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Soundtracks of Our Lives: Music-Making and Musicians in MENA Cinema

"Dima Punk" – A Conversation about Music Documentary,
Subcultures and Street Language in Morocco

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DOSSIER THÉMATIQUE :

Soundtracks of Our Lives: Music-Making and Musicians in Cinema of the MENA Region

DIMA PUNK – a Conversation about Music Documentary, Subcultures and Street Language in Morocco

Stefan Pethke

Unerhört! Film Festival

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Abstract | En 2020, en raison de la pandémie de COVID 19, le plus ancien festival de films musicaux d'Allemagne, UNERHÖRT!, basé à Hambourg, a dû organiser sa quatorzième édition en ligne. Si la pandémie a pu avoir un côté positif, c'est que plus de temps a pu être consacré à la discussion autour des films par des entretiens en ligne. Cet article est une retranscription éditée d'une interview dans laquelle la cinéaste, sociolinguiste et experte des dialectes arabes maghrébins, Dominique Caubet, a échangé avec le programmeur de UNERHÖRT!, Stefan Pethke, à propos de son film *Dima Punk* (2019), dont le héros est Stof, un jeune punk de Casablanca, au Maroc. La discussion approfondie entre Caubet et Pethke leur a permis d'aborder de nombreux sujets, tels que le punk à Casablanca, la langue vernaculaire au Maroc et les cultures alternatives dans les pays du Sud.

Mots-clés | Maroc, Punk, cultures alternatives, DIY, Dominique Caubet, UNERHÖRT! Music Film Festival Hamburg.

Abstract | In 2020, due to the COVID 19 pandemic, Germany's oldest music film festival, the Hamburg-based UNERHÖRT!, had to organize its fourteenth edition via online streamings. If there was any positive aspect about the pandemic, it consisted in granting more time to discussing the films through virtual Q&As. This article is an edited transcript of an interview in which the filmmaker, renowned sociolinguist and expert of North African Arab dialects Dominique Caubet, talked to UNERHÖRT! programme coordinator Stefan Pethke about her film *Dima Punk* (2019), featuring Stof, a young punk from Casablanca, Morocco. The in-depth discussion between Caubet and Pethke allowed them to address multifaceted topics, such as punk in Casablanca, vernacular language in Morocco, and Western subcultures in the Global South.

Keywords | Morocco, Punk, subcultures, Moroccan Arabic, DIY fashion, Dominique Caubet, UNERHÖRT! Music Film Festival Hamburg.

Introduction

Around the beginning of the millennium, Morocco underwent a new socio-cultural movement that arose from the underground music scene in the mid-1990s, and continued with hopes aroused by the start of the young king Mohammed VI's reign in 1999. A sentiment of relative freedom allowed rock, metal and rap musicians to develop together and not against each other.¹ In 1999, a new festival called *Le Boulevard des Jeunes Musiciens (L'Boulevard)*, which showcased this alternative culture, was born in Casablanca. The new spirit of optimism, nonetheless, was severely shattered by the rise of conservative Islamic parties and the dramatic (but decisive) events of 2003, including the arrest of fourteen young metal musicians in Casablanca on serious charges such as "shaking the Muslim faith" of which they were acquitted with strong mobilization of support from civil society, and the suicide bombings in the centre of Casablanca, killing 45 people and injuring hundreds.

Following the case of the fourteen musicians, which acted as a wake-up call for civil society, there was a collective re-thinking of Moroccan identity, debating whether it had a specificity, as opposed to the straightforward 'Arab and Muslim' identity which had been the rule in political circles as well as in education.² The plurality and complexity of Morocco was discussed at length and even led later to the writing of a special paragraph in the preamble of the 2011 post-'Arab Spring' constitution. Darija (Moroccan Arabic), which had long been related to backwardness and illiteracy, changed roles completely and came to be associated with modernity, a cool attitude and the singularity of Morocco, visible in a massive grassroots shift to writing on keyboards via mobile phones, smartphones and computers: a dream situation for a sociolinguist.

In that context, Dominique Caubet, who had previously worked on Moroccan Arabic linguistics for over twenty years, decided to study the new status given to Darija by Moroccan civil society (until this day, Darija lacks any official, institutional recognition in Morocco), and thus came to share the experience of the Casablanca-based *L'Boulevard Festival* and its musicians, regularly living in immersion in that milieu from 2005 onwards. Her study soon led to cultural studies and to investigating the role Darija plays for that specific scene, especially for punk groups and rappers (metalheads adhered more to English for international recognition at the time; only later did they start writing lyrics in Darija). Her idea of filming that movement arose with the first documentary project which she initiated and wrote in 2007, *Casanayda!* ("It's rocking in Casa!"), probably the

1- CAUBET, Dominique, "Nouveau mouvement culturel et social, nouveau rôle pour la darija (marocaine): le Maroc d'après 2003", *Revue des études berbères, Langues et Littératures berbères et arabe maghrébines: dynamiques et enjeux actuels*, 2009/1.

2- CAUBET, Dominique, "Darija and the Construction of 'Moroccanness'", in BASSIOUNEY, R. (ed.), *Identity and Dialect Performance: A Study of Communities and Dialects*, London: Routledge, 2017, pp. 99–124.

only film documenting that movement. The movement had by then – too soon – been compared to the Spanish Movida of the Post-Franco era of the 1980s and had taken the name of *Nayda* (literally, “it’s rising, moving, rocking”). During this period, hopes were high, but this movement ‘in the making’ never actually went any further and disillusionment slowly grew. The musicians, the militants and the festival were still there, but there was considerable political hijacking, and morale diminished.

As Caubet was documenting the *Nayda* and its evolution, the idea of making a film about the aftermath came about. The linguist decided to become a director and to give voice to youths from the Casablanca metropolis neighbourhoods. A young punk nicknamed Stof, whom she had followed for many years and had seen grow and turn frustrated, imposed himself as the central character who could represent this youth. The result was the documentary *Dima Punk* (2019) (literally “always a Punk”; hence the English title, *Once a Punk...*). Apart from the images taken on the fly during the early years, the major filming sessions took place in 2015 and in 2018, after Stof was released from a one-year term in prison. The film was finished in spring 2019. It premiered at the Cinema Méliès in Montreuil (near Paris) by the end of January 2020, just before the Covid-19 pandemic. It was also broadcast for a week on BBC Arabic TV in August 2020, and twice on Moroccan TV channel 2M, with 2 million viewers in November 2020 and 2,143,000 viewers in January 2022. Between 2020 to 2022, *Dima Punk* was selected at over twenty international film festivals (online or in person), and was awarded several prizes, including Best Director and Best Human Interest Documentary awards at South Africa’s Sound on Screen Music Film Festival, Capetown, in March 2022.

Among *Dima Punk*’s early online selections were German film festivals UNERHÖRT! (Hamburg) and Soundwatch (Berlin), both focusing on documentaries about music, and joining forces in November 2020, under pandemic pressure. As any carefully assorted programme should, the 2020 UNERHÖRT!-Soundwatch edition, too, came with many connections between the films, content-wise. So *Dima Punk* found itself in the company of what could be called its film soul mates, with *Contradict* (2020) from Ghana/Switzerland, for instance, where nothing but the title reveals an attitude key to Punk; or a film more about the historical contexts of Punk, titled *White Riot* (2019), dealing with the “Rock Against Racism” movement in late 1970s London. This range of geographical, historical and cultural references exemplifies both festivals’ credo that films about music should, essentially, be a window to the whole world, rather than just reproduce standard Western gestures of hegemonic aspirations. While Soundwatch has a penchant for Eastern Europe, UNERHÖRT! is known for its “tricontinental” orientation, aiming at consistently integrating into its programme films from South America, Africa, and Asia – and specifically the MENAP region (see the list of films in the Appendix).

In 2020, for rights reasons, a geo-blocking for Germany had to be set up, so only audiences within the country could watch the films. But the general idea of such festivals is, of course, to invite any interested party to look out for these kinds of interconnections between the films and possibly recreate the curatorial experience which, in this case, consists in trying to understand better what is happening on this planet through the prism of diverse musical styles, and through images of these musics being performed, hoping to share thoughts, questions and emotions with a cross-border community of like-minded people – and to win others over, or at least a few ...

As a matter of fact, conversations about the films after their screening are a crucial element of the festivals' framework and, in 2020, these Q&As were held via Zoom meetings – and recorded. What follows now is a transcript of the conversation between *Dima Punk* director Dominique Caubet, and UNERHÖRT!'s programme coordinator Stefan Pethke, slightly reworked from the perspective of March 2023 for the purpose of this publication.

SP: Thank you for being with us, Dominique Caubet. I would like to start with the age difference between Stof, the protagonist of *Dima Punk*, and yourself. In your director's statement in the film's press kit, you say: "An old lady like me conveying about a young Moroccan punk youth, it's quite a challenge". Your film tells an eight years' long story.

DC: Over ten now, because it all started in 2010, in fact. It's a long story indeed. My producer says that I'm a "young director". Because it's my first film. This is something that you have to bear in mind. It means that I have been working on other things than filmmaking. I'm a University Professor, I'm a researcher. I am a specialist of North Africa, I am Professor Emerita of North African (Maghrebi) Arabic at INALCO, the National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilisations in Paris. So, my field of research is North Africa and Morocco. I'm a linguist. I wrote a comprehensive grammar of Moroccan Arabic in the 90s. And, after that, I started working more on sociolinguistics, the language being here Moroccan Arabic, Darija, which is not the official language of Morocco, but the mother tongue of Moroccans alongside Amazigh (formerly called Berber). When I started in the field of sociolinguistics, I worked on youth language. And then I found myself in the milieu of the Underground music scene. There is a festival in Casablanca which is called *L'Boulevard* ("the Boulevard"). It's now over 20 years old, because it started in 1999. It gathered all the musicians of the alternative scene, the Underground scene. So I started working with them, and on them, on the groups of the various styles. The first one was Hip Hop.

SP: So, "*L'Boulevard*" is 20 years old, a series of events, concerts – kind of a focal point of the Underground scene in Morocco.

DC: Yes, and around “L’Boulevard” gather various styles like Hip Hop, Rap, Metal, Fusion, i.e. World Music, and now Punk. So, can you imagine? Punk groups in Morocco started appearing around 40 years after the beginning of Punk. In the beginning of this millennium, punk groups were forming and hundreds of fans were suddenly blooming in Morocco.³ That was quite challenging. And also, I was working on the scene in general. I was interested in the Punk aspect, but it was not my main interest. Mostly, I write articles, I produce books,⁴ and this is what I did at first. And then, suddenly, I decided to make a film. And I started documenting, filming some events. And I met Stof at the “L’Boulevard”, during its 2010 edition. He was quite different with his short red Mohawk; he was 17 then... This is the first time I saw him. So, I just filmed the guy. There were other punks, too, but it just happens to be him. Years went by, we met regularly at concerts or at Park Yasmina where all the urban youth of Casablanca used to meet, and I also continued filming him, so, four or five years later, the project of the film began to focus on him.

The film project was originally called *Looking for Orland*. Orland is Stof’s friend, we see him in the film, the guy with the dreadlocks; Stof explained to me at length how Orland had influenced him and how he had lost sight of him. But Orland is not a punk anymore – or maybe he still is, because the title of the film means just that: “Dima Punk” – literally, “Always a Punk”. “Once a punk, always a punk...”

3- See also the film *Chaos in Morocco: la scène punk alternative au Maroc* (Clotilde Mignon and Svink, 2017, France), available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBjWTodNLmU>, and the compilation *Chaos in Morocco* (2013) on vinyl by TAM89 Records.

4- See CAUBET, Dominique and HAMMA, Amine, *Jil Iklam, Les Poètes Urbains*, Casablanca: Éditions du Sirocco, 2017; CAUBET, Dominique and MILLER, Catherine, “Du rock au Maroc. Quelle place dans la nouvelle scène urbaine casablancaise?” in BONNEFOY, L. and CATUSSE, M. (eds), *Jeunesses arabes. Du Maroc au Yémen: loisirs, cultures et politiques*, Paris: La Découverte, 2013, pp. 342–354; CAUBET, Dominique, “DIY in Morocco from the mid 90’s to 2015: back to the roots?” in GUERRA, P. and MOREIRA, T. (eds), *KISMIF, Volume 2. An approach to Underground Music Scenes*, Porto: Faculdade de Letras, Universidade do Porto, 2016, pp. 249–256; CAUBET, Dominique, “Nouveau mouvement culturel et social, nouveau rôle pour la darija (marocaine): le Maroc d’après 2003”, *Revue des études berbères, Langues et Littératures berbères et arabe maghrébines: dynamiques et enjeux actuels*, 2009/1. CAUBET, Dominique, “From ‘Movida’ to ‘Nayda’ in Morocco: the Use of Darija (Moroccan Arabic); and in Artistic Creation at the Beginning of the 3rd Millennium”, in Stephan PROCHAZKA, S. and RITT-BENMIMOUN, V. (eds.), *Between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, Studies in Contemporary Arabic Dialects*, Wien: Neue Beihefte zur Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, Band 4, LIT, 2008, pp. 113–124.



Figure 1: Poster of *Dima Punk* – Once a Punk ... (2019)

So, the original idea was to walk around the streets and the neighbourhoods of Casablanca, literally looking for Orland. But when we started filming, we never received the authorization to film. So the risk was they would seize our cameras if we were caught filming, and that was too risky. We only filmed inside the places where we felt protected: the festival premises, Park Yasmina, other meeting points of the Underground scene, or in Stof's or Orland's neighbourhoods where no one stopped us.

I had all these images. I started working on them, trying to see how I could make the film, how I could rewrite it. I was in that process of writing when Stof got arrested by the police in April 2017. That was quite a shock, and we decided that we would help him first by providing a lawyer, and that we would wait for him, and the second half of the film was filmed as he came out of jail in 2018.

The friendship between us had grown deeper and deeper. Is it because of that friendship that the idea of that film came up? Or did the idea of the film come up and the friendship deepened? I don't know. But this is how the old lady, who is a "young director", filmed Stof.

SF: I was wondering what kind of connection there might be between you being a trained linguist and sociolinguist, as you explained to us, and the medium of film or audio-visual technologies. I imagine this is an interesting device also for scientific research because you can capture street talk in a quite spontaneous way, but you can also have other things in addition, like body language, like intonation and so on which are crucial, as we all know, for the whole of our human communication. Does your discipline of linguistics therefore feel a particular attraction towards film?

DC: Yes, absolutely. Young sociolinguists starting their research today do a lot of filming, as you say: to capture the body language and so on. Yet, this wasn't my particular approach. What I wanted was to give voice to this youth, to let them be seen, and to try not to be in the front. At one point, you can hear my voice, when Stof comes out of jail, but that's it. My attitude here was more to show, to give ... In French you would say "*donner à voir et à entendre*": "to give to see and to hear", to let people see who these youths are, and how they are, what their problems are, their difficulties. As I was filming, I caught a lot of their ways of speaking, of course. I myself started to talk like them. I can speak youth language, both orally, when I am with them, but also on social networks. When I publish posts, I use these expressions, and with some of our colleagues, we have done an article on youth language.⁵ And many of my interviewees were people from the music scene.

SP: There are two photographers in your film, one young Moroccan photographer who we witness talking with Stof in a certain way which I find quite telling, an appropriation of ad agency jargon of sorts. And then, there is this slightly older guy from Spain. Maybe these two sequences also tell us something about your own relationship to filming Stof.

DC: I didn't take it that way, but I can see what you mean. The young photographer is Joseph Ouechen. There was a time just after 2011 or 2012, when Stof was hoping to be able to be part of the fashion world as a designer, and also as a model. Because he was interesting, in the way he dressed. Joseph is a street photographer and took him as a model, because he was publishing photos of the way the Moroccan urban youth dressed in 2011.⁶

5- See ZIAMARI, Karima et al., "Éléments de caractérisation de pratiques linguistiques de jeunes Marocains (Casablanca, Meknès, Tétouan, Marrakech)", in TRIMAILLE, C., PEREIRA, C., ZIAMARI, K. and GASQUET-CYRUS, M. (eds), *Sociolinguistique des pratiques langagières des jeunes. Faire genre, faire style, faire groupe autour de la méditerranée*, Grenoble: UGA éditions, Collection Langues, Gestes, Paroles, 2020, pp. 23–79.

6- See DAHMAN Tessylia, "Entretien avec Joseph Ouechen: La Street Photography pour se réapproprié le Maroc" [online]. Link: <https://www.dunemagazine.net/articles/entretien-avec-joseph-ouechen>; for Joseph Ouechen, see <https://www.instagram.com/josephouechen/?hl=fr>

The older guy is different. He is Miguel Trillo, famous in Spain, because he is one of the photographers of the Spanish Movida in the 80s.⁷

The Movida was a cultural movement that represented the actual passage of Spain to democracy, after the death of General Franco who had ruled for 40 years since the Civil War in 1936. Photography was one of the arts present, together with music, design and the cinema with directors like Pedro Almodóvar: freeing both culture and politics.

So, Trillo is not so young anymore, but he still goes around, he still has many exhibitions, at La Tabacalera in Madrid in 2014, for example – where Stof's photo was part of the exhibit – or in other very interesting places. He was in Casablanca, and somebody from the Spanish Cultural Institute had seen Stof in festivals, at "L'Boulevard", probably, and asked me whether I could establish a contact between Trillo and Stof. And so, we went to Les Abattoirs, a former slaughterhouse in Casablanca, and I filmed their long photo session myself, with a Lumix GF2 in 2013. I didn't have anyone with me, so I am particularly proud of this particular sequence because it was very intense. Actually, I was also on my own when I shot the sequence with Joseph Ouechen in 2011, with the same Lumix camera.

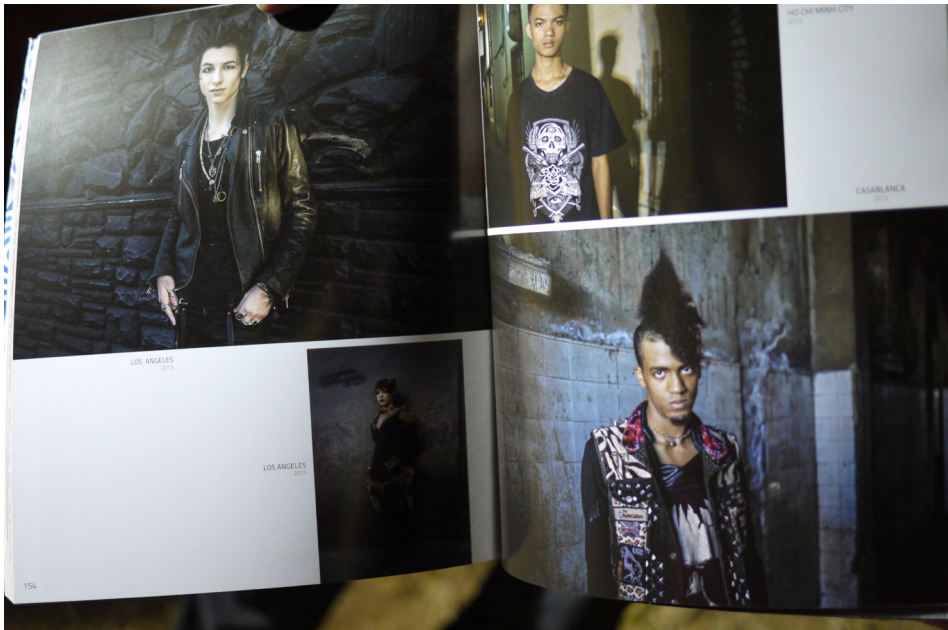


Figure 2: From the catalogue for Afluencias. Costa Este-Costa Oeste, a photography exhibition by Miguel Trillo at the Tabacalera, Madrid, in 2014

7- See "Miguel Trillo La Primera Movida : Madrid in the Early 80's" [online]. Link: <https://www.librairie-gallimard.com/livre/9788417769505-miguel-trillo-la-primera-movida-madrid-in-the-early-80-s-miguel-trillo/>; see also "Afluencias. Costa Este - Costa Oeste" [online]. Link: https://www.montehermoso.net/pagina.php?id_p=2113.

SP: I was going to ask you about your own relationship to the work of making pictures and moving images. You just revealed to us – and you can read that in the final credits, also – that you used the camera yourself, but there were also other collaborators.

DC: At the beginning I didn't have a producer for this film. I was in contact with Pan Production in Casablanca (Rita El Quessar and Mickaël Clouet at the time), with whom I had a project in 2010 that fell short. So from September 2011 to 2015, I was on my own. I was just documenting, keeping memories of things happening and hadn't yet thought of a film project. The more professional filming was for everything that happened in 2015 and in 2018; that I didn't film myself. In 2015 I had met Aboubakr Douraidi (a militant from the 20 February movement in the Moroccan Arab Spring of 2011 and its cinema section, Guerrilla Cinema)⁸ who had studied at l'École Supérieure des Arts Visuels de Marrakech au Maroc (l'ESAV), the film school in Marrakesh, and he decided to join the project and to help me with the filming; he was the artistic director of the film. We did a first series of shootings, but with no filming permit and no money: real DIY and self-production. These were incredible moments and beautiful images that several producers to whom I showed afterwards found unworthy and meritless, and this destabilized the "young director" that I was, for a year or so, until I found people that encouraged me to continue.

In 2017 I met my French producer at Lardux Films and got him interested, and Rita El Quessar from Pan Production joined in to help finish the film and get the Moroccan television network 2M involved too.⁹ This was just before Stof was arrested and it allowed us to have a professional Franco-Moroccan team when he was released in 2018.

This proved to be one of the difficulties of the film, of building the film, with the rushes we had. Because it was so heterogeneous. Some of the things were not meant to be in a proper film, they were just documents for us, for me...

So, we had to see what we could do with such footage, how to build the film in the end, when sometimes the camera stops exactly at the wrong moments, so you miss an image or two – things like that. The editing is very often "*à l'image près*": when it cuts, it's because there is nothing else afterwards. We had to make do with what we had. Either you leave it out or you take it as it is. But after all, this is a Punk film and a film about Punk, so people can probably accept these conditions.

8- See AMOUZAI, Ali, "The February 20 Movement in Morocco – Roots of failure and lessons for the future" [online]. Link: <https://longreads.tni.org/the-february-20-movement-in-morocco>; for Guerrilla Cinema, see <https://www.facebook.com/GuerrillaCinema>

9- This proved decisive later for the impact of the film in Morocco, when it was shown on 2M TV in the programme *Des Histoires et Des Hommes* in November 2020 and in January 2022, with 2 million and 2,143,000 viewers, respectively.

SP: *Dima Punk* has a striking beginning: You see this guy with a red mohawk who has a neon yellow security vest on, but in a very punkish manner, with the name of one of the iconic British bands, The Exploited, written on the back. Today, especially from a French perspective, that makes you think of the “gilets jaunes” movement. But at the same time, Stof wears flip-flops, and with a long knife in his hand, he handles the severed heads of animals, of slaughtered sheep – a very striking start that tells you about the whole mash-up in global pop culture. The opening sequence ends with a shot of a three-wheeled transportation moped driving away, avoiding a harsh accident by only a hair. So, it’s a very dynamic entrance to the film and maybe also to Stof’s personality.

DC: Yes, exactly. The idea of putting this particular sequence at the beginning was to say that this guy is a guy from the hood, like everyone else. When it’s the Eid al-Adha, he does like everybody else. We are in Casablanca, not at the countryside: everybody does what they have to do, but families have small apartments. So they ask the guys around the corner to grill the heads and the hooves of the sheep outdoors. And the guys earn money that way. It’s one of the big days when they can earn money. So we decided to film it. This was in 2015. Four years before the “gilets jaunes”, he is wearing a “gilet jaune”, a yellow security vest. This is why I put “2015” as an insert into the film, so that people know that it has nothing to do with the French movement, unless it’s a premonition... (*laughter*). Here, Stof is the person leading the operation, with all the younger kids, organizing, taking notes. Because you have all these heads and hooves, and you have to know whose is whose.

SP: In your film, we see a guy who obviously is more of a fan of Punk, who is punk in the way of adopting an attitude, adopting a dress code. He is doing fashion, the fashion he designs is completely DIY. But, thanks to your film, we also learn that there are genuinely Moroccan Punk bands. We see them perform on the stages of the “L’Boulevard” festival. What’s your explanation that Stof doesn’t make that one step more into Punk culture, and express himself through music as well?

DC: Well, there are several explanations. The groups that we see manage to have the means, the gear, the instruments (guitars, drums), the amplifiers, and things like that. They come from a slightly higher milieu than Stof himself. Most of them come from Rabat or Salé, not from Casablanca. Casablanca is more metal. So, another way of being a minority, a minority in a minority, is a Punk from Casablanca – at the time, especially. And also you would have to find other guys, you would have to earn enough money. In Morocco, in the *Maisons des Jeunes*, there is no equipment like you would find in France or in Germany where you can find guitars at free disposal. In Morocco, you’d have to gather that yourself. And Stof doesn’t. He doesn’t know how to play. He has never tried. Some of his friends with a background similar to his know how to play the guitar. Orland,

as you see, is a very good guitar player and singer. Stof was dreaming of being a lyricist and doing vocals. But he couldn't find a group. Not enough punks in Casablanca, obviously. At the time. And it's even worse now, as you can imagine. Meanwhile, things have changed a bit, because Stof tried to start a group where he sings and writes the lyrics; he named it "Dima Punk", after the film. It had to stop during the pandemic, but they have two tracks online.¹⁰

SP: How do you explain that there is a culmination point of Underground culture in Morocco from 2010 to 2015?

DC: The real culmination was earlier, in 2006/2007 when there was this movement called *La Nayda*, which – at the time – was analysed as the equivalent of the Spanish Movida, but the big difference, as we realized later, was that the political regime did not change. In 2007, I made a film – which I didn't direct but wrote – called *Casanayda!*, which means "It's rocking in Casa".¹¹ This was the apogee of the movement. In 2010, it was already going down terribly. Stof, at one stage of the film shoot in 2015, says that all his friends who were punks in 2008 or 2009 – for him, these were the years – are now either married or in jail or dead.... He is a bit like an "Ancien Combattant" already, like a war veteran. So you can imagine what's happened by 2018, the end of the filming, or now in the post-Covid era of 2023... On the other hand, Punk, as you perfectly know, is very present in fashion now. Everyone dresses with Doc Martens Punk boots, even the girls on the streets in Paris. It became fashionable around 2014, but I started filming much before that. This was when Stof was really a punk. When he started in 2006 or 2007, he was 14 at the time.

SP: But what is the political context of this culmination and the following decline?

DC: The years 2005–2007 were exceptional; there seemed to be a real cultural bubbling and the birth of urban arts, in music, fashion, dance, video and photography. This is what we tried to capture in *Casanayda!* "Citizens" emerged – instead of "subjects" – and decided to make the *bled* ("the country") move forward, to do things themselves and not expect everything from the authorities.¹² I was so lucky to be able to live in Casa[blanca] at that time, via a sabbatical leave. This came after a key year in the country, 2003, when dramatic events took place. First, on 16 February 2003, fourteen young metalheads were arrested, charged and sentenced – for "Satanic rites", "shaking the Muslims' faith" and other terrible crimes – to terms ranging from one month to one year of prison in the first

10- See <https://www.youtube.com/@dima-punk16>

11- *Casanayda!* (2007) is a documentary written by Dominique Caubet and directed by Farida Benlyazid and Abderrahim Mettour. It is available online in six parts, starting with Part 1 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRrT1zRzmFQ>

12- CAUBET, Dominique, "Nouveau mouvement culturel et social, nouveau rôle pour la darija (marocaine): le Maroc d'après 2003", op. cit.; CAUBET, Dominique, "DIY in Morocco from the mid 90's to 2015: back to the roots?", op. cit.

instance. There was a very harsh press campaign against them, but also a popular movement of support and international mobilization that led to their acquittal.¹³ This was a waking up on the part of public opinion after the leaden years under Hassan II. And only weeks after, on May 16, there were terrorist suicide attacks by sixteen young “kamikaze” in Casablanca, killing nearly 50 and injuring hundreds. 2003 was a political electroshock after the fundamentalists had won the legislative elections in 2002 and had a growing influence, and the arrest of the musicians was part of this. But after the suicide bombers, there were huge demonstrations and the fundamentalists retreated for some time, and slowly the freedom of the years 2005–2007 made its way. There was a feeling that the Moroccan “Movida” was about to bloom into a “Nayda”. But this was an illusion and the movement-in-the-making never actually emerged and things went downhill until 2011 and the Arab Spring with the 20 February Movement. Unlike the other Arab countries, Morocco had had its Nayda and 2011 led to divisions because people were afraid to lose the little freedom they had gained. There were political changes in 2011 with a new constitution that enshrined the plurality of the Moroccan society,¹⁴ but the elections led to a fundamentalist government (2011–2017) and the authorities took back all the freedoms gained, leading to arrests of investigative journalists charged on false common law offences, and to closing down of places of urban culture, and so on.

SP: *Another detail I liked a lot in your film is when you see Stof entering the festival of “L’Boulevard”. He or one of his friends is wearing a Ramones T-Shirt, and to his right, there is a small boy who has a football shirt of Ramos, then defender of Real Madrid and notorious bad guy. So you have that Ramo(nes)–Ramo(s)–doublet.*

DC: This is in my unconscious here, I hadn’t seen it. It’s right, I remember now. (laughter)

SP: For me, that adds to the mash-up image, and this is another key motto that has been expressed about Punk many times, or about Postmodernism – that famous slogan “anything goes”. In your film, very diverse elements are coming together, but popping up – as you explained to us – 30 or 40 years after their so-called historical origins. This brings me back to the question of your field of work as a scientist, which is language. What is your observation of the impact of globalizing Pop Culture, a culture that spreads with even bigger intensity since

13- CAUBET, Dominique and MILLER, Catherine, “Du rock au Maroc. Quelle place dans la nouvelle scène urbaine casablancaise?”, op. cit. For related articles see, for example, TREMLETT Giles, “Moroccan judge jails metalheads”, 11 March 2003 [online]. Link: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/mar/11/arts.artsnews>; and GARÇON José, “Les rabat-joie du Maroc and roll”, 14 March 2003 [online], link: https://www.liberation.fr/planete/2003/03/14/les-rabat-joie-du-maroc-and-roll_458547/

14- This was one of the points discussed at length during the years 2003–2007: the plurality and the Africanity of Morocco. See CAUBET, Dominique, “Darija and the Construction of ‘Moroccanness’”, in BASSIOUNEY, R. ed. *Identity and Dialect Performance: A Study of Communities and Dialects*, London: Routledge, 2017, pp. 99–124.

we entered the digital era – how does that affect and re-dynamize vernacular language in the case of your main domain of work, Moroccan Arabic?

DC: Youth language in Morocco is developing in its own way. There is a lot of language mixing, Darija (Moroccan Arabic) with French or English.

Since the beginning of the millennium, there has been a big change in the form of a passage to writing of Darija (which doesn't have an official orthography) on social networks. It started with text messages on the first Nokia mobile phones, in Latin script (there was no alternative). People taught themselves to read and write in Darija and the massive arrival of smartphones around 2015 rendered this easier, with a choice of Latin and Arabic script, and the result is that millions of pages are written in Darija on a daily basis now.¹⁵

SP: We know that the influence of French in Moroccan society is declining. There is an ever-stronger influence – through the internet, probably – of English. Could the rise of Punk be a marker of that shift of cultural influences?

DC: I don't think so, no. Because the people interested in Punk and coming from the more working-class neighbourhoods are influenced by the music, obviously. They love Punk music, they love Metal. Another thing that is interesting is that, in Morocco, fans do not stick to one style: a punk could listen to Metal with great pleasure. Which is not the case in Europe very often. A metalhead can listen to Rap. A rapper can love Metal. There are many Moroccan rappers who love Metal and who have done tracks where they mix Metal and Rap. This is also thanks to the "L'Boulevard" which created an Underground community of Underground musicians, and they do not exclude the other styles. Metalheads, punks, rappers, Fusion people – all come together. You can feel the influence of English, maybe, with engineers, computer scientists and the likes, but you won't hear people code-switching with English and Moroccan Arabic in the streets, like you would hear them in French. It may happen here and there, but it is still marginal, I would say.

SP: Let me be the devil's advocate. In the particular field the UNERHÖRT! festival is working in – i.e. films about music – we have seen quite a lot of those films which witness particular musical styles in let's say unexpected areas on the planet: Punk in Cambodia, Metal in Nepal, Rap in Lebanon, and so on. One could say, Western Popular Culture is playing the agent of disseminating concepts of Western democracy, or neoliberal individualism. Punk is a very good example of

15- CAUBET, Dominique, "Morocco: An Informal Passage to Literacy in Darija (Moroccan Arabic)", in HØIGILT, J. and MEJDELL, G. (eds), *The Politics of Written Language in the Arab World - Writing Change*, Leiden: Brill, 2017, pp. 116–141; CAUBET, Dominique, "New elaborate written forms in Darija: blogging, posting and slamming in Morocco", in BENMAMOUN, A. and BASSIOUNEY, R. (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Arabic Linguistics*, London: Routledge, 2018, pp. 387–406.

that, because in its core – and Stof repeats it several times – it’s about freedom. But what is freedom? Is it something for which you have to be rich to really live it? How would you comment on that?

DC: I think all the local fans of Alternative Underground music are very conscious of their Moroccanness, if you will. They take in, they make use of and they adapt these musics to Morocco. They moroccanise them. Punk groups in Morocco can only sing in Moroccan Arabic. They wouldn’t dream of singing in English. So, they will use Moroccan Gnawa castanets and things like that; they will mix them. You cannot say that Punk is just English – or just American – whether you prefer the Sex Pistols or The Ramones. Punk has travelled. There are the most fantastic groups, as you say. There is one in Myanmar in Southeast Asia, The Rebel Riot; they are fantastic. There is a film about them, *No Spicy No Fun – The Rebel Riot in the UK* (directed by Roberta Bononi and Kim Ford, released in 2022).¹⁶ Punk generally adopts the language of the country where it grows. Stof’s motto is in French: “*Vivre libre ou mourir*” (“to live freely or die”). This is the title of a track by the French Punk group Bérurier Noir. Stof says it at least twice in the film. This is very romantic, in his style, but he has a right to dream, and this is what he does.

SP: I would like to come back to your decision to film this yearslong adventure. You explained to us already that it was not necessarily – and certainly not directly coming from – a scientific approach, a scientific use of the camera. How important is that typically French cinephilic culture? Is that a background for you? How did it start as a film project?

DC: Well, it started with the other film, with *Casanayda!* in 2007; this is how I started to go into filming. When I was still teaching at INALCO, the National Institute of Oriental Studies in Paris, I got a sabbatical. I was going to write a book on the Underground scene in Morocco. I was a friend of Rachid Taha, the former lead singer of Carte de Séjour – a crucial act in France’s immigrant music scene emerging in the 80s – who passed away in 2018; he died fairly young, he wasn’t even 60. I had worked with him on several of his albums, and I translated for him The Clash’s “Rock the Casbah” from English to Algerian Arabic, for his own version of that song. And I did all the translations for his 2004 solo album *Tékitoi* (“*T’es qui, toi?*” / “And who are you?”). I translated the wrong way around: from French into Arabic! And he was telling me as a joke: “Stop making books, make films! You will reach more people.” So, this is why I made a film, the first film – which in the end did not credit me as its director, but just as its writer. And then, I decided to do a *Casanayda!* follow-up, which I would be directing. This is how this film started, and later, as I told you, Stof became its main character. But yes: I like films, I

16- Yet another film about punk in Myanmar and Rebel Riot identified by Dominique Caubet is *My Buddha is Punk* by German director Andreas Hartmann, released in 2015. See https://www.senscritique.com/film/My_Buddha_is_Punk/43094055. UNERHÖRT!, in its 2012 edition, screened the film *Yanagon Calling – Punk in Myanmar* (2012) by German directors Alexander Dluzak and Carsten Piefke.

watch films. But I never studied them, really. So it's more like a DIY filmmaking, with the help of professionals. So, thank you for selecting the film. It's very nice to be in a music-oriented festival, of course. Punk's not dead!

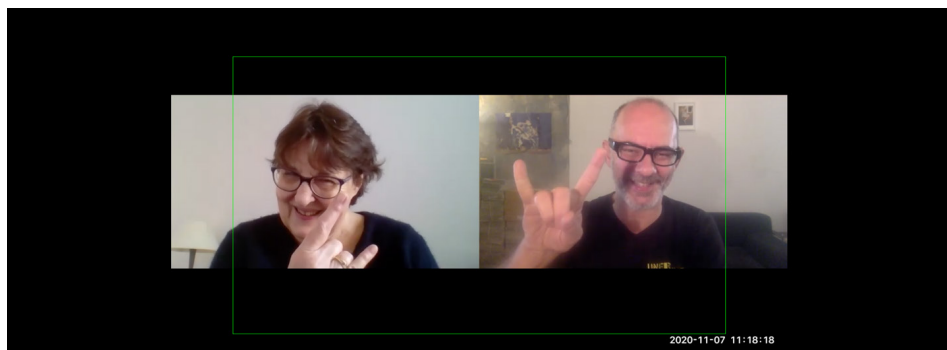


Figure 3: Dominique Caubet and Stefan Pethke, *Dima Punk* Q&A, UNERHÖRT! Music Film Festival, November 2020 (online edition).

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Appendix: Music documentaries from and/or about the MENAP region shown at UNERHÖRT! Film Festival to date

I Love Hip Hop in Morocco

Dir. Jennifer Needleman and Joshua Asen

USA, 2007

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OnGt2n-eDQU>

Taqwacore – The Birth of Punk Islam

Dir. Omar Majeed

Canada, 2009

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMZ8DOgF4Mo>

Electro Chaabi

Dir. Hind Meddeb

Egypt/France, 2013

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p9OBTodW3So>

Mali Blues

Dir. Lutz Gregor

Germany, 2015

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtnAkbm4Sbg>

Yallah! Underground

Dir. Farid Eslam

Czech Republic, 2015

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jE4umNC4jq4>

Wenn Gott Schläft (When God Sleeps)

Dir. Till Schauder

Germany, 2017

Trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_pUIDzViI8

Dima Punk

Dir. Dominique Caubet

France, 2019

Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/331407336>

El Arena

Dir. Jay B. Jammal

Lebanon/ United Arab Emirates, 2022

Trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zuElq-Woo_o

ملخص | في عام ٢٠٢٠، اضطر أقدم مهرجان لأفلام الموسيقى في ألمانيا UNERHÖRT! الذي يقام في هامبورغ إلى تنظيم الدورة الرابعة عشرة عبر الإنترنت بسبب جائحة COVID-19، لذا، فإنه تم تخصيص وقت أكثر لمناقشة الأفلام من خلال المقابلات عبر الإنترنت. هذه المقالة هي نسخة محررة من مقابلة أجرتها المخرجة وعالمة الاجتماع وخبيرة اللهجات العربية المغربية، دومينيك كوبيه Dominique Caubet مع مبرمجة، المهرجان Stefan Pethke حول فيلمها «ديما بانك» *Dima Punk* (٢٠١٩) الذي يحكي قصة Stof، شاب يتبنى ثقافة *punk* و الذي يعيش في ضواحي الدار البيضاء بالمغرب.

يتناول الفيلم الصراعات التي يواجهها ستوف في محاولته للتعبير عن ذاته ومواجهة القيود الاجتماعية والثقافية المحيطة به.

خلال المناقشة العميقة بين Caubet و Pethke تم استعراض العديد من المواضيع، مثل البانك في الدار البيضاء واللغة العامية في المغرب والثقافات البديلة في البلدان الجنوبية.

كلمات مفتاحية | DIY, Dominique Caubet, Music Film Festival Hamburg, Punk, الثقافة المحيطة، المغرب.

Notice biographique

Stefan Pethke is a filmmaker, author, translator, subtitler, consultant, lecturer, and program coordinator of UNERHÖRT! International Music Film Festival Hamburg. He was a founding member of “ENTUZIAZM - Friends of Mediation between Film and Text.” Pethke has been a jury member in Rabat (Festival International de Cinéma d’Auteur), Torino (See You Sound), and Paris (F.A.M.E.). His recent publications include “The Berlin Ashlaa Incident – A letter to filmmaker Hakim Belabbes”, in Viola Shafik (ed.), *Documentary Filmmaking in the Middle East and North Africa* (2022).

Dominique Caubet is Professor Emerita of North-African Arabic at INALCO (School of Oriental Studies), Paris. She is a sociolinguist specialising in Moroccan Arabic and she has written numerous books and articles on Morocco and North Africa. For the last ten years, she has published various articles and a book on the underground music scene and on the cultural movement that took place around 2005–2007, which was named “Nayda” (Rising). *Dima Punk* – on which she worked from 2010 to 2019 – is her first experience as a film director.