



Javi Felipe
Rock is matter of girls



*"I've been your slave, baby
Ever since I've been your babe
I've been your slave
Ever since I've been your babe
But before I'll be your dog
I'll see you in your grave"*

***I Loved my Man aka Billie's Blues
Billie Holiday and her Orchestra, 1944***

Rock is matter of girls

Diego F. Hernandez

Seventy-four photographs of sixty-three women who make the stage their own. The gaze of Tenerife photographer Javi Felipe captures and compiles a collection of images from the last decade, where the rock music stand and all the styles feed the exercise of music in the Canary Islands have a woman's name. A gesture by the author that responds to the convenience of making the female figure visible in the island scene. A look at an intermittent scene, which has never existed as such, of which Javi Felipe has been a direct witness, and to which different generations of creators, men and women, who have cultivated the noble craft of the song in all its forms, without complexes and avoiding insularity.

ROCK&ELLAS is a photographic project in progress, capturing a different reality than usual in six island settings. Javi Felipe gives prominence to women, because rock is matter of their, just like soul, blues, jazz, pop and electronic music. This is how the photographer understands it, who for this collection, in which he underlines his status as a visual - and sound - chronicler of the recent history of the invertebrate Canarian scene, has opted for images in a glossy vinyl LP cover format, and in color. Because as the author himself reasons, "life is in color and that color represents a current stage where all the nuances that arise from the current empowerment of women in any artistic discipline, in this case music and, in turn, moves away from the black and white that represents a patriarchal past."

Seventy-four photographs of sixty-three different women that take over a scene that has always had a strong masculine weight, had it and still has it. Rock had pioneers, and they had to make their way into a men's genre, where the role of women was distributed in the black and white prints that Javi Felipe avoids in this first series of ROCK&ELLAS.

"The objective of this exhibition is basically to publicize the work of women in the rock scene made in the Canary Islands (RMC), as we like to call it. A rock scene that, despite the

systematic disregard of the relevant cultural institutions, survives, outside the circuits, in an underground ecosystem where women play a very decisive role,” explains photographer Javi Felipe. In the opinion of the author of this photographic series, “it is basically making visible this empowerment that has emerged for approximately a decade on the scene. Here we can find women who sing, play guitars, basses, drums, violins... and it seems to us, therefore, a tribute to them, hence the name Rock & Ellas and also a tribute to the mothers who gave birth to them.

“I have been your slave, since I have been your baby, but before being your dog I will see you in your grave,” sang Billie Holiday, an artist who, due to her attitude and musical discourse, must be placed among the pioneers in breaking barriers and put women at the center of the action. Ma Rainey, Memphis Minnie, Ella Fitzgerald, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Big Mama Thornton, Etta James and Wanda Jackson, as well as Lady Day, sowed the seeds of jazz, blues, rock & roll and country before Elvis changed the sign of the time. And in the same way, later generations sought their place away from men, with a musical discourse that ranged from folk to soul, from Joan B  ez to Aretha Franklin or Nina Simone.

ROCK&ELLAS is also a tribute to all these women who made history. All the faces of these pioneers also appear here reflected in an imaginary mirror that also returns to the viewer the images of Janis Joplin, Debbie Harry, Crissie Hynde, Joan Jett, Patti Smith, Madonna, Cindy Lauper, Annie Lennox, Marianne Faithfull, Nina Hagen, PJ Harvey, Suzi Quatro, Wendy O. Williams, Dusty Springfield, Tina Turner, Nico, Grace Slick, Stevie Nicks, Joni Mitchell, Rickie Lee Jones, Poison Ivy, Poly Styrene, Siouxsie Sioux, Kate Bush or Bjork.

Why ROCK&ELLAS?

“The project arose a year before the pandemic with the idea of contributing my grain of sand to the cultural activity of International Women's Day. Then the health crisis arrived, the confinement, and everything stopped. It is in 2021 when we begin to prioritize concert coverage to basically portray bands with a female presence,” explains Javi Felipe. The invitation and proposal that comes to you from Hero Fest 2022 through its director Alejandro Padr  n to bring a photographic exhibition about Canarian rock to El Hierro put Rock & Ellas on the table. The next thing was to put together a team for this visual and sound challenge. In this sense, Javi Felipe emphasizes that “I like to surround myself with positive people who bring energy to the projects, and in September we premiered Rock & Ellas, on the island of El Hierro curated by Diego F. Hern  ndez who is in charge of the literary part; and Cristo Gil, supervising the art and composition section of the exhibition. The graphic design was carried out by the prestigious designer Max Mala and, finally, we were able to count on the fantastic collaboration of Rita Vera, who is in charge of production tasks. So we assembled a great team of five people to continue breastfeeding this beautiful creature that does not stop growing week after week.”

The prominence of women in the music scene in the Canary Islands is notorious, and in recent years a high number of women exercise the leadership that gives them the robustness and maturity of their musical projects. Photographer Javi Felipe elaborates on this circumstance regarding the Sonora Festival of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria 2023 band competition held last April. “The last prize at the Sonora festival was awarded to a woman: Alba Gil Aceytuno, who is selected in the exhibition within three different projects, which indicates the desire that exist in our archipelago to make music, to compose, play... One of Alba's projects, Arube is made up entirely of women (Xerach Pe  ate, Bel  n Doreste and Alba herself).”

In the opinion of the author of ROCK&ELLAS, “the rise of women in the rock scene made in the Canary Islands is inherent to a natural process that is fed by the reactions of women in today's society where they worthily claim their space. Let's call it empowerment or whatever,

but it arises through a process of natural spontaneity." And as Javi Felipe reasons, "music and other artistic disciplines are to a certain extent reflections of the circumstances that societies experience and, fortunately, women in today's society are beginning to gain levels of prominence that were unthinkable not long ago. Something similar happens in music, not only do projects arise from young girls who begin to show their talent on stage, but women who were part of the scene in the 80s of the previous century are also resurfacing."

Women are the exclusive protagonist in ROCK&ELLAS, whose exhibition is an explosion of color that according to Javi Felipe "represents the current stage far removed from the patriarchal past that was revealed in black and white. This exhibition, which reveals them in color, seeks recognition of their contribution to a scene that is already underground, vetoed by commercial circuits, whether programming or broadcasting." Javi Felipe insists that "color is key in this exhibition." In this regard, he points out that "the change to black and white is a widely used resource in concert photography because it enhances the photographs and frees them from the excessive saturation produced by red spotlights, very common in concert halls and bars. In our case we prefer to keep the images in the original colors of the scene, regardless of whether they are saturated or oversaturated."

"With this exhibition we want to show them, make them visible and, furthermore, we show them in color, because life is in color. The fact that it is an open exhibition, that grows day by day, shows a constant struggle to achieve that empowerment and keep it alive every day. In El Hierro the expo premiered with 53 images and currently has 74 and we continue adding," says photographer Javi Felipe.

Close Ups

The ROCK&ELLAS exhibition and series is fundamentally nourished by photographs-portraits in medium, short and close-up shots in order to establish more intimate relationships with the artists, highlights the author Javi Felipe. The photographer assures that "these types of shots allow us to capture the entire gestural range that the authors themselves display in concerts and that, to a large extent, bring to light feelings and emotions that underlie the music they perform."

Regarding the format in which the photographs are presented, a square format has been chosen in the manner of the cover of a vinyl record. The author explains that this format "compresses the expressiveness of the faces much better and because we sought to represent the expo as if it were a collection of vinyl records. We wanted to hang vinyl covers on the wall where these covers would be illustrated with the artists' photographs. Hence the photos have the size of the cover of a vinyl record. We also wanted it to be minimalist, lacking external elements that distract the public. In this sense, we opted for stickers on the photo, instead of adjacent cards, where the only information offered is the name of the artist.

Biographies

Javi Felipe (Santa Cruz de Tenerife) has a degree in Information Sciences (journalism section) from the University of La Laguna and a diploma in Teaching (English). He dedicates himself to language teaching to live and cultural activism to survive. He has been a columnist in some digital newspapers in the archipelago and has worked as a cultural manager and activist for thirty years. He is responsible for the cinema press at the International Short Film Festival, and has collaborated with the Las Eras del Tablero Rural Creation Festival, where he programs the film section and coordinates the electronic music festival Era Electrónica. He has participated as a jury in several film festivals and is currently dedicated to rock concert photography for almost fifteen years.

In this sense, it has exhibited the following collections: They think they are tough guys and

everything [Bandas RMC], permanent exhibition at the Lone Star Tenerife pub (August 2021 to present); Music can be seen with your eyes closed, a mixed exhibition that collects 400 images in concert, in single disc format, of artists from the RMC scene during the second decade of this century. Island Library of Gran Canaria. Las Palmas de GC, October 2021; and Rock & Ellas The woman in Rock Made in the Canary Islands during the last decade. Hero Fest, La Frontera (El Hierro), September 2022. Rock & Ellas. Women in Rock Made in the Canary Islands during the last decade. Gran Canaria Big Bang Vintage Festival (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria) Insular Library of Gran Canarias, October 2023.

Cristo Gil Díaz (Santa Cruz de Tenerife) She has a doctorate in Art History from the University of La Laguna. She has participated in several national and international conferences and has published several research articles related to eroticism, gender or music and terror within the artistic field and music. She's a member of the Institute of Canarian Studies [attached to Csic], as well as the research teams of Urban Culture and Audiovisual Creation and Art, Fashion and Identity, both belonging to the University of Laguna.

Member of the academic team of the magazine Heresy and Beauty, as well as a member of the advisory board of the magazine Accadere. Magazine of Art History of the University of La Laguna and coordinator of the Art section of Sui Generis Madrid.

He has worked as a teacher in university courses and has given talks at institutes and in different associations and entities. She also participates as a collaborator in colloquiums, moderating tables, presenting and interviewing in Film Talks and in the Film Classroom of the University of La Laguna, the Isla Calavera Fantastic and Horror Film Festival, as well as in Sui Generis Madrid, the Festival . Tenerife Noir and recently for the I Conference on Research, Communication and Management of Cultural Heritage held at the Tenerife Espacio de las Artes and organized by the CUCRA Research team (to which it belongs) and by the Academic Commission of the Master in Theory and History of Art and Cultural Management of the University of La Laguna. He has been part of the short and film selection team at the Canary Islands Independent Film Festival, [FICINDIE] and currently serves as a jury at the Docurock Festival.

Diego F. Hernández Sosa (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria) He has a degree in Information Sciences (journalism section) from the Complutense University of Madrid. Journalist and music critic, specialized in the Canarian scene and industry, in which he has been involved since 1990 as coordinator, producer and director of various musical projects linked to the written press, radio and television. Editor and content coordinator at the newspapers Diario de Las Palmas and La Provincia between 1990 and 2021, with experience in other media in the Canary Islands in the last three decades. Director and presenter of musical programs, Tercera Planta (Radio Canarias/Antena 3) and La Batidora (Radio Costa Internacional); and on television as a scriptwriter for the program Beatkini (Televisión Canaria). Co-producer of shows such as the I Canary Islands Noise Festival (1993) and Carnaval Pop (1995), among others; and co-director of recording projects such as Persiones y Diversiones (Ruin Records, 2011). Member and founder of the Fuckin Four Factory project, as a DJ and band, he is the author of the Guide to Pop Rock in the Canary Islands, published by the General Directorate of Culture of the Canary Islands Government in 1995. In 2016 he received recognition from the Canary Islands Disco Association the work of disseminating the Canarian discography; and in 2017, best promotional work at the Canary Islands Music Awards. In recent years he has been press officer for important music festivals in the Canary Islands, including the PHe Festival. He currently works as press and communication manager at the Cuyás Theater in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.

