

*MODERN SPANISH
HISTORY & CINEMA*

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LA MOVIDA MADRILENA

Early Spanish Cinema

- The first Spanish film industry was based in Barcelona, Spain, in the Catalonia region



- Historical epics (*españoladas*) were one of the first popular Spanish genres, remaining so through the '60s
- By the 1920s, the film center became Madrid

- Through the 1920s, filmmakers such as Florian Rey helped to create a Spanish national cinema, but one that struggled to overcome the never-ending stream of popular films from the U.S. and other more established European cinemas
- In 1928 Luis Buñuel with a few friends founded the country's first cine club; that same year he made *Un chien andalou (Andalusian Dog)* with Salvador Dalí
- The arrival of sound put a halt to the Spanish film industry, as it fell behind then-current technology; only a few films made in early 1930s

Spanish Civil War and Franco

- By 1935, Spanish film industry had more or less caught up with synchronized sound technology and was producing nearly 40 films per year
- A year later, in 1936, the country was in the midst of a civil war that greatly divided the country and parts of the world
- Both sides, the Republicans (in support of the anti-clerical Second Spanish Republic, in power between 1931 and 1939) and the Nationalists (right-wing fascists) employed cinema for purposes of propaganda

- Many historians think of the Spanish Civil War as a dress rehearsal for World War II and its national as well as political divisions
- Many Popular Front and/or Communist countries, such as France and the Soviet Union, supported the Spanish Republic, but fascist powers, especially Germany and Italy, poured dollars, soldiers, and weapons into Spain's fascist movement
- Other important players, such as U.S. and Great Britain, regrettably remained on the fence; many individuals, however, including artists, writers, activists, and others sympathetic to the Popular Front, joined the cause

- After three years, in 1939, General Francisco Franco came to authoritarian power by fusing the right-wing fascist/nationalist parties into one



- That single fascist party came to be known as *Falange* (and its members *Falangists*), allying itself with fascist Italy and Germany
- Like its fascist contemporaries, the Spanish version reviled Bolshevism and democracy; but unlike them, the Falange built its ideology around Catholicism

- One hallmark of Franco's Spain was a rigidly repressed, censored, closed society, and the film industry was no exception
- Some have equated his rule with stopping time itself, as Spain remained frozen in time during his reign, its doors closed to advancements in technology, culture (e.g., rock and roll), medicine (birth control), etc.
- Franco would rule Spain for four decades, relinquishing control of Spain only upon his death in 1975

La Movida Madrileña

- After Franco's death Spain underwent one of the biggest cultural and political transitions in modern history
- A new constitution was put in place by the end of the 1970s, making Spain more tolerant & open overnight
- Between the end of the '70s and the start of the '80s, *la Movida* emerged in response to this transition
- *La Movida* celebrated modernity and tolerance, expressing itself musically (punk and new wave), cinematically (Almodóvar), sexually (homosexuality, transgender, etc.), and in lifestyle (drugs, fashion)

