

Mano Negra – Patchanka (1988)

Written by bluelover

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01. *Mano Negra* 02. *Ronde De Nuit* 03. *Baby You're Mine* 04. *Indios De Barcelona* [play](#)
05. *Rock Island Line* 06. *Noche De Accion* 07. *Darling Darling* 08. *Killin' Rats*

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09. *Mala Vida* 10. *Takin' It Up* 11. *La Ventura* 12. *Lonesome Bop* 13. *Bragg Jack* 14. *Salga La Luna*

Personnel: Oscar Tramor (Vocals, Guitar) Santiago Casariego (Drums, Percussion, Vocals) Gilles (Guitar, Vocals) Alain (Contrabass, Vocals) Geo (Synthesizer, Vocals) Jean-Marc "Guilouli" (Bass) Fred (Bass) Mamack (Vocals, Saxophone) Anouk (Vocals) Denis (Vocals)

The debut from Mano Negra is more than a band wanting to be the Clash. It's the sound of a band becoming the Clash (it compresses all the musical sprawl of Sandinista! into a single disc), then going on to find their own sound, most especially with tracks like "Indios de Barcelona" and "Mala Vida," both of which would become staples of their repertoire. "Killin' Rats" is a perfect mix of hip-hop and rock, while their take on the traditional "Rock Island Line" (the song that launched the skiffle movement of the '50s) flows through several musical styles in the course of three minutes. There's nothing that complex about it, but the best rock & roll has always been simple. But there's an undeniable fire about Patchanka -- they sound as if they've just discovered rock, and they play as if their lives depended on it, with Chao singing (probably one of the few to take Joe Strummer as a vocal model) and the rest of the band offering soccer-style chanting as a background.

They're not afraid of anything, they're immortal, and they swagger -- and they're often funny, as in the over-the-top fake applause that permeates "Mano Negra," the album's opener. Not everything works -- two of the English-language tracks, "Baby You're Mine" and "Takin' It Up" (which slows the pace -- a bad idea on an album that had been merrily careening to that point), seem like sops to an Anglo market, although the second half of the latter song does pick up with some fake rockabilly. There are plenty of touches of ska, as on "Bragg Jack," which fits in with the grab-bag music ethic, and the album never runs out of steam, a bravura piece of energy and

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invention, even putting a punk hold on flamenco with the closing "Salga la Luna." But perhaps its most remarkable achievement is that in 1988, when acid house was rendering guitars obsolete all over Europe, Mano Negra could make such a vital record that made rock important again. --- Chris Nickson, AMG

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