

Kip Tobin goes out in the city that never sleeps, known for its 4am traffic jams and diverse music scene

Madrid is the loudest city in Europe. In some parts, it averages over 100 decibels during the day. Endless construction is engulfing the city while drivers, who have past their wit's end, unanimously honk in protest. When the sun disappears however, the noise transforms into loud voices and laughter as cleaning crews and water trucks hose down the streets. At midnight, most people are just ordering dinner and if you get home by 3am, you've had an early night. Madrid truly illuminates unlike any other city in Europe.

Madriñeos are an open people, partly due to the warm climate and aided by the fact that almost everyone who lives here has come from somewhere else in Spain. This internal migration brings many from the south and along with it, flamenco. Add to that a near-crisis level immigration problem (sometimes over 1,000 immigrants per day enter Spain) and you have the perfect environment for a burgeoning cultural fusion. While flamenco fusion is nothing new, it is currently riding a revival wave throughout Spain and the world. Groups like Ojos de Brujo and Chambao have opened the door for other groups like El Bicho and Muchachito Bombo Infierno. These fusion tendencies include overt and subtle melds with rock, hip-hop, electronica and other forms like ska, reggae, salsa, rumba, Latin jazz, African, samba,

bossa nova, and Caribbean rhythms. The fusion is so omnipresent that it precipitates confusion trying to discern where flamenco starts and others begin.

So it becomes impossible to speak of world music without speaking of flamenco or jazz and vice versa. Musicians who emigrate to Madrid invariably work with what's available and many times that means playing in jazz clubs. Weekly jam sessions throughout clubs in the city are perfect opportunities to witness converging styles. Since both jazz and flamenco are rooted heavily in improvisation, they mesh naturally and provide proper starting points with which to add, say, a Senegalese percussionist or a Brazilian guitarist. The rest is history in the making.

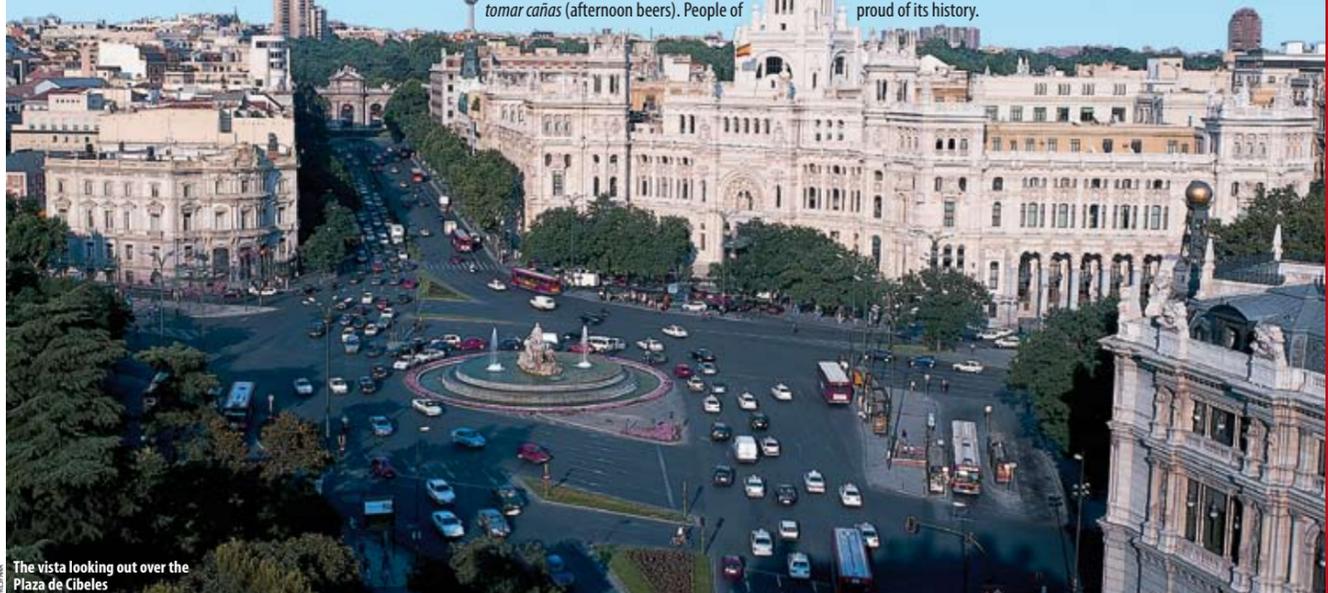
Just south of the centre is Lavapiés, the cultural Mecca of Madrid where over 60 different cultures intermingle every day of the week. Characterised by bohemian cafés, independent art galleries and theatres, terraces in the summer, African art shops, Chinese food stores, plentiful ethnic cuisines and bars that play music from all corners of the planet, Lavapiés is the place of many languages.

On any Sunday night next door, tens of thousands of people gather at the Rastro, one of the largest weekly flea markets in the world—buying, selling and bumping into each other. When it closes around 2pm, an exodus marches to nearby La Latina where another age-old Spanish tradition occurs: *tomar cañas* (afternoon beers). People of

all races are found drinking small beers and eating tapas, nurturing the social opportunity that Madrid offers anyone who wants to come.

Around dusk, a couple of kilometres away in the Retiro park, another weekly tradition occurs. Families and couples, students and hippies, bums and professionals all gather for strolling, napping or marvelling at street performers. From almost anywhere in the park, the sound of hundreds of bongos can be heard. If you follow the sound you will find yourself amidst a massive, pillared monument to Alfonso XII and it will be teeming with people, unified in the simplest of sounds—hands slapping on drum skins. Here you will also find a multitude of races, all unified in rhythm and enjoying the last few hours of free time on Sunday. It's a beautiful, emblematic sight of Madrid.

When Monday takes over, the construction and chaos resumes. Much of this growth was caused by 2012 Olympic aspirations. Even though Madrid lost, it is plodding forth much to the chagrin of the public. And all the growing pains it currently experiences should pay off some years down the road. If it works (that is, if it actually ever ends), Madrid will find itself in the league with other impressive European capitals, one that stands near the behemoths of London, Paris and Berlin: an aesthetic jewel that is as functional in its modernity as it is as proud of its history.



The vista looking out over the Plaza de Cibeles



BEST FLAMENCO CLUBS

Casa Patas
This is the place to see flamenco in Madrid. Not cheap but well worth it. Their motto: "We live and breathe flamenco."
Cañaneres, 10. +34 91 369 04 96, www.casapatas.com

El Corral de la Pachecha
Where celebrities and presidents go to see flamenco (pictured).
Juan Ramón Jiménez, 26. +34 91 353 01 00, www.corraldelapachecha.com

OTHER CLUBS

Oba Oba
Lots of dancing, caipirinhas and live Brazilian music almost every night of the week until late. It's where the Brazilians go.
Jacometrezo, 4

Kabokla
A bar/cultural centre that offers classes in *capoeira* and *axé* dance classes. Every Wednesday is *bossa nova* night.
San Vicente Ferrer, 55. +34 91 532 59 66, www.kabokla.com

Sala Caracol
Sala Caracol, a disco, often has African and Brazilian concerts, largely attended by immigrants. A great place to see authentic music.
Bernadino Obregón, 18. +34 91 527 35 94, www.salacaracol.com

Taboo
The Taboo nightclub always has house music with at least one bongo player, soul singer and/or guitarist and sometimes entire concerts of African percussion. An interesting twist on house music.
San Vicente Ferrer, 23. +34 91 524 11 89, www.taboo-madrid.com

VENUES

Clamores
Renowned jazz club (that is not so jazz) in a cave. It hosts an endless variety of music nightly throughout each month: Cuban, singer-songwriter, Indian chants, tango, gospel, blues, alt-country, African, Latin jazz and the occasional rock and pop group. Open nightly with shows that start around 10pm. Jam sessions are Tuesdays at 11pm and always bring the best of local talent who are not touring. Reservations recommended for bigger names.
Albuquerque, 14. +34 91 445 79 38, www.salaclamores.com

Galileo Galilei
Called Madrid's 'temple of music' reminiscent of a theatre and a favourite of many performers. Similar to Clamores, only larger and boasts bigger names, this club has 20 years under its belt and is a mainstay for CD release parties to the likes of Carmen Paris, Kiko Veneno, El Cigala, Tomatito et al. An excellent sound system, non-smoking section and theatre layout makes it the ideal place to see a show.
Galileo, 100. +34 91 534 75 57, www.salagalileogalilei.com

Zanzibar
Intimate club that specialises in world music with a world music jam session every Tuesday.
Regueros, 9. +34 91 319 90 64, www.zanzibarmadrid.com

Café Central
After 24 years and over 8,000 gigs and counting, it was chosen as one of the 35 Best Jazz Clubs in the World by several international jazz magazines. Wynton Marsalis, Javier Krahe, Art Farmer and Chano Domínguez have graced this bar with their presence.
Plaza del Angel, 10. +34 91 369 41 43, www.cafecentralmadrid.com

Calle 54
Born of Fernando Trueba's documentary of the same name, this upscale restaurant has hosted most of the musicians from the film. Primarily Latin jazz, though the occasional world or flamenco name passes through.
Paseo de la Habana, 3. +34 902 14 14 12, www.calle54.net



The sleek bar at famed world music venue, Clamores

Café Berlin
The most jazz of all the jazz clubs in Madrid. Al Foster (Miles Davis's drummer), Santiago de Muela, The Missing Stomper, Chemi Zeiz and Calento Jazz Orchestra have all played here.
Jacometrezo, 4. +34 91 521 57 52, www.cafeberlin.net

Café Populart
Moderately priced joint that has seen Compay Segundo, Paquito D'Riviera, Ximo Tebar and Sonny Fortune perform.
Huertas, 22. +34 91 429 84 07, www.populart.es

FESTIVALS

Spring and summer are the key times for festivals.

WOMADRID

The second annual WOMADRID is set to occur in the autumn in Casa de Campo, a sprawling park just outside the city.
www.womad.org.

Veranos de la Villa

A series of individual concerts at Conde

Duque during July and August each year. Gilberto Gil, Cesaria Evora, Taj Majal, Roberta Flack, Los Lobos, Cheikh Lô, Amparanoia, Erykah Badu, Rosa Passos, Claudio Baglioni and many others have played here.
www.esmadrid.com/festivalveranosdelavilla/

Suma Flamenca

A new, impressive flamenco festival held in June in Madrid with the best in music and dance from all over Spain. Enrique

Morente, José Mercé and Son de la Frontera were 2006's main attractions, along with dance presentations and activities that intend to celebrate and show the history of flamenco.
www.sumaflamenca.com

Madrid Encanto

The first three weeks of June see this smaller flamenco festival in the Albéniz theatre.
www.madrid.org/das_artes/teatros/albeniz/



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