The term movida madrileña, roughly translatable as ‘the Madrid scene’, originated from marginal drug culture, but was coined as a generic term for the explosion in subcultures from about 1977 to 1985. Just as in the UK punk music challenged the stabilities of rock music and comfortable British society, so the movida was a subcultural response to Spanish elite culture and politics. Madrid became a magnet for young Spanish musicians (however amateurish). Astonishingly, they found venues for their bands, friendly radio stations and even record labels. New groups included Paraíso, Tos (later, Los Secretos), Nacha Pop, Mamá, Radio Futura, and Alaska y los Pegamoides. This new vigour in youthful, and playfully transgressive popular music soon attracted groups from outside Madrid, including Loquillo, Rebeldes, Siniestro Total and Derribos Arias.

The movida encompassed anyone wishing to participate, perform or produce things in other media. These included designers, painters and photographers, and emblematic movida figure Pedro Almodóvar. His early films are both products of the movida’s DIY subculture and a true reflection of it, portraying both culturally productive aspects (music, design) and the more hedonistic side (drugs, sex and pasotismo).

The demise of the movida around 1985 was caused by a variety of factors including the closure of Rock-Ola, the most famous movida venue, the end of pop programme La edad de oro, and the rise of AIDS, which ended the blissfully ignorant drug binge of the early 1980s. Perhaps more significant, the support of the political class, anxious to promote a youthful, liberated image of Spain, gave the movida a respectability which it did not want, removing its counter-hegemonic edge and thus its status as a subculture. (Mark Allinson)

See also Alaska; bands; Almodóvar, Pedro; pasotismo; radio.

Further reading