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SUMMER IN EUROPE; From Jazz to Fusion, Late and Live in Madrid

By ANDREW FERREN

IT'S 11 p.m. in the Plaza del Angel in Madrid, and the strains of a jazz sax solo can be heard seeping through the plate-glass windows of Caf?entral. Inside, couples and small groups huddle around the 20 or so tables set amid mirrored pillars that seem to multiply the ambience without blocking the view of the stage.

Just down the street at Populart a crowd of jazz aficionados sip gin and tonics from giant goblets. A few young Turks in leather jackets stick to beer at the far end of the bar as the West Africa-born **Justin Tchatchoua** and his Afro Group warm everyone up with selections from their new CD of African fusion beats.

Similar scenes -- some rowdy, others refined -- are replicated nightly all across the city. Within a 10-minute stroll from the Puerta del Sol, the center of historic Madrid, music lovers can take their pick of live jazz, rock, flamenco or folk-rock, or an ever-growing fusion of all the above by top Spanish artists like Manu Chao or the rising flamenco star Esperanza Fern?ez. Mixed in you might find international names like Busta Rhymes or the Strokes.

In the past year or so there has been a major multiplication of the number of establishments -- ranging from cafeterias to small theaters -- that now offer live music. It's helped that city officials seem to have eased some of the restrictions and aggressive monitoring of clubs. Diego A. Manrique, the music critic of the daily El Pa?and the Spanish Broadcasting Corporation, said: "It's really still just beginning to take off. While many new places are finding their way, the old standards are adding performances and drawing larger audiences."

"Madrid is an easy place to get hooked on live music," says Curro Gonz?z, an owner of La Boca del Lobo, as the local band Funk Attack clears the stage after midnight on a recent Thursday evening, and the crowd of about 100 drifts toward the bar in this compact multilevel club. He says the live-music scene works because so many of the people involved are industry insiders -- producers, agents, music critics and, of course, the artists themselves -- and their enthusiasm doesn't disappear when they leave the office. "People do this because they love the music," says Mr. Gonz?z.

It also doesn't hurt that Madrile?love night life and being out among the masses, so with cover charges that are rarely more than 10 euros (\$15 or so) and typically include a drink, a live performance from 10 p.m. to midnight gets people into the bars and into the mood. Many bars

also serve relatively good and reasonably priced food, providing the possibility of a one-stop evening. The jazz club Caf?erlin has a whole menu of "Bird" salads and "Stormy Weather" sandwiches and offers wine tastings of standout Spanish vintages.

Nor does it hurt that lots of the bars are serendipitously located near -- even next door to -- each other, creating lively neighborhood vibes that last all night.

Just a block off the Gran V?is another vortex of Madrid's music scene. The two-year-old Costello Club has quickly evolved into one of the city's most popular destinations. Warm amber lighting sets a relaxed mood in the street-level bar that has a chill-out room in the back with deep sofas for lounging and conversation. Downstairs, the long brick-vaulted basement is a ready-made concert area for the nightly rock concerts and jam sessions. Costello's owners, the brothers Dani and Paco Mar? both worked for recording labels and many musicians come here to drink after finishing their sets elsewhere.

But they don't always come just to drink. Given the brothers' background, they bring in the occasional big-name international talent, bands like the Strokes and Keane. But given the club's small size, these concerts get no promotion and are more or less a gift to Costello customers, Dani Mar?says.

Around the corner is El Sol, a joint whose most commonly applied modifier is "mythic." Open since 1979, it was the backdrop for much of the famous movida madrile?the post-Franco punk-rock, pop-culture explosion that gave the world Pedro Almod? and Agatha Ruiz de la Prada. Even today, the large basement club -- with it's all-white d?r glowing with pink neon tubes -- still feels like an underground carnival. Nightly concerts can range from rock to pop to salsa or flamenco, and the place rocks to at least 4:30 (on weeknights).

Not far away is Caf?erlin, perhaps the city's most elegantly evocative jazz club, very likely because it opened as one in the 1950s and still retains its Art Deco interior, including the original jazz-inspired frieze behind the stage. Caf?erlin is a classic bo? whose owner, Carlos Marquerie, insists that performers be versed in classic jazz. Every other Wednesday is big band night.

"Whatever kind of Latin-flamenco-jazz fusion you want to do," Mr. Marquerie says, "you won't do it here unless you can play classic bebop jazz vocals. People come here for jazz-jazz."

Since they are mostly geared to tourists, many of the city's flamenco stages, known as tablaos, set their prices back in the days when the dollar was worth something. At 31 euros per person, the 90-minute performances at Casa Patas can seem pricey to someone hoping to catch a song or two before moving on to another club. So now there is Patas Chico, a tiny bar across the street popular among the flamenco crowd; impromptu performances late at night after the shows are not guaranteed, but nor are they uncommon, and a glass of wine is just 2 euros.

Yet another constellation of late-night revelry awaits north of the old center, near the Bernab? Stadium, where Real Madrid plays its soccer. At Moby Dick, the sleek neon-lit facade conceals a rollicking nautical interior, complete with lighthouse next to the stage. With bands that rock and a youthful crowd that comes to move, it reads Jersey Shore, and is very likely the closest

thing Madrid will ever have to the Stone Pony.

So whether you're looking for mojitos and merengue or cold gin and hot jazz, Madrid has a foolproof recipe for everyone. "Just look around the place," says Dani Marías as he surveys the wall-to-wall crowd at Costello. "We're full like this every night."

MORE INFORMATION

Café Central, Plaza del Ángel, 10; (34-91) 369-41-43; www.cafecentralmadrid.com.

Popular, Huertas, 22; (34-91) 429-84-07; www.popular.es.

La Boca del Lobo, Echegaray, 11; (34-91) 429-70-13; www.labocadellobo.com.

Costello Club, Caballero de Gracia, 10; (34-91) 523-01-74; www.costelloclub.com.

El Sol, Jardines, 3; (34-91) 532-64-90; www.elsolmad.com.

Café Berlin, Jacometrezo, 4; (34-91) 521-57-52; www.cafeberlin.es.

Casa Patas, Cañares, 10; (34-91) 369-04-96; www.casapatas.com.

Moby Dick, Avenida del Brasil, 5; (34-91) 555-76-71; www.mobydickclub.com.

PHOTOS: ABOVE: Outside the Costello Club in Madrid. **FAR LEFT:** At La Boca del Lobo.

LEFT: Franck Lacy and his group at Popular. (PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATIAS COSTA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

MAP: The heart of the jazz and music district in Madrid, Spain.