent. "Do it yourself", and so it was; removing ourselves from the equation is something we do ourselves. I think that, beyond ensuring spaces are safe, which is a priority, part of the ideological drama that unfolds within these scenes is connected to the fact that people are no longer politically active in real organisations, places where collective construction takes place, because those places are often boring, contradictory and require talking to people who listen to Sabina and do not look particularly cool... so instead they spend that energy ideologically disciplining the places where they go to get drunk: a constant stream of controversies and debates that do not seem particularly productive in terms of cultural struggle and end up leaving everyone exhausted.

And the songs?
The songs matter very little. They are the centre of my hobby. In rock and roll specifically, I have learned that what really matters is how the figure looks, and if they happen to fit into a size 38, then all the better. That is why I understand that a work of art by itself accomplishes very little. I believe that, without independent structures, shared experiences of struggle and collective projects that go beyond leisure, protest songs remain little more than a gesture towards the sun. At best, they become markers of identity. The illusion of their transformative power depends heavily on context and on the people who make them their own within a horizon of aspirations that uses aesthetics but ultimately transcends them. I will always keep writing them because they live inside me, but I do not fool myself into believing they change the world. I write them because I cannot help it.

Your lyrics seem very closely connected to the street, to the real world, to specific characters. Do you write from observation or from personal experience?
Mostly, I write about myself, although I occasionally draw inspiration from what I see around me. In a context where the arts in general are being devalued, the only way I can try to write songs that matter, at least to me, is by telling the truth. Am I intense? Absolutely. I couldn't care less about "cringe". I know that if I genuinely believe what I'm singing, I'm more likely to sing it well, and doing that part properly still matters to me. There is no "ironic distance" in what I do, nor is there some joke that only makes sense if you are deeply embedded in a particular scene and understand all the references. There is simply a bloke with a guitar, playing and singing as well as he can.

In "High Fidelity", the character Rob Gordon, played by John Cusack, says: "What came first, the music or the misery? Did I listen to pop music because I was miserable, or was I miserable because I listened to pop music?" Knowing about your political activism, what came first for you, music or politics?
That's a good question… My instinct is to say that what came first was learning that the world is unjust and that injustice must be challenged. And of course, as a middle-class child and teenager in the 1990s, within that "end of history" context, the idea I learned, which I now understand was mistaken, was that the ultimate form of rebellion was being an underground rocker: a kind of aesthetic, domesticated "Zero Zero disobedience", expressed through cultural consumption and designed to catch the eye... and the truth is, I wasn't nearly as clever as I thought I was. That's why bands like MC5 and Minutemen appealed to me so much, because they seemed to combine those two worlds. This desire to bring the two together comes from the rock culture that existed in Spain at the time, heavily influenced by music from the Basque Country, where it was fairly common for bands to be politically engaged.

How does punk change for you when you pick up an acoustic guitar?
I'm not sure it changes very much, because for me punk is only one element of what I do, and not even the main one. Although in all my projects I play fast, make energetic, political and visceral music, I do not consider myself a punk. I consider myself a Marxist who plays rock and roll. I am gradually losing respect for labels, and especially for that one. Punk and post-punk, which have produced such wonderful and powerful things and continue to attract young people to music from the margins, are in 2026 full of orthodox defenders of mediocrity. Just like any other niche.

There are musicians who, out of shyness, need to hide behind the volume of a band. Does performing solo force you to be more methodical, more honest?
It places me in a much more vulnerable position, where the fear of failure grips my chest far more tightly than it does when I'm playing with a band. You always want to put on the best show possible, and here you have to do it alone. From the outside, it probably doesn't show, but inside there's a storm of self-imposed pressure. Sometimes I catch myself apologising between songs when there's no need to. "You need to sell yourself better", a friend told me the other day. I don't know, yes and no. If my self-esteem were completely in order, maybe I would never have picked up a guitar in the first place to prove my worth.

What do you make of a music scene that is increasingly obsessed with algorithms, metrics and digital presence?
I think these so-called "scenes" have always been something of a mirage, like something you think you can see or experience, but the moment you truly need it in any material, social or emotional sense, it vanishes. It disappears because it doesn't really exist. If things have always been that way, then now they are even more so. I think the era of hyper-communication serves to further stratify and segment cultural movements, creating sealed bubbles and vacuum chambers. We are so mediocre that we sit there in our little niches, feeling superior to everyone else. What a ridiculous lie. I think the overall dynamic is one of erosion: the erosion of structures and shared spaces, including symbolic spaces. Furthermore, because of the questionable "inevitability" of big data in all economic relationships, a disconnect has emerged between talent and the music business. The exhausting multi-platform existence of projects now performs, and performs poorly, the work that A&R departments once did, meaning that follower counts and monthly listener figures have replaced artistic judgement in publishing and booking decisions. Venues of all sizes are, ultimately, developable land, so they reproduce the same abusive and speculative practices as the property market that is strangling our incomes. In any case, none of this really affects any of my projects, since they all exist quite comfortably on the very fringes of the fringes.

What have you lost and what have you gained over the years within underground music?
I've lost money and innocence. I've gained family, valuable and genuine relationships, and a life worth living. I've also gained wounds, unpleasant emotional tasks such as managing my supposed irrelevance or processing people's lack of interest in my art. But through all that, I've lost the fear of being who I am and of occupying the space I occupy when I play and when I sing.

How important is silence in acoustic performances?

Well, I suppose it's very important, but I'd be lying if I said it was part of a strategy. It isn't. At the moment, my acoustic live show resembles a sleeping dog running in its dreams more than anything else. For now, I'm more of a visceral bluesman. I'm proud of what I offer because it doesn't fit into any of the existing boxes, without being avant-garde or anything like that. It's simply me. I suppose that with experience I'll learn how to manage intensity and attention more effectively.

If you could sit down one night and talk about songs with Bob Dylan, what would you ask him?
I don't think I'd talk about songs. I'd like to know why he's such an arsehole to women. Life has treated him far too well for him to treat other people so badly. Who does he think he is? I don't understand how someone with his intelligence and lyrical sensitivity still hasn't realised that he isn't special, because nobody is. I'd ask him whether he lies to himself as much as he lies to everyone else. Or perhaps I'd ask him all these things, but without the moral judgement. I suppose I'd have to ask him about success. About that prize we're supposedly meant to desire, which clearly doesn't make happy any of the people who attain it, and instead seems to separate them from humanity, estrange them from their loved ones and make them suspicious of everyone around them. When Bob Dylan became famous, very few people had ever been as famous as Bob Dylan, and almost none of them came through it with all their marbles intact. Perhaps The Beatles did, because they weren't alone when they went through it all. Bob Dylan was. You can hear that loneliness in his songs. Why is there so much loneliness in that fulfilled dream of transcending one's class? What effect does gaining access to that class have on us, the class in which, simply for emotional survival, ordinary people cease to be people and instead become an inconvenience? What purpose does it serve, and whom does it serve, for our desires to be colonised in such a way that this becomes the central aspiration?

Do you still get excited about stepping onto a stage after so many projects and so many miles?
Yes, always. It still commands my respect. It still makes me nervous, and it still empties me out inside, freeing me a little from myself when it happens. I have more experience now, I know how to do the job, but it remains full of a mystique, a romanticism and a sense of vertigo that I do not want to lose, even though my rational mind advises otherwise. Most importantly, I'm still a fan. Not only of professional artists with fully developed talents, although of course I am that too. I'm a fan of my friends, people who are the same as me, even if they think differently and make different kinds of music. I can still be moved to tears watching someone who dares to confront all the fears that stop us from being creative in our lives. And I'm transported somewhere else whenever I see one or several musicians venture into that difficult territory and emerge from it successfully. It still moves me deeply, yes.

What kind of musician do you want to be right now? Someone who entertains, someone who accompanies, or someone who makes people uncomfortable?
The idea of unsettling those in power from my bedroom seems absurd to me. It simply doesn't fit reality. And being someone who unsettles the audience isn't in my DNA either. Even if I tackle controversial subjects and come down hard on certain issues, I'm not going to pretend to be some subversive figure. At the end of the day, I'm a member of the Communist Party: I'm a Boy Scout. The whole business of provoking people for the sake of provoking them has always struck me as the behaviour of simple minds and, therefore, cruel ones. I think it's necessary that someone does it, but to do it properly you have to take seriously that watchtower from which artists often look out over the world, and whenever I catch myself up there, I tend to laugh at myself for it. The great truth about artists and bohemians has been revealed to me: one thing we all have in common is that we think we're cleverer than we actually are. Just because we put together three colours or four notes, as if that were such an extraordinary achievement. I like people far too much to adopt that arrogant attitude, and that's despite knowing full well that we are all mediocre and disappointing at times. The provocateur role feels theatrical, false and dishonest to me. Entertaining people and keeping them company is fine, but it feels insufficient. I'd like to be someone who helps others endure all this nonsense a little more easily, from a place of closeness rather than superiority. Because I'm exactly the same as the people who come to see me.

With so many projects and so many different repertoires, how do you cope with having so many songs in your head and constantly switching roles?
By rehearsing. And by making mistakes from time to time. But we keep improving and we're better musicians than we were two years ago. So what I feel is more satisfaction than anything else.

Are you the kind of musician who needs to stop from time to time and reflect, or one of those who believes that if you stop, you rust?
I think it's good to stop occasionally, but the truth is that if I go more than two months without a gig, I start feeling anxious. Which isn't particularly healthy when you're an amateur. Generally speaking, being able to enjoy not being productive and doing nothing at all seems like a fairly healthy thing when viewed from the outside.

Do you sit down to write songs specifically for each band, or do you write songs first and then decide which project they belong to depending on what each one requires?
No, no, I deliberately compose for each specific band. It may not be obvious, but I use different guitar techniques for each project, each one drawing on different elements. So when I'm writing, I effectively pick up a different toolbox depending on which band the song is for.
You've played with many people over the years and you still do. What would you say to them? What message would you like to send them?
Thank you. Please forgive me if I've ever lost my way and stopped working for the song itself, but you know very well that it happens to all of us, and please, let's play together more often.

And to close: what does it mean to you today to keep making music in an almost amateur way, or simply for the love of it?
It's a hobby, but apart from my relationships and my family, it's the most important thing in my life. I understand that what I'm saying is contradictory, and emotionally it certainly is. It means that, in addition to having your heart broken in the same way any artist does through their art, you also end up feeling guilty and vain for allowing a hobby to affect you so deeply. Making art is wonderful, but it also hurts. These so-called "scenes" are full of people in costume, dogmatic people who spend their entire lives pontificating about works they would not even know how to begin creating themselves, but who would never pick up a guitar because they are afraid of that pain and would rather avoid it. That is precisely why it is also one of the most satisfying things a person can experience. When fear, embarrassment and gossip are defeated because you've shone, because you've played an incredible show and your songs work and your brothers and sisters are there with you in that bloody moment. I've experienced it as a solo performer too. It doesn't happen all the time, and that is why we never stop searching for it. Everyone should experience something like that at least once, one way or another. The important things in life are like that: they build you up and tear you down at the same time. What I'm describing is "the love of art".There is pressure to give it up. We are supposed to stop playing with toys because, at this stage of life, other things are meant to matter more, grown-up things. But that model was designed for a world in which jobs paid enough to buy a house and send two children to university (if that world ever truly existed), and where women were expected to put up with emotionally immature men who devalued them day after day because that was simply how life worked. Unfortunately (for some things) and fortunately (for others), none of that is true anymore. So the things that matter have changed.

I understand the underground as a frontier territory between people and the market. Some parts of that territory function as the market's research and development department, seeking to produce innovative proposals capable of positioning themselves, opening new niches, building new audiences and perhaps generating what will become the next trends within capital's cultural project. At the opposite end of the map are the people who make art because they have no other choice. Because it is the only thing they can do to make life remotely bearable. I belong to that group. The market often appears within us because we have internalised it. We feel like failures, unloved, irrelevant, because the ideas we carry do not belong to this world but to another one that, for lack of a better term, colonises it, exploits it and feeds upon it. So I'm not entirely sure what it means. I feel uncomfortable talking about "resistance" because it gives the impression of assigning a political weight to something that, if it possesses any political dimension at all, does so only tangentially or circumstantially. Truly political acts involve intention and a confrontation with power. Here we are talking about something more akin to eating, washing clothes and sweeping the floor. I think what it means is that the market, which presents itself as vast and infinite, is actually full of limits; it is itself a limit. And that human beings are far more than capital believes them to be, which is why its offer is not enough for us.

Thank you very much, Guille, for taking the time to speak with Rock Bottom Magazine.
Thank you so much to you for always being there, Néstor.

Achilles in Monument Valley: Greek Mythology in the Western

Oh, gods, here we are again, back to the western. The United States often presents itself as a nation without a past, a country that supposedly invented its own history by always looking forward, with a rifle over its shoulder and the horizon as its only compass. Yet no culture ever truly escapes myth. It may change the names of its heroes, replace spears with revolvers or temples with saloons, but sooner or later it ends up telling the very same stories the Greeks were already telling nearly three thousand years ago. Where Homer imagined Achilles, Odysseus or Heracles, Hollywood eventually gave rise to figures such as Ethan Edwards, Tom Dunson and Tom Doniphon: men out of the ordinary, too violent to live in peace and too necessary to disappear altogether. The scenery changed from the shores of the Aegean to Monument Valley, but the questions remained the same: who founds a community, what price civilisation demands, and why heroes cannot enjoy the world they help to build.

But before delving into the Homeric resonances of John Ford or the tragic echoes that run through the classic western, it is worth pausing over a book that seems to have been written precisely to build that bridge. Recently published by Tierra de Nadie, Desiertos, mitos y cine: Centauros del desierto y París, Texas, by Francisco José Morales Bernal, begins with a question as simple as it is fertile: what relationship can exist between Ethan Edwards' obsessive odyssey in "The Searchers" and Travis Henderson's melancholic drift in "Paris, Texas"? At first glance, the two films seem to belong to incompatible worlds: one is one of the great monuments of the classic western, while the other is a contemporary elegy directed by Wim Wenders. Yet Morales Bernal uncovers the same underlying current beneath both films: the persistence of myth within the landscape of the desert.

The idea is simple, yet remarkably powerful: the desert is not merely a place through which the characters pass, but the space where they confront what they cannot control: fate, guilt, loss, memory or even who they truly are. In that sense, Ethan and Travis, despite belonging to very different eras of cinema, share something essential. Both are men out of place, travellers crossing hostile, almost unreal landscapes, trapped between the desire to find a home and the impossibility of remaining there.

What makes Morales Bernal's approach so interesting is that he does not use myth as a mere collection of learned references, despite being more than capable of doing so. He is not looking for mechanical equivalences (this character is Achilles, that one is Odysseus), but for something deeper: the narrative and symbolic structures that survive once the gods have disappeared. The desert becomes a liminal space, a territory where identities are tested and protagonists confront who they truly are.

The choice of "The Searchers" as one of the two poles of the study is particularly revealing. For decades, critics have pointed out that Ethan Edwards possesses an almost Homeric dimension: he is a warrior out of his own time, consumed by a quest

that ultimately defines his entire existence. His long journey to rescue Debbie differs little from the exploits of the ancient heroes, subjected to endless trials and condemned to a solitude that separates them from the rest of humanity. Ford scholarship itself has described Ethan as an epic, archaic figure, a man incapable of finding a place in the world he helps preserve (we will talk another day about that same figure in “The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance”). But the book’s greatest achievement lies in placing that figure in dialogue with Travis Henderson. Because “Paris, Texas” demonstrates that myth does not disappear with modernity, it simply changes form. The warrior becomes a drifter and the epic becomes an inner quest. The hero no longer battles monsters or crosses hostile lands in search of glory, but instead tries to understand who he is and what he has lost. The journey remains the same, even if the language of cinema has changed radically.

Seen from this perspective, the classic western ceases to be a historical genre and becomes a modern mythology. And that is precisely the path worth following. Because if Desiertos, mitos y cine proves anything, it is that the great films of the American West are not simply “Indian films”; they do not merely speak about cowboys, settlers or gunmen. They speak of founding heroes, exiles, revenge, impossible returns and sacrifice. They speak, ultimately, about the very same concerns that occupied Homer, Aeschylus and Sophocles more than two thousand years ago. And about the ones that ought to concern us too, if only we would put our phones down for a while.

The desert crossed by Ethan Edwards and Travis Henderson is not so far removed from the one traversed by the ancient heroes. The names change, the weapons change and the maps change. What remains is the human need to turn experience into narrative and landscape into myth. It is from that intuition that this brief journey through the connections between Greek mythology and the great westerns of Ford, Hawks and Walsh also begins. As we have already mentioned in these pages, Jordi Balló and Xavier Pérez explained all this a thousand times better than I ever could years ago in La semilla inmortal (Anagrama, 2006): cinema never stops telling the same stories because, quite simply, we continue asking ourselves the same questions. Armour gives way to Stetson hats, the Trojan Horse becomes a stagecoach and oracles become sheriffs, yet the great conflicts remain intact. That is probably why the classic western still feels so powerful (at least to some of us). Because beneath the surface of revolvers and stampedes lies not merely a story about the conquest of the West, but something far older: the need to turn violence into legend, to create heroes capable of founding a new world and, when the time comes, condemn them to remain outside it. Ford, Hawks and Walsh never needed to quote Homer in order to film as though they were still walking through his pages.

Yet calling the western the mythology of the United States has almost become a cliché, and I do not find the idea especially interesting because of how often it has been repeated: we have all read it countless times. Even so, I take it seriously. If the western occupies the place that epic poetry once occupied in ancient Greece, then it deserves to be read using the same tools with which we read the Iliad or the Odyssey. Not because Ford, Hawks or Wellman deliberately hid classical references in their films, but because they were working with the same narrative structures: the exceptional hero, the initiatory journey, the frontier between order and chaos,

foundational violence and sacrifice as the inevitable price of every community. The Homeric hero was never an exemplary citizen, let us not fool ourselves. Achilles is hardly distinguished by moderation, but by a greatness born precisely from excess. After killing Hector, it is not enough for him simply to defeat him: he needs to humiliate him, drag his corpse around Troy and prolong the violence even after the battle has ended. His strength makes him indispensable and, at the same time, a threat to the very world he seeks to defend. That same tension runs through the great protagonists of the classic western. Tom Dunson, in “Red River”, is the man who builds a cattle empire from nothing and yet nearly destroys it because he cannot distinguish authority from tyranny. When Matt Garth (Montgomery Clift) questions his decisions, Dunson stops behaving like an adoptive father and begins obsessively pursuing him for half the film. He is not simply trying to recover the cattle; he wants to recover his authority. The offence weighs more heavily than any practical consideration.

Ethan Edwards in “The Searchers” takes that logic even further. When Ford introduces him for the first time, silhouetted against the immensity of the landscape, it is not simply a cowboy entering the frame: it is an archaic, almost mythical figure, someone who seems to have survived a previous world and no longer has a place in the new one. That is why “The Searchers” functions less as an adventure than as a tragedy. Debbie’s search is merely the surface of a much deeper conflict, Ethan’s struggle against the hatred he has nurtured for years. As with the heroes of Aeschylus and Sophocles, the true enemy lies not outside, but within the protagonist himself. Every mile he travels brings him closer to his niece, but also to the moment when he must decide whether he is capable of overcoming the obsession

that has defined his entire existence.

The other great Homeric inheritance is the journey, Horace Greeley's "Go west, young man". The Odyssey turned movement into a form of knowledge: every island, every monster and every storm forced Odysseus (Ulysses) to discover something about himself. The western takes up that tradition and transfers it to the frontier. The wagon trains of "Wagon Master" (1950), the stagecoach in "Stagecoach" (1939), or the endless journeys undertaken by Ford's riders do not move merely towards a geographical destination; the frontier always entails a moral transformation; it is not simply a landscape, but a test. This is also where the importance of Monument Valley lies. Ford never filmed those rock formations as mere natural backdrops. He turned them into an almost sacred space, where the characters appear diminished before a nature that seems older than time itself. The Greeks imagined forests, mountains and islands inhabited by monsters in order to mark the limits of the known world; Ford uses the desert with exactly the same symbolic function. What matters is not so much what is there, but what it forces those who cross it to reveal.

Raoul Walsh shares that tragic vision, although his films replace solemnity with an almost wild energy. Our friend Walsh did not simply film adventures, he himself had lived a life that seemed lifted straight from an adventure novel. Compared with Ford or Hawks, he was probably the classic director whose biography most closely resembled that of one of his own characters. Dear Rock Bottom reader, get hold of his memoirs, El cine en sus manos, and you will have a thoroughly enjoyable time. In "Pursued" (1947) and "Colorado Territory" (1949), family violence, destiny and the impossibility of escaping the past constantly remind us that tragedy never depends solely on individual decisions. The gods have disappeared, yet fate remains. The characters believe they are choosing their own path, but every step seems to bring them closer to an ending written in advance.

Ford, for his part, understood better than almost anyone that every civilisation needs heroes whom it later ends up expelling. "My Darling Clementine" (1946) and "The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance" (1962) revolve around that paradox. Law does not arise spontaneously, but thanks to men willing to exercise a violence that society will prefer to forget once peace arrives. Tom Doniphon understands that contradiction better than anyone: he knows he is building a future in which there will no longer be a place for him. The famous door closing on Ethan Edwards at the end of "The Searchers" expresses exactly the same idea with devastating simplicity. The community can now live without him; that is precisely why he must leave.

Howard Hawks introduces a decisive variation. If Ford looks towards tragedy, Hawks looks towards the epic of comradeship. In "Rio Bravo" (1959) and "El Dorado" (1966), the central concern is no longer so much the founding of a community as loyalty between equals. That ethic recalls the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, or the brotherhood of the Argonauts, more than the institutions of the polis. Shared songs, jokes and silences matter just as much as gunfights, because heroism is born from mutual trust rather than victory.

If the classic western transformed Greek mythology into a foundational narrative for the United States, the New Western set out to ask what happens when those myths begin to crumble. Sam Peckinpah, Arthur Penn and Sydney Pollack do not abandon the Homeric hero; they show him old, defeated or out of place, as though Achilles had survived Troy only to discover that nobody needs his exploits anymore. The protagonists of "The Wild Bunch", "Little Big Man" and "Jeremiah Johnson" continue to undertake initiatory journeys, confront destiny and search for a place in the world, but they no longer expect to attain glory, merely to survive or find meaning in their own defeats. Greek tragedy remains intact, although it has lost all solemnity: destiny is no longer dictated by Zeus or Athena, but by History, capitalism, the expansion of modernity, or the certainty that the world for which those men had been born has disappeared. If Ford filmed the birth of myth, Peckinpah and company witnessed its funeral. And, as in the finest Greek tragedies, they understood that even the death of heroes could become a form of legend. Ford's heroes still believed they were founding a world. Peckinpah's already know that all they have left is the dignity of deciding how to disappear from it.

Perhaps that is why the classic western continues to withstand the passage of time. Beneath its hats, horses and revolvers beat questions far older than the United States itself. Who deserves to be remembered? What violence sustains every community? Can a hero ever truly return home? The Greeks answered with capricious gods and armoured warriors. Ford, Hawks and Walsh replaced marble with dust and shields with Colts, but preserved the structure of myth intact. Achilles no longer fought before the walls of Troy. He rode towards Monument Valley, knowing, like all great heroes, that the very world he was helping to build would ultimately close its doors on him.

Javier Sanabria

Dave Fortman (Ugly Kid Joe)

A successful musician on both sides of the music business

In the early 1990s, a carefree band from Isla Vista, California called Ugly Kid Joe brightened our teenage years with a series of albums that offered an alternative to what was coming out of Seattle. On guitar was Dave Fortman, a key member of the band who would later establish himself as a highly successful producer. The team at Metal N' Rock Radio got in touch with a very friendly Dave and fired a few questions his way. The guitarist and producer replied almost immediately. As is only right, this is a conversation we are delighted to share with our friends at Rock Bottom Magazine.

After playing in a couple of bands, you joined Ugly Kid Joe in the early 1990s when the band was enjoying major success with "America's Least Wanted". That album made a huge impact and you even wrote one of the singles, "Busy Bee". Success, tours, gold records, MTV appearances, soundtrack contributions... What do you remember about that period?

Yeah, "America's Least Wanted" was a very exciting time for me. I had been in Sugartooth, a Los Angeles band, and we had landed a record deal with Geffen Records. But before that, I had already known Claus and Whit from Kid Joe for about a year and a half. We used to hang out a lot around Santa Barbara until the moment Whitfield Crane asked me to join the band, so I switched sides and joined Ugly Kid Joe. "Busy Bee", the song I wrote for "America's Least Wanted", was actually something I had been playing on acoustic guitar for a long time at parties, bonfires and various projects we had going on. It was an amazing experience. We toured the world for around two years, including Spain of course. Everything we experienced was fantastic, and it still is. It was an incredibly exciting time in my life. Going into the studio with the guys and making an album was great, and I also got to work with Mark Dodson, a wonderful producer who taught me so much about production. Those are unforgettable memories.

In 1995 you released "Menace to Sobriety", an album we really love and one that we've read suffered from a lack of promotion from Mercury/PolyGram. Do you think that album deserved better? We certainly do.

Punk rock was starting to emerge along with a variety of other sounds. The label was hesitant about promoting us at that time. They were simply reacting to what was happening around the music scene. It was like a car salesman not wanting to sell a car. But, you know, it didn't really bother us. We toured that album, it did well in France and I think in Germany too. Also, "Milkman's Son" has accumulated a lot of plays over the years and people still know it when we play live. Believe it or not, that's probably our favourite underground album among the fans. So yes, to answer the question, absolutely. They just didn't promote it as much as they normally would have because of everything happening around the music scene at the time. It was largely down to internal label opinions. It was probably a bit of everything.

After releasing "Motel California", the band went on hiatus for several years. What led to that break? Were you uncertain about the future of the band?

Yes, we split up after "Motel California". What really happened was that we had a meeting and Claus had decided to leave the band. We all looked at each other and thought that if Claus didn't want to continue, neither did we. We felt it wouldn't be the same anymore. He was one of the founders and the guy who wrote "Everything About You", the person who had helped take us to where we were. That was really what caused the hiatus at the time and ultimately led to the band breaking up after "Motel California".

After Ugly Kid Joe split up, you set up a small recording studio. How did you end up moving into production? What motivated you? We remember producer Mark Dodson speaking very highly of you.

Once the band split up, it was more a matter of necessity for me. I had already been recording bands in Santa Barbara since I was young, probably from the age of seventeen or eighteen, maybe even sixteen. I had a four-track recorder and started recording everything I could. I made lots of demos for bands I played in over the years, including Ugly Kid

Joe. I thought having my own studio that I could rent out to other artists would be a good career path and a way to use my abilities from another side of the music business. It seemed like a smart option. As for Mark Dodson, yes, he was the first producer who really taught me a huge amount. Besides being a close friend of ours, he was an incredible mentor because I had never worked in a top-level studio before. When we started working with Mark, I was fascinated. He showed us all kinds of techniques and taught us how every element of a song should fit together to make everything work properly, something I recently talked about on a podcast. I had never really considered all those aspects before. You're lucky when you meet someone like that in the industry. It was a revelation and I thought, "Oh, great, so this is how you make a production sound powerful and solid." Watching him get those sounds, seeing him work with a great team and a Neve console, was fascinating to me. I was hugely impressed by what Mark did and it motivated me tremendously.

As a producer you've worked with hugely successful bands such as Godsmack, Slipknot, Superjoint Ritual and Evanescence. Regarding Evanescence, what do you remember about working on their first two albums? Did you expect such enormous success?

With "Fallen", honestly, nobody had any idea it would become as successful as it did. There was simply no way of seeing that level of success coming. When you're making a record like that, you're just trying to do the best job possible, create something innovative, fresh and exciting, and make sure the songs are great. The reason we were already excited in the beginning was because one of the songs was going to be featured in the film "Daredevil" during a fight scene. We were going to use "Bring Me to Life", so we were incredibly excited about that. At that point in the recording process, we thought we might have something special. Amy would even joke around saying, "Oh my God, we're going to get a gold record... no, a platinum record". The joke was that deep down we didn't even think it would go gold. It was different. Nobody was thinking, "This is going to be the next huge success," whether for that band or any other band. We genuinely didn't expect it. And it certainly wasn't made with a huge budget. We started in smaller studios and every time we delivered new mixes, they moved us into better facilities. Eventually we ended up in our Studio G facilities in Los Angeles and the whole thing came to life. Everyone started saying, "Okay, this is going to be a big record." But nobody thought it would explode the way it did. Not even close.

How has working with so many different bands influenced your guitar playing and songwriting? Do you prefer being a producer or a guitarist?

Yes, I'd say that being a producer and working with bands, and with musicians of such a high level, definitely influenced me as a guitarist, especially on the Ugly Kid Joe records from our 2012 comeback through to the new album. For example, sitting in the control room and hearing someone like Greg Tribbett come up with riffs and write a song like "Happy" for Mudvayne, wow. When you hear that happening in real time, it's incredible. I was heavily influenced by many of the people I worked with, in lots of different ways. I discovered chord progressions and songwriting approaches I wasn't aware of before, and all of that inevitably influences you. When you work with people that talented, it's impossible not to be affected by it. The same goes for every band, including the Slipknot guys. Jim and Mick are phenomenal guitar players. So yes, I've absolutely been influenced by the people I've worked with.

How do you see the arrival of artificial intelligence in the music industry? Do you see it as a threat or simply another tool? These days you barely need to know how to compose music. With a computer and some basic knowledge, there are already programs capable of writing songs, including lyrics. Does it strip away the creative process? Where do you see the limits?

Yeah, I'm not really sure what the final outcome of AI in music is going to be. I've definitely explored it, used it, and generated some amazing string arrangements and things like that. I haven't actually used it in a song yet, but I've experimented with it to see whether I liked it, and I really did. In fact, jokingly, I sent the guys AI-generated versions of a couple of songs from our new album, which hasn't been released yet. During recording we created versions in different styles using AI, and I was impressed. It's pretty incredible because what it's really doing is taking pieces of what has already been part of human musical history and combining them to create whatever you describe. It's borrowing from all of us in a way, and yes, it creates some truly fantastic things. As for whether it will evolve into guaranteed-hit AI artists or AI musicians or whatever we end up calling them, I honestly don't know. I think it's fascinating and I'm open to anything that pushes the music industry forward. Technology never stops and innovation is key. In a way, I feel I was part of something similar with Evanescence because that was also something very different at the time compared to what else was happening, although obviously not on the level of AI. I imagine some very interesting things will happen with it. I'm curious and excited to see where it goes. There's simply no way to predict where artificial intelligence will take us.

When you started producing, it coincided with the beginning of the long decline in record sales. Home recording, downloads, Napster, changes at MTV, the Telecommunications Act of 1996... How did you experience those uncertain years? Dann Huff told us in a previous interview that there was a lot of concern.

Yes, well, my production career really took off around 2003, so the digital transition hadn't fully happened yet. We were still selling CDs, lots of CDs, in record stores all over the world during those years, so it didn't affect me that much. The real change came with streaming. There was a quieter period for a while, although I can't remember exactly when, maybe between 2012 and 2016. I could see everything really starting to shift, and then streaming took off and changed everything. Once I realised how convenient streaming is, being able to sit in your car and tell your phone to play any song in the world, it seemed both crazy and fascinating. So no, it didn't affect me too heavily.

> ***Everything we experienced was amazing, and it still is. It was a very exciting time in my life. Going into the studio with the guys and making an album was incredible, and I also had the chance to work with Mark Dodson, a wonderful producer who taught me a great deal about music production. Those are unforgettable memories.***

What do you remember about Ugly Kid Joe's concerts in Spain? A friend of ours saw you in Barcelona with Bon Jovi and loved it. We also remember an acoustic show in Madrid promoting "Motel California".

I love this question because Spain has fantastic audiences. I remember playing venues for around 1,000 people in Madrid and I think also in San Sebastián, and it was incredibly fun and energetic. The audience moved as one, almost like a single organism. Very passionate crowds. The same thing happened when we played with Bon Jovi in a stadium in Barcelona, I think, right? That was just as crazy. It was amazing. Southern European countries were always among our favourite places to play.

Ugly Kid Joe are still active and you have produced some of the band's more recent releases. What are you doing these days? Are you still involved with the band? Are you still producing?

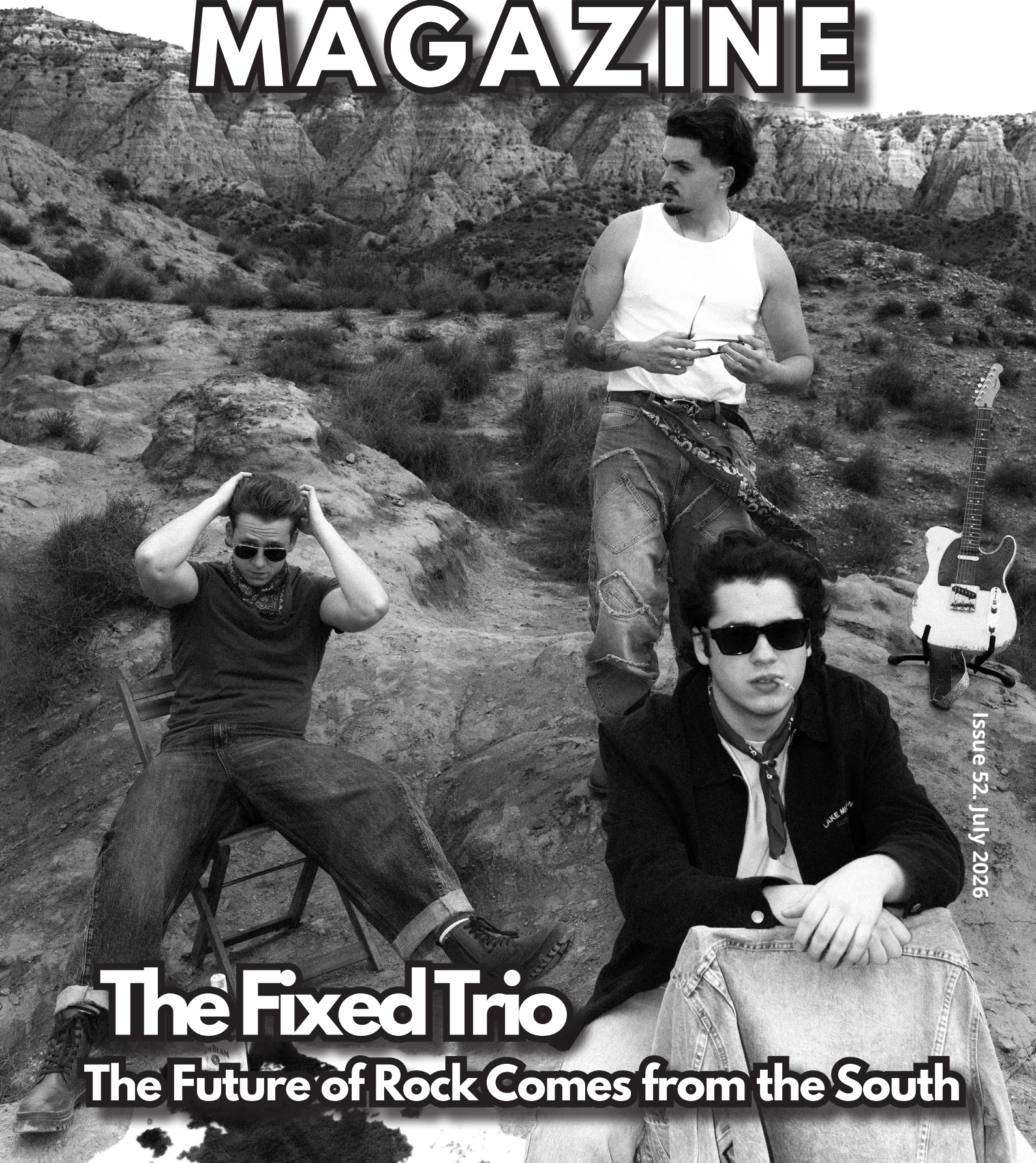
Yes, I'm no longer actively touring with the band. However, I'm still mixing and producing. I've handled the production on all the albums except "Rad Wings of Destiny", which we recorded with Mark Dodson in 2019. We wanted to bring Mark back for the nostalgia and it was wonderful. The album turned out really, really well. I love that record. But yes, I'm still doing my thing. I just don't enjoy touring anymore because I want to focus on my studio career and on mixing. In fact, I've got some great projects coming out soon, including Godsmack's new live album recorded at Mohegan and a few other things waiting in the wings. There's also the new Ugly Kid Joe album, which is incredible. I can't wait for everyone to hear it. I'm really excited about it and looking forward to its release.

Metal N' Rock Radio

FULL FLOWER MOON BAND EMANUELA HUTTER THE FLAMING SIDEBURNS LAS ROBERTAS THE FIXED TRIO JOHN BUSH AZKENA

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

ROCK BOTTOM MAGAZINE



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The Fixed Trio

The Future of Rock Comes from the South