

Berklee College of Music

**Iberoamérica Media Records Presents:
Dios Perro, a Statement of Cultural Preservation**

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Master of Music in Music Production, Technology and Innovation

Supervisor: Pablo Munguía

by Marcelo Wilson

Valencia Campus, Spain

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Abstract

The present project consists of a full twelve songs album, with a specific common concept and aesthetic goal: to respond to unanswered questions regarding how Chilean popular music would have developed if the 1973 coup d'état, which resulted in seventeen years of military dictatorship and an ensuing cultural disaster, had never occurred. Because of this political intervention, the previously vibrant music scene in Chile was suddenly and deliberately persecuted. However, since the turn of the century, after decades of cultural obscurity, a new movement has come along and Chilean music is finally recovering its identity. The recorded songs attempt to not only imagine what the current cultural energy would be had its development not been cut off, but also to channel this into a new and exciting movement.

Keywords: Chile, Chilean music, dictatorship, coup d'état.

1. Introduction

Forty-five years later, the question remains the same: what happened to our music? Towards the end of the 60's decade, Chilean popular music was developing a very strong identity: an interesting mixture between folklore heritage and modern music of those times¹. It was during this period that in 1973, a military dictatorship planned by the United States² and Chilean extreme right, took over government, persecuting all artists and thinkers that seemed like a menace to this new imposed political-economic model, a nightmare that lasted seventeen years and obscured all form of arts³. It took time to recover from this. Only with the beginning of the new millennium Chilean music started a waking up process: since big discographic labels abandoned the country due to internet, music streaming and piracy (among other factors), independent artists from various different genres started producing their own albums in their home studios with no commercial pressures, which led to the development, once again, of a unique style belonging to a particular place and a time. Chilean music was finally having the second chance it deserved.

Influenced by legendary artists such as Los Ángeles Negros, Violeta Parra and Victor Jara, young musicians Sebastián Orellana and Martín Benavides, two of the most talented Chilean 60's-oriented artists of this new generation, collaborated with producer, arranger and pianist Marcelo Wilson in order to create a new album that aims to become a modern extension of what was suddenly left behind forty years ago. Although this might sound like an impossible task, truth is the artists that were involved in this project, have been part of an intuitive aesthetic

1. Gonzalo Planet. *Se Oyen Los Pasos*. (Santiago: Cápsula Libros, 2004).

2. Stella Calloni. *Los Años del Lobo: Operación Condor*. (Barcelona: Icaria Editorial, 1999), 36-46.

3. Ascanio Cavallo. *La historia oculta del Régimen Militar*. (Santiago: Uqbar Editores, 2008), 197-207.

movement of bringing back what was lost decades ago, and what really seems impossible to do is not to ask yourself this particular question, which no political intervention can take away. This was the energy that allowed this project to dream about the music and influence it wants to bring back, to imagine how the present sound would be, and see towards the future by honoring the heroes from the past.

2. State of the art

The last two decades have been one of the most flourishing times of Chilean music. Artists such as Ana Tijoux, Alex Anwandter, Manuel García and Camila Moreno, are some of the representatives of this new continuous expanding scene⁴. Creating their music from a completely independent basis, they have become reference milestones that have pushed the independent Chilean scene to grow into a real local music industry that can sustain a long-term development. Relatively small recording studios have evolved into professional high standard studios, and nowadays one of the biggest studios of Latin America is based in Santiago: Estudio del Sur (<http://estudiodelsur.cl>). Sebastián Orellana, Martín Benavides and Marcelo Wilson, they have all worked directly or indirectly on these artists projects—among several others—for around ten years now, participating as producers, composers, artists, arrangers, and performers of all kinds of different projects that have been developed as part of the new Chilean independent music. This means not only they are completely aware of the ‘State of the art’ of Chilean music, but they are also an important part of it. The mixture of these three different musicians, that combined have been participating in the whole spectrum of Chilean music, from classical to jazz; from cumbia, salsa and bolero to rock and roll; from hip-hop to folklore; created the perfect set-

4. For more information about these artists: “MusicaPopular.cl la enciclopedia de la música chilena,” last modified 2018. <http://www.musicapopular.cl/>.

up to have all the necessary tools in order to achieve the one particular characteristic that all three of them have in common: the respect, appreciation and finally the thirst for reinterpretation of 60's Chilean music, and how without the traumatic political intervention, it could have developed.

3. Background and Album Description

3.1. The Album

Dios Perro is the title of this project, which consists of a twelve-song album inspired by the music developed in Chile during the late 60's. The songs are all original compositions by Sebastián Orellana, arranged by Martín Benavides, and produced by Marcelo Wilson. One of the goals of this project is to bring back the influence from those days, a particular era and a particular sound in danger of being forgotten because of the political intervention that occurred in 1973. This led to a permanent change in the cultural landscape of the country. Nowadays people don't seem to understand or remember the rich culture of that decade. Dios Perro's mission is to put Chilean musical grandfathers of younger generations, back into the family tree.

3.2. Chile in the 60's

The 60's in Chile were a very interesting period, not only musically speaking but in all kinds of artforms. In addition to Violeta Parra and Víctor Jara standing out in music, the poet Pablo Neruda won the Nobel Prize in this decade, author/film director Alejandro Jodorowsky was already very active during this period, just to name a few. There was a very unique social consciousness, which led to the popular election in 1970 of a socialist president, Salvador Allende. But in the eyes of the cold war world, this was seen as communism uprising, so

something had to be done. In 1973, the CIA planned and supported a military coup⁵, in secret collaboration with the Chilean army, putting Augusto Pinochet in charge. They persecuted and eliminated everything that was considered left-sided politically. The paranoia of a second Cuba happening was strong. After putting Víctor Jara in jail, they broke his hands so he couldn't play the guitar anymore, few days before murdering him. With all these people forced to leave the country, especially artists, this culturally vibrant place was suddenly muted.

3.3. Los Ángeles Negros

Besides the very strong folk music scene known as *La Nueva Canción Chilena*⁶, there was a very interesting and vibrant rock and pop music scene. Bands like Los Vidrios Quebrados, Los Galos and Los Ángeles Negros are good examples of this. The latter are the main influence for Dios Perro. Mixing funk music with boleros, the group led by Germaín De La Fuente became an iconic legendary band, and despite the fact of being active with its original band members for only five years (1968-1973), their influence spread all over Latin America.

3.3. The Sound

Given all the technology available today, emulating the sound from that era was not too complicated a matter. The secret relied mostly in selecting the right gear, but most importantly in keeping things simple and not over complicating it with too much processing. The first step was trying to get the right sound from the source, and this refers to the instruments, the guitar amps, and also the character of the songs. Some examples of the instruments used on this album were a

5. Calloni, “*Los Años del Lobo*”, 37-38.

6. J. Patrice McSherry. *La Nueva Canción Chilena. El Poder Político de la Música, 1960-1973*. (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2017).

Teisco Guitar from 1968, and a Gretsch Electric Bass from 1963. The second step was to carefully choose which microphones will best capture the sound. Vintage replicas available in Berklee Studios were used, such as the M147, and the M149, to name a few, but probably the most essential microphone used during these recordings was the dynamic super cardioid Sennheiser MD441. Its frequency response (see fig. 1), plus the possibility of using the bass roll-off switch, made it the perfect microphone for almost every instrument, including electric guitars, acoustic guitars, snare drums, percussion in general, but most importantly, the lead vocals, since it captured them almost exactly as desired in the mix without having to do any EQ processing later.

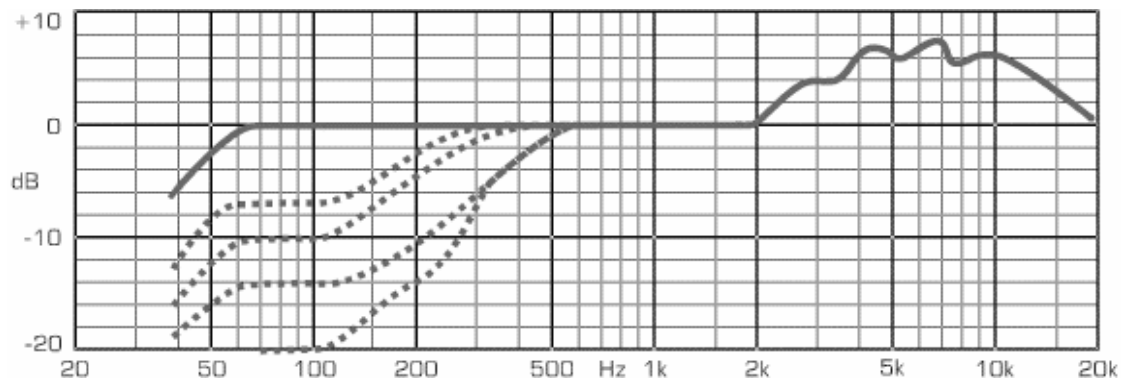


Figure 1. Sennheiser MD441 microphone frequency response.

The third step of this process was giving the recording the feeling of a live performance. Using different room mics (see fig. 2), plus having all doors open in the live room of the studio, letting everything bleed to each other, gave the recording a similar feeling of how it was done in the past, mostly with few mics and not much isolation.



Figure 2. Pair of M149 microphones in Blumlein technique. Photography by Marcelo Wilson.

The fourth step came after finishing all recordings, and consisted of re-amping some instruments with guitar amps (see fig. 3) in order to add distortion and room sound to them, without having to use plugins later in the process. Another important instance of re-amping was to bring to Berklee Valencia's AKSS Live Room any of the instruments that couldn't be recorded there initially. Finally, with all of these different signal options, the mixing was mostly about balancing clean/regular signal with the different room mics and re-amped signals, allowing the mix to be done with almost no plugins. After adding a small amount of extra reverb with Altiverb's emulation of the classic BX20 Spring Reverb, the mixing was done.



Figure 3. Stereo re-amping. Berklee Valencia AKSS Live Room. Photography by Marcelo Wilson.

4. Development

4.1 From arranger to producer

The completion of this work allowed its producer Marcelo Wilson to go from never having engineered a single recording session, to fully produce a twelve-song album. His experience working for approximately eleven years in different studios as an arranger and a piano performer, combined with all the learning from the different classes at Berklee Valencia, provided him enough information—and most importantly the confidence—to make all the technological decisions needed to create an album. This will be a precious new skill and experience for the future, regardless of his role during upcoming productions, since the addition of music technology knowledge to having musical theory and performer background gives a broader understanding of the music production process as a whole.

4.2 Making decisions

Recording a full album composed of only new original songs may sound like an unrealistic idea, especially considering the limited studio time available in Berklee Valencia Studios. Instead of letting this become a problem, this situation was used in favor of the project. There was a great amount of planning and preproduction involved so that when the time of entering the studio came, everything was as clear as possible. In addition to that, once in the studio, all the decisions had to be made fast, which allowed the project not to lose its focus and to keep its vision, character and integrity from top to bottom. The limited time problem was not only a matter of studio time, but also the fact that not all the members of the project were living in Valencia at the time. Having to wait for random studio appointments given by the Petition Sessions system, was another difficulty that was overcome with this focus and vision mentioned above.

The outcome of this project was better than expected. The sonic and aesthetic vision achieved by the album has given its members the tranquility of knowing that there will be more than one company or institution interested in helping directly or indirectly in the promotion of this work. This means that not only music labels may be attracted, but also cultural institutions interested in supporting projects like this that intend to contribute to historical culture.

5. Conclusion

One of the main characteristics of the music that was being developed in Chile during the 60's was its character. Combining with no inhibition whatsoever, the historical traditional music with all the new influences coming from English speaking countries, Chilean musicians developed a unique style, prepared to conquer big audiences as well as interest more demanding

types of listeners. That is exactly what the Dios Perro project attempted to follow, a kind of music with that same uninhibited character, able to be attractive to any type of listener. It was certainly interesting to see how every time a person walked by during the recording sessions, they stopped and asked what was happening there, expressing that no matter what that is, it sounds great. This happened not only with all kinds of musicians, no matter the music style they are dedicated to, but also with all people working at Berklee, regardless of being musicians or not. The album seems to be transversal not only in terms of musical tastes, but also generationally.

Having recorded an album that tries to revisit a specific time and era, this album is much more than a group of interesting sounding songs within a particular style, the project became a deliberate act of cultural preservation. Considering this, it was discovered during the process of this work, that instead of only looking strongly at the past, the album is even more powerfully looking at the future, as a trend setter. It attempts to bring back a specific aesthetic in order to facilitate a revival process and influence younger generations in the future, putting Chilean musical grandfathers back into the family tree.

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