

Interview with Porno Para Ricardo

Cuban Libertarian Movement

2008

The Cuban Libertarian Movement (MLC) interviewed via internet a punk musical group active in Havana for over 10 years who are today a significant reference in a counter cultural scene that merits recognition and solidarity.

Without a doubt, Porno Para Ricardo www.pornopararicardo.com has become a legend of countercultural resistance in Cuba and a milestone inside the Latin American punk scene; likewise we've been able to confirm the growing interest in the international anarchist milieu regarding the activities and the anti-establishment attitude of the band's members who self-describe openly against authority of whatever color.

However, we think it's not enough to advertise the existence against all odds of a growing and every day more important countercultural scene in Cuba where punk stands as the tip of the spear against all authority. It is precisely in this scene where PPR stands out with their independent and do-it-yourself music, full of irreverent lyrics which have resulted in harsh persecution by the bourgeois dictatorship of the Castro brothers.

This open repression against Cuba's countercultural movement leads us, as Cuban anarchists, to add our voice to the necessary international solidarity campaign for Porno Para Ricardo. Therefore we publish this interview with Gorky and other members of the PPR collective as a first step in this campaign.

MLC: First we want to inform you that this interview will appear in El Libertario, a Venezuelan anarchist publication, and also in Cuba Libertaria, voice of the Group of Support to Libertarians and Independent Syndicalists in Cuba; besides other anarchist organizations who will surely publish it in their respective media.

PPR: We don't call ourselves anarchists per se because we are not very well informed about what this philosophy means today and we'd like to design "our" anarchy for ourselves because after all this philosophy is very seductive.

MLC: When did PPR start as a countercultural musical endeavor?

PPR: The group started towards the end of 1998 motivated by unhappiness with the Cuban rock scene, that is, if we wanted to continue doing what we liked we could not continue to be just public, we had to form our own group. Our proposal has evolved but very little, it has been the same or very similar from the beginning, essentially as our hatred of the system increases and our bodies spend more years submerged in it, so has increased our radical stand with respect

to that which bothers us – the older we get the more radical we become. Should it be the other way around?

MLC: Why Porno Para Ricardo? How did the name come up?

PPR: We don't remember from so much repeating it, let's have coffee and then we'll answer you ... Ricardo (an individual) + Porn (a censored pleasure) = Porno Para Ricardo – against the famous slogan “Fatherland or Death”

MLC: In what context did you decide to come together and express yourselves as a band?

PPR: Under official repression and total misunderstanding – we're talking about the public, our colleagues etc – but also funny because being well liked was never too important for us, if that were the case we would've made a Salsa group.

MLC: what was the young people's reaction to the appearance of PPR in the Cuban countercultural scene?

PPR: Since the beginning our public was small and to tell the truth our shows were never wholly accepted by the “classic” rock public because the public as well as the artists live in a state of frozen neurons typical of provincial cultures little informed and also because the culture of fear and intolerance that permeates people's minds. Today more people understand our message, even transcending the boundaries of rock and being listened to by not only the followers of the genre, and that is where we believe we make our impact inside Cuba because a lot of people want to hear what we say in our lyrics since that is what many people think but are incapable of expressing because of fear.

MLC: And the state's reaction?

PPR: Same as always, it's always been obvious to us that we must pay a price for our obstinacy, for our way of thinking.

MLC: We know first hand of the persecution and repression the bourgeois dictatorship of the Castro brothers and the thousand and one ways of implementing it against whoever disagrees with the internal order of the Farm. In the case of the PPR collective, how has the Cuban state repressed you?

PPR: It is well known because we have denounced it every time we have a chance, summons to the police station, intimidation, acts of repudiation, discrimination, humiliation and even jail.

MLC: Porno Para Ricardo has set a precedent in the Cuban punk scene. Are there other punk bands and collectives in Cuba?

PPR: There are, but not at the radical level we have, which doesn't make us proud because we would like to have more groups so we wouldn't feel so lonely and to have somebody to go to because in many cases we are plague ridden, many people from other bands say they identify with us but when push comes to shove they freeze. What would be very sad for us is that when change comes many of those who kiss the official's asses suddenly become “radical” and “anti-establishment” and invent stories to present themselves as heroes like it has happened in other occasions.

MLC: There are definitely clear differences between the life time totalitarianism of the Castro brothers and the bad copy of it that comandante Chavez tries to implant in Venezuela; perhaps because of it, taking advantage of such differences, the Venezuelan anarcho-punk scene has been able to establish strong links and coordinate among autonomous bands and collectives such as Cooperative of Self-managed Bands, that includes bands such as Apatia No, Doña Maldad, Skoria Social among others and initiatives such as Toche Records, La Libertaria de Biscucuy, the journal El Libertario, etc.; with the goal of organizing concerts and countercultural events in different cities. Is there in Cuba any coordination among punk bands and collectives?

PPR: The only thing we have in Cuba is a wrongly named “rock movement” which is even directed by a governmental agency called “Rock Agency” that answers to the government. It is a total aberration of what rock is, when did rock ever had to be institutionalized?, the saddest thing is that some people believe that they need the state to support their creativity and are not conscious of the “do it yourself” spirit that has always been the standard of rock and roll.

We certainly would like to make contact with this Cooperative of Self-managed Bands and perhaps learn from their experience and make interchanges since in Cuba there are very few punk bands, to mention a few also in the punk scene: Eskoria, ALbatros, Barrio Adentro, the rest are bands in this new thing of EMO and pop-punk that are in no way anarchist nor anti-establishment but in many ways the opposite.

MLC: We spoke of the “clear differences” that can still be observed between the Cuban and the Venezuelan states, but given the more evident similarities, would you like to coordinate efforts with anarcho-punk bands and collectives in Venezuela?

PPR: Definitely yes.

MLC: What about a joint effort as a first step?

PPR: We love the idea, count us in.

MLC: PPR lives under very particular conditions due to the scarcities, deprivations and restrictions of which the Cuban people but not its dominant class is victim which, together with the specific repression you suffer due to your anti-establishment position as a group, it multiplies your difficulties regarding your creative labor and its publicity. How can we help you? What do you need and how can we bring it to you?

PPR: We suffer necessities of every type but we have always prioritized among material things what we need for our recordings. The most urgent item right now when we’re trying to record our 4th self-managed record is a fast computer because we only have an old Pentium 3 where the software gets stuck when we try to put down several tracks with effects – imagine, we do our own mixes. We could also use a microphone to record voice because not even clandestinely people dare record the lyrics in their home studios for fear of reprisals. A good mike for us would be a Marshall 9000 or something like that. Our records can be bought in our web site: www.pornopararicardo.com . Buying them is another direct way to help us.

MLC: Would you like to add something else?

PPR: Thank you for the solidarity ... Anarchists –as we say here- of all countries Unite! And let everyone do with their ass as they wish.

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