



“Genuine music joins people, it gives power to society and its individuals: it makes us a tribe”

Ál Carmona is a founder member and guitarist for Rober y los Optimistas, bassist in the band Sin voz ni don and he has released the solo album “Canciones sin estribillos”

How has been the collaboration with the composers who have inspired the song “Vamos despertando”?

We are used to play with people who have any mental distress: the leader of our band lives with the symptoms of a mental illness, so we take this condition as something natural. Rober and me have played together for about 17 years. The weirdest case was that month where the band could not rehearse weekly.

How did Rober y los Optimistas start?

Félix Pérez, from the group Candeal, had a studio, and there we recorded the two first EP. The first EP, with Rober and Félix, with the help of Jesús E. Cuadrado, “Chuchi”, playing the guitar. For the second EP we had Rebeca de Orleans singing the chorus, Quique “More wood” to the solo guitar, and me playing the

bass. From there, the group started being called Rober y los Optimistas. There was a moment where the bassist Alejandro Rivero played with us, from the group Reciclaje, so I started playing rhythmic guitar. Later, people like Gabriel Santiago, people from La Cava... also played with us. Since 2004, many “Optimistas” have joined and left the band. There have been travels and moving outs. We have had some painful losses, like Félix not long ago or the flutist Óscar García... But we have met many people and all of them have added something, I suppose we have also left something for them. This path has taken us to release a compilation with three EP – the third one was recorded in the Puerta Bonita high school, in Carabanchel –it is available in every digital platform like Spotify (https://open.spotify.com/album/3xhFHpCTFOR04tCDMyYGwm?si=2XG1K_YZSa2dd4Btfca4YQ) or TIDAL (<https://tidal.com/browse/album/149698383>). We have also recorded music videos that we will be posting slowly in our Youtube channel (https://youtu.be/z9Rz3_-XNOI).

How do you create your songs?

In Rober y los Optimistas, both melody and lyrics come from Rober. We make some arrangements,



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of times, not to think “This has been made by a mad person” and that’s all. There are funny and teasing songs, they make fun and celebrate both personal madness and the madness of everyone. Other songs have background, meaning, and they get deep into an experience that not everyone can live. Rober’s music is different, attitude matters more than shape, I am not sure whether the concept is understood. Maybe people think: “And this damn deranged...?!” [Laughter]. But our songs try to be moving in some way; to touch something personal and elemental in the audience. Some songs are too straight forward, but some other are so innocent that they disarm you.

What gives you to be a member of Rober y los Optimistas?

In my opinion, music is so powerful. Making music makes us happy, it makes us feel realized and that makes up for the amount of troubles that nowadays it implies. The sensation you have when you are in scene when everything – musicians, audience, sound – works is unique and addictive. Anyone that has ever been on scene knows what I’m talking about. No further pretense is needed. I remember one of the last gigs in a bar near Rober’s house. We enjoyed, many friends attended, some unknown people were fuzzy... a Rober y los Optimistas gig is so funny! On the other hand,

genuine music joins people, it gives power to society and its individuals: it makes us a tribe. Now this doesn’t seem to sit right with some interests: it is easier to control people if they feel lonely and fragile; it is easier to sell us useless things if we feel unsatisfied and blue. That’s why certain musical scenes are promoted. They have more of a neutral and alienating product than honest and genuine art.

What do you mean by genuine?

Being brave enough to say: “I’m here, I’m like this and this is what I truly feel” even if it is not nice. To recognize that shit exists and not because of this the world is a less beautiful place. To speak of other kind of sensations, not only good vibes, having fun or romantic love, those themes so proper of rock. To not try to please for the sake of pleasing, nor to be cool for the sake of being cool. Listen to songs like “¡Estoy loco!”, “Metemos miedo” or “Nada en el cuerpo” and then “Lo que yo sé”, “Esperando conoerte” or “Lisonjera sonrisa” and you will see what I mean.

What do you take from your participation in the IME project?

I’m left with having met new people. Both incredible artists from the rest of Europe and Rober’s colleagues at INTRAS. The latter have been rehearsing for more than a year and, even though they are not very experienced musicians in general, their motivation and sensitivity often surpasses that of professional musicians. There are people who have thrown themselves into writing lyrics and poetry in such a hyper-honest way that it hits you in the face like a slap in the face, people who have let go of singing in public with a drive that I would like to have for myself, and others who have picked up a guitar again to go into the studio and record this song, ‘Vamos despertando’. That moment when you notice people ‘waking up’ to music is very stimulating. And contagious.

but Rober is a very good musician and a very good guitarist. The repertoire is basically his, his ideas and his songs. The lyrics of the project song for IME, “Vamos despertando”, has been written by Rober and his colleagues of the day care center 20 meters. Some verses are from ones and some verses are from others. Rober has finished the “puzzle” adding the melody and the rest of the Optimistas have arranged the song.

Does this proximity to mental distress adds identity to the bandyou?

The circumstances of our leader are a creative and unusual key point for the lyrics and the structures of the songs, but Rober y los Optimistas is a band like any other. We do music and we do it in a natural way. It is not necessary to be “mad” to make creative music, but the fact of being mad is not a problem

either. Sometimes it is even an advantage artistically speaking. We are all at the same level, the ones that have diagnosed mental health issues, and the ones that do not... Music and artistic creation are healing elements, vital for everyone. We have to remember that Rober is also a painter with a unique and recognizable style. He has absolutely superb pictorial work.

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Do you have any message for the public?

Our repertoire presents a challenge and we invite the audience not to judge and to be condescending of our music. To begin with, it can, more or less, trap you, but it does not let anyone indifferent. We would like people to listen to Rober’s songs a couple

