

# MUSIC IN MALLORCA: THE VOICE OF THE ISLAND



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MALLORCA, TOO, IS LOOKING FOR NEW VOICES, NEW FORMS OF MUSICAL EXPRESSION TO REFLECT THE EVOLUTION OF MUSICIANS IN TIME WITH THE AGE. ALSO, THE TIME HAS COME TO SEARCH FOR NORMALITY: MAKING MUSIC IN CATALAN IS NO LONGER THE SYMBOL OF A NECESSARY VINDICATION, BUT THE MANIFESTATION OF A CULTURAL DESIRE.

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**M**allorca is a land open to creation, ready to offer a place to anyone who wants to make its voice heard and manifest its signs. A legend has even grown up about the island's ability to attract travellers who, fascinated by their discovery, decide to drop anchor. It's a place that encourages creative work especially, as happened to Louis Salvador, the Arch-Duke of Austria, a constant traveller and a

writer whose pen was always ready to capture the beauty of this land. He lived there a long time, beside the sea, filling pages with words that spoke of all that he discovered there. Or George Sand, who settled with Chopin at the Carthusian monastery of Valldemossa, in the midst of storms and music, so close to the lonely illness. Santiago Russiñol came this way, and so did Josep Carner, Rubén Darío..., and so many other

great writers. Of their passing there remains the imprint of the writings that emerged at some moment and that go on and on. Many painters also were born on Mallorca or decided to make it their home, perhaps because the light helps pick out the colour and makes it stronger. Musicians have come here in search of sounds and rhythms, and they, perhaps, are the voice of the island.





TOTS SANTS

During the sixties, a movement called Nova Cançó (New Song) grew up all over the Països Catalans. During that period, dozens of names emerged in the world of music, and Mallorca was not to be left out. The island became a focus for unrest and for cultural agitation that found in music a valuable form of expression. It was a rebellious music, the unanimous manifestation of a people searching almost desperately for the paths of an individual or collective cry. Then groups and singers appeared, some of them destined to disappear with the years, others holding on and experimenting, still alive and active today. Groups who performed almost in hiding and who in summer, at the festival at the Castle of Bellver, attracted hundreds of followers. Today, the music of **Els Valldemossa**, a group that bears the name of the town its members come from, still includes popular tunes combined with foreign rhythms. **Sis som, Musica Nostra...**, and, especially, the wonderful voice of Maria del Mar Bonet, skilfully recovering ancient romances, legends and tales that speak of the spirit of the island and of its secrets. But the years go by and change is needed, and the search must be taken up.

That's why Mallorca, which in spite of its traditional tranquillity is often bustling and restless, is looking for new voices, forms of musical expression that will reflect the evolution and experimentation of the musicians. This is the age of Catalan rock, the boom that started at the end of the eighties and has made its mark on the present decade. The time has come to search for normality: making music in Catalan is no longer the symbol of a necessary, even urgent vindication, but the manifestation of a cultural desire, the result of a society that sings in Catalan precisely because it knows that this is the language in which it communicates. That's why the young musicians express their concerns in music.

Since the mid-eighties, a Festival of Pop Rock has been held in Mallorca which brings together all the island's groups. Significantly, at each edition more and more of the groups taking part sing in Catalan. Nevertheless, the list of those starting out on professional careers is not very long yet. Short but significant, because there is diversity and strength. One outstanding group is **Tots Sants**, made up of five musicians from Manacor, and combining the voice of the so-

loist with two guitars, the drums and the bass. They have been playing for nine years now at concerts in the towns around the island, and not long ago they started touring in Catalonia. From Manacor, one of the island towns with the greatest capacity for generating musical and literary creation, they play hard rock.

For almost twenty years now, the **Ocults** have also opted for music. This group set out singing in Spanish, and interestingly enough they didn't have any success until they devoted themselves to rock songs written in their own language. Today their records sell widely and they perform all over the place. Two years ago they brought out *Pa amb oli nacional*, a humorous record which set out to combine criticism and light-heartedness. Another group we might single out is **Harmonica coixa**, formed in 1982, who are excellent live and have a repertory of songs in English and Catalan.

One group with its own personality that deserves special treatment and attention is **La Fosca**, born four years ago with the express intention of playing a different kind of music and now beginning to show a considerable polish which, according to the critics, holds great promise for the future. Its eight members are mostly university students and they have had a thorough musical training at music school. Two years ago, at the seventh edition of the Festival of Pop Rock, they won the prize for the best Catalan lyrics, with a song written by their own singer. Since then they have released one album, *La carn humida*, and a single, and their music can be heard constantly on the media all over Catalonia, in songs combining features that range from pop to classical music. The combination of two splendid voices, along with such varied instruments as guitar, drums, flute and keyboards, provides a music that is rhythmic and intense at their live performances, an exciting sound, and that in recordings becomes deep and inviting to discerning audiences. Their music today is a symbol of quality and investigation, of this need to explore the possibilities of the musicians who, from Mallorca, hope to raise their voices. ■