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**MORE THAN JUST LA MOVIDA MADRILEÑA;  
POPULAR MUSIC AND CULTURAL CHANGE IN 1980'S  
SPAIN.**

*For my friend, Des Ryan, with thanks*

The *movida madrileña* of the 1980's is probably one of the most celebrated European cultural movements of the latter part of the twentieth century. As a natural reaction to the end of over forty years of reactionary conservatism under the Francoist regime, the *movida madrileña* was an event which had been waiting to happen for a long time and its close association with a great period of political, social and economic change in contemporary Spain has only helped to add to its cultural currency and mystique since then. The continuing presence in the Spanish cultural scene of leading *movida madrileña* figures such as Pedro Almodóvar and Agatha Ruiz de la Prada is a further factor which has helped to cement the idea of this movement or scene as the major cultural movement in 1980's Spain and indeed, the source and direct inspiration for radical socio-cultural change in a post-Francoist Spain.

Undoubtedly, the *movida madrileña* played and continues to play a significant role in Spanish cultural life but this article, which will concentrate primarily on the musical aspect of the *movida madrileña*, will argue for the other voices of 1980's Spanish music whose contribution to a change in cultural attitudes may have been as important or indeed, more important than the *movida madrileña* but which have suffered from a lack of coverage or analysis by cultural commentators and academics alike. In particular, this article will deal with the explosion of new forms of popular music throughout 1980's Spain in order to dispel the myth that the popular music scene was dominated by the *movida madrileña* and the contribution of these new forms to cultural change in contemporary change will be examined and analyzed.

The *movida madrileña* or Madrid scene is a loosely defined term given to a Spanish cultural tendency of the early 1980's. Often, the *movida madrileña* is shortened to simply the *movida* but this is misleading in itself as there were many other *movidas* in 1980's Spain which were unique and distinct from that of Madrid. These will be discussed later in this article. Indeed, the 1980's in Spain is often referred to by cultural commentators as the decade of the *movida* meaning the *movida madrileña* but this is erroneous as the *movida madrileña* itself was quite a

small grouping with a defined geographical limit but what it did have was an excellent ability to present and in many cases exaggerate its achievements to an eager and compliant media.

The cinema director, Pedro Almodóvar is probably the best known personality of the *movida madrileña* but in fact, it was popular music which was its real driving force. Alongside him, Alaska was a pop star, muse and *movida madrileña* celebrity while Agatha Ruiz de la Prada became the leading *movida madrileña* fashion designer and her bright colours and geometric prints remain as the backdrop to change in post-Francoist Spain. The *movida madrileña* also had its painters such as the collective, Las Costus but most importantly, it had a record label, Dro, a radio station, Radio 3 and a couple of television shows, Paloma Chamorro's "*La Edad de Oro* (The Golden Age)" and Alaska's "*La bola de cristal* (The crystal ball)". All of these became quickly identified with the *movida madrileña* and ended up as almost exclusive organs for the diffusion and propagation of its ideas and creations.

Unlike other cultural movements such as the French *Nouvelle Vague* (New Wave) or Italian neo-realism,<sup>1</sup> the *movida madrileña* was more akin to a loosely organized scene. It had no manifesto and this is probably where its greatest attraction lay in the beginning. As a direct successor of the *destape*<sup>2</sup> or "lifting off lid/letting on steam" period which had followed General Franco's death in November, 1975, it offered a more advanced and avant-garde version of the wave of cultural permissiveness and proliferation of soft pornography which had chiefly characterized the *destape*.

To date the birth of the *movida madrileña* is notoriously difficult as by the late 1970's, there were already pop groups and art collectives in the avant-garde Madrid districts of Malasaña and Chueca who were clearly espousing a *movida madrileña* platform. This platform was one of reaction against all that had come culturally before them, a collision of common (and by extension, uncommon) interests, heavily influenced

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<sup>1</sup> Both of these movements were primarily cinematic ones but with highly significant socio-cultural agendas. They would differ from the *movida madrileña* in that there were a clear and defined set of elders, disciples with accompanying manifestoes.

<sup>2</sup> The *destape* or literally "lifting off the lid" period occurred after the death of Franco in November, 1975 and lasted more or less until 1978 when the new Spanish Constitution came into force. A honeymoon period, it was identified by a collective letting off of tensions which had been simmering after nearly forty years of authoritarian rule. The chief characteristics of the *destape* were a huge increase in publications and film about sex and a much more liberal and permissive attitude to society. Fernando Trueba's 2005 film "*Torremolinos 1973*" captures well the spirit of the *destape*.

by the growth of punk rock in Great Britain and the *Neue Deutsch Welle* (New German Wave) musical movement. A cultural scene of disrespect and youth, the *movida* was famous above all for its wild, alternative lifestyle which involved an embrace of hard drugs, late-night partying and an avowed culture of excess.<sup>3</sup> During the early 80's reign of the *movida madrileña* movement, Madrid became the Party capital of Europe and the new Socialist party government which had come to power in 1982<sup>4</sup> openly supported the *movida madrileña* as a symbol of Spain's rupture with the past and embrace of the future.

A watershed date in the birth of the *movida madrileña* from a musical perspective was New Year's Eve, 1979 when a late night car accident near Villalba in the outskirts of Madrid claimed the life of Canito, the drummer of Tos, one of the first *movida madrileña* bands. It was in February of 1980 that a concert was organized in Madrid University to celebrate his life and with the television cameras there and a group of like-minded bands and audience, the media became aware that something different was going on. Canito had died a late-night reveller and as such, he had become a symbol for a cultural scene whose main aim was to shake up the old guard and have a good time. The movement was christened *la movida madrileña* and as aforementioned, this was often shortened to the simpler *movida*, a problem for *movidas* or scenes in other cities as when commentators mention the *movida* in 1980's Spain, it is almost always taken to refer to Madrid.

Canito's band Tos was re-named Los Secretos and they became one of the major bands of the *movida madrileña* with seminal *movida madrileña* anthems such as *Déjame* (Leave me alone) and *Quiero beber hasta perder el control* (I want to drink until I lose control). Mamá were another of the *movida madrileña* groups that took to the stage at the concert for Canito and their *Para tí* (For you) and *Estrella de la radio* (Radio star) are other *movida madrileña* standards.

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<sup>3</sup> Heroin and in particular, cocaine were the drugs of choice for the *movida madrileña*. Spain and in particular, Madrid's role as the gateway for cocaine into Europe kept the price down and ensured widespread availability. From 1982 on, the Socialist Party was notoriously lax on enforcing an anti-drugs policy and Madrid, under the famously liberal mayor, Enrique Tierno Galván, had one of the most relaxed drugs policies in the whole of Spain.

<sup>4</sup> The left-wing Socialist Party (P.S.O.E.) under Felipe González won a landslide victory in the 1982 general election as a response to the failure of the right-wing military coup of February, 1981 which had precipitated the election and may have frightened many Spaniards as it alerted them to the possibility of a return to authoritarian rule. This fear undoubtedly drove many voters into the ranks of the P.S.O.E. and informed their policy once in government of a complete socio-cultural rupture with the Francoist past.

However, perhaps the most powerful musical symbol of the *movida madrileña* was a young Mexican girl in her late teens called Olvido Gara who re-invented herself as Alaska. Dressed like a punk rocker with back-combed hair dyed bright red, she was in a succession of *movida madrileña* groups from the famously named Kaka de Luxe or Deluxe shit to Alaska y los Pegamoides and Alaska y Dinarama. Songs such as *A quién le importa* (Who cares) and *Ni tú ni nadie* (Not you nor anybody else) enjoyed considerable commercial success in Spain and for many outside Madrid, Alaska's outlandish outfits and her frantic lifestyle represented the *movida madrileña* at its height.

Other notable groups of the *movida madrileña* were Radio Futura and Gabinete Caligari who recorded classic *movida madrileña* anthems such as *La negra flor* (The black flower) and *El calor de amor en un bar* (The warmth of love in a bar) respectively. Even Almodóvar got in on the act when he formed a duo with his *movida madrileña* sparring partner Fabio McNamara and Almodóvar and McNamara had hits with songs such as *Suck it to me* and *Gran Ganga* (Great bargain).

Above all, the *movida madrileña* was about a hedonistic group of people who liked going out and bars and clubs such as La Via Láctea and Rock Ola have attained mythical status through their *movida madrileña* associations. Almodóvar's 1978 film, starring Alaska, "*Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón*" (Pepi, Luci, Bom and a load of other girls) captures brilliantly the spirit of the *movida* and although, there were *movida madrileña* painters such as the aforementioned Las Costus and Ceesepe, who specialized in album covers for *movida madrileña* artists, the truth is that there is not a wealth of real artistic or cultural legacy left from a movement to which academics give so much importance.

It is true that Agatha Ruiz de la Prada has become one of Spain's best-known fashion designers and that Pedro Almodóvar is now Spain's most famous film director while other *movida madrileña* figures such as the photographer, Ouka Lele have also outlived the movement and gone on to further success. However, the great majority of the pop groups disappeared towards the end of the decade and Alaska has been transformed from a cultural icon of the 1980's into a kitsch celebrity<sup>5</sup> in con-

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<sup>5</sup> The author's last encounter with Alaska during research for this article was in her old stomping ground of Chueca, the predominantly gay quarter of Madrid, in October, 2008 where she was the special guest at the Kiss Madrid contest (people must kiss as many others as possible). Forty-eight now, she parodies the sexual permissiveness of the *movida madrileña* era. An interested observer in the audience was another quintessential figure of the latter *movida* years, Esteban Reypiedra, better known as "Steve el Sibarita". A seminal figure of early 1990's post-*movida* Spain, the notoriously hedonistic and charismatic Reypiedra was a key conduit between the 1980's *movida* and the

temporary Spain where the *movida madrileña* has become increasingly more myth than matter. The simple explanation for the demise of many *movida madrileña* figures and particularly, those in music is the lifestyle they led and coupled with the very defined and limited nature of *movida madrileña*, one could argue that the music of the *movida madrileña* didn't really produce much of great cultural value at all and definitely not enough to ignite radical cultural change in an entire country.

The first problem with the *movida madrileña* and its status as the cultural reference for music as an instrument of change in 1980's Spain is its geographical limitation to Madrid and one must remember here that the *movida madrileña* was only ever a real force in a few clearly defined bohemian districts of the capital. Yet, if its' cultural production was limited by its membership, its inspirational value should not be underestimated and perhaps the greatest strength of the *movida madrileña* was its influential role in the foundation of other cultural scenes in the rapidly changing socio-cultural landscape of 1980's Spain.

One of these cultural movements in music was the *movida gallega* or Galician scene which played a leading role in transforming the deeply conservative and traditional north-east corner of Spain into one of the most vibrant and culturally daring regions of Europe. The port city of Vigo, better known before then for making Citroën cars<sup>6</sup>, was the heart of the *movida gallega*. If Vigo was the heart of the *movida gallega*, Siniestro Total was its main artery. The leading group *par excellence* of the *movida gallega*, Siniestro Total was a collective whose provocative songs often dealt with political issues, couched in a dark, quasi-nihilistic humour. *Ayatollah*, *Las tetas de mi novia* (My girlfriend's tits) and *Menos mal que nos queda Portugal* (At least we've still got Portugal) are still as powerful today as when they were released and their status as the harbingers of a changing Galicia and Spain is undeniable.

Their rival group in Galicia throughout the 1980's was Os Resentidos led by the multi-talented Antón Reixa. Singing in *gallego*, the regional tongue, their songs were often nationalist and *Fai un sol de carallo* (It's a burning sun) and *Galicia Cantibal* (Galicia Cannibal) became anthems for the youth of a new Galicia which was finding its voice. Following his nationalist leanings, Reixa later left Os Resentidos to form

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1990's house music or *bakalao* scene with classic underground standards such as "*Maihem en Maidenhead*" and "*Kira, Kira, te quiero*". Bizarrely, the latest reported sightings of Reypiedra have been in Washington, U.S.A. where he is alleged to have settled down as a family man with two young daughters, a far cry from holding court in his personal fiefdom of Chueca where he had attained quasi-guru status but amongst the hard core revellers and *movida* survivors, his legend lives on.

<sup>6</sup> Their largest factory in Europe is in Vigo.



a new group, Nación Reixa with Kaki Arkarazo from the Basque group, Negu Gorriak and they enjoyed some success in the 1990's.

Aerolíneas Federales was another notable product of the *movida gallega* along with Golpes Bajos and the highly provocative and controversy-seeking nature of the movement was epitomized in Alberto Comesaña's group Semen Up who caused uproar in traditional Spanish circles with their sexually explicit *Lo estás haciendo muy bien* (You're doing it very well).

Valencia was another area which experienced a cultural revolution through music in the 1980's with its own scene, *el sonido levantino* (the Levantine sound) at the forefront. The army tanks of General Miláns del Bosch had been on the streets of Valencia in February, 1981 during Col. Tejero's ill-fated coup attempt<sup>7</sup> so it was no surprise that the city wanted to shed this image of a reactionary provincial capital. Music played a major role in this creation of a new Valencia and groups such as Presuntos Implicados and Revolver projected the idea of a city and region ahead of its time with a mix of funk and jazz, doing much to dispel the negative image of a tourist region rooted in the mould of the *España cañí*.<sup>8</sup>

Both groups continued to enjoy considerable success well into the 1990's and beyond and their influence was felt regionally through the emergence of other bands such as Mallorca's La Granja and Alicante's Mediterráneo.

One area which has suffered more than most from the excessive coverage of *la movida madrileña* is Valencia's northern neighbour, Barcelona. Always a rival to the capital, Barcelona was at the forefront of many of the major cultural movements in twentieth century Spain and although it has enjoyed little coverage, the 1980's were no different.

The demand for a cultural rupture with the past was perhaps even stronger in 1980's Barcelona than it was in Madrid and this can be seen in the more hard-driven and aggressive work of 1980's Barcelona groups such as El Último de la Fila and Los Rebeldes. In contrast with their Madrid counterparts, the output of the Barcelona groups was far greater, perhaps a symptom of the fact that the culture of excess was not as important a part of the Barcelona scene as it was in the Madrid one.

El Último de la Fila under different guises released seven album

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<sup>7</sup> Valencia was the only city where the military came out in support of Col. Tejero's 1981 coup attempt in Madrid. The military commander in Valencia, Gen. Miláns del Bosch took his tank division onto the streets of Valencia, imposing a curfew, and aiming its guns at the offices of the P.S.O.E.

<sup>8</sup> *España cañí* is a term, often used in a derogatory fashion, to refer to traditional, reactionary Spain. *La España de pan y toros* (Spain of bread and bulls) is a similar term. Both terms would be associated with an image of an intolerant and culturally stagnant rather than progressive society.

between 1981 and 1988. Their style was a mix of rock with traditional Spanish influences from flamenco music but overtly political album titles such as *Cuando la pobreza entra por la puerta, el amor salta por la ventana* (When poverty comes in the door, love jumps out the window) did not go unnoticed in a Spain that was rapidly changing and becoming one of the leading consumer societies in Europe.

Other areas of Spain were influenced by this genre of politically committed soft rock pioneered by El Último de la Fila and Zaragoza's Héroes del Silencio were one of the most popular groups in late 1980's Spain with their anthemic "*Entre dos tierras* (Between two lands)" gaining the group popularity all over continental Europe and particularly in Germany where its message, albeit sung in Spanish, struck a deep chord with the coming down of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Hard rock groups such as Barricada, Barón Rojo and Asturias's Los Ilegales also enjoyed great commercial success throughout the decade and their loud, often nihilistic offerings struck a chord with disaffected youth in particular. Miguel Ríos and Ramoncín were other rock singers whose cultural influence is often sadly under-estimated and the latter's *Hormigón, mujeres y alcohol* (Concrete, women and alcohol) eloquently expressed the reality for many young 1980's Spaniards in a far more authentic fashion than many of Alaska or Gabinete Caligari's *movida madrileña* themes.

The *movidas* or scenes of Barcelona, Valencia and Vigo may have rivalled that of Madrid in the influence of their cultural production but in the field of music, there was a further genre in 1980's Spain which had very little to do with the *movida madrileña* but was nonetheless of great cultural reach and significance. A direct descendant of the *cantautores* or protest songwriters of the 1960's and 1970's, the urban songwriter movement of the 1980's was hugely relevant in documenting socio-cultural change in Spain and for many ordinary Spaniards, it is seen perhaps as a more authentic example of this change which the *movida madrileña* claimed to represent.

The leading player in the urban singer/ songwriter movement was Joaquín Sabina. A native of Úbeda in Andalucía, he, like many Spaniards of his generation, had made the enforced move from the countryside to the city and as an adopted *madrileño*, he spoke of the dark side of change in 1980's Spain in songs such as *Pongamos que hablamos de Madrid* (Let's talk about Madrid)<sup>9</sup> and the later *Pacto entre*

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<sup>9</sup> Lyrics such as "*hay una jeringuilla en el lavabo, pongamos que hablo de Madrid* (there's a syringe in the washbasin, let's talk about Madrid)" spoke about the escalating problem of drug addiction in Madrid. Antonio Flores, who himself died later from a drug overdose, had a huge hit with the song in the early 1990's. Such sentiments also heavily influenced offshoot regional movements

*caballeros* (Gentlemen's agreement).

Alongside Sabina, other *cantaautores* of the 1970's continued their work throughout the 1980's such as Luis Manuel Aute and José Manuel Serrat. Aute was a native of the former Spanish colony of the Philippines and Serrat released material in both Spanish and Catalan. Such cosmopolitan leanings gave currency to the idea of a freer, more tolerant Spain in the 1980's and their work was characterized by clear and definite political overtones.

Aute's introspective work portrayed this new Spain in a subtle manner with songs such as *No te desnudes todavía* (Don't take off your clothes yet) and *Siento que te estoy perdiendo* (I feel I'm losing you). On the other hand, Serrat's work was far more overt with the pessimistic *Plany al mar* (Jump to the sea) and *Hoy puede ser un gran día* (Today could be a great day) standing out as two songs amongst the many titles in the eight albums which he brought out during the 1980's. Other highly influential *cantaautores* of the 1980's were Cuenca's Jose Luis Perales and the enigmatic Carlos Cano whose *María la Portuguesa* (Maria from Portugal) relates the true story of a Spanish fisherman who was killed in Portuguese waters for fishing illegally, a highly topical and sensitive issue at a time when Spain and Portugal were both entering the European Economic Community.<sup>10</sup>

Although the *cantautor* movement was on the whole male-dominated, the marriage of the child actress, Ana Belén to the 1970's *cantautor* legend, Victor Manuel produced a singer/songwriter partnership of great socio-cultural importance. In particular, *La Puerta de Alcalá* (Alcala Gate) became an anthem for the triumph of Spanish democracy after the failed Tejero coup of 1981. Throughout the decade, they released various albums together while continuing to work on solo projects. Manuel tackled the hitherto taboo issue of homosexuality head on in *Quién puso mas ?* (Who gave more ?)" while his *La madre* (The mother)" of 1988 dealt with the escalating problem of drug addiction in the new permissive Spain.

Related to the *cantaautores* was the complementary flourishing in the 1980's of Spanish flamenco and flamenco fusion music but what made this genre different from traditional flamenco was its confrontational and challenging social commentary and political content. Established stalwarts such as Paco de Lucía and Camarón de la Isla were the founders of this movement whilst younger disciples such as Kiko and the collectives, Ketama and Raimundo Amador's *Pata Negra* became the

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such as Valladolid's, Javi "FalopaMan" Suárez and Toñin "Caballo Salvaje" Zuñiga's "Pucela Guay" movement which spawned such classics such as "Somos los putos amos del Barrio España" y "Español, huevo frito".

<sup>10</sup> Spain and Portugal entered the E.E.C. (later to become the European Union) in 1985.



voice of Spanish marginalization and brought gipsy culture to a national and international audience. Interestingly, the principal figures of female flamenco, Isabel Pantoja and Rocío Jurado, whilst still enjoying great popularity, shied away from this politically and socially engaged "new flamenco" scene and as such, their role in cultural change was far less apparent than that of their male counterparts.

Other minority cultures took inspiration from this resurgence of flamenco or what is often termed "new flamenco" and the 1980's saw traditional Galician music merge with pop to bring the Celtic culture of north-western Spain to a new audience. Milladoiro and Fuxan Os Ventos were the first of these Celtic groups and their work reinforced and found resonance in the rise of the aforementioned *movida gallega*. In fact, both trends came together in the foundation in 1988 of Valladolid's Celtas Cortos whose songs would become in turn the documents of the economic malaise and political discontent which ravaged early 1990's Spain.

In tandem with the cultural changes that swept through 1980's Spain, other new genres also blossomed. Some such as techno music, with Aviador Dro and Azul y Negro as its leaders, would be highly influential in an international arena with ecstasy culture and acid house emanating first from early 1980's Valencia. Groups such as La Unión, Tam Tam Go and Seguridad Social were amongst those who defied definition or pigeonholing and sought out new musical territory whilst their use of foreign themes and muses<sup>11</sup> portrayed a new Spain which was no longer culturally ostracized from the rest of Europe.

One of the most significant if not, the most significant group in 1980's Spain and logically, one which suffers more than most from the attention lauded upon the *movida madrileña*, is Mecano. A partnership of an aspiring *cantautor* and guitarist/keyboard player, Jose María Cano with his keyboard-playing brother, Nacho was completed by the inclusion of a female vocalist with a unique and distinctive voice, Ana Torroja. Mecano's sound was also unique, the seed of a genre which would later be described as warm electro while Torroja's voice although evidently Spanish, has also been described as European if one can speak of a European voice, and this may account for the group's considerable success throughout continental Europe and in particular, in France.

In the eyes of many, due to their commercial success, Mecano are often heralded as members of the *movida madrileña* but they were never members of that scene, refusing to play in Rock Ola, the home of the *movida madrileña* in Madrid and neither did they participate in any of the other *movida madrileña* concerts or collective enterprises. Yet, one cannot deny that Mecano, perhaps more than any other cultural group,

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<sup>11</sup> Seguridad Social in particular enjoyed success with a version of Pink Floyd's *Wish you were here*.

struck a chord in 1980's Spanish society and managed to document its change with almost eerie relevancy and accuracy in their classic songs at the beginning of the decade such as *Hoy no me puedo levantar* (I can't get up today)<sup>12</sup> and *Perdido en mi habitación* (Lost in my room).

However, Mecano were more than mere rivals of the *movida madrileña* and their longevity is testament to this with the group remaining musically and culturally significant well up to the end of the 1990's. However, they were at their zenith in 1986 with songs such as *Mujer contra mujer* (Woman against woman) breaking the taboos of lesbianism in Spain while *Cruz de navajas* (Knife Fight) dealt with the scourge of *machismo* in Spanish society and its potentially tragic consequences.

The socio-cultural and political content of Mecano's music is only now beginning to be considered and it is clearly evident that the group may have suffered the fate of being too popular or pretty to be considered hitherto of meaningful cultural importance. A similar fate has befallen other Spanish "pin-ups" of the 1980's such as Miguel Bosé, Duncan Dhu and the Hombres G but analysis of their work reveals that these artists are far more than just poster boys for teenage girls.

Hombres G's *Devuélveme a mi chica* (Give me back my girl) is the quintessential tale of the closed social strata of post-Francoist Spanish society coupled with the new desire for social mobility. Sales of white Ford Fiestas in Spain plummeted afterwards in Spain as this was the car the rich kid in the song is driving when he steals the singer's girl. From San Sebastián, Duncan Dhu's *Cien gaviotas* (One hundred seagulls) is another song which belongs far more to the tradition of the *cantautores* than teen pop music and their lead singer, Mikel Erentxun's cover version in Spanish of *Hay una luz que no apagará* (There is a light that never goes out), the anthem of angst from seminal 1980's British band, the Smiths, is further evidence if needed of Duncan Dhu's serious socio-cultural agenda.

One cannot talk about the cultural influence of music in 1980's Spain without mentioning Julio Iglesias, still Spain's best known artist during the period. However, after his 1970's heyday in Spain, Iglesias spent much of the decade in Miami where he consolidated his international reputation and his influence on a changing Spain from a socio-cultural perspective was therefore considerably diminished. Similar

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<sup>12</sup> One of the most successful musicals of the last few years in Spain has been written by Nacho Cano of Mecano. *Hoy no me puedo levantar* takes the *movida madrileña* as a cultural backdrop but explores Madrid of the 1980's against the background of the rise of Aids and the problems of drug addiction. The musical begins with the classic couplet from the original Mecano song, *Hoy no me puedo levantar* (I can't get up today), *el fin de semana me ha dejado fatal* (the weekend has left me wrecked), an epitaph for much of the youth of 1980's Spain.

were the cases of other 1970's legends such as Raphael and Juan Pardo who still enjoyed commercial success but whose cultural influence waned throughout the decade.

In conclusion, one cannot deny the importance of the *movida madrileña* as a factor in socio-cultural change in 1980's Spain but its importance is probably over-estimated and over-exaggerated due to a variety of factors. Foremost amongst these is the official support, after 1982, of the Spanish Socialist government through the channels of the Ministry of Culture for the propagation of this idea of the *movida madrileña* as the representative of the new Spain. From then on, it has been the Socialist government when they have been in power who have done most to perpetuate this myth of an elitist scene, based principally on an avowed espousal of hard drug use and socially deviant behaviour, as being the principal motor behind socio-cultural change in 1980's Spain. Although, such backing may seem morally dubious and indeed questionable, from a government which at the same time was paradoxically promoting anti-drug campaigns, etc, it can be explained by the fact that the permissive and radical *movida madrileña* presented the complete antithesis to the reactionary, conservative nature of the Francoist regime and it was this complete rupture from a socio-cultural perspective that the Socialists were seeking.

The analysis in this article of the *movida madrileña* may seem a little harsh but on cold and close examination, it is the reality of a cultural movement which produced very little cultural output in comparison with the *cantautores* or flamenco fusion artists of the decade. A further factor which cannot be ignored in the perpetuation of the importance of the *movida madrileña* myth is the figure of Pedro Almodóvar, one of its original leading lights but once again, the contemporary figure of Pedro Almodóvar is far removed from the 1980's version, both in ideas and content.

In fact, one could argue that Almodóvar has been almost totally transformed from a deviant figure on the extreme margins of Spanish culture (his first feature-length film was the 1975 *Folleme, folleme, folleme, Tim* (Fuck me, fuck me, fuck me, Tim)) into the reformed prodigal son and new golden boy of official Spanish state culture, a re-packaged and sanitized version of the *movida madrileña* which he left behind him a long time ago. Similar criticism could be aimed at the designer, Agatha Ruiz de la Prada. In fact, most of the *movida madrileña* figures who have had any significant cultural output only achieved it once the scene had petered out and ended in the late 1980's, perhaps a suggestion that the entire scene was more about late nights and drug use than any real agenda of social or cultural change.

On the other hand, scenes such as the aforementioned regional *movidas* have continued to thrive and have spawned significant succes-

sor scenes and movements and although it is notoriously difficult to assess cultural capital, content and influence, one could definitely argue that their importance has been critically under-estimated in relation to that of the *movida madrileña*. Similarly, the influence and societal penetration of the *cantautores*, flamenco fusion and other individual groups such as Mecano has been under-estimated by many and this has often given us an erroneous and flawed picture of the cultural forces in Spanish music which influenced change in 1980's Spain.

The *movida madrileña* is an exciting and photo-friendly era to study with its heady cocktail of drugs, sexual permissiveness and larger than life personalities but it was and remains the lifestyle of a highly selective, (albeit highly colourful!) elitist minority whose cultural values and norms have enjoyed little resonance or reproduction in contemporary Spain. On the contrary, the message and influence of groups such as Mecano and singer/songwriters such as Serrat may have had far more cultural penetration in 1980's Spanish society than has been hitherto commonly considered and indeed, testament to this is that their message and influence can still be seen in a changing twenty-first century Spain. Jaime Urrutia<sup>13</sup> and Alaska may always be the poster boy and girl for cultural change through music in 1980's Spain but on a level of real societal permeation and moulding of socio-cultural attitudes, there was far more going on at the time than just the *movida madrileña*.

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<sup>13</sup> Urrutia was the charismatic frontman of *movida madrileña* stalwarts, Gabinete Caligari.

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