



University  
of Glasgow

Moreda Rodríguez, E. (2014) *Review of "Rock Around Spain. Historia, Industria, Escenas y Medios de Comunicación"*, edited by Kiko Mora and Eduardo Viñuela. *Popular Music*, 33 (3). pp. 568-570. ISSN 0261-1430

Copyright © 2014 Cambridge University Press

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

Content must not be changed in any way or reproduced in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holder(s)

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details must be given

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/96674/>

Deposited on: 2 September 2014

Enlighten – Research publications by members of the University of Glasgow  
<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk>

Even from the book's title one can see that Shipley firmly places the development of hiplife in the context of Ghana's neo-liberal climate of celebrities and entrepreneurs, i.e. hiplifers looking for fame and fortune. But he does not fully discuss that fact that hip hop was also recontextualised in Ghana as a flag or signifier for the young generation of the 1990s against the old – who did not like hiplife's fast talk, lip-synched performances, 'gangsta rap' and lewd and sometimes misogynist lyrics.

This book was written some years ago and as a final point I should mention that hiplife has continued to split into various subgenres. Shipley mentions 'jama/jamma' and 'hardcore' (now known as 'Gh rap'). Others are 'contemporary highlife' which focuses more on singing than rapping, and the new hiplife 'azonto' dance style. Yet another hiplife subgenre is 'rag-life', which is influenced by Jamaican dance-floor and ragga. This Jamaican undercurrent has been felt in hiplife from its very beginnings – but is not really covered in Shipley's book. At the same time there has been in the last few years a fusion of hiplife with American 'contemporary urban/R&B', equivalent to what happened in the US from the 1980s when hip hop fused with R&B and soul to produce 'new jack swing' and 'neo soul'. As with these two offshoots of American hip hop. Ghanaian women play an important role in this new extension of hiplife which, as mentioned earlier, is called 'Afro-pop' or 'Twi-pop' (or sometimes 'Afrobeats').

John Collins

University of Ghana, Ghana  
[newbapmaf@yahoo.com](mailto:newbapmaf@yahoo.com)

***Rock Around Spain. Historia, Industria, Escenas y Medios de Comunicación.***  
 Edited by Kiko Mora and Eduardo Viñuela. Lleida: Edicions de la Universitat de Lleida, 2013. 263 pp. ISBN 978-84-8409-624-5  
 doi:10.1017/S0261143014000555

The history and analysis of Spanish popular music has attracted considerable attention in Spanish academia during the last decade or so. This increasing interest has reached the international sphere as well: in 2013 Routledge published Sílvia Martínez's and Héctor Fouce's *Made in Spain* – the first English-language edited book to focus entirely on Spanish popular music – and in the same year the annual IASPM conference was held in Gijón, with a considerable range of papers on Spanish topics. *Rock Around Spain. Historia, Industria, Escenas y Medios de Comunicación* provides a welcoming addition to this scholarship by focusing specifically on rock, the definition of which here appropriately errs on the side of generosity to encompass rock 'n' roll, progressive rock, *rock urbano*, heavy metal, *indie* and a number of Spanish or regional takes on these genres, such as *flamenco-rock* and *rock bravú*. The book's editors, Kiko Mora and Eduardo Viñuela, are right in pointing out that the study of Spanish popular music post-Franco has typically focused on the 1980s *Movida*. The *Movida* relied on pop and punk styles rather than rock, but its significance went indeed beyond music: in the Spanish imaginary, it is still widely understood as a counter-cultural movement and an enactment of Spain's entry into European and democratic modernity. Most of the contributions of the book take a most welcomed critical stance on the hegemony of the *Movida* discourse.

In focusing on rock, the editors are clearly aware that there are tackling new ground. However, their motivations and expectations in doing so come across as a little self-defeating. Even though there is clearly still work to do and this is by no means the 'ultimate' book on Spanish rock (as Mora and Viñuela admit in the introduction), the final result could have been more ambitious in terms of going beyond the purely narrative or the anecdotal to identify instead a limited number of case studies useful for an in-depth initial discussion of the main issues surrounding rock in the Spanish context. Indeed, most chapters in the book emphasise breadth rather than depth and are intended as broad overviews of the history, industry, scenes and media of Spanish rock, as indicated in the title. History extends from the beginnings of Spanish rock in the 1950s to 2010, with three chapters by Eduardo García Salueña (1950s to 1970s), Fernán del Val (the 1980s) and Igor Paskual (1990–2010), whereas the Industry section opens with an overview of the period 1975–1985 (by Héctor Fouce) followed by a first-person testimonial case study by Carlos Galán on his experience of managing Subterfuge Records in the 1990s.

In the next section of the book, 'Scenes' is intended to mean 'geographical scenes', with four chapters on rock in the so-called 'historical nationalities' of Spain: Roberto Moso on the Basque Country, Álex Gómez-Font on Catalonia, Luis Clemente on Andalusia, and Gonzalo Cifuentes on Galicia. The final section, on rock and the media, covers traditional mass media (José María Esteban and January Ruiz on press, Juan Pablo Ordúñez on radio, Eduardo Guillot on TV) with the more innovative rock and cinema (Teresa Fraile) and rock and advertising (Raúl Rodríguez Ferrándiz and Cande Sánchez Olmos).

As an overview or compendium of the main bands, styles and trends happening in the Spanish rock scene from the 1950s to the present, the book covers an obvious gap. Moreover the fact that there are sections on peripheral scenes, on media and industries assures that this is not simply a linear narrative focusing on Madrid and ignoring the social and economic milieu in which rock music took place. However, this approach has also its shortcomings: indeed, some chapters are more successful than others in providing the reader with more than a chronological list of facts and names, and some of them border on the journalistic or the merely anecdotal. Perhaps more importantly, this structure and approach leave some unanswered questions in terms of cohesion between the chapters and, ultimately, the relevance of the book. As has been mentioned before, most of them explicitly share scepticism towards the narrative of the *Movida*, and this is properly addressed in the introduction, but other allegedly equally overarching topics are not; I would like to mention two of them.

The first one concerns, again, modernity: a significant number of chapters in the book take it for granted that Spain's rock scene has always been characterised by its backwardness (*retraso*) with respect to other Western countries, to mirror the assumption that Spain itself was backward as a country, primarily as a consequence of the Franco regime (which itself had a complex, somewhat schizophrenic attitude towards modernity which, in my view, is not given full consideration in the book). Such claims of backwardness typically rely, on the one hand, on an understanding of music history as a way forward and, on the other hand, on the idea of Spain's exceptionalism in the European context.

The second topic has to do with an almost instinctive mistrust of any suspected commercialism, which leads some contributors to flatly dismiss certain ramifications

of Spanish rock, ignoring the complexities of the landscape of production and consumption. Some chapters do attempt to engage with either of these two concepts critically, at least in passing (Teresa Fraile on the issue of modernity; and Fernán del Val and, especially, Raúl Rodríguez Ferrándiz and Cande Sánchez Olmos on the issue of commercialism), but future studies on the topic of the Spanish room should not ignore these two elephants in the room.

Eva Moreda Rodríguez

University of Glasgow, UK  
[Eva.MoredaRodriguez@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Eva.MoredaRodriguez@glasgow.ac.uk)

## Reference

Martínez S., and Fouce H. (eds) 2013. *Made in Spain: Studies in Popular Music* (London, Routledge)

***Singer-Songwriters and Musical Open Mics.* By Marcus Aldredge. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013. 217 pp. ISBN 978-1-409-44272-1  
 doi:10.1017/S0261143014000567**

Taking as its starting point Simon Frith's call to take the study of popular music into cultural and social fields (p. 183), this book provides an ethnographic study of the open mic night. It also fills a much-needed gap in the field of popular music studies, with relatively little having been written on the open mic night up to now. Consisting of seven chapters that examine the open mic scene in New York, this book puts forward the idea that the open mic night operates as a kind of 'fourth' place (p. 125), a location in which activities associated with the domestic sphere (such as musical practice) are blended with social activities typically ascribed to places such as music venues, bars and social clubs (such as musical performance).

The opening two chapters discuss definitions and histories of the open mic, locating the social structures and dynamics of these events within broader discussions of democracy, race, gender and the emergence of the creative class. Aldredge argues that the open mic bears a similarity to amateur poetry events and karaoke nights and developed out of the participatory folk hootenannies and anti-folk movement that emerged in New York in the mid-1980s. Despite the wide array of influences and connections cited, Aldredge does not discuss the open mic element of hip hop culture. Also emerging in New York in the 1980s, hip hop similarly blurs musical practice and performance and employs open, democratic social structures that are akin to those discussed by Aldredge. The exclusion of hip hop from Aldredge's historical survey has the danger of privileging particular types of musical expression (and thus communities). This is seen in Aldredge's discussion of the venues selected for study: 'very few to none ongoing events were found in the Bronx and Staten Island, the other two city boroughs, likely due to the small frequency and density of musicians living in those areas' (p. 15). While it *might* be argued that these areas host fewer musicians that would describe themselves as acoustic singer-songwriters, I don't believe it can be argued that these areas have fewer musicians.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the ethnographic study. Focusing on two venues in Manhattan and two in Brooklyn, it discusses these open mics in relation