


The Songs of *Paquita Salas*: Function and Meaning in TV shows

LAS CANCIONES DE *PAQUITA SALAS*: FUNCIÓN Y SIGNIFICADO EN LA FICCIÓN TELEVISIVA


Received on 13/08/2025 | Accepted on 04/11/2025 | Published on 15/01/2026

<https://doi.org/10.62008/ixc/16/01Lascan>

Patricia Palomares-Sánchez | Universidad de Alicante

✉ patricia.palomares@ua.es |  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7566-4125>

Cande Sánchez-Olmos | Universidad de Alicante

✉ cande.sanchez@ua.es |  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5080-2835>

Abstract: This article examines the function and meaning of pre-existing songs, musical numbers, and the theme song in *Paquita Salas*, one of the most successful Spanish streaming-platform series in recent years. The findings reveal that songs serve to situate the action, convey the protagonists' emotions, and contextualise the narrative by emphasising and anchoring the storyline. Musical numbers, in turn, operate as narrative devices that blend formats and genres that are characteristic of transmedia culture. The study also observes that the series' growing success, along with its move to Netflix, coincides with an increased use of iconic songs that strengthen its ties to Spanish popular culture. The participation of prominent artists such as Rosalía and Isabel Pantoja in the theme song further reinforces the symbolic legitimisation of these musical references in consolidating the cultural value of this televisual metafiction.

Keywords: Music and Television; Popular Music; TV Fiction; Netflix; Metanarrative.

Resumen: Este artículo analiza la función y el significado de las canciones preexistentes, los números musicales y la sintonía de *Paquita Salas*, una de las ficciones más exitosas del panorama televisivo español de las plataformas de *streaming*. Los resultados evidencian que las canciones sitúan la acción, expresan los sentimientos de las protagonistas y contextualizan el relato al enfatizar y anclar la narrativa. Los números musicales, por su parte, funcionan como artefactos narrativos que hibridan formatos y géneros propios de la cultura transmedia. Asimismo, se constata que el creciente éxito de la serie y su paso a Netflix coincide con un incremento en el uso de canciones emblemáticas que intensifican su vínculo con la cultura popular española. La participación de figuras como Rosalía e Isabel Pantoja en la sintonía refuerza la legitimación simbólica de los referentes musicales en la consolidación del valor cultural de esta metaficción televisiva.

Palabras clave: música y televisión; música popular; ficción televisiva; Netflix; metanarrativa.



To quote this work: Palomares-Sánchez, Patricia & Sánchez-Olmos, Cande. (2026). Las canciones de *Paquita Salas*: función y significado en la ficción televisiva. *index.comunicación*, 16(1), 255-276. <https://doi.org/10.62008/ixc/16/01Lascan>

1. Introduction

This article examines the role and importance of synchronized songs in the series *Paquita Salas*, created by Javier Calvo and Javier Ambrossi (Los Javis), which premiered in 2016 on the Flooxer platform (part of Atresmedia). As a result of its popularity, Netflix acquired the rights to produce its second and third seasons. *Paquita Salas* is a Spanish comedy that follows the journey of a fading talent agency, PS Management. In the 1990s, Paquita was a leading figure in the entertainment industry, but she finds herself faces new challenges resulting from sector changes, social media and losing her key actresses. Combining humour and nostalgia, the series uses metafiction to show her efforts to reinvent herself with the aid of her loyal assistant, Magüi, amidst setbacks, betrayals, and occasional successes in Spanish pop culture. In an era in which media convergence and platformisation are shaping television production, Netflix has expanded this successful local series with new seasons, aiming to enrich its catalogue with local stories that can appeal to global audiences (Hidalgo-Marí, 2020).

This research is based on the idea that *Paquita Salas* exemplifies how original and pre-existing songs can be strategically integrated into a television comedy. According to Giuffre & Hayward (2017), music, comedy, and television form a valued triad for audiences, but are often dismissed by critics due to their popular, predictable and commercial nature, as if these characteristics might prevent a comedy from being taken seriously as a legitimate expression of popular culture and as a reflection of its collective imaginaries, especially those of marginalised groups. In this regard, we examine the functions and meanings of the songs inserted into *Paquita Salas's* narrative to understand how they construct narrative meaning, character development and emotional connection with the audience. Although the series features incidental music, this article focuses on the songs, as they generate a greater effect and deliver a deeper emotional impact than instrumental music, firstly because of their lyrics, narratives and visuals (Hesmondhalgh, 2013), and secondly because in many cases they are recognised by the audience and foster an emotional connection with the audiovisual narrative (Kalinak, 2010). For this reason, this article will explore the function and meaning of the songs and musical performances featured in the show.

Analysis of a series created by Los Javis is relevant due to the central role that popular music plays in their creative imagination. From *La Llamada*, an independent musical theatre production that became a transmedia phenomenon (film, sing-along, etc.) centred on pop music, love, friendship, sexual

diversity and religion (Sánchez-Olmos, 2024), to *La Mesías*, in which they re-interpret the viral YouTube group *Flos Mariae* as *Stella Maris*, who expanded across different media platforms into reality by performing at the Primavera Sound festival (Martín-Martín *et al.*, 2024). The trajectory of Los Javis reveals a commitment to legitimising popular culture, focusing on pop music, meta-fiction and real events, while also helping to make LGBTQI+ identities more visible, both in their creations (*La Llamada*, *Paquita Salas*, *Veneno*, *Paca La Piraña ¿Dígame?*, *Vestidas de Azul*) and in their productions (*Mariliendre*, *Superestar*), as well as in their roles in talent shows as teachers on *Operación Triunfo* and as judges on *Drag Race España*.

When people find meaning and pleasure, and add their own interpretation to television texts, these texts become popular culture (Fiske, 1989) and, consequently, an interesting object of study for cultural studies and semiotics. Metafiction, self-reference and the constant interpellation of reality are key to understanding how Los Javis have managed to connect so intensely with their audience. In *Paquita Salas*, metafiction not only structures the narrative, it also becomes its distinctive feature. On the one hand, the series is presented as a mockumentary — similar to *The Office* (NBC, 2005-2013) or *Modern Family* (ABC, 2009-2020) — and on the other, the boundaries between fiction and reality are blurred, which is expressed both in nods to the world of cinema and television and in the appearance of real characters playing themselves, among whom are artists who were key figures in television history but have fallen into obscurity, such as Lidia San José, Belinda Washington, Miriam Díaz Aroca, Eva Santolaria and Andrés Pajares. *Paquita Salas* connects with the audience by breaking the fourth wall and inserting intertextual references into the narrative that viewers have stored away in their Spanish popular culture pantry, and which in many cases are activated with a certain sense of nostalgia. The metafiction turns television itself into the narrative premise which, following Genette (1989) in his analysis of metatextuality, addresses the viewer's critical commentary and narrative awareness, and demands an additional point of reflection. Even *Paquita Salas*, played by Juan Echanove in the film being shot about her in the series, becomes the narrative premise of *Paquita Salas*, a prime example of a *mise-en-abyme* that emphasises the metanarrative reflection on the representation of the television medium itself.

1.1. The roles that songs play in television series

In the second half of the 20th century, Hollywood integrated popular music into its productions under commercial pressures, fostering alliances between film studios and record companies to promote films and songs jointly (Kalinak, 2010). As a result of the crisis the music industry faced due to digitalisation, this synergy was strengthened. From the second decade of the 21st century onwards, the use of pre-existing songs serves not only narrative functions but also promotional ones, especially in light of declining income from physical sales. Television fiction thus becomes an advertising platform for music (Padilla-Castillo & Requeijo-Rey, 2012), a phenomenon known as «musicvertising» — music + advertising —, which highlights not only the dichotomy between the functions of music in audiovisuals but also the tensions between art and commerce (Sánchez-Olmos, 2018).

Since the 1980s, the relationship between music and image has attracted academic interest across perspectives, including semiotics, audiovisual analysis and musicology, examining the narrative, emotional, and aesthetic functions of music, the typology of its placement within the narrative, and its interaction and synchronisation with the image as a key element of meaning (Alcalde, 2007; Cook, 2001; Chion, 1993; Fraile, 2012; Kassabian, 2001; Piñeiro-Otero, 2019). Studies agree that music for television — whether instrumental or song-based — functions as a rhetorical resource, strongly conditioned by the genre's norms and conventions, which govern the selection, style and narrative role of the music. In comedy, it often faces prejudices that consider humour a minor product, which limits its aesthetic development (Giuffre & Hayward, 2017). Conversely, science fiction offers a privileged space for sonic experimentation (Donnelly & Hayward, 2012).

When analysing music in audiovisual works, Knakkergaard (2013) distinguishes between «music», «film music», and «music in film» to emphasise that the latter is integral to the work: even when it is extradiegetic, it always contributes to the unfolding and dramatisation of the narrative. It is never neutral, but rather serves a rhetorical function. The audience perceives the music as diegetic, since what matters is not its origin within or outside the story, but its legitimisation on screen and its role in shaping audiovisual meaning. Kassabian (2001) argues that cinema is not only seen but also heard, as music brings its own meaning. Cook (2001) suggests that music operates as part of a multimodal system of meaning, in which significance emerges from the negotiation between different semiotic levels, such as lyrics, images and sounds.

This research focuses on the analysis of songs as artefacts of enunciation whose meaning is primarily supported by their lyrics. Hesmondhalgh (2013) argues that, being less polysemous than music, lyrics anchor the message and facilitate the audience's identification with the performers or with the emotions that form an inherent part of fiction, acting as an additional narrator, reinforcing the audiovisual discourse and enhancing the viewer's emotional engagement by conveying implicit emotions that are not expressed verbally (Kalinak, 2010).

Frith (2002) considers that the constant presence of music on television has solidified three key conventions for understanding its creative potential. Firstly, music constructs its own aesthetic, which reinforces the narrative and stylistic tone. Secondly, it anchors images in familiar cultural references, using pop songs to evoke memories, situate scenes or even trivialise significant events, normalising the extraordinary. Thirdly, it can operate as an ironic comment, generating critical distance and reinforcing the viewer's interpretation, even when the song appears to have no direct connection to the scene.

In addition to the pre-existing songs, this research also analyses the musical numbers in *Paquita Salas*. In this regard, Macrossan (2021) proposes the concept of «screensong» to describe musical performances within a trans-media culture context that has dissolved the boundaries between formats and audiovisual genres. He uses the term screensong to define a singular audiovisual unit that integrates different texts and formats (musical theatre, musical film, music videos, advertising, TikToks, etc.), in which popular song and moving image are combined. It is characterised by intensified aesthetic and memetic elements that generate high engagement, thereby encouraging its viral spread across multiple platforms and promoting its modification and circulation among the audience. The screensong exemplifies how musical content adapts to a continually evolving digital media ecosystem, where narrative, performative and audiovisual aspects interconnect to produce new formats. Both in international and domestic series, musical numbers are a common device that serve vital narrative and aesthetic functions. These elements articulate meanings and reinforce the development of scenes, characters or plots through lyrics that relate to the story (García-Martín, 2018; Galeano-Galea, 2020), even alluding to impossible worlds and dreamlike environments (Fraile, 2012).

Finally, this article examines the theme tune of *Paquita Salas* in terms of the importance of its performers, including Rosalía, Isabel Pantoja and Sergio Dalma. Series theme tunes have evolved from simple instrumental

pieces — similar to the opening melodies of other programmes — into paratexts (Genette, 1989), which place the series within a recognisable symbolic universe and encourage interpretations connected to the viewer's cultural memory. Zuazu & López-Cano (2014) highlight that, from its very first episode, the theme tune defines the series' identity: its formal elements — rhythm, melody, genre and even lyrics — anticipate the tone and audiovisual style, and attract a specific audience. When popular artists perform the opening credits, the song gains an additional semiotic significance by embedding ideology, narrative and aesthetics, as well as strengthening the link with the music industry.

2. Objectives and Methodology

The research aims to examine the meanings of songs in *Paquita Salas*. Its specific goals include analysing the roles that songs play within the story, exploring the importance of pre-existing tracks and musical numbers, and examining their connection to diegesis. The study also considers how the soundtrack develops as a form of paratext. A discourse analysis is employed to examine how the songs relate to the narrative. Firstly, all 16 episodes across the three seasons were watched, and each musical piece was identified and categorised in a table based on four criteria: soundtrack, original incidental music, pre-existing songs, and original songs or musical numbers. Following an initial review and drawing on theoretical studies, the primary functions of the songs created specifically for the series are analysed. Although a single song can have multiple functions, only its primary role was recorded.

Table 1. Coding Criteria for the Musical Corpus

Variable		Label
Axis of Analysis	Opening credits	Opening Theme: <i>¡Ay, Paquita!</i>
	Incidental Music	Instrumental composition accompanying the scenes
	Pre-existing Song	Popular musical theme incorporated into the soundtrack
	Original Song	Song composed specifically for the series
Season, Episode, and Minute		Exact location of the musical excerpt
Authors, Performers and Title		Authorship, performer and title of the piece
Relation to the Diegesis		Diegetic / Non-diegetic

Narrative Function	Locates and sets the scene / Expresses the character's feelings / Provides context and dramatisation
Context	Description of the narrative moment in which the music appears

Source: authors' elaboration.

3. Results

The analysis reveals 109 synchronisations across three seasons: 55 incidental music insertions and 33 songs, of which 30 are pre-existing and three are original. Additionally, five instrumental pieces and one with pre-existing lyrics from libraries are identified. Finally, the theme music appears in 15 of the 16 episodes, although with significant changes in both interpretation and visuals. The authorship of the original music for *Paquita Salas* varies by season: in the first, J. C. Moreno is credited with sound design, whereas in the second and third seasons it is attributed to Manu Guix, known for his work on *Operación Triunfo*, a programme on which he worked alongside Los Javis as a teacher. The inclusion of an original soundtrack by Guix coincides with the series' acquisition by Netflix, underscoring its status as an audiovisual production. The role of music supervisor is held by Marta Crespo, who is responsible for coordinating the selection, integration and licensing of music across all seasons and who served as the music supervisor for *La Llamada* (2017). However, the auteur vision of Los Javis is evident both in their song selections, which anchor the aesthetic and help provide coherence, and in terms of how the sound discourse is adapted to how the series' narrative evolves.

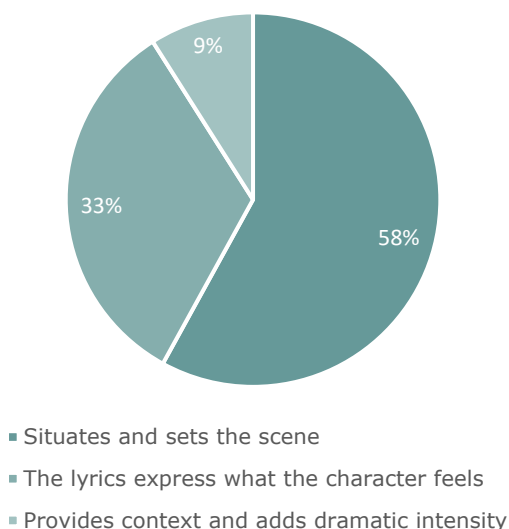
3.1. Pre-existing songs

Considering the synchronisation of pre-existing songs, a total of 30 tracks were identified, of which two are instrumental pieces, and the rest include lyrics. The distribution of these pieces shows a progressive increase in the use of placed songs, accompanying the programme's growing success: From five in the first season to 11 in the second and 14 in the third.

Regarding the function within the discourse of songs with lyrics, 9% serve to situate and set the scene, helping to build the context and atmosphere of each scene. An example of this appears in the introduction to the track «Back for Good» by Take That. On the other hand, in 33% of cases, the music contextualises and acts as an expressive resource that intensifies the dramatisation and sentimentalism, as identified in the case of «Inventas» by Vanesa Martín, or the comedic tone of scenes, as seen in «Flying Free» by Pont Aeri and «Baila

morena» by Héctor y Tito. However, the predominant function accounts for 58% of songs, which express the characters' feelings and emphasise their emotions and states of mind through the lyrics, establishing a direct connection between the musical dimension and the emotional development of the discourse. This function is reflected in the synchronisation of songs such as «Respirar» by Bebe and «Cadillac Solitario» by Loquillo.

Figure 1. *Function of Pre-existing Songs with Lyrics in Paquita Salas*



Source: own elaboration.

Although most of the songs are introduced extradiegetically, on five occasions they are presented diegetically, in ways that integrate them into the action and make them part of the characters' world. The first song appears in episode 2x05 with «Back for Good» by Take That, which plays when Paquita plays a cassette of Lidia's on a Walkman. Both the choice of track and the retro device reinforce the story's setting, presented through flashbacks. The Walkman and the cassette, typical of the era, enhance the journey into the past, while the song, released in 1995, resonates with the nostalgia of audiences who experienced Take That's impact during that decade.

Another case of diegetic hybridisation occurs in «Cadillac Solitario» by Loquillo, which presents a nod to musical metafiction. According to

Paquita, the rocker wrote the song for her, whom he called his «Loquilla». In episode 3x01, Paquita and Macarena flee from the Goya Awards ceremony, where Macarena is nominated for *La Llamada*. After an argument with her partner, who was Leiva in both reality and fiction, they embark on an adventure to recover the gifts she gave him, the «rocker». Macarena's nomination for the Goya Awards, as depicted in *Paquita Salas*, did not happen in reality; it was actually Leiva who was nominated for Best Original Song, and who went on to win. However, Macarena wins the Goya Award in *Paquita Salas*, and to celebrate, Paquita and Macarena head to a karaoke venue and perform «Cadillac Solitario» together, with Manu Guix accompanying on the piano. The scene assumes a strong symbolic charge: Both appear to dedicate the song to each other, and the lyrics serve as an emotional synthesis of their professional and personal bond. At that moment, Macarena informs Paquita of her decision to move to Los Angeles. She sings the first lines «I always wanted to go to L.A., leave this city one day...» while Paquita, still hurt, responds with «But you left me a long time ago...». The scene thus becomes an emotional musical farewell. Finally, Macarena leaves and Paquita is left alone in the venue, singing, «And I'm here drunk in the Cadillac, under the palm trees, lonely crossing. And you're not here», lines that reinforce the feelings of loneliness, abandonment and heartbreak that the artist's representative is experiencing.

Two cases of diegetic hybridisation also stand out, in which songs are combined with scenes in which the music assumes an extradiegetic character. One of these is «Morena» by Héctor y Tito (3x03), which plays in a nightclub where Magüi — now no longer with PS Management — dances wildly under the influence of alcohol and drugs while singing «baila morena, baila morena». The reggaeton of the 2000s is a symbol of escape and extroversion. Accompanied by musical references such as Mario Vaquerizo and talent-show contestants such as Miki and Alba Reche, Magüi dances and sings, revealing a facet of unprecedented liberation. The same song is also used extradiegetically over images of Anna Castillo, who is anxiously waiting at an audition. In this case, the same musical theme conveys an opposite emotion: not liberation or a carefree attitude, but rather a sense of pressure, anxiety and tension in the face of the challenge posed by the selection process. Thus, as Cook (2001) suggests, the accompanying images are what shape the song's meaning.

Similarly, «Los Jardines de Marzo» by La Bien Querida is diegetically introduced (3x05) and performed live by the artist in a pub where Clara and

Belinda Washington are present. The use of this song enhances the emotional weight of the scene, as the lyrics serve as a way to channel what Clara is thinking after a failure with Paquita: «Everyone has remnants of dreams, and regions of life devastated». During the song, Belinda is also shown dancing, and the camera focuses on her when the lyrics «And I was always seeking the flames with you. Now I burn for you like a pagan» are heard, in reference to the crisis she is facing due to the leak of her sexual video. Subsequently, when the song reaches the line «Everyone has a childhood», the images show Paquita and her best friend from the village dancing a *jota*. At this point, the song has become an extradiegetic element, but the lyrics continue to function as a narrative device that reinforces the happiness of two friends as they reminisce about their time in Navarrete. Interestingly, Amaia —a contestant from *Operación Triunfo*— performs the song «So Tiny and Sincere», which is later played at Paquita’s mother’s funeral. The song anticipates the «sincericide» — as Leiva would say — that Paquita is about to commit before the media, gathered at the door seeking explanations after the leak of Washington’s sexual video. Amaia’s vulnerable, emotive and restrained voice anchors the drama in a scene that, set within a comedy, adopts a solemn tone and appeals to the viewer’s empathy when Paquita admits that they have made mistakes in their working practices. «So tiny and sincere» takes us back into fiction because, in the world of show business and television, the truth is hidden.

Table 2. Pre-existing Songs

Season	Artist	Song Title
First Season	El buen hijo	El hombre del tiempo
	Georgina	Supermujer
	El buen hijo	Pekín
	Miss Caffeina	Venimos
	Bebe	Respirar

<p>Second Season</p>	<p>Olé Pont Aeri El buen hijo Carlos Sadness Julio Iglesias (con Paul Anka) El buen hijo Leiva Bambino Ana Belén y Víctor Manuel Take That Rocío Jurado</p>	<p>No controles Flying free La fatalidad de las cosas Hoy es el día My way Walasse thing Pólvora Se me va No sé por qué te quiero Back for good En el punto de partida</p>
<p>Third Season</p>	<p>La bien querida Loquillo Loquillo The Parrots Joaquín Sabina / Leiva Héctor y Tito Vanessa Martín Camela La bien querida Amaia Miranda C. Tangana</p>	<p>Dinamita Cadillac Solitario El final de los días Let's do it again Lágrimas de mármol Morena Inventas Cuando zarpa el amor Los jardines de marzo Tan pequeña y sincera Fantasmas Un veneno</p>

Source: own elaboration.

As the seasons progress, the number of pre-existing songs increases. A recurring pattern is observed throughout the series: In many cases, the songs are inserted in the final minutes of the episode, serving as a resource for emotional and narrative closure. The lyrics of the songs not only reinforce the meaning of what has happened, they also anchor and amplify the episode's significance, as they directly engage with the plot and conflicts in the episode, and express the characters' thoughts and feelings. A paradigmatic example is «Un veneno» by C. Tangana and El Niño de Elche in the final episode, in which



Paquita and Magüi leave the cinema after watching a film about Paquita Salas. While they happily celebrate the success of their careers and their friendship, the verses sound: «This unrestrained ambition for women, money and the spotlight is taking my life, very little by little, bit by bit». The lyrics sum up the premise of this metafiction and introduce a critical reading of the cost of success in the entertainment world. The song extends the narrative until the end credits, which cease to function as an epilogue and instead serve as a device that closes and summarises the narrative premise through a dramatic, emotional and reflective meaning.

In the first season, the pre-existing songs featured mostly belong to emerging artists, such as El Buen Hijo —an indie pop band formed in 2016—, alongside Miss Caffaina and Georgina, which reinforces the series' independent character in its early stages. In the second season, the musical selection expands significantly, with the inclusion of iconic voices from popular culture such as Julio Iglesias and Rocío Jurado, providing a symbolic legitimisation of the series and enhancing its folkloric aesthetic. This trend continues into the third season, where tracks by established artists from the Spanish music industry, such as Loquillo, Leiva, Joaquín Sabina, Vanesa Martín, Camela and Amaia, are included.

3.2. Original songs

Regarding the original songs, two are identified in the first season and one in the third. All of them can be classified as screensongs, as they adopt the format of a musical number and incorporate elements of hybridisation characteristic of other genres and audiovisual formats that emerged within the context of transmedia culture and social media. These songs expand the protagonists' narrative through intense audiovisual texts that elicit high levels of interaction and introduce a comedic component, while also making the song the narrative voice of the metanarrative. Furthermore, they include intertextual references to musical theatre, cinema, television, music videos, and even to memetic logics typical of social media. In this regard, the narrative and aesthetic functions of these diegetic songs depend not only on their melody or lyrics but also on how they are integrated and experienced within the series' fictional universe.

«Secretary», written by playwright Ferrán-González and produced by J.C. Moreno, is the screensong that opens episode 1x04, performed by Belén Cuesta as Magüi. In this sequence, the character expresses her feelings through lyrics that narrate an imaginary love story with the delivery person (Álex de Lucas). The scene contrasts Magüi's sexual intensity with the absurdity of the situation,

reinforcing the narrative's comedic tone. The screensong begins as a classic musical number in Paquita's office, but quickly transforms into a stylised sequence set in a «non-place», with a white background, characteristic of a music video. Accompanied by a male dance troupe, the character sensually gestures her passion for the delivery person and her future plans, including a wedding, in a music video that combines elements of an Oreó advert. The classic sexual myth of an affair with the secretary is reinterpreted through a screensong from the secretary's perspective, where power is reversed: it is the empowered secretary who dominates the fantasy, while the delivery person, whom she ends up falling in love with, plays a secondary role in a format that shifts from musical number to music video and advertising.

In episode 1x05, the original song «Ya no hay estrellas» is introduced; it was written by Ferran González, produced by J.C. Moreno, and performed by Brays Efe as Paquita. As a musical number, the protagonist, in her lounge and in pyjamas, expresses her sense of failure in both her profession and her life, accompanied at the piano by the pizza delivery person (Víctor Elías). The screensong presents a scenographic change that transports us from Paquita's lounge to a dreamlike space, and incorporates elements typical of televised musical performances, with both characters at the piano. The song functions as a monologue that allows the viewer to understand Paquita's feelings and highlights the duality between success and failure. Through the lyrics «Yo era la más grande» or «Se lo he dado todo, ¿y ahora qué?», the frustration of a character who has hit rock bottom is reflected. Through the contrast between the glamour of her past, represented in the phrase «las alfombras rojas se desenrollaban a mi paso», and her current reality, expressed in «ya no hay estrellas, hay mozzarella», her professional and personal downfall is emphasised. The line «Sé fuerte, Paquita», a phrase that the Prime Minister, Mariano Rajoy, addressed to Luis Bárcenas during a well-known corruption case, functions as a metatextual wink that disrupts the scene's dramatic effect and addresses the viewer in an ironic, critical tone.

The third season incorporates the song «5 deditos», performed by Belinda Washington, who plays herself, written by Ferran González and produced by Jaime Vaquero and Milo García. The track is introduced in episode four, when Belinda finds herself embroiled in a scandal after a slip-up with her phone: Paquita confiscates the device and, by mistake, a sexually explicit video intended for a police officer she met on the dating app Tinder is published. The recording goes viral and sparks a wave of comments on social media and in the

press. Her reputation, already in decline within the meta-television universe of the series, seems completely destroyed.

This plot is inspired by the real leak of an intimate video of former councillor Olvido Hormigos, which sparked intense social debate (Devesa, 2019). In *Paquita Salas*, the story follows a similar trajectory, as the character Belinda is stigmatised after becoming a trending topic on social media. Although the story was initially conceived as an independent series developed by Los Javis, the creators ultimately decided to incorporate it, considering it the emotional core of the season (Quijorna, 2019).

The narrative takes a significant turn in episode six, when the Nuevo PS team, along with Belinda, decides to re-appropriate the situation and reframe what happened through a screensong that takes the form of a YouTube music video. Thus, «5 deditos» emerges as a work that transcends mere comedic elements and highlights the cruelty of social media and the culture of digital lynching. The performance transforms humiliation into a performative act that advocates for sexual freedom and autonomy over one's own image. From a discursive perspective, the song is constructed from an intertextual quote of the children's song «5 lobitos», employing musical codes typical of this genre to establish a contradiction between the apparent innocence of its structure and the subtext of its lyrics, and alluding to the traditional song through simple rhymes and repetitions, such as «dedo, dedito, dedi dedón». However, this playful aesthetic is subverted with the inclusion of implicit references to masturbation, evident in lines such as «uno de ellos se mete en la cuevi» or «mira que mira, juego con él». The song thus adopts a satirical tone as a way to challenge taboos surrounding female self-pleasure. It also rephrases the feminist slogan «nosotras parimos, nosotras decidimos», widely used in movements advocating for reproductive rights and the right to abortion, transforming it into «nosotras nos abrimos, nosotras decidimos» as a way to talk about masturbation.

Furthermore, the use of a parodic aesthetic in the music video allows for the scandal to be re-signified, transforming it into an act of empowerment and subversion of «slut-shaming». The video reinforces this re-signification through a striking aesthetic, in which Belinda appears dressed in a sequined bodysuit, long gloves and a red mask. The visual style establishes a metatextual relationship with Leticia Sabater's music videos, characterised by green-screen backgrounds, daring outfits and provocative songs. In fact, a direct quotation from the singer and her song «El polvorón» appears both in the lyrics and in the music video.

Figure 2. Music Video by Belinda and Leticia Sabater



Source: Netflix España (2025) and Blasco (2024).

3.3. Original songs

The *Paquita Salas* theme tune serves as a stylistic device that sets the tone of the series and reflects the evolution of both the main character and her narrative universe. Various versions of the opening song are presented throughout the series, with the song adapted each time to the style of a different performer, thereby preserving the theme's essence while offering a fresh experience in each instalment. This strategy renders the opening sequence a polysemous paratext that accompanies and reinforces the progression of the storylines within the fiction.

The theme song of the series, titled «¡Ay, Paquita!», was initially composed and performed by Antonio Poza and Alberto Jiménez, from the band Miss Caffaina, who had previously collaborated with Los Javis in creating songs for the musical *La Llamada*. Their performance adds a melancholic tone to the theme tune that directly connects with the protagonist, Paquita, who in the first season is characterised as living in the past and by resisting acceptance of her reality. Likewise, the lyrics paint a portrait of the character and reveal the duality between her ambition and the constant struggle to exist in a world that seems to have left her behind, as «Paquita has a sorrow, Paquita wants more'. The phrase «con el mundo por montera», with its bullfighting connotations, reflects her defiant attitude in the face of adversity. In contrast, the line «maneja la ciudad» reflects her veteran status and knowledge of the entertainment world. Other concepts, such as «passion» and «perseverance» reinforce the image of a persevering woman, whose journey is marked by effort and resilience. In this way, not only do the song's lyrics accompany the character throughout all the programme's seasons, they also function as a paratext that introduces the series, framing its tone and genre, its conflict and its place within the story.

Additionally, analysis of the images used in the opening credits reveals how they create a visual tapestry of nostalgia and self-reference that reflects

the essence of the series. The golden age of variety shows is effectively evoked through a retro aesthetic and the use of archival footage from Spanish television, and establishes the metatextual context in which Paquita reached her professional peak. The introduction incorporates original fragments from television history, such as Belinda Washington presenting *Telecupón* (1999), Lidia San José's appearance on *Pasapalabra*, and the Goya Awards ceremony, where we see the Best New Actress award presented to Lolita Flores (2003) and Macarena García (2013). Additionally, the header features Ambrossi, the series' co-creator, embracing his sister, Macarena, during the ceremony. A metanarrative game is thus created, one that is intensified by including the real figures of Belinda, Lidia, and Macarena as characters in the series, helping to blur the line between reality and fiction.

The move to Netflix in 2018 marked a turning point for the series. The second season updated the opening sequence with a performance by Rosalía, an artist forged in the urban popular music scene who was also experimenting with flamenco and was poised to revolutionise the music scene with her album *El mal querer*. Rosalía's reinterpretation of the theme song generated significant anticipation among fans of the series and the artist alike, while also legitimising the tone of the series, consolidating its popularity and giving it a renewed musical aesthetic in line with the character's narrative evolution. Furthermore, the release of the new season coincided with the debut of «Malamente», the single that catapulted Rosalía into the mainstream, which proved particularly fortunate in terms of promoting the series.

Visually, the opening credits of this season retain elements that characterised the original, such as the retro aesthetic and scenes featuring Belinda Washington and Lidia San José on television. However, it introduces new images and familiar faces that reinforce connections to popular culture, as seen in the picture frames on Paquita's bedside table, which display photographs of Raphael and Miriam Díaz Aroca. It also incorporates clips and behind-the-scenes moments from programmes, featuring figures such as Concha Velasco, Raquel Meroño, and Norma Ruiz, among others.

Regarding the second season, the opening of episode 2x05 features an exceptional performance by Sergio Dalma. It is the only episode in which this version appears, featuring a narrative set in 1994 and structured through flashbacks that reconstruct Paquita's past alongside Lidia San José in the entertainment industry. The choice of Sergio Dalma's voice, iconic in the nineties for reaching fourth place at the Eurovision Song Contest with «Bailar Pega-

dos» in 1991, legitimises the use of flashback and the sense of nostalgia, immersing us in a time when the protagonist was still enjoying success and recognition. With a more classical arrangement, this version evokes the Sergio Dalma of that era, heightening the contrast between the Paquita of the past and the present, caught as she is between nostalgia for what was and the struggle to reinvent herself, represented by a voice that evokes the romantic Italian songs that triumphed in the 1990s.

Finally, Isabel Pantoja performs the theme tune for the third season with arrangements by Luis Cobos. This performance by Pantoja, one of the finest voices of copla and Spanish folklore, marked her return to recording studios after years of silence. Additionally, it symbolically reinforces the anachronism that typifies the main character, since the singer — recognised for her success in past eras, her marriage to a bullfighter, her time in prison for corruption cases and her constant presence in the tabloid press — embodies the contrast between tradition and the modern world, a metaphor for Paquita Salas, who could very well have represented the folkloric singer.

Figure 3. *Isabel Pantoja in the opening credits*



Source: Audiovisual451 (2019).

Regarding aesthetics, the opening credits depart from the initial format of television clips, adopting an illustrated style by Ignasi Monreal, full of references to the series, such as the Hollywood Walk of Fame stars, the Feroz Awards won by the series, the Larios gin bottle and Paquita's characteristic sandwiches. Additionally, the inclusion of Isabel Pantoja's image in the sequence stands out, as the only artist who, in addition to performing the theme tune, also appears visually in it. Her appearance functions as a rhetorical device that adds verisimilitude to this televisual metafiction, making one of the most emblematic —

and at the same time controversial — singers of Spanish popular culture reappear in a television comedy. According to Ambrosi (Cadena SER, 2025), Isabel Pantoja's return to a recording studio to perform the theme tune was an organic process, as the singer was a fan of the series and had empathised with the protagonist's story. The singer is said to have accepted the proposition with humour and good grace when it was put to her by Los Javis. Ambrosi confesses that, if there were to be a fourth season of *Paquita Salas*, it would be challenging to surpass Rosalía and Isabel Pantoja, highlighting the importance of musical references in the cultural legitimisation of a televisual fiction.

In the third season, Pantoja appears in the opening sequence in five of the six episodes. In the fifth, the song is omitted, and only the title is shown, accompanied by a bell sound, symbolically evoking funeral imagery in line with the episode's plot, which centres on the death of Paquita's mother. The opening sequence functions as a paratext that frames the series, and its absence bears the narrative significance of mourning.

4. Discussions and conclusions

Paquita Salas exemplifies the breakdown of traditional boundaries between diegetic and extradiegetic music by hybridising both musical dimensions in parallel within the narrative. Although from a theoretical perspective, all music in fiction can be considered diegetic insofar as it is part of the audiovisual universe (Kassabian, 2001; Knakkegaard, 2013), these categories remain useful for classifying its use and, especially, for understanding the viewer's emotional expectations. Furthermore, it is observed that meaning is negotiated (Cook, 2001) when the same song is inserted into images evoking opposing emotions. When songs are integrated into the narrative action of *Paquita Salas*, their emotional impact and credibility are enhanced, strengthening the link between music and narrative.

Music supervision reveals a postmodern and transmedia authorship by Los Javis, perceptible both in the intertextual references of pre-existing songs and in the proposal of screensongs (Macrossan, 2021), which form a dialogue with the codes of transmedia culture. Screensongs, where the musical number, the music video, the reel or YouTube meme and the advertising spot converge, incorporate multiple intertextual citations that address the viewer, reinforce narrative premises and amplify the emotional impact of the music and, by extension, the metafiction itself. This creative style is evident in other transmedia products, which are also characteristic of Los Javis

(Sánchez-Olmos, 2024). As a result, the series' narratives expand across various platforms and social networks, broadening the protagonists' meanings and generating audience engagement.

It is not just about the songs: the musical references present in the series (such as Alanis Morissette, Mario Vaquerizo and the appearance of former contestants from *Operación Triunfo*) break the fourth wall and reveal a metatelevisual dimension that criticises, celebrates, and reflects on the world of entertainment in Spain, representing those who struggle to survive amidst the changes in the audiovisual industry and digitalisation. This metafiction, infused with distinctive traits of Spanish culture and folklore, is legitimised by Los Javis as part of an auteur project that represents a generation of millennials raised in front of the television, whose cultural references — programmes, characters, singers and media realities — are depicted in the series' narrative, addressing an audience aware that reality surpasses fiction.

The progressive increase in the number and value of pre-existing songs across seasons reflects the qualitative leap experienced by the series upon its arrival on Netflix. Musical synchronisation involves higher rights costs, depending on the prestige of the artists, and is reinforced by the inclusion of Guix, an experienced composer in television music, who composed the incidental music. All of this broadens the series' aesthetic and meaning and enhances its connection with an audience that nostalgically identifies with Spanish popular culture.

Indie songs (such as those by El Buen Hijo and La Bien Querida) coexist with icons of popular culture — such as Rocío Jurado, Enrique Iglesias and Camela — and with figures of significant impact in Spanish rock, including Leiva, Joaquín Sabina, Loquillo, and C Tangana and El Niño de Elche. Meanwhile, La Bien Querida has acknowledged her interest in appearing in *Paquita Salas*, not only for the aesthetic affinity that she has with the programme, but also for the series' impact as a platform for visibility and artistic revitalisation (El País, 2022), a point confirmed by Padilla-Castillo & Requeijo-Rey (2012). All of this highlights the complexity of the relationships between creativity and commercial logic in the music and television industries. Furthermore, the title sequence — across its various versions — functions as a paratext, an identity resource that accompanies the transformation of the narrative and its protagonist.

Ethics and Transparency

Acknowledgements

The translation work is gratefully acknowledged to Mr. Martin Phillips.



Funding

R&D Project MUSIMA (Music and Audiovisual Media: Intermedial Transits, Heritage and Cultural Dialogues) (Reference: PID2023-147271NB-I00), funded by the State Research Agency (AEI) of the Government of Spain.

This research was carried out within the framework of a predoctoral research staff contract (CIACIF/2022/416), funded by the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) Programme, Valencian Community 2021–2027.

Author Contributions

Contribution	Author 1	Author 2	Author 3	Author 4
Conceptualisation	X	X		
Data curation	X	X		
Formal analysis	X	X		
Funding acquisition	X	X		
Investigation	X	X		
Methodology	X	X		
Project administration	X	X		
Resources	X	X		
Software	X	X		
Supervision	X	X		
Validation	X	X		
Visualisation	X	X		
Writing – original draft	X	X		
Writing – review and editing	X	X		

Data Availability Statement

For data availability, the authors should be contacted.

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