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Tuning Up at Dawn: A Memoir of Music and Majorca

Tomas Graves

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Tuning Up at Dawn: A Memoir of Music and Majorca Tomas Graves
A loving portrait of the other Majorca, and of a life there revolving around music and manana, that is as paradaisical as could be -- a book to savour, perfect for escaping those crowded beaches. 'I've used what's left of my eardrums to describe the culture I was born into, and to contrast it with the British culture I was educated in.' Tomas Graves was born in and belongs to Mallorca (even if he did go to boarding school in England as a teenager). His father, the great love poet Robert Graves, famously ended up in the beautiful Mediterranean island pretty much by accident, but it is the happiest accident of Tomas' life. His love and respect for the special beauties of Mallorcan culture shine on every page of this infectiously happy book. Not that there is any simplification or idealization. Graves looks at how the key elements of the island's history since the Spanish Civil War have had complicated consequences: the Francoists' retarding of growth which left the island a backward peasant economy until the 1960s; those same Francoists' sudden discovery that there was money in Majorca's beauty, resulting in the arrival of the holidaymakers, with all the construction and activity attending them; and the suppression, redirection and renaissance of the old, old native culture -- above all, its music. Music has always been important to all Spanish-speaking peoples. Under Franco's severe repressions, music was often the one form of public expression into which every restricted emotion could be poured. Once democracy was brought back to Spain, regional movements surged, taking their music with them. In this dancing, darting book, Graves traces the development and fusion of a host of styles, Spanish and imported -- flamenco, rock, jota, rumba, blues, salsa, punk. He is a musician himself, and his own musical escapades give the book its very individual architecture. A host of musical stars -- Jimi Hendrix, Kevin Ayers, Bob Geldof, Sinead O'Connor, Eurovision contestants, summer-anthem songwriters -- tarried in Majorca and provide the soundtrack to this rhythmic, irresistible tour around a magical island and its magical culture.

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