

STRINGS ATTACHED

*Intimate interviews with
masters of Flamenco Guitar
Volume 1*

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Ediciones
**Oscar
Herrero**
Flamenco & Guitar

F L A M E N C O

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE	11
PROLOGUE	13
TUNING UP	17
MANUEL MORAO	23
Cerberus in Santiago	24
JUAN "HABICHUELA"	31
Singing with the Guitar.....	32
RICARDO MODREGO	39
Let's Remind Ourselves	40
ANDRÉS BATISTA	51
Gentleman with a Guitar	52
"PERICO EL DEL LUNAR" (HIJO)	61
Fountain of Wisdom.....	62
PACO CEPERO	69
The toque that inspired Camarón.....	70
PACO PEÑA	79
The international flamenco artist	80
"SERRANITO"	93
Pinnacle of purity	95
MANOLO SANLÚCAR	103
Genius and maestro of flamenco.....	105
PEPE "HABICHUELA"	117
It's so difficult to play flamenco!	118

PACO DE LUCÍA	125
The Maestro.....	127
ENRIQUE DE MELCHOR	163
Bronze pharaoh.....	164
“TOMATITO”	171
Almeria smells, tastes and sounds like Tomato	172
OSCAR HERRERO	189
Flamenco Knight from La Mancha	190
RAIMUNDO AMADOR	199
Electric flamenco.....	200
MANOLO FRANCO	207
The Maestro of the Giralda	208
GERARDO NÚÑEZ	215
Much more than Jerez.....	216
THE FLAMENCO GUITAR OF CAÑO ROTO	235
“FOREIGN” FLAMENCO GUITAR	245
Part 1	245
JUAN CARMONA	257
Part II	257
Setting an example from France.....	258
FLAMENCOLOGY AND FLAMENCO GUITAR	265
LITERATURE	306
STRINGS ATTACHED	307

*“The more real you get, the more unreal it's gonna get”
John Lennon to Muhammad Ali*

MANOLO SANLÚCAR

Manuel Muñoz Alcón (Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Cádiz, 24 November 1943)

“If I wouldn't have been born, I don't think I would be less than what I am now”

“From reason we can achieve mastery, but to touch the heavens one must search the soul, one must feel inside of oneself the artist who finds the roads that haven't been built yet”

“There are ‘disasters’ that reinforce an artist's greatness, and ‘successes’ that confirm the misery of a mediocre soul”

“An artist is not a series of pieces of knowledge, he's something else”

“One must burn one's innocence to become wise”

Manolo Sanlúcar

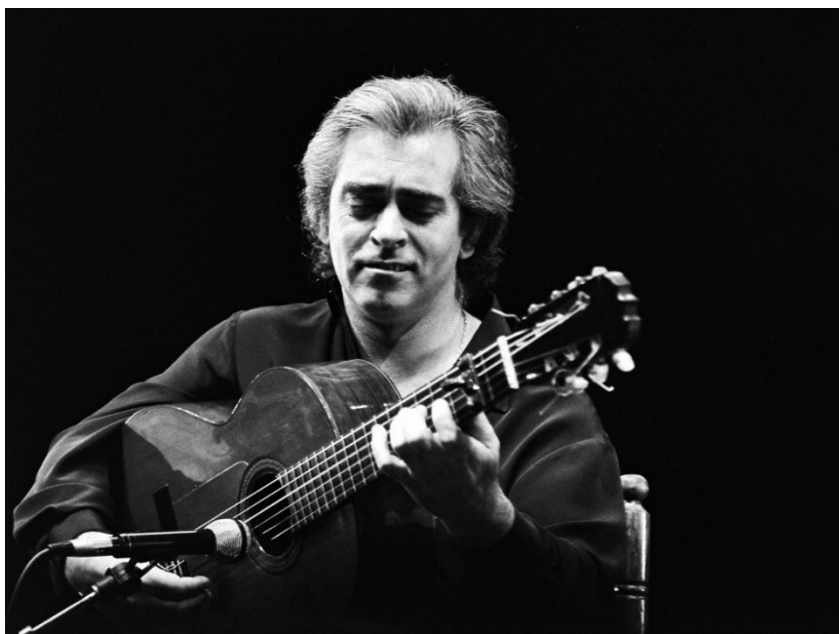


Photo: Paco Manzano

UNPUBLISHED INTERVIEW WITH PACO DE LUCÍA
(Completed in his house in Madrid on 1 April 1971 and
transcribed in its entirety)

Context: The following interview is presented in its entirety and was completed in what was then Paco de Lucía's house, floor 2, apartment C, 17 Ilustración Street in Madrid. One week before, Paco de Lucía had given a historic recital in the Teatro de Zarzuela.

This is the first lengthy interview given by Paco de Lucía. Several days prior, he had briefly talked with José Luis Rubio for the magazine *Triunfo*. The young guitarist was twenty-three and a half years old, and for more than half an hour he opened his heart to the practicing flamenco enthusiast, student of Niño Ricardo and flamenco scholar Hubertus J. Wilkes. With a looseness and sincerity never seen before, and dealing with delicate topics like politics (he uses the word "socialist"), Gypsies in flamenco, his two main guitar idols (Sabicas and Niño Ricardo), allusions to Mario Escudero and Enrique Morente, classical guitar and his own life and musical goals.

It is a conversation that goes down complicated paths, with references to the "Regime" then still in force and, without a doubt, watchful (a logical explanation to some of the young maestro's answers). There are also brief mentions of what would later become known as "fusion," the necessity of new harmonies in flamenco and a surprisingly bold act of comparing flamenco music of fifty years prior to that which was beginning to take root in the seventies.

I have tried to transcribe everything as such, including the pauses, obstacles of language and contingencies of a dialogue between two people from different cultures. Moreover, the recording was made on a machine considerably more precarious than current technology. A lot of time has passed since all that. Enjoy this essential document and draw from it all possible conclusions. There are many.

Hubertus J. Wilkes or "Payo Humberto" Scholar, practicing flamenco enthusiast, and militant flamenco aficionado born in Amsterdam. Having become interested in flamenco through his relationships with Spanish immigrants in Holland in the 60s, "Huib" traveled to Cadiz where he took guitar classes from Juan Díaz. Through intermittent stays in Madrid, he met

And are you one of those people who records albums and later revisits them and regrets everything?

“To tell you the truth, I don’t have any of my albums. Sometimes I hear things that I’ve played and hey, they’re not bad, they sound pretty and everything to me. It’s not that I love to hear myself, but I don’t dislike it either”.

Where is the forefront of contemporary flamenco?

“I think the trailblazer is Paco de Lucía, without a doubt. I saw him a year ago in Torrelodones and I think he’s playing better than ever. He continues to compose music that is tremendously advanced, with great musicians around him, and he is still ‘flamenco’. On top of that he has a mature flavor, of one who has already seen and done a lot”.

That is to say that other things more removed aren’t flamenco.

“It’s that it’s one thing that certain artists sound ‘flamenco’ and another thing that they *are* ‘flamenco’. I’m not saying it’s losing its roots. Only that one could lose them in the end if one focuses too much on other musicians. The youth of today are very well-prepared, that much is clear. They pay attention to musicians and composers who they hardly know, of other styles, without hardly listening to what people like Sabicas and Mario Escudero gave us. Ketama, for example, are very close friends of mine and musical geniuses. Antonio plays the guitar and percussion like crazy, Josemi plays the guitar phenomenally, Juan does too, and what they’ve done this whole time sounds like flamenco and I love it, but it’s not flamenco. There aren’t flamenco forms like that. If they did it, it would be incredible, but it’s not flamenco even though it seems like it.

Going back to what I said before, one must try to play *por soleá* well because that’s really the issue. It’s very difficult for us to play like Pat Metheny, for example, because he is another type of musician, a different style, a different world. Though we try hard to do it. In the same way that others don’t play flamenco like we do—isn’t that the case? We should analyze in depth who Montoya was and maybe we would come to more concrete conclusions”.

EXTRACTS OF THREE INTERVIEWS WITH TOMATITO
(Published in the magazine Acordes de Flamenco, Issue 8, and on
the website www.deflamenco.com. Completed in February 2007
and April 2010 and 2013, respectively)

***“IF CAMARÓN WERE STILL ALIVE, I WOULD STILL BE HIS
GUITARIST”***

In an hour he goes on stage. The soundcheck was long and everything seems to be going too quickly. Tomatito welcomes us in his dressing room at the Compac Gran Vía Theater in Madrid. A lot of people want to see him, but it's impossible; Tomate is going to play and only see as many people as he has to. In the wings, *Acordes de Flamenco* had the opportunity to talk with one of the living guitar legends of this country, not only because of who he was, but because of who he is.

José, how do you feel before you go on stage?

“As you can see, nervous and thinking about the other things that have been going on. The little problems in soundcheck, friends who come to see me, the lights... I mean, the usual”.

A lot of musicians from all genres take a tranquilizer, “Sumial” it’s called.

“Well, I don’t have habits or take anything, the nerves don’t let me think about weird things. I go without any help, like a natural-born sufferer (*laughs*)”.

And Madrid? And the experience you have? Do you notice anything different today?

“No. The nerves are always the same. They’re there and you can’t get over them. With respect to Madrid, I don’t think it makes a big difference because the public is very similar in general. We artists have a false belief with respect to the audiences. We think they come to see our defects and that’s not the