

The Beatles in Spain: The Contribution of Beat Music and Ye-yés to the (Subtle) Musical, Cultural and Political Openness of General Franco's Regime in the 1960s

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Abstract:

From the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, the impact of American twist and rock'n'roll and British beat music, the Eurovision Song Contest, the considerable growth of the national record industry, the number of radio stations and the (still timid) deployment of nationwide TV gave rise in Spain to the development of the *ye-yé* fashion amongst the young Spanish population. This was accompanied by the development of a mild feeling of rebellion and critical spirit against the traditional conservative/Catholic *status quo* and the conventional mores of the previous generation. Indeed, from 1964-65 onwards dozens of Beatle-like bands imitated the Beatles' rhythms, language, image, poses, fashion and song lyrics. The two live performances of the Beatles in Madrid and Barcelona in 1965 disseminated their popularity even further in Franco's Spain. English became the *lingua franca* of modernity, of international tourism and of the new musical genres. In this Anglophile context, Beatlemania was to exert a relatively gentle influence on the social and political Spanish scenario of the decade and contributed to preparing the path to the country's democratization in the late 1970s.

Keywords: Spanish tourism in the 1960s; Franco's Spain; The Beatles; *Ye-yé*; Hippies; Anglicisms in Spanish

In the 1950s and early 1960s new artistic and cultural manifestations emerged in the USA and Britain in the form of bands and solo singers of various dynamic youth movements and musical styles (rock and roll, rock, soul, blues, twist, skiffle, beat, etc.). At the time Spain was still under a strict dictatorial regime, but modern European and American cultural and political ideas (and records) were slowly entering Spain through the American bases and the main Spanish commercial ports (Barcelona and Valencia). Spain's tourist boom in the late 1950s and throughout the following decade brought a joyful and spontaneous flow of a mild spirit of modernity and cosmopolitanism into Franco's Spain via a number of popular resorts such as the Costa del Sol, the Costa Brava and the islands (especially the Balearic archipelago) as well as through the main business cities on the peninsula (Madrid and Barcelona). This highly economically- and culturally-profitable phenomenon coincided chronologically with the entry into Spain of rock/beat music from the English-speaking world and with a period of economic prosperity and reforms encouraged by the most liberal sectors of Franco's dictatorial regime, the so called *desarrollismo* of the 1960-70 decade (Longhurst 2010). "Modern" music started to arrive in Spain initially in very small doses in the late 1950s, mainly from the US (Elvis, Chuck Berry, etc.) but increasingly in larger doses during the early and mid-1960s, and by that point, more from Britain. Besides, Spain's economic bonanza allowed Spaniards to travel abroad more often and become familiar with more democratic modes of life and with state-of-the-art trends in foreign musical genres. The arrival of American rhythms throughout the late 1950s prepared the way in the early 60s for the boost of British beat/rock music in Spain, the so called "British invasion".

In 1963 the Beatles caught the western world by surprise. Beatlemania contributed considerably to the reshaping of the old-fashioned post-WWII British society into a modern one. Spain was also ultimately influenced by the Beatles from as early as 1964, and this also made an impact on the country's body and soul. The Beatles had not shown much interest in the Spanish record market initially. Despite their manager Brian Epstein's (1934-67) well-known fondness for bullfighting (León, 2015) and the Spanish coastal resorts, he was not at all enthusiastic about his protégés playing live in mid-60s Spain as part of their planned European tour in 1965. In Europe and America the Beatles were selling records by the million, but in Franco's Spain they had only sold a few thousand. According to *TeleExpress*, by July 1965 only six hundred Beatles records (including the four LPs that had been released by then) were being sold in Barcelona each week (Alegret, 2020). Taking into consideration that from 1963 to July 1965 twenty-five different Beatles records altogether –singles, EPs and LPs– had been released in Spain, these meager six hundred copies a week in Barcelona is proof enough of the poor sales of their

records in Spain.¹ This did not, though, prevent them from appearing in top positions in Spanish “private” hit parades in music magazines in 1964.² However, in the end, thanks to the timely nine hundred thousand pesetas (5,400 euros) that a Spanish show business agent was ready to pay for two performances, Epstein yielded and the Beatles performed in the bullrings of Madrid and Barcelona in July 1965. Franco’s severe Minister of the Interior Camilo Alonso Vega’s initial opposition to the inclusion of Spain in the Beatles’ European tour of 1965 changed when he was conveniently informed that the Queen of Britain had recently awarded them MBEs (Tarazona and de Castro, 2011).

Franco’s authoritarian regime would not take kindly to an intrusion into its peaceful ideological paradise perpetrated by any of the youthful breaths of freedom blown in by the *melenudos* (long-haired) English singers,³ but did not take them too seriously either. The Spanish *Movimiento* (i.e., Spain’s dictatorial regime) tried to ridicule the modern and daring rhythms that came from abroad during the 1960s, especially during the weeks running up to the Beatles’ performances and the gigs themselves were given limited or prejudiced attention. The *NODO* (Noticiero Cinematográfico Español, the Spanish regime’s weekly official news bulletin broadcast compulsorily in cinemas), though obliged to give their concerts due coverage, did so in a less than a three-minute reportage (“Los Beatles en Madrid, 1965”). In this *NODO* report it was evident that the newsreader was trying to make fun of the Beatles’ music and their looks, as well as of the young *fans* who went to the airport to welcome them and the audiences that went to see them play live. His remarks are eloquent enough: “la recepción que se les hace en Madrid no es apoteósica” [Madrid’s welcome is not enthusiastic]; “salta a la vista que no hay un lleno” [it is evident that it is not a sell-out]; “[los fotógrafos] apuntan sus objetivos sobre los tocados capilares” [(the photographers) point their cameras at their periwigs]; “por fin salen los melenudos al tablado” [at last the long-haired musicians jump onto the stage]; “los Beatles pasan por Madrid sin pena ni gloria” [the Beatles pass through Madrid without fuss or glory] (*NODO*

1 From 1963 to July 1965 the following Beatles singles, EPs and LPs were released in Spain: only five singles [“Please, please me”/“Ask me why” (1963); “I feel fine”/“She’s a woman” (1964); “She loves you”/“I want to hold your hand” (1964); “A hard day’s night”/“Roll over Beethoven” (1964) and “Ticket to ride”/“Yes it is” (1965)] and sixteen EPs with songs from the four LPs released in Spain up to that point, namely *Please, please me*, *With the Beatles*, *Qué noche la de aquel día* [*A Hard Day’s Night*] and *Beatles for Sale* (Sánchez and de Castro 1994, 82-84).

2 For instance, in the hit parade organized by the magazine *Fonorama* in 1964, the top position was held by “A hard day’s night”; no. 8 by “I should have known better”; no 51 by “Twist and Shout”; no. 75 by “Long Tall Sally”, and no. 89 by “Roll over Beethoven” (Sánchez and de Castro 1994, 17).

3 *ABC*, 23/2/1964 (cited in Sánchez and de Castro 1994, 12).

1965). The conservative gossip magazine *iHola!* titled its (unattributed) report on their performances as “Pasaron los Beatles y no pasó nada: los hermanos Marx de la era ye-yé vistos y entrevistados” (no. 1089; July 10, 1965) [the Beatles finally arrived and nothing happened: The Marx Brothers of the ye-yé era have been viewed and interviewed]. The regime’s moderate daily press of the 1960s did their best to ridicule them by spreading among their readership a discredited image of the English band, its wild music and their alleged unmanly looks because of their long and seemingly unkept hair. The Beatles were unfairly described as *sucios* (dirty), *salvajes* (wild), *descerebrados* (brainless), *excéntricos* (weird), *estrafalarios* (bizarre), *ridículos* (laughable), *vulgares* (vulgar), or *escarabajos* (beetles).⁴ But the mocking and patronising attitude of the Spanish newspapers went no further than that. In the streets, Spanish followers who imitated the Beatles hairstyle were branded as *amanerados* (Cillero 1976, 11), that is, camp or effeminate. In the press conferences given by the Beatles in their Madrid and Barcelona hotels, the Spanish journalists’ questions were extremely superficial; they only seemed to be interested in the length of their hair. The Beatles, despite being a social phenomenon, were clearly not being perceived as any danger to the solid columns of the regime or its imposed morality. In other words, the Beatles were being presented in Spanish society as the newest clowns of the western world. Only two ultraconservative newspapers, *Pueblo* and *El Alcázar* made a real fuss about the Beatles. According to them, the Beatles, who made so much “noise” with their music and posed so much danger to the healthy Spanish youth, should be perceived as potential initiators of riots and their concerts were prone to the violent and uncontrolled lascivious reactions of the female public (Isles 1997). The Francoist authorities were scared of the wild reactions of young women that had been seen at other Beatles concerts. The Beatles’ European and American concerts were used by young women to loudly express their feelings of power, independence and pleasure by shouting, screaming, crying, dancing and giving free rein to their limbs or even demonstrating their sexual arousal in front of their idols as a way of protesting against the set social rules imposed upon them (Ehrenreich, Hess and Jacobs 2003, 100). Spain did not publicly reach that level of mass excitement in modern live concerts in the early sixties. During the Beatles’ performances in Spain the police, ever visible at all times, would make sure that they cut short any open expression of male or female enthusiasm, let alone any lascivious dancing. Due to the vigilance of the political and ecclesiastical

4 Sánchez and de Castro (1994, 12, 16, 26, 46, 57, etc.) give ample evidence of these derogative terms employed to describe the Beatles in numerous newspapers and magazines of the time: *ABC*, 27/2/1964 and 29/2/1964; *Lecturas*, 18/9/1964, *iHola!*, 10/7/1965, *TeleExpres*, 2/7/1965, *La Mañana*, 2/7/1965, etc.

authorities of the time, any such free and open expression of female joy was nevertheless much more controlled and frowned upon.

After the July 1965 concerts, the Spanish newspapers insisted that the group had not filled the venues of Madrid's Las Ventas (which is true)⁵ and Barcelona's La Monumental (which is not so true).⁶ They stated that when the Beatles played their brief concerts in the Madrid and Barcelona bullrings, attendance was low because Spanish youth had not shown any special inclination towards them. The truth is that the excessively high prices of the tickets –ranging from 75 to 400 pesetas (from 45 cents to 2.5 euros)– and the expectation of police interventions had kept away many potential ticket-buyers. The (mainly) middle-class audience (for they were the only social group who could afford to pay such extortionate prices) was also peppered with dozens of policemen in order to prevent any hysterical or revolutionary overreaction of the Spanish *fans* like that believed to have taken place in other venues abroad. Spectators were encouraged to remain seated and not to make fools of themselves in public. After the Madrid performance, the ultraconservative *El Alcázar* could not disguise its joy: “Afortunadamente falló la Beatlemania” (2/7/1965) [Fortunately, Beatlemania was a fiasco]. The ecclesiastical authorities did not seem too keen on beat bands in general either. The conservative newspaper *ABC* carried an “Advertencia del Papa Pablo VI a los jóvenes contra la histeria de algunos grupos musicales” (6/7/1965, 75) [A warning from Pope Paul VI to young people against the hysteria of some music groups], published only four days after the Beatles' historic concerts in Spain. Only the music critic and journalist Alberto Mallofré (1927-2017) publicly defended the importance of the historical event that had just taken place in Barcelona and the supreme quality of their music and the gross distortion of their image by the powers-that-be in his article “Los ‘Beatles’ y su mito”, in *La Vanguardia Española* (4/7/1965).

There is no conclusive evidence that the Francoist authorities deployed all their censorship machinery and the intelligence service to combat the potentially

5 Madrid's Las Ventas bullring was not full on July 2, 1965: only about five thousand people attended. The sound was not of the highest quality, the shouting worsened the acoustic conditions and the tickets were extremely expensive for those days for a brief 35-minute performance of the main stars of the show. The opening acts were Beat Chics, Freddie Davis, Juan Cano y su orquesta, Los Pekeniques, Martin Brothers, Michel, The Modern 4, The Rustiks and Trinidad Steel Band (Sánchez and de Castro 1994, 34).

6 At Barcelona's Monumental bullring, which reached two-thirds of its capacity, the Beatles created a very pleasant sensation in the forty frenzied minutes of their performance in front of a more devoted (or more liberated) audience than Madrid's. The opening acts were Beat Chics, Freddie Davis, Los Shakers, Los Sírex, Michel, The Modern 4, Trinidad Steel Band and Orquesta Florida (Sánchez and de Castro 1994, 51).

subversive arrival of *los cuatro muchachos de Liverpool* (the four young lads from Liverpool, as they would often be referred to) in the press. Sometimes one feels that Spain was laughing at the weirdness of the Beatles. However, aware that their historic visit was being observed from the distance, Spain took advantage of the occasion to give publicity to Spanish products (e.g., sherry). The Beatles were pampered while they were in Spain and even the police would gladly take pictures of themselves in their company.

Despite the obstacles, though, Spanish popular music, culture, art and fashion became openly Anglophile. The Spanish radio began to show greater interest in the new foreign (French, Italian, British and American) musical genres by broadcasting widely followed programmes for young audiences such as *Caravana musical* (from 1960 onwards) on Red de Emisoras del Movimiento and *El gran musical* (1963) on Radio Madrid (Aguilera Moyano, 1989; Pedrero Esteban, 2000), and soon after on other radio stations, as well as the popular Sunday TV programme *Escala en hi-fi* (1961-67). A great Spanish diffuser of the new sounds was the then young Spanish journalist José María Íñigo (1942-2018), who since 1960 had been the correspondent in London on musical matters for the radio station SER and therefore a pioneer in the growth of Spanish admiration for the beat sound coming from Britain (Otaola González, 2012b). New record companies started to appear in Spain (Novola, 1964) while existing ones further consolidated their presence in the national market by widening their list of artists (Hispavox and Belter). Spanish branches of foreign record companies (EMI, RCA, CBS, etc.) were also created due to the rising demand for new Spanish beat bands and singers, many of them regular participants in the popular matinee musical concerts of the Price Music Hall in Madrid in 1962. English –no longer French– became the international language that all but monopolized the tourist industry as well as most of the cultural, artistic and musical manifestations of any youth movement in Spain that was not officially connected with Franco's regime. English started to be taken more seriously as a foreign language in the Spanish educational system. The recently created youth magazines were more than willing to contribute to the expansion of the Beatles' world in Spain. The weekly *Fans* magazine dedicated eight issues to the Beatles (from 15 to 23) in 1965. A number of "official" Beatles fan clubs were created in different cities too for the glorification of these new gods (Sánchez and de Castro 1994, 62). The social and cultural impact of the Beatles in Spain has been analyzed by several music critics and scholars such as Sánchez and de Castro (1994), Crusells and Iranzo (1995), Tarazona and de Castro (2007), Álvarez (2008) and González Lemus (2010).

True to the clichéd knowledge about Spain of the British population at the time, the Beatles took advantage of their first official trip to Spain in July 1965 to immerse themselves in Spanish flamenco and bullfighting. They got off the

plane in Barcelona wearing bullfighter hats, Lennon wore a flamenco hat at both concerts, the four of them attended a *tablaó* (flamenco dance show) and a wine tasting session organized by the Sherry Institute of Spain and Bodegas Domecq and they bought several copies of Picasso's *Toros y toreros* (1961), a book with his drawings and a text by Spain's leading bullfighter of the time, Luis Miguel Dominguín. The Beatles also purchased the record collection *La antología del cantante flamenco*,⁷ as well as a collection of recordings made by a number of Spanish bands and a real Spanish guitar (Sánchez and de Castro 1994, 59).

Coincidentally, only a couple of weeks before their live performances in Spain, at the end of June 1965, John Lennon (1940-80) had published his second book of off-kilter poems and nonsensical stories full of puns and accompanied by his own line drawings entitled *A Spaniard in the Works* (1965). On the book cover, Lennon was dressed in a Spanish bullfighting cape and a flamenco hat. However, the book title suggests Lennon's poor opinion of Spaniards: the common idiom "a spanner in the works" means to put obstacles to the realization of a work, to put sticks in the wheels. This expression implies an image of troublemaking which, together with other current English expressions such as "Spanish practices" or "old Spanish customs", points to the allegedly irregular or deceptive working capacity of Spaniards in the eyes of Britons at that time. In the first story of Lennon's book, also titled "A Spaniard in the Works", the protagonist is a Spanish immigrant, Jesus El Pifco,⁸ who settles in Scotland as a stable groom and coachman. Jesus El Pifco "had immigrated from his little white slum in Barcelover a good thirsty year ago" (Lennon 1965, 13). He is in love with a young Scottish girl, Polly/Patrick, whom he sees every day and for whom he feels unbridled passion. He is also homesick for his family, a feeling he demonstrates by "whistling a quaint Spanish refrain dreaming of his loved wombs back home in their little white fascist bastard huts" (14). However, when the protagonist's mother, "Mrs El Pifco", from "Barcelunder" (15), wishes to visit him in Scotland, he is not happy about it (15). In Lennon's story this peculiar Spanish coachman unburdens himself by talking to his horses, but they do not respond "because as you know they cannot speak, least of all to a garlic eating, stinking, little yellow greasy fascist bastard Catholic Spaniard" (15). If Franco's regime had found out about the existence of Lennon's recently-published book and his grossly derogative depiction of Spaniards by the time his band went

7 Presumably in the edition released by Hispavox in 1958, which consisted of an album of three LPs prepared by the flamenco singer Perico el del Lunar and the musician Tomás Andrade de Silva.

8 "Pifco" was the brand name of a British company specialized in small domestic electrical appliances.

to Madrid and Barcelona to delight the “young Spanish fascists, garlic eaters, stinkers and greasy Catholic bastards” with their music, the Beatles would have certainly been in trouble and a massive international crisis between Britain and Spain might have accompanied their careers.⁹

Spain in the 1960s, still culturally and ideologically chained to the all-powerful Catholic Church and to the *Movimiento*, was trying to wake up to modernity. Indeed, the Beatles’ worldwide successful record- and film-making in 1964-65 gave rise to numerous Anglophile Spanish imitators. The Spanish bands who fell under the spell of the Beatles combed their hair in youthful (but well-groomed) hairdos à la *ye-yé* in admiration of the Liverpool band. They copied the *fab four* by adopting their poses and visual aesthetics, their record covers, their outfits (suits), their beat musical style, their lyrics, their instruments (drums, lead, rhythm and bass guitars and occasionally keyboards), their English expressions and mannerisms (Del Val, Noya and Pérez-Colman, 2014, 162). Copying the Beatles was taken as a youthful demonstration of the counter-reaction to the die-hard traditions and old-fashioned mores of their parents’ generation who had fought in the Spanish Civil War, endured the dark years of the postwar but found it difficult to adapt to the fresher airs arriving from Europe and America. In what Marc (2013, 125) labels as “appropriations of foreign music”, dozens of Spanish bands sold thousands of records nationally by making cover versions in Spanish of Beatles hits. These “appropriations” were usually reasonable musical renderings but were frequently poor and unfaithfully freestyle Spanish translations/adaptations of the original lyrics.¹⁰ Titles such as

9 According to the novelist Antonio Muñoz Molina, the publication of *A Spaniard in the Works* “provocó hasta una nota de protesta del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores” (“Patriotas y aliados”, *El País*, 20/2/1991).

10 Los Ángeles: “La ayuda de la amistad” (1967) [“With a little help from my friends”] and “Blackbird” (1972);

Los Botines: “Sólo ayer” (1965) [“Yesterday”];

Los Diablos: “Me tratas mal” (1969) [“Don’t let me down”];

Los Diablos Negros: “Mi gran amor le di” (1964) [“And I love her”], “Twist and Shout” (1964), “Lo tendrás, amor” (1964) [“From me to you”], “Me enamoré de ti” (1964) [“If I fell”], “¿Quieres saber un secreto?” (1964) [“Do you want to know a secret?”], “Déjalo así” (1964) [“It won’t be long”];

Duo Juvent’s y su conjunto: “Please, please me” (1964);

Los Gatos Negros: “Ella te quiere” (1964) [“She loves you”];

Los Gratsons: “Please, please me” (1964) and “Aquella noche fue” (1964) [“A hard day’s night”];

Lone Star: “Ella te quiere” (1965) [“She loves you”], “Ocho días” (1965) [“Eight days a week”], “I feel fine” (1965) and “She said she said” (1965);

Los Módulos: “Yesterday” (1970) and “Hello Goodbye” (1970);

Los Mustang (1964-65): “¡Socorro!” [“Help!”], “Te necesito” [“I need you”], “Sabor a

“Please, please me” (covered by the Spanish bands “Duo Juvent’s y su conjunto”, “Los Gratsons” and “Los Mustang”) would not be translated into Spanish (“por favor, satisfácame”) because of the risk or the embarrassment of having the song censured. Other Beatles song titles and lyrics were also defectively translated, as was the case with “It won’t be long” (“Déjalo así” [Leave it like that], by Los Diablos Negros), “Baby’s in Black” (“Niños de negro” [Children in black], by Los Mustang), “You’ve got to hide your love away” (“Qué ha pasado con tu amor” [What’s happened to your love], by Los Mustang), or “Don’t let me down” (“Me tratas mal” [You treat me badly], by Los Diablos), to give but a few examples.

Due to the worldwide influence of the Anglophone record industry, English became the vehicular language of modern music and was employed in a high number of songs played by Spanish bands in the 60s. Both Los Bravos, the most international of the Spanish bands after their international hit “Black is Black” (1966; Michelle Grainger, Tony Hayes, Steve Wadey; Decca Records), and Los Canarios –more influenced by American soul and jazz-rock and later gradually transforming their beat beginnings to a more socially and politically critical “progressive rock” (Delis Gómez 2015)– sang either most or all of their repertoire in English because they aspired to be successful in the European and American markets. Some Spanish bands were happy to make their own Spanish versions of Beatles songs for strictly national consumption and imitate the Beatles’ style, thus extending even more the English band’s popularity in the country. These were Los Sírex (the support band who played with the Beatles in Barcelona’s La Monumental bullring), Los Brincos (who eagerly aspired to be considered the “Spanish Beatles” and did not hesitate to wear bullfighting capes as a way of affirming their Spanish identity), Los Módulos and Los Mustangs (who owed their national success and fame almost exclusively to their Spanish versions of Beatles songs), Los Pekeniques (the support band at the Beatles gig in Madrid’s Las Ventas and imitators of The Shadows), and a long etc.

The Beatles’ entry onto the Spanish cultural stage also opened the door of the country’s musical market to other British bands (the Rolling Stones, the Animals, the Who, the Kinks, etc.) and solo singers (Tom Jones, Cliff Richard, Petula Clark, etc.), whose work now reached the ears of Spanish young people more easily through their records and occasionally also through their Spanish

miel” [“A taste of honey”], “Y la quiero” [“And I love her”], “Quiero contarte un secreto” [“Do you want to know a secret?”], “Conocerte mejor” [“I should have known better”], “Lo que hablamos hoy” [“Things we said today”], “Niños de negro” [“Baby’s in black”], “Siguiendo al sol” [“I’ll follow the sun”], “Please, please me”, “Nadie respondió” [“No reply”], “Un billete compró” [“Ticket to ride”], “Si te dicen que caí” [“If I fell”], “Ayer” [“Yesterday”], “Submarino Amarillo” [“Yellow Submarine”], “Qué ha pasado con tu amor” [“You’ve got to hide your love away”].

cover versions.¹¹ In the meantime, “official” Spain still insisted on promoting international tourism and melodic songs in the *Festival de Benidorm*, the *Festival del Mediterráneo* and the *Festival de Mallorca*, with only minor concessions made to modern music.

The cultural hegemony in the 1960s of Britain, unanimously believed to be the European champion of a newer and fresher type of music, was gradually gaining ground in Spain, especially among the adolescent public. This was at the expense of the French and Italian musical models, which were more clearly addressed at an older and more ideologically conservative type of listener. In the yearly editions of the Eurovision Song Contest—an international window onto the music scene in western Europe—in the 1960s and early 70s, the clash between modern and conservative musical tendencies was clearly perceptible. Songs played by Britain’s more youthful rhythms almost always ranked highly: they either won (like Sandie Shaw’s “Puppet on a String” in 1967; Lulu’s “Boom-Bang-a-Bang” in 1969; or Brotherhood of Man’s “Save your Kisses for Me” in 1976) or ended in second position (as was the case in 1959, 1960, 1961, 1964, 1965, 1968, 1970, 1972 and 1975). Spain finally won the contest for the first time in 1968 thanks to a *ye-yé* song with a superficial and repetitive “la-la-la” chorus, the Spanish alternative to the prevailing British “yeah-yeah” of the time. The winning song, “La, la, la” (1968, R. Arcusa and M. de la Calva; Novola) was performed by Massiel, a Spanish *ye-yé* girl. The following year the contest was won by Spain again, this time by Salomé, another *ye-yé* girl who sang “Vivo cantando” (1969, M. J. de Ceratto and A. Alcalde; Belter), a catchy song strategically accompanied by the choral repetition of “hey!” after every line, another concession to the Anglophile fashionable use of youthful interjections. The lyrics of both hits typically praised the happy world that Massiel and Salomé, indeed, all Spaniards, had been lucky to be born in. The image of Spain depicted in the songs produced by the Spanish beat bands and solo singers, now fully imbued in Franco’s “25 Years of Peace”, was of an optimist and utopian Eden-like country. The mass arrival of foreign tourists wanting to enjoy the country’s goodness every summer seemed to confirm this. Thanks to the Eurovision Song Contest, Franco’s Spain could show to the world that the country was modern and technologically advanced, and could now rub shoulders as an equal with other European countries on the international scene.

The Beatles were also responsible for the construction of a product of great musical and cultural popularity among the youth of the 1960s in certain European

11 Played by Los Salvajes, who specialized in The Rolling Stones. The Animals’ international hit “The House of the Rising Sun” (1964) also had a few Spanish cover versions, as “La casa del sol naciente”, by Lone Star (1964), Los Cinco Latinos (1966) and Los Mustang (1970).

countries, the so-called, and aforementioned, *ye-yé* movement. It was especially intense in France and Italy, having been born under British influence, and then spread from these two countries to Spain. Especially via the French route, the *ye-yé* aesthetics gained strength in Spain. The term “*ye-yé*” became a Spanish word (used as both a noun and an adjective), following the French/Italian linguistic adaptation of the famous recurring chorus line employed in a good number of Beatles’ songs, “yeah, yeah”, and originally a relaxed and spontaneous youthful pronunciation of the English “yes”.¹² The phrase “yeah, yeah” (or its variation “oh, yeah”) symbolized the youthful spirit of beat or rock music followers in the early days of Beatlemania and the “swinging sixties” as a way to openly express their generation’s need for fun and freedom, as well as being a spontaneous expression of vitality. Furthermore, the phrase also symbolized a way for young people to boast of their ideas of rebellion and maintain a prudent distance from their elders. The *ye-yé* phenomenon lasted several years in Spain, between approximately 1963 and 1968, coinciding roughly with the period of the Beatles’ dominance in Europe. Spain’s *ye-yé* movement succeeded as a simple musical expression of a state of the happiness, optimism and freshness of its bourgeois youth, who only timidly advocated the need for change from the obsolete ways of the Spanish older generation. No strong political intention nor any criticism of the dictatorial regime appeared in the *ye-yé* music played on the radio, TV and jukeboxes (and in their *guateques* [house parties]). Franco’s military society and Church-ridden Spain made sure, however, that these tendencies did not get out of hand amongst Spanish youth.

In Spain the numerous pro-Beatles magazines *Discóbolo* (1962-71), *Fonorama* (1963-68) and *Fans* (1965-67) promoted the *ye-yé* music and aesthetic fashions of the new Anglo-French style (and to a lesser extent the Anglo-Italian style too) among their young readerships. Indeed, the first time that the term “*ye-yé*” appeared in Spanish was in number 4 (page 19) of *Fonorama*, February 1964, in an unattributed article titled “El Ye-ye”. Spanish *ye-yé* records, magazine articles and musical radio and TV programs of the time did not hesitate to include either

12 The Beatles’ “yeah-yeah” songs were “A Hard Day’s Night” (Lennon-McCartney), “Boys” (L. Dixon & W. Farrell), “Day Tripper” (Lennon-McCartney), “Every Little Thing” (Lennon-McCartney), “I Want to Hold your Hand” (Lennon-McCartney), “I’ll Get You” (Lennon-McCartney), “I’m Down” (Lennon-McCartney), “It Won’t Be Long” (Lennon-McCartney), “Money (That’s What I Want)” (J. Bradford & B. Gordy), “P.S. I Love You” (Lennon-McCartney), “Please Mr Postman” (G. Dobbins, W. Garrett, B. Holland, R. Bateman & F. Gorman), “Please, Please Me” (Lennon-McCartney), “She Loves You” (Lennon-McCartney), “Thank You Girl” (Lennon-McCartney), “Ticket to Ride” (Lennon-McCartney), “Yes, It Is” (Lennon-McCartney) and “You’re Going to Lose that Girl” (Lennon-McCartney). Several years later, in a post-yeah-yeah stage of the Beatles, there was also: “All You Need is Love” (Lennon-McCartney), “Polythene Pam” (Lennon-McCartney) and “She Came in through the Bathroom Window” (Lennon-McCartney).

English titles or expressions and terms borrowed from English (the “official” language of the movement, together, but to a lesser extent, with French) on their pages and headlines, namely: *single*, *LP*, *EP*, *hi-fi*, *hit parade*, *baby*, *love*, *ok*, *darling*, *fan*, *peppermint*, *picú* (the Spanish adaptation of “pick-up”, i.e., portable record-player),¹³ *boîte* as a synonym of disco, etc.

Spain’s beat music and *ye-yé* spirit combined easily in films, song lyrics, fashion and art. Spanish beat bands and their *ye-yé* products endeavored to depict the country as a happy nation devoid of any personal or social trouble. It was a place where young Spaniards aspired to having romantic and chaste love relationships, where they had constant smiles on their faces and where they enjoyed the everlasting sunshine, especially in the summer, often in a Balearic ambiance,¹⁴ while they listened to and enjoyed their hollow but (moderately) danceable and catchy melodies of the *canciones de verano* or summer hits. The Spanish beat singers interpreted songs with themes related to the natural joviality of healthy Spanish youth whose lyrics contained no social criticism, or if they did, it was very slight or extremely veiled social or political criticism. These songs would always be under the distant guardianship of the Franco regime and the closer scrutiny of the all-powerful Catholic Church, which was deeply committed to the vigilance of the spiritual health and education of Spanish youth. The most daring message this pop subgenre conveyed in their lyrics was closer to the youthful innocent aspiration to free themselves from their parents’ old-fashioned ways of dressing and musical tastes (*zarzuela*, *flamenco*, *bolero*, folkloric dances, *pasodoble*) than to the depiction of any real political/social criticism against Franco’s regime or against the widespread Catholicism of the country (Alonso González 2005, 252-53). Proof of the largely unpolitical intentions of their song lyrics is that many of them were composed in English and were therefore inaccessible to the average Spanish young person.

Spanish beat song lyrics were specifically written to avoid them from entering lusty dominions, especially after the publicly daring affirmation of Los Bravos

13 In the 60s Spanish youngsters would socialise in the so called *guateques* or house parties, where the “picú” was absolutely obligatory, for dancing with members of the opposite sex was expected, often under the watchful eye of a responsible adult. Apart from TV and radio programs, a “guateque” was a cheap way for the local youth to familiarize themselves with the latest hits from abroad: one record could be listened to by dozens of party-goers at the same time. Jukeboxes in bars were also popular ways of disseminating the Beatles all over Spain.

14 See, for example, hits such as “Paradise of Love” (Los Javaloyas), “Me lo dijo Pérez [que estuvo en Mallorca]” (Mochi y Karina), “El puente” (Los Mismos) and “El vuelo 502” (Los De la Torre), all summer hits praising the virtues of the cosmopolitan and touristic Mallorca of the sixties, where every day was Sunday.

that “los chicos con las chicas quieren estar” (that is, literally “boys want to be with girls”) in their national hit “Los chicos con las chicas” (1967, J. A. Muñoz; Columbia). The Spanish film *Los chicos con las chicas* (1967), directed by Javier Aguirre with the purpose of giving Los Bravos a commercial boost, followed the path of the Beatles films *A Hard Day’s Night* (1964) and *Help!* (1965), directed by the Anglo-American Richard Lester, but was very far from them in terms of quality and innovation. However, despite the obvious lack of political/social compromise of their texts, ye-yé youngsters were still criticized by the most conservative sectors of Spanish society for being uncivil savages, a mixture of beatniks and thugs, nocturnal rioters and practitioners of wild music with mesmerizing rhythms of dubious morality (Alonso González 2005, 243).

Most Spanish beat artists and their ye-yé followers aspired to lead a certain type of (urban) life, that is, to wear unorthodox clothes—jumpers, mini-skirts and colorful shirts as symbols of protest against conventional dress codes—dance with free unclassical steps and movements, play their electric guitars, grow their hair longer and be able to speak more freely to the opposite sex. Paradoxically enough, the most popular Spanish ye-yé male singers who followed the modern rhythms of the 1960s were more prone to the American musical influence than that from Britain: Dúo Dinámico (originally called “Dynamic Boys”) reflected their American leaning in their songs “Hello Mary Lou” and “Lolita Twist”, both from 1962, and in their adaptations of Paul Anka’s “Adam and Eve” and the Everly Brothers’ “Bye, bye, love”; Mike Ríos declared himself “the king of twist”, and others such as Mochi, Raphael, Luis Aguilé, Bruno Lomas, etc., did not appear to be overtly influenced by either the British or American scene, except in their ye-yé attire. As for the Spanish female disciples of the European ye-yé fashion such as Marisol, Karina, Rocío Dúrcal, Conchita Velasco, etc., they were all very young-looking singers of chaste youthful love songs which hardly ever ended in traumatic break-up episodes or sex. They had all begun their musical and/or film careers between the ages of sixteen and eighteen, wore youthful clothes such as mini-skirts, albeit somewhat less “mini” in Spain than in the rest of Europe, or tight jeans as a minor concession to the lustful eye. They danced with a wide display of gestures, swinging their arms like windmills and making use (only moderately, though) of their hips with characteristic freshness and a rejuvenating spirit, but they never lost one bit of their unmistakable looks of sheer innocence, or broke with the total absence of eroticism despite the inevitably frenetic rhythms of their modern songs. Their lyrics would almost invariably be about the joy of being young in a world permanently perceived as happy and therefore more naturally inclined to allow young people to fall in love. The Spanish ye-yé girl *par excellence* was characterized by “cantar en inglés, con el pelo alborotado y medias de color” [singing in English and having messy hair and wearing colorful tights],

as was described in Conchita Velasco's popular hit "Una chica ye-yé" (1965, A. Guijarro and A. Algueró; Belter). Indeed, the *ye-yé* girl à la espagnole was supposed to represent a modern image of the independent Spanish woman who the young women of the time supposedly aspired to emulate (Otaola González, 2012a). *Ye-yé* girls' whims were only small and tolerated liberties that did not gravely disrupt or pollute the healthy Spanish youth of the 60s.

The film *Megatón ye-yé* (dir. Jesús Yagüe, 1965; Eva Film/Mundial Film), starring the aforementioned *ye-yé* singer Mochi, aka Juan Erasmo and accompanied by a soundtrack consisting of songs performed by the beat band "Micky y los Tonys", was the first Spanish-made youth film. It is considered both a disciple of *A Hard Day's Night* and of the British "free cinema" movement of the most progressive filmic circles of the 1960s. *Megatón ye-yé* dared depict a somewhat more radicalized and socially provocative vision of the typical Spanish *ye-yé* woman: she was overtly dynamic and independent, she smoked, had her own car and wore makeup. But the film's attempt to boost the new Spanish woman of the 1960s ended up being mere wishful-thinking as her optimistic aspirations of freedom, sex equality and self-awareness would easily disappear as soon as she married her long-time boyfriend and became emotionally and ideologically dependent on her husband, like any other conventional and traditional Spanish lady of previous generations.

The *hippy* movement that followed as a social and political evolution of the *ye-yé* era was also closely backed by the musical and ideological evolution of the Beatles during the late 1960s and early 70s. It had its origin in the messages of "universal peace and love" popularized by the Beatles song "All You Need is Love" (Lennon-McCartney, 1967; Parlophone), among others. The new worldwide pacifist sentiment based on universal love and fraternity was especially encouraged by John Lennon and George Harrison (1943-2001), composers and performers of various songs with such themes—"Give Peace a Chance" (Lennon-McCartney, 1969; Apple) and "Imagine" (Lennon-Ono, 1971; Apple), by John, and "My Sweet Lord" (Harrison, 1970; Apple), by George—in their late Beatle and early ex-Beatle careers, as a result of their familiarity with Indian philosophy and oriental sounds. On the other hand, pacifism and the *hippy* ideology was also promoted by the anti-militarist protests that arose in the US after obligatory conscription during the Korean war (1950-53) and the Vietnam war (1955-75). These protestors became more radically critical of the establishment and the *status quo* than the European *ye-yé* youth. The *hippy* movement's adopted slogans, "Make Love, Not War" and "All You Need is Love", swept across the western world.

By the end of the decade a large sector of the European and American youth had drifted towards pacifism and embracing the universal love of *hippy* overtones. *Hippy* fashion brought about a new type of musical subgenre, psychedelic rock,

initiated by the Beatles' *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967, Parlophone), a musically revolutionary album that tried to reproduce the human mind's "trips" through the use of powerful electronic technology, the most advanced available at the time in recording studios. Drug consumption would liberate one's mind and let it flow in search of the essence (the truth) of existence and reach unexplored boundaries. However, this was not the case in Spain. Spain did not develop a serious interest in pacifism, or universal and free love and drug consumption (which was heavily and unmercifully penalized under Spanish law). The spirit of anti-militarism inherent in psychedelic rock did not catch on in Spain either, where every man was obliged to do military service (García Lloret, 2006).

Despite the easy-to-fall-into trap of simplifying the cultural and political atmosphere of Franco's Spain in the 60s as dictatorship/repression versus beat-ye-yé music/freedom, the development of Spanish national pop-rock is clearly more complex than this. Indeed, this mild liberalization of Spanish society would not have been able to grow roots in the country had it not been for some degree of tolerance on the part of the regime with regard to modernity from abroad. This was spread through the adoption of new rhythms and melodies or through the hordes of open-minded foreign tourists who patronized Spanish beaches every year. On the surface, the musical panorama in the late Spanish 60s did not allow for much of an open counter-cultural movement. This does not mean that this movement was not present in more discreet ambiances and in more subtle undercurrents verbalized in the form of social and political left-wing or nationalistic folk songs of protest (Joan Manuel Serrat, Raimon, the *Nova Cançó*). Other alternative rock subgenres such as psychedelic rock, progressive rock, folk-rock, radical Basque rock, heavy metal, Andalusian rock, urban rock, etc., developed in the later stages of the decade, especially during the early 70s—the final years of Franco's dictatorship—and during the first steps of the birth and infancy of democracy in Spain from 1976 onwards (Mora and Viñuela 2013).

International tourism did more than its fair share in the modernization of Franco's Spain. The English-speaking tourists in Spain brought pounds and dollars, very welcome and valued currencies indeed, but they also brought their eccentricities, sin, liberalism, sexuality, etc., in their luggage. During the 60s and early 70s, British and European freedom and debauchery, heterosexual and homosexual sex, orgies, alcohol, drugs and everlasting parties of which the national-Catholic regime was ignorant (or pretended to be) was supposedly concentrated on Málaga's Costa del Sol, especially in Torremolinos, its unofficial capital. The Spanish coasts and islands became the southern European capitals of the "sexual revolution" symbolizing an easy life of pleasure and luxury. The Costa del Sol was perceived by the rest of Spain as an isolated and dangerously contagious cell. The word loans borrowed from English in those days are

revealing of the type of lifestyle the international tourists led in the Spanish resorts. These terms were easily disseminated throughout the country through films, songs, radio and magazines. This vocabulary was unfailingly related to music (*rock, pop, top chart, jazz, blues, soul, beat, single, LP, hit parade*), leisure, fast food, fashion and (an alleged) relaxation of customs: *estriptis, snack, snack bar, barman, gin, gin tonic, cóctel, sándwich, beicon, restauran(t), bikini, shorts, mini* (from *mini-skirt*), etc. (Rodríguez González 2019, 801). The Costa del Sol and Mallorca (and to a lesser degree the cinematographic province of Almería) began to appeal to both the most *avant-garde* and cosmopolitan intellectuals and the most cutting-edge filmmakers and actors of the time and other modern followers of sexual liberation and advocates of the consumption of drugs and cheap booze, all attracted by the Spanish sun which encouraged light clothing and a generous exposure of bare skin on the country's beaches.

Inevitably, Beatle-influenced Spain also provided the Beatles with inspiration for their professional careers. John Lennon had visited Torremolinos in the company of the band's manager Epstein in 1963 and perceived its relaxed atmosphere,¹⁵ while his other companions went on holiday to the more temperate Canary Islands when they were still unknown outside the British Isles and could still go unnoticed. In May 1965 fellow Beatle Paul McCartney (1942 -) travelled by car from southern Spain to southern Portugal: it was then that he wrote the lyrics to a catchy melody that had been in his head for a long time: the best-seller of all times, "Yesterday" (Lennon-McCartney, 1965, Parlophone). In 1966 Lennon travelled to Almería as an actor in the film *How I Won the War* (1967, dir. Richard Lester; United Artists). It was at his hotel there that he composed "Strawberry Fields Forever" (Lennon-McCartney, 1967; Parlophone).

In 1966 a teacher from Cartagena, Juan Carrión Gañán (1924-2017), a declared admirer of the Beatles, was using their songs to teach his students English. When he learnt about Lennon's presence in Almería for the shooting of Lester's *How I Won the War* he tried to meet him personally to ask for his help in completing the lyrics that he was transcribing by ear listening to Beatles records and Radio Luxembourg broadcasts. The journalist J. Adolfo Iglesias, founder in 1999 of the cultural association "John Lennon Almería Forever", published *Juan & John: el profesor y Lennon en Almería para siempre* (2013), where he recounted the meeting of only half an hour between the Spanish teacher and the English musician. According to Iglesias, Carrión Gañán managed to convince Lennon to

15 Epstein only took Lennon to Torremolinos for two weeks in the Spring of 1963 in order to try to—presumably—"conquer" him: this town has named a street after the English musician. See Francis Mármol's newspaper article "John Lennon en el ambiente gay de Torremolinos", *El Mundo*, 10/06/2013.

print the lyrics of the songs on the album covers. This was done for the first time in the world on the LP *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967), released only shortly after Carrión Gañán and Lennon's interview.¹⁶

The Costa del Sol and Almería stayed in Lennon's mind. On the album *Abbey Road* (1969, Apple) he included the song "Sun King" (Lennon-McCartney), in which, in the most *avant-garde*, telegraphic, cosmopolitan and cryptic manner, he endeavored to depict the hedonistic atmosphere of the Arcadian, festive and smiling southern Spain of the 1960s thanks to the omnipotent presence of the Mediterranean sun. In its psychedelic lyrics Lennon, an observant but peculiar chronicler, most likely under the shadowy influence of the fashionable drug LSD, described the easy life of tourists in Spain:

Here comes the sun king
 Here comes the sun king
 Everybody's laughing
 Everybody's happy
 Here comes the sun king

Quando paramucho mi amore de felice corazon
 Mundo paparazzi mi amore chica ferdi parasol
 Questo obrigado tanta mucho que canite carousel

Mallorca and Ibiza (and to a lesser extent Gibraltar) also became popular "summer pilgrimage" places for musicians in search of luxury and vitamin D. In "The Ballad of John and Yoko" (1969, Lennon-McCartney; Apple), the Beatles narrated the vicissitudes of the Lennon-Ono couple trying to get married: they finally succeeded in "Gibraltar, near Spain" (l. 15), in March 1969, as the song narrates. The Spanish authorities, always fussy about any mention of the British colony, did not like the reference to the Rock in "The Ballad of John and Yoko" and the song was banned by the Franco regime,¹⁷ but it reached number one in the British charts.

Any study on Anglo-Spanish cultural relations during the Franco era would not be complete without an analysis of the Beatles' influence on Spain and

16 A recent Spanish film, *Vivir es fácil con los ojos cerrados* (Paco León PC/Canal+/Televisión Española), directed by David Trueba in 2013, starring Javier Cámara in the role of the Spanish teacher, was a deserved winner of several Spanish Academy Goya awards. This film recreated this Anglo-Spanish encounter and paid tribute to this innovative teacher of English, to Lennon and to Almería's film industry of the 1960s.

17 <http://www.rtve.es/alicarta/audios/canciones-prohibidas/canciones-prohibidas-the-ballad-of-john-and-yoko-16-11-13/2145563/> [Accessed January 27, 2020]

Spain's influence on the Beatles. In this article I have endeavored to show that this mutual connection went hand in hand with other historic and social milestones throughout the more liberal years of the dictatorial regime such as the development of mass tourism and the population's somewhat slow process of assimilating new cosmologies from abroad. A powerful role was also exerted by a more liberal younger Spanish generation (that of the *ye-yés*) who aspired to gain more freedom for themselves. Little did Franco's Catholic and conservative Spain know in the 1960s that a good number of streets and squares in Spanish towns and cities would end up being named after the Beatles during the democracy that followed Franco's death, and especially after Lennon's assassination in 1980.¹⁸ This is indeed a matchless example of gratitude and recognition of the Beatles' contribution to Spanish contemporary culture as well as a much-deserved homage to the Beatles' influence in the construction of democratic Spain as we know it today.

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18 Namely: C/ John Lennon (in Mérida, El Ejido, Telde and Vilanova/La Geltru), Paseo de John Lennon (Madrid), Plaça de John Lennon (Barcelona), Plaza de John Lennon (Torremolinos), Jardins de John Lennon (Gerona), C/ Beatles (Almería), Carrer dels Beatles (Lérida), etc. Lennon has also been honored in Spain through the erection of commemorative statues: one in Plaza Flores de Almería (sculpted by Carmen Mudarra, inaugurated in 2007); another in the town of Telde (Gran Canaria, sculpted by Ana Luisa Benítez Suárez, in 2003) and another in Jardines Ménez Núñez in La Coruña (by José Luis Ribas Fernández, in 2005).

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