

"The truth is I'm here": Ways to live

"No sé si estoy en lo cierto, lo cierto es que estoy aquí".

["I don't know if I'm right, but I'm here"]. Leño.

A song is composed at a specific time and under specific circumstances. The passing of time, the interest of the audience, the changing conditions and circumstances in society and, in short, the value of music as a cultural reference, are all factors that can turn a song into a symbol. You know examples, some recent, in which a song goes beyond the scope of conventional interpretation and becomes an anthem for many. Now we are going to see a good example of this.

No pienses que estoy muy triste
Si no me ves sonreír
Es simplemente despiste
Maneras de vivir

Don't think I'm too sad
if you don't see me smiling
It is simply misleading
Ways to live

Rosendo Mercado, known simply as Rosendo, is a singer, guitarist, lyricist, composer and producer. With an extensive career (started in 1972), his journey reflects the successes and difficulties of an independent musician in the rock world in Spain.

An authentic musician seeks to find his own voice as an artist. And if that is difficult, founding a band, and making it last, is not easy either. Until 1977, Rosendo was part of a group led by a legend, José Carlos Molina. About 60 musicians participated in Ñu [that means "wildebeest"], in a controversial story of the comings and goings of performers along with the band's leader. Molina is a charismatic, non-conformist and controversial musician. He himself comments on his way of life (interview by David Esquitino 2013).

Let's look at a day in the life of a musician:

"I get up late, study flutes, transverse flute (Bach, Vivaldi etc.), Irish flute, I do an hour of exercise, I eat, I play the guitar or someday the mandolin. Then I get involved with the piano, some technique, then blues, rhythm 'n' blues [rhythm and blues], everything I can get my hands on". So, it's part of the daily planning:

- Musical practice with different instruments:
- Practice of different musical styles

Musical practice with different instruments:

Flutes. Use the plural, as there are two types: transverse and Irish.

- Transverse flute [western concert flute]. Aerophone, instrument from woodwind family with beveled mouthpiece. Included in the woodwind family, it can be made, for example, of silver.
- Irish flute. Aerophone, instrument with a close reference to folk music, its use has spread to various fields and musical styles.



Figure 1. Flute. Image in the following link: <<https://losinstrumentosdeviento.com/flauta-travesera/>>; Figure 2. Irish flute. Photo image by Eltharion in Wikipedia Italy (public domain): <<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=76886931>>.

Molina indicates "I play the guitar or someday the mandolin. Then I get involved with the piano". Thus, the list includes various plucked chordophones instruments, and the keyboard.



Figure 3. Mandolin. Image available in the following link (public domain): <<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mandolin1.jpg#/media/Archivo:Mandolin1.jpg>>; Figure 4. Rafael Hidalgo de Caviedes. *A trattoria in Naples*. 1896, oil on canvas, 50 x 62 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, catalogue no. P006367. Image on the web-Museo del Prado: <<https://www.museodelprado.es/coleccion/obra-de-arte/en-una-trattoria-de-napoles/d88794cb-bcf7-4c75-b576-4d29a8bb2f82?searchid=2055ccce-33b2-c9f2-f06e-11d7e72278ee>>.

Practice of different musical styles

Molina cites the performance of pieces by two very important composers, both belonging to the Baroque period. Johann Sebastian Bach (Eisenach, in present-day Thuringia, Germany 1685-Leipzig, in present-day Saxony, Germany, 1750) and Antonio Vivaldi (Venice, 1678-1741). Many would perhaps not relate it to the tastes of a rock musician, but that thought is a prejudice. In fact, it is a sign of the interest in music, enjoying and learning from different influences.

They are joined by styles such as rhythm and blues, the fundamental basis of rock, and, in general, "everything I can take advantage of", to which punk is added later. A musician who opens the door to trends, creators and different musical practices.

Do you consider yourself a person with diverse musical tastes, that is, do you listen to or perform music of varied styles, or do you focus your interest on a single style?

The musician continues to list his activities:

"Then I bike or, if it's already summer, I go to the swamp to swim, come back, play something and go have a beer. Then I come back, watch a movie, play the piano for a while and go to sleep and dream that I am a minstrel, bohemian, hippie, punk or bullfighter (laughs)".

As we see, more piano, and dreams like "minstrel, bohemian, hippie, 'punk'" are part of a way of life.

Do you find references to a particular musical style?

How would you describe a minstrel?

Nowadays there are artists who define themselves as minstrels.

Do you think it's possible to be a minstrel today?

Do you know anyone, perhaps yourself, who fits that definition?

We are talking about a musician who includes hours of rehearsal throughout the day, within his own daily order. **Do you think it would be like your day-to-day if you had all your time for yourself?**

How much music would there be in your day-to-day life?

Me sorprendo del bullicio

Y ya no sé qué decir

Cambio las cosas de sitio

Maneras de vivir

I'm surprised at the bustle

And I don't know what to say

I change things around

Ways of living.

Rosendo, after having some disagreements with Molina, left Ñu and founded the band Leño [that means "log"], in 1977. From that moment on, his work as a guitarist was joined by his labor as a soloist. Chiqui Mariscal (bass) and Ramiro Penas (drums) also left the group with him. As a new band, they became part of the label Chapa Discos. They released two albums, and there were changes in the group (for example, Mariscal would leave the group, being replaced by Tony Urbano). Dissatisfied with the production of their studio recordings, they decided to release a concert album in 1981. It included "Maneras de vivir" (on the album *En directo*), a success from that moment on. Luz Casal, with whom Rosendo had previously worked, participated in the chorus of the song. Teddy Bautista, his producer, participated on the keyboard. It was recorded at the Sala Carolina in Madrid. Although neither the sound nor the media were the best, the song went noticed.

Voy cruzando el calendario

Con igual velocidad

Subrayando en mi diario

Muchas páginas

I'm crossing off the calendar

With the same speed

Underlining in my diary

Many pages

The group splits up in 1983, after a successful tour with Miguel Rios, called "A Summer Night Rock". Problems with the record companies led Rosendo to find difficulties for broadcasting his production. True to his style, he ironizes about the interests in the music market in his song "Agradecido" ["Grateful"]. As he develops his solo career, the songs in his repertoire are growing in appreciation among diverse audiences. Leño becomes over time a music icon in Spain.

Rosendo represents the image of a musician who continues his journey seeking independence, in a long search for a way to express his personality and his way of thinking. He creates new themes while continuing to perform his classics. Important is the choice of the guitar. Rosendo was faithful to his Fender Stratocaster model ("the Strato") for a long time. Trying out new brands and models, and after several changes, to a Strato he will return again. It is not a small detail, because for a musician, the instrument becomes the means of expression very close to oneself. This is how the guitarist explains it:

"Always with the Fender Stratocaster guitar, or 'betrayed' by the manipulated Gibson Les Paul?"

– No, I'm back on the Strato. I had one that was the guitar of a lifetime, but the sound wasn't the same anymore and it was short of body [sounding box] and fret board [also known as fingerboard]. So I tried the Les Paul [Gibson Les Paul] and it's a *guitarrón* [here, it means a tremendous guitar, really good], but I couldn't get it to work, especially in terms of touch. And suddenly I was given the Golden Guitar of Navarra in Pamplona, a Strato with a double pickup. And then the Fender gave me another one that sounds like a donkey. So I went back to my origins, to my lifetime guitar". (Iñaki Zarata, interview with Rosendo, 2008).

The musicians talk about the guitars preceded by the article: the Strato, the Les Paul. It is an indication of closeness and interest, in the style of the denomination of the divos and divas of the opera, for example.

What do you think about the connection between a musician and his instrument? Do you find it excessive or understandable?

What was Rosendo's difficulty with the Les Paul guitar?

What do you think the colloquial expression "sounds like a donkey" means when referring to the guitar Rosendo received as a gift?

Being a guitarist, it doesn't seem that Rosendo has a large collection of guitars, which sometimes happens:

"I must have three Stratos, a Les Paul and a couple of acoustics. I don't have many guitars, and besides I always play the same one. I carry a spare when I go to record, in case I need to change the sound".

How many guitars does Rosendo have? How many are electric and how many are acoustic?





Figure 5. Rosendo in concert at Las Ventas, Madrid, in 2014. Image on the musician's official website:

< <http://www.rosendo.es/galeria/>>.

Figure 6. Rosendo at the acoustic guitar, F. Ortega. Image on the musician's official website:

< <http://www.rosendo.es/galeria/page/2/>>.

Although his performances are based on the electric guitar, he has also performed a song, "Rompe la cadena" ["Break the chain"], on an acoustic guitar. We see in this way how a musician can continue to look for different options:

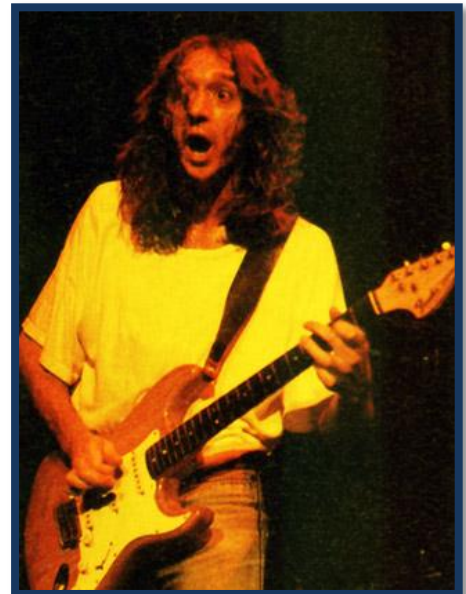
"I don't dare the acoustic as such because I don't see myself with an acoustic guitar, but there I am, groping to see if I'm capable. At least I've been successful and I feel good about it, I don't know what the staff will think now (laughs)". (Rafa López, *La Opinión*, 2010).

Te busco y estás ausente
Te quiero y no es para ti
A lo mejor no es decente
Maneras de vivir

I look for you and you are absent
I love you and it's not for you
Maybe it's not decent
Ways to live

Musical styles can be associated with characteristic clothing, as well as a particular aesthetic and a series of specific gestures. They are part of a mode of expression of life, but they can also have consequences based on ways of thinking from those who only perceive stereotypes and that can lead to rejection. The aesthetics associated with rock are well known, and have spread to other styles over time. It has its cultural significance as much as it is understood by some in a negative way.

Figure 7. Rosendo in concert in 1990. Image on the musician's official website: <<http://www.rosendo.es/galeria/page/3/>>.



Rosendo tells some anecdotes about the consequences of his appearance. He points out the generational differences that are typical of a process of family understanding and relationship, among which is the aspect chosen by each person. In his words: "It was clear that I was going to do this [rock music] when I started to grow my hair long at 16". His mother's opinion was that his long hair was not a good idea. The fear of a life full of difficulties resulting from an independent career was also present, which has been common in the history of many artists. Success brought peace of mind about the future of a son dedicated to the world of rock, when he became famous.

About the aspect chosen, the musician indicates the following: "I don't understand that, because I had long hair, I was marked in the neighborhood, where everyone knew me". On one occasion he had to specify the reason why he wanted to enter, for example, a bank office looking like that, "to the point of having to put my heel against the glass to get them to let me in", and he also had to specify "I'm here to bring money", accompanied by some swear words. (Magda Bandera, interview with Rosendo, 2009).



Do you think the aesthetics associated with a musical style are necessary, or inevitable?

Would it confuse you if a particular physical aspect or mode of dress did not match a style like rock?

Figure 8. Rosendo live, Jácara, 1998. Image on the musician's official website:

<http://www.rosendo.es/galeria/page/3/>.

Voy aprendiendo el oficio
Olvidando el porvenir
Me quejo solo de vicio
Maneras de vivir

I'm learning the trade
Forgetting the future
I complain for no reason
Ways to live

Time passes, the musical career continues. Rosendo already has a repertoire that has been extended. To the difficulties are added, therefore, the successes and recognitions. Some of them were strange to the musician himself. A street named after him in the town of Leganés, Madrid (2000), the Gold Medal of Fine Arts (2006), or seeing in his performances types of audiences that he did not find in previous times. Surprises along the way: "I no longer understand anything, now the posh people sing my songs", he says. It's a circumstance of the music market: the greater the number of fans of a group or an artist, the more likely it is that the audience will be varied.

No sé si estoy en lo cierto
Lo cierto es que estoy aquí
A lo mejor no es decente
Maneras de vivir

I don't know if I'm right
The truth is that I'm here
Others have died for less
Ways to live

In the list "Rosendo's top ten songs, according to 'Rolling Stone' readers" (2011), chosen by Facebook and Twitter users, the song "Maneras de Vivir" came in third place. Also in *Rolling Stone*, Leño's songs are included in the list of the 200 best pieces of Spanish pop-rock (2012). Different generations are beginning to come together in their concerts, and other groups are starting to cite Ñu, Leño and Rosendo himself as references.

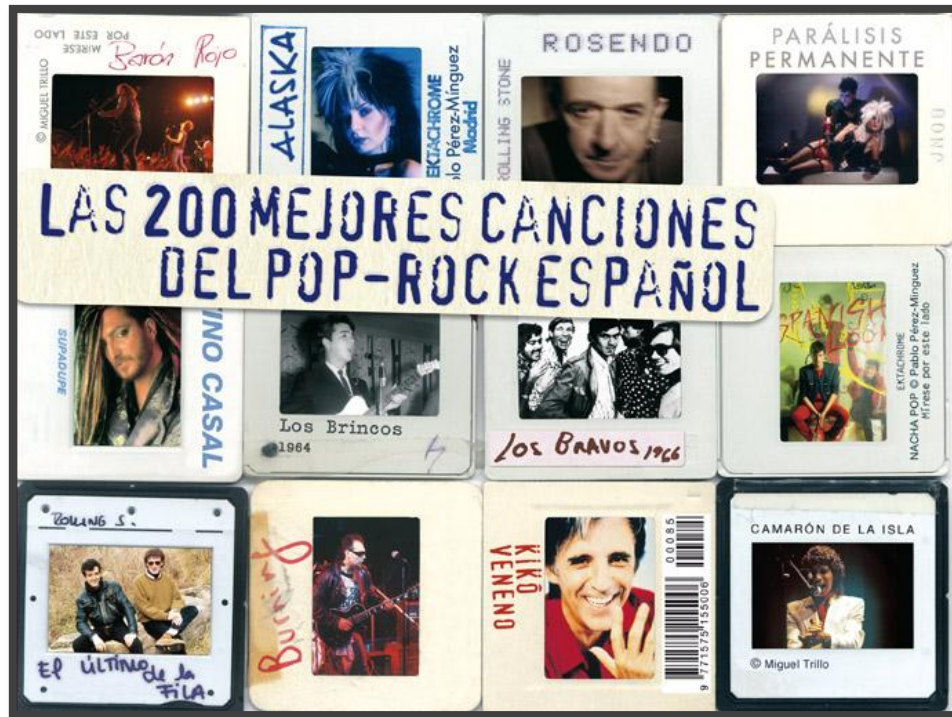


Figure 9. Image of Rosendo with other artists selected in the list "The 200 best songs of Spanish pop-rock", *Rolling Stone*, January 30, 2012.

Success can take many different forms. One of them, the most obvious, is popularity over time. Thus, his songs have been performed by artists such as Antonio Vega, and have been performed as a duo by Rosendo with Miguel Ríos and with Luz Casal, or as part of a performance with Barricada, as well as versions by groups such as Mago de Oz and Pereza.

Likewise, the song "Maneras de vivir" has had its versions in advertising productions, as in the tourist promotion of Navarra (2009). For that campaign, a version was made that included instruments considered by many to be alien to rock. They are part of a version of a song that has become a classic and, therefore, can be interpreted in many ways. On this occasion, the instruments of a rock band are joined by the violin accordion and folk instruments, as well as a charanga (txarangaBakerías) made up of brass instruments and percussion (<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tRC61mPKM4E>>).

Some verses from "Maneras de vivir" were included in an episode of the Spanish Television series "El ministerio del tiempo" ["The ministry of time"] (2015). A fragment of the lyrics of Rosendo's song was used in a verbal duel of wills between the playwright, poet and novelist Lope de Vega (played by Víctor Clavijo) and the main character Julián Martínez (played by Rodolfo Sancho). In the scene, the character of Lope de Vega, author of the Spanish Golden Age theatre, doubts whether the verses of "Maneras de vivir" correspond to his contemporary Luis de Góngora. (Link to the scene in "El ministerio del tiempo": <<https://youtu.be/XsMhrH0S1el>>; more extensive version of the

scene in the following RTVE link: <<https://www.rtve.es/television/20150303/lope-vega-vs-rosendo-mercado-duelo-versos-twitter-ministerio-del-tiempo/1107420.shtml>>.

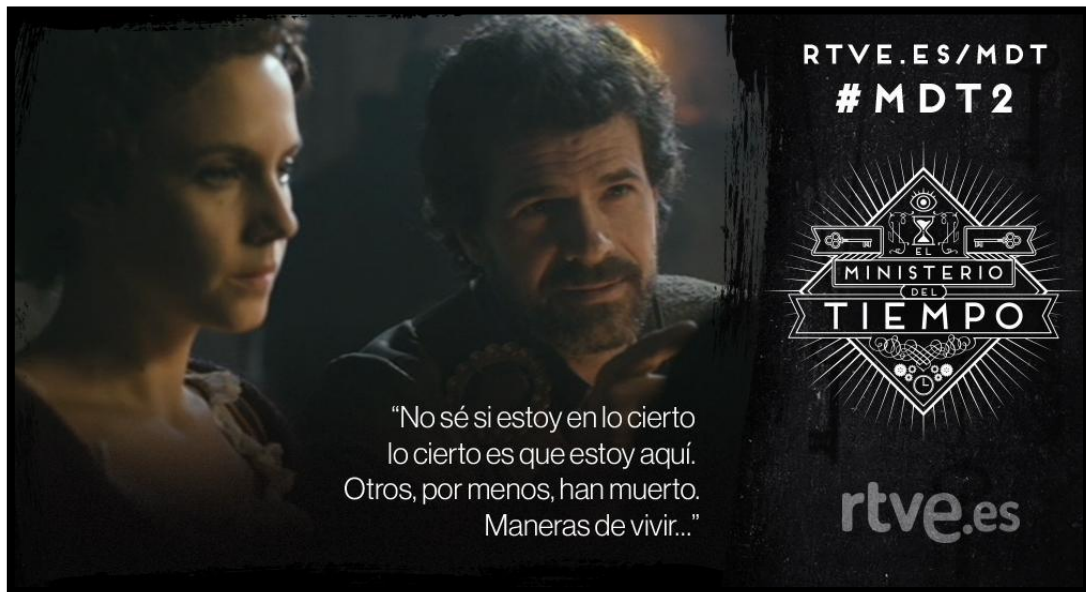


Figure 10. Image of the advertising campaign of the series "The Ministry of Time". Link to the network MDT-RTVE.es: <https://twitter.com/MdT_TVE/status/572513976619302912/photo/1>.

Why does one song manage to endure while many others fade away? What makes a song a classic? Complex questions, since they have to do with the cultural and historical context and with a development of the society in which this artistic production is found. We can analyze how a song becomes more than just a song, but it is not an automatic or predictable mechanism. That happens from the origin of the song. Rosendo, the main author of the song, comments sincerely: "What I wanted to express with 'Maneras de vivir' is that we felt different and we liked to feel different. That's the idea. Otherwise, I don't really know how I came up with the phrase" (*Rolling Stone* 2011).

All this happens with a song that has recognized values. An introduction (a chord La growing emphatically) and after it, an initial *riff* that is identified immediately by many. It has been described as: "what is perhaps the most recognizable *riff* in Spanish rock" (Javier Escorzo 2018).

A *riff* is a characteristic musical idea that is repeated. It is often played by the instruments that perform the accompaniment. There are songs that have a distinct motif that stands out in a particular way, and that becomes an essential element to recognize and connect with a song. "You really got me" by The Kinks or "Smoke on the water" by Deep Purple are just two examples among many.

I'm sure you know songs with a distinctive motif. **Indicate a song that has an outstanding *riff*:**

The chord progression to the guitar support the vocal melody. They are based on the repetition of three chords in each of the first three verses: Re-Mi-La (E-D-A). The verse *Maneras de vivir* is based on two repeated chords: Ti [Si]-Mi (B-E). The pattern is repeated, with a change ("Voy cruzando el calendario) in which four chords are used: Mi-Ti-Re-La (E-B-D-A).

Rosendo, who has become a classic figure in the history of rock in Spain, announced his retirement, or rather, "is about to take break on a road that does not know the turning point and remains in suspension points", with a phrase that expresses an intention: "Neither burn out nor fade away, leave it at the top" (*El Diario.es*2018). A message from an independent musician who, both in his band and as a soloist, has managed to overcome decades, styles and tastes, always making his own music.

Be yourself, write the lyrics you know to do and not what the others expect, and compose the music that matters to you. If you express what you want to say, even if you are not sure about the reason why you chose it, it will always be authentic music. And so:

<p>Descuélgate del estante Y si te quieres venir Tengo una plaza vacante Maneras de vivir</p>	<p>Get off the shelf And if you want to come I have a vacant place Ways to live</p>
---	---

"Maneras de vivir": Interpretations and Lyrics

Links to song performances:

- "Maneras de vivir", studio version, 1981, Ser disco. Available at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITXFkH0MSk8>.
- "Maneras de vivir", performance on Radio Television Española, 1983. Available in the following link:
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=30=EwqIRV6g7-4eature=emb_logo.

"Maneras de vivir": Lyrics

No pienses que estoy muy triste
Si no me ves sonreír
Es simplemente despiste
Maneras de vivir

Voy aprendiendo el oficio
Olvidando el porvenir
Me quejo solo de vicio
Maneras de vivir (x2)

Me sorprendo del bullicio
Y ya no sé qué decir
Cambio las cosas de sitio
Maneras de vivir (x2)

Voy cruzando el calendario
Con igual velocidad
Subrayando en mi diario
Muchas páginas

Voy cruzando el calendario
Con igual velocidad
Subrayando en mi diario
Muchas páginas

No sé si estoy en lo cierto
Lo cierto es que estoy aquí
Otros por menos se han muerto
Maneras de vivir

Te busco y estás ausente
Te quiero y no es para ti
A lo mejor no es decente
Maneras de vivir

Descuélgate del estante
Y si te quieres venir
Tengo una plaza vacante
Maneras de vivir (x4)

Reference list: Journal articles

Bandera, Magda. "Ya no entiendo nada, ahora los pijos cantan mis canciones", interview with Rosendo Mercado in *Público*, August 12, 2009. Available at the following link: <https://www.publico.es/actualidad/ya-no-entiendo-ahora-pijos.html>.

Barroso, F. Javier. "Rosendo ya tiene su calle", in *El País*, October 5, 2000. Available in the following link: https://elpais.com/diario/2000/10/05/madrid/970745074_850215.html.

Esquitino, David. "Entrevista con José Carlos Molina, ÑU antes del Leyendas del Rock", in *Rafabasa.com*, 2013. Available at the following link: <https://www.rafabasa.com/2013/08/02/entrevista-con-jose-carlos-molina-nu-antes-del-leyendas-del-rock/>.

"El Rey premia a [Joaquín] Sabina, [Enrique] Morente, Raphael, Rosendo y Maruja Torres", in *Actualidad y espectáculos, Terra.es*, October 6, 2006. Available in the following link of Archive.org: https://archive.is/20120629045221/actualidad.terra.es/cultura/articulo/rey_sabina_morente_raphael_rosendo_1128192.htm.

Escorzo, Javier. "Leño: Diez clásicos de los padres del rock urbano", in *Efe Eme.com. Diario de actualidad musical*, July 17, 2018. Available at the following link: <https://www.efeeme.com/lendio-diez-clasicos-de-los-padres-del-rock-urbano/>.

"Las diez mejores canciones de Rosendo, según los lectores de 'Rolling Stone'", in *Rolling Stone*, December 14, 2011. Available at the following link from Archive.org: <https://web.archive.org/web/20150417235713/http://rollingstone.es/noticias/las-diez-mejores-canciones-de-rosendo-segun-los-lectores-de-rolling-stone/>.

"Las 200 mejores canciones del pop – rock español", in *Rolling Stone*, January 30, 2012. Available at the following link: <https://web.archive.org/web/20140714171858/http://rollingstone.es/listas/las-200-mejores-canciones-del-pop-rock-espanol/>.

Lopez, Rafa. "Estoy en el estribillo de mi vida", in *La Opinión*, A Coruña, July 3, 2010. Available in the following link: <https://www.laopinioncoruna.es/cultura/2010/07/03/rosendo-estribillo-vida/399096.html>.

"Rosendo anuncia su retirada de los escenarios con una gira de despedida", in *Cultura, El Diario.es*, March 5, 2018. Available at the following link: https://www.eldiario.es/cultura/musica/Rosendo-Mercado-deja-anuncia-despedida_0_746825669.html.

Zarata, Iñaki. "No me importaría ser vasco, es una zona envidiable y tengo buenos amigos", interview with Rosendo Mercado in *El Diario Vasco*, 27 February 2008 Available in the following link: <https://www.diariovasco.com/20080227/cultura/importaria-vasco-zona-envidiable-20080227.html?ref=https%3A%2F%2Fes.wikipedia.org%2F>.