

WORLD MUSIC

SPAIN

SPANISH CELTIC MUSIC

Introduction

The majority of the Spanish cave-inspired music can be grouped neatly into two genre of music: Spanish Celtic and Flamenco. The Celtic music in many cases was inspired by real caves in the northwestern portion of Spain whereas the Flamenco music is related in some way with the artificial nightclub caves of Sacromonte outside Granada in southeastern Spain

WD-ES-CEL1 Spain 1990

NA COVA DA BARXA

WD – Traditional – Celtic – Instrumental

Comp: (Traditional)

Rts: (SGAE)

Perf: **MILLADOIRO**

Roi Casal (harp)

Xosé V. Ferreirós & Nando Casal (bagpipes)

Xosé A. Méndez (flute)

Antón Seoane (accordion)

Manú Conde (guitar)

Moncho García Rei (bodhran)

Prod. Co: Dial Discos S.A.; Madrid

Rec. Co: Estudios Kyrios; Madrid

Time: 4:43

1. **LP:** O BERRO SECO (1990)

Doblon (?) (Sd 1 – Bd 5)

2. Reissue on **CD:** O BERRO SECO (1990)

Doblon 96201 (Tk 5)

Notes: A stirring, lively traditional march with bagpipes wailing behind and a peaceful harp interlude.

A Galician bagpipe and a uilleann pipe are played in unison here. (Kimerajamm 2010)

The Spanish Celtic group Milladoiro was formed in 1978 and this was their third album; by 2008 they had released 18 albums.

It would be nice to know if this is a real cave in Spain, no doubt a cave with a history. There is a small village of Cova da Barxa in the province of Pontevedra on the west coast of Galicia (so there might be a sea cave there). And there is also the town of Barxa inland just north of the Portuguese border.

Ref: Kimerajamm 2010, Milladoiro, O Berro Seco, [strokesforo](http://strokesforo.com)

Milladoiro, (in Spanish) [es.wikipedia](http://es.wikipedia.org) & (in English) [Wikipedia](http://Wikipedia.org)

Na cova da barxa, Milladoiro, [Amazon](http://Amazon.com) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)



WD-ES-CEL2 Spain 1996

NA COVACIELLA *

WD – Folk – Celtic – Vocal & Instrumental

Comp: Nacho FONSECA (LY-WD10)

Arr: Tom Prendes

Rts: (SGAE)

Perf: XARANZAINA

Esther Fonseca (vocal)

Agustín Cobo (piano)

Lorena G. Caro (clarinet)

Carmen Cuello (Spanish guitar)

Hector Braga & Jesús Helguera (cellos)

Héctor Cuello (bass)

Prod: Nacho Fonseca

Prod. Co: L'Aguañaz; Avilés, Asturias

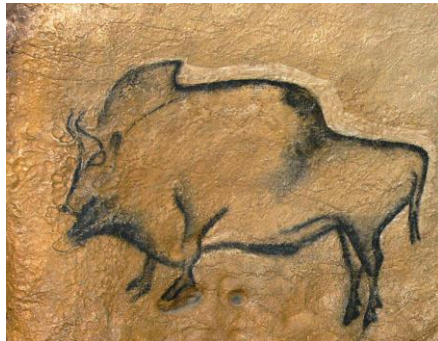
Rec. Co: Estudios Eolo; Xixón, Asturias

Liner Notes: (4-page foldout)

Time: 4:55

CD: XARANZAINA

L'Aguañaz CDÑAZ 110 (Tk 4)



Notes: There is a small cave called, Cueva de La Covaciella, in the Sierra de Cuera Mountains of eastern Asturias at Las Estazadas (Municipio de Cabrales). It was discovered in Oct. 1994 during the widening of the road AS-114 from Cangas de Onis to Las Arenas de Cabrales and it was found to contain a few prehistoric engravings and paintings. Regarding the traces of prehistoric man on the cave floor, however – “*en 1994, tout le village défila, sans le moindre précaution... le jour même de la découverte, détruisant toutes les traces au sol.*” (Clottes & Lewis-Williams 1996) [On the very day of discovery in 1994, the whole village paraded around in the cave without the slightest precautions and destroyed all traces on the ground.]

The first photo shows three bisons of the principal panel (the red smudges are iron oxide) and in the background the ramp of the cave entrance. The cave was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008.

Nothing further is known about this Asturian folk group, Xaranzaina. The song is a slow-paced two-stanza ditty sung rather limply without much enthusiasm. It was not possible to translate the Asturian lyrics (see LY-WD10). The fourth verse of the first stanza mentions the cave.

Ref: de Blas Cortina, Miquel Ángel 1996, *Cuevas prehistóricas de Asturias*, Ed. Trea, Gijón, p. 23

Clottes, Jean & Lewis-Williams, David 1996 (2001), *Les chamanes de la préhistoire*, La maison des roches, p. 72

Cueva de La Covaciella (in Spanish), [asturnatura](#)

Na Covaciella, Esther Fonseca (4:59), [Goear](#) (◀ COMPLETE AUDIO SAMPLE)

WD-ES-CEL3 Spain 1985

A COVA DA SERPE

WD – Traditional – Celtic – Instrumental

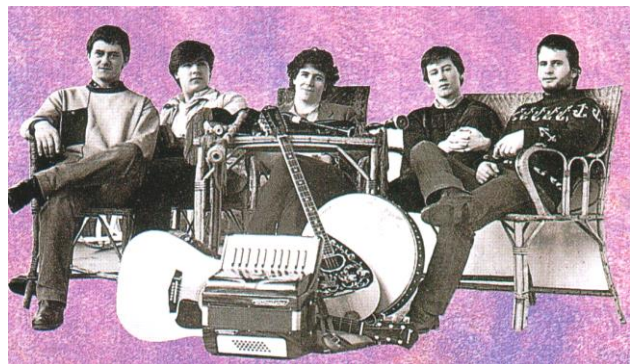
Comp: XORIMA

Rts: (SGAE)

Perf: XORIMA

Carlos A. Celeiro (Galician bagpipe)

Xose Ramon Vazquez (piano)



Queno Eimil (guitar)
Lalo Baamonde (bombarda)
Xosé L. Pernas (percussions)

Prod: Xorima

Rec. Co: Estudios Sonoland; Madrid

Rec. Date: April 1985

Time: 3:55

CD: XORIMA

Punteiro 9011-CD (Tk 2)

Notes: Starts out with slow and ponderous bagpipes then becomes a very up-beat, cherry Galician piece with rollicking piano. About halfway through the tempo increases and it gets more hectic.

Yet another group from Galicia that formed in the 1980s.

It would be nice to know if this is a real cave in Galicia, no doubt a cave with a story to tell. The Serra da Cova da Serpe is in the northern part of Galicia, southeast of A Coruña.

Ref: Xorima, A Cova da Serpe (3:56), [YouTube](#) and [CDTracks](#) (◀**COMPLETE AUDIO SAMPLES**)

Xorima, Grupo Musical (in Galego), [gl.wikipedia](#)

WD-ES-CEL4 Spain 2003

AS COVAS DO REI CINTOLO * **(THE CAVERN DANCE)**

WD – Celtic – Traditional – Instrumental – Speleolithophonic – Recorded in Caves

Comp: (Traditional)

Arr: Carlos Núñez, Pancho Álvarez, & Xurxo Núñez

Rts: (SACEM)

Perf: **Carlos NÚÑEZ** (recorder)

Xurxo Núñez (bodhran, drums, timbales,
percussion, guitars, keyboards, vibraphone,
& stalactites or speleolithophone)

Pancho Álvarez (bouzouki, electric guitar)

Begoña Riobó (fiddle)

Paloma Trigás & Sara Pérez (violins)

José Vera (bass)

Bagad Ronsed Mor Lokoal Mendon

& Kevrenn Altré Auray (bagpipes & Breton bombard)

Prod: Jacques Bernard

Prod. Co: Label Productions

Liner Notes: Carlos Núñez

Time: 3:34

A. Original Spanish **CD:** ALMAS DE FISTERRA (**RIC-ES1**)

Sony SM 5110229 (Tk 10)

B. French **CD:** FINISTERRE: THE END OF THE EARTH (2003) (**RIC-ES1**)

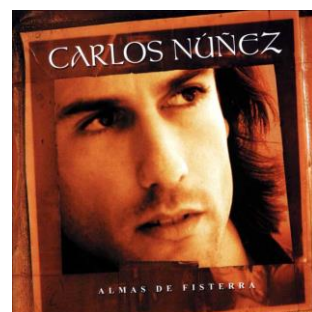
Saint George SAN 512404 2 (Tk 10 – Titled: THE CAVERN DANCE)

C. American **CD:** FINISTERRE: THE END OF THE EARTH (2003) (**RIC-ES1**)

Sony Music 5124042 (Tk 10 – Titled: THE CAVERN DANCE)

Notes: A fine piece of traditional Celtic music, originally a Breton 2/4 dance tune (entitled “St. Patrick’s An Dro”), but here reused as music inspired by the longest cave in Galicia, Cova do Rei Cintolo, which in 1994 was 6.5 kilometers long. Located in Argomoso near the town of Mondoñedo in northwestern Spain, this cave is gated but can be visited on organized tours.

The Spanish liner notes tell the story – “*Escondidas en las montañas de Mondoñeda, en plena “Galicia britoniese,” se encuentran estas fascinantes cuevas aún no exploradas en su totalidad por el hombre “actual.” Decía D. Alvaro Cunqueiro que los habitantes de sus alrededores aseguraban que allí vivía el Rei Cintolo que, según muchos, no era otro que el mismísimo rey Arturo. Adentrándonos en ellas, a cuatro horas de viaje hacia el centro de la tierra, descubrimos espacios tan sugerentes y literarios como la “Sala*



de los Apóstoles,” la de “Valle Inclán,” con sus estalactitas en forma de enormes barbas, o el peligroso “Laberinto de Augustias” que lleva hasta la “Sala de Organos,” una verdadera catedral interrestre. Hasta allí bajamos mi hermano Xurxo y yo, junto a un grupo de amigos espeleólogos, para grabar el sonido de sus enormes estalactitas que aquí podéis escuchar. Al tocar este “an dro,” que es una célebre danza bretona, las resonancias de la flauta junto a éstas eran sobrecogedoras y parecían poder despertar a los antiguos habitantes de las cuevas y asistir a nuestra llamedada en forma de extraños ecos.”

[Hidden in the mountains of Mondoneda, in the middle of “Breton Galicia,” one finds these fascinating caves still not entirely explored by men “of today.” Alvaro Cunqueiro said that the residents of the surrounding area affirmed that there had lived King Cintolo, who many argued was none other than King Arthur himself. When we entered this cave, four hours journey to the center of the earth, we discovered spaces so very suggestive and literary such as “The Room of the Apostles” or “The *Inclan* Valley,” with its stalactites in the form of enormous beards, or the hazardous “Labyrinth of Augustus,” which lead to the “Organ Room,” a veritable cathedral inside the earth.

There we descended, my brother Xurxo and I, together with a group of caving friends, to record the sound



of the enormous stalactites that one can listen to here. When one tapped this “an dro,” which is a famous Breton dance, the resonances of the flute along with this were breathtaking and it seemed that we could awaken those ancient inhabitants of the cave to attend our call in the form of strange echoes.] The American and French releases of this CD renamed the piece “The Cavern Dance” and gave the notes in English -- “I have played this “an dro” all over the world. It is the most popular Breton dance and I have seen audiences dancing to it in Japan, Australia, Italy, US... Somehow I feel this mysterious tune can be danced in any place and in any time... even in a cave inhabited in prehistoric times. I recorded the stalactites sounds inside Galicia’s biggest cave. Legends say that it was the home of

King Arthur and his troops who were disguised as crows. I had to walk inside it for hours with some speleologists friends, but it was worth it when we arrived to what they called the Organ Hall and my brother started playing rhythms on the impressive stalactites. I couldn’t help remembering this time that kept everyone down there dancing!” (Liner notes)

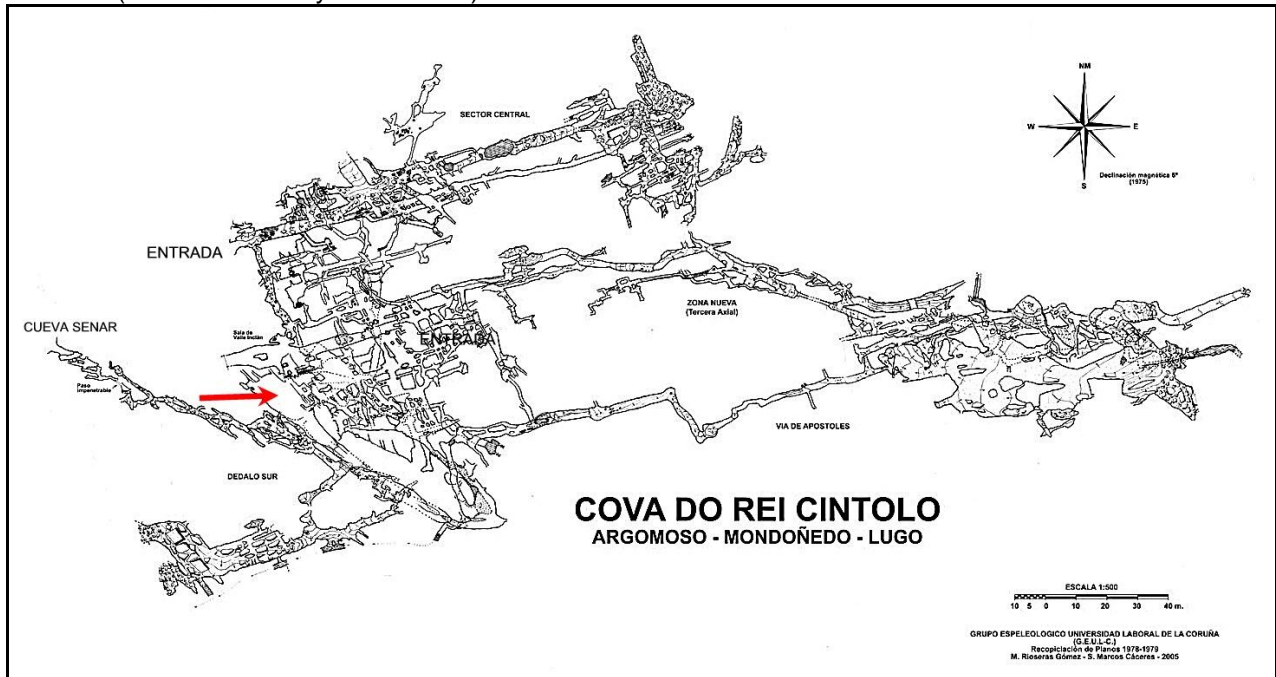
The original Spanish liner notes are a bit misleading when they imply that this piece was recorded in the cave. Carlos says that he was in the cave with his brother and a group of caving friends and he recorded Xurxo playing on the stalactites in the Organ Room. When combining his Spanish and English texts it becomes clear that Carlos played this piece on flute together with his brother on speleolithophone (stalactite percussion) and they heard the resonances and people danced, but he never says they recorded the instrumental music there in the cave.

The personnel credits for this piece lists nine musicians as having participated in the recording: Xurxo plays five different percussion instruments (including guitar, keyboards, & vibraphone) and some of the other musicians play two instruments. All of this clearly shows that the recording was made in a studio on different tracks and later mixed using the stalactite percussion that was recorded in the cave.

One critic wrote – “ ‘The Cavern Dance’ is a cheerful Breton tune that will always associate with the visual image of Begona Riobo leading the crowd through a lilting skipping dance at the 2003 Celtic Colours festival in Cape Breton. On the album version, Riobo plays fiddle along with Nunez on recorders. Nunez could easily have played this tune solo and it still would have stuck in my ear; the very modern underscoring does not detract from the traditional lead, however – together, it’s an effective, infectious package. A blast of bagpipes at the end is again unexpected, but very rousing.” (Knapp 2003)

It’s easy to get caught up and carried away by this infectious, joyous tune as it is played over and over again by Carlos. There is something hypnotic about it and if you have any Celtic blood in you it’s downright irresistible.

The 2005 map of the cave system is by the Grupo Espeleológico Universidad Laboral de la Coruña, recopied from a 1978-1979 map. The Sala de Organos is the big room located to the south of the main entrance (indicated here by a red arrow).



A good audio-video sample (3:45) can be heard on [YouTube](#), which was put together by Teresa Bouza and uses the album version, a good mix, and various photos from around Galicia. The latter site also has a clip (5:19) of a concert version of the piece where an amateur camera spends most of the time giggling around and filming the action off stage of several people in white bunny costumes prancing back and forth on another stage to the rear of the crowd.

See under Recordings in Natural Caves – Spain – As Covas do Rei Cintolo.

A selection from this piece was used in my paper, “Speleo-Discography: A Progress Report,” which I presented at the 2005 UIS (International Speleological Union) Congress at Kalamos in Greece.

Another performance of this music under the title “St. Patrick’s An Dro (As Covas do Rei Cintolo)” played on a mountain C hardwood ocarina by an unknown musician can be heard on [francetudiant](#).

Ref: Anon. 2006, Las Cuevas de Rei Cintolo, *La Voz de Galicia*, 4 Marzo 2006, [biogeociencias](#)

Carlos Nuñez Muñoz, Biography (in Spanish), [es.wikipedia](#) & (in English), [en.wikipedia](#)

Carlos Nuñez, Finisterre: The End of the Earth CD, [discogs](#)

Carlos Nuñez, As Covas do Rei Cintolo (3:45) [YouTube](#) & (5:19) [YouTube](#) (◀COMPLETE AUDIO-VIDEO SAMPLES)

Diaz Prieto, Manuel, Las 30 cavidades gallegas más significativas, *Subterránea*, n. 2, Oct. 1994, p. 19, 26-27

Drouin, Philippe 2009, e-Mail message, Sept. 14, 2009

Duckeck, Jochen 2011, Cova do Rei Cintolo, Spanish Show Caves, [ShowCaves](#)

Knapp, Tom 2003, Finisterre: The End of the Earth, Rambles, [rambles](#)

Rioseras, Miguel A. 2014, Cova do Rei Cintolo, Grupo Espeleológico Edelweiss (in Spanish), [grupoedelweiss](#)

St. Patrick’s An Dro (As Covas do Rei Cintolo), [francetudiant](#) (◀COMPLETE AUDIO SAMPLE)

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