

[Mexico's New Wave Conquers Madrid](#)

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For 41 years, Madrid has not deemed a single Mexican torero worthy of its greatest prize—leaving the sands of the venerable ring on the shoulders of the enraptured crowd, the coronation of taurine royalty. Madrid's San Isidro fair is to toreo as the Tour de France is to bicycling, or Cannes to the film industry; the attentions of the cranky, demanding, fickle denizens of Las Ventas del Espiritu Santo--the cathedral/torture chamber/primer plaza of the taurine world—are fixed for more than a month on the actions of those aspiring princes and charlatans, prodigal sons and faded flames who aspire to the glory and riches to be had if Madrid finds favor—it is the God given right of Madrid to ordain the new order, banish the unworthy; reclaim the lost. For 41 years, Madrid has not deemed a single Mexican torero worthy of its greatest prize—leaving the sands of the venerable ring on the shoulders of the enraptured crowd, the coronation of taurine royalty. Eloy Cavazos, diminutive bull tamer from Monterrey, was the last to achieve the distinction, in 1972, and he will hold that honor at least another year. But the drought was nearly ended by five of the leading stars of Mexican toreo's "new wave"—Diego Silveti, Arturo Saldivar, Joselito Adame, Sergio Flores, and Juan Pablo Sanchez. Silveti, Saldivar and Adame each cut an ear from one of their bulls, and most of the taurine press agreed that Flores, who was gored by the bull of his confirmacion—the official recognition of his status as a matador by the king makers of the capital city—offered some of the finest, most classical work of the entire 34 day odyssey and should have taken a prize as well. Only Sanchez, probably the most technically savvy of the group, was, ironically, left out in the cold by his scientifically precise, but ultimately, soul-less, action with the generally good set of bulls from the Alcurrucen ranch. Diego Silveti, whose physique and profile are heartbreaking recreations of his father, David, Mexico's last matador/deity, defied a hail storm of biblical proportions to take his prize, while Saldivar, a cognoscenti's favorite, abandoned his normally classic repose in favor of a blood and guts attack that demanded a reward for his determination if nothing else. But it is Adame who especially impressed the madrilenos with his quiet, self-possessed demeanor and confidence, his ability to understand and dominate the particular challenges his bulls presented, and the variety and quality of his work with the large capote and smaller muleta. Appearing twice, once as a substitute for another of Madrid's new crushes, Ivan Fandino, Adame could easily have gone out on shoulders both times if not for the recurring crucible of his faulty sword work; two attempts on each bull left him with one ear each day instead of a possible four, or even five. Madrid has been flirting with Adame since he became a full matador in September of 2007, but for reasons not made entirely clear by the matador or his handlers (the Tijuana empresarial group CASA TOREROS now handles Adame's career), Adame had not reappeared in Madrid until this year. Madrid will not soon forget his determination—and ability—to succeed at the highest level of the art. "Madrid is just the beginning," he said in one of the many interviews sought by the Spanish press following his triumphs. The beginning of what, is, unfortunately, the bothersome question being asked by aficionados in Mexico, and not a few in Spain.

Concerned that the oligarchy that controls the interests of Spain's major plazas and ferias will rely on the safe stable of proven—if unadventurous—talent that offers the best return on an increasingly fragile euro, many wonder if the triumphs of this promising class of Mexican matadors will be compensated with opportunities that—common lore holds—follow triumphs in Madrid/San Isidro as sure as PAC money follows poll leading candidates. The European recession has been ruinously felt in Spain, and promoters have felt forced to reduce the number of corridas, and fill the remaining spaces with the names of figuras in hope of sustaining themselves and the Fiesta until the recovery (?). Mexican matadors, regardless their talent, have never had an easy time obtaining contracts in the zealously nationalistic mother country, and the economic troubles offer easy cover for this deeply embedded prejudice. Possibilities exist—Saldivar will perform in the Madrid province of Navas del Marques in July, Flores has a few contracts in France, and Adame has just been contracted for the important plaza of Valencia, although that corrida is at the end of October, when the taurine faithful turns its attention toward the Americas. Silveti and Sanchez have yet to see any offers, and the larger, important summer fairs of Pamplona, Bilbao, and Malaga, have long been booked. There is unrest among the aficion, who feel that effort and talent must be recognized and rewarded at whatever the cost, and a realization that if the Fiesta is to survive its many antagonists, it must become more inclusive and international in both its principal actors and fan base. The story of the summer of 2013 will be a revealing spotlight on that assertion.