

Frock 'n' Roll

university's façade, the west front is a triumph of the intricate Spanish decorative style, known as plateresque from its resemblance to the silversmith's art, which is particularly suited to the soft golden sandstone from nearby Villamayor.

The splendor of Salamanca's tradition of elaborate decoration is nowhere better shown than on the Casa de las Conchas, or House of Shells. Built in the 15th century as a residence for Ferdinand and Isabella, it features walls covered with the symbol of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. The love of ornament has given the city another wonderful building, the Casa Lys, now a museum of Art Nouveau and Art Deco. The structure is itself Art Nouveau and looks to be half constructed from colorfully painted glass. It contains more than 1,500 late-19th and early-20th century items, including vases and lamps designed by Emile Gallé and a superb collection of Lalique scent bottles.

During its year as a European City of Culture, Salamanca is putting on a dazzling array of more than 700 theater, music, art and dance events performed by arts companies from all over Spain and around the world. An essential part of Spanish cultural tradition is bullfighting—regarded as not just a sport, but an art too—which will also feature in the celebrations. The region around Salamanca rivals Andalusia in breeding bulls for the *corrida*, with the largest annual fiesta held over four days around June 12, feast day of the city's patron saint, John of Sahagún. While Salamanca's diverse cultural program feeds the spirit, visitors' physical hunger will find the local cuisine excellent, especially local Ribera del Duero wines and the Castilian specialties *jamon Grijuelo* (serano ham), *asado de tostón* (roast suckling pig) and *cordero lechal* (milk-fed lamb). With such a bewilderment of attractions, the city more than lives up to the compliment paid by the great Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes, who wrote, "Salamanca bewitches with the wish to return all those who have enjoyed its pleasures." —Reported by Jane Walker/Salamanca

■ SALAMANCA: EUROPEAN CITY OF CULTURE 2002
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■ Most Greek orthodox clerics call it a shameful act, but the black-clad rock-'n'-roll band Eleftheroi (the Free) is taking the country's pop charts by storm. Over the past two years, the group has sold more than 110,000 copies of their first two CDs; its debut release was the fourth-biggest selling record ever in Greece. Eleftheroi's current CD reached No. 2 on the Greek charts when it

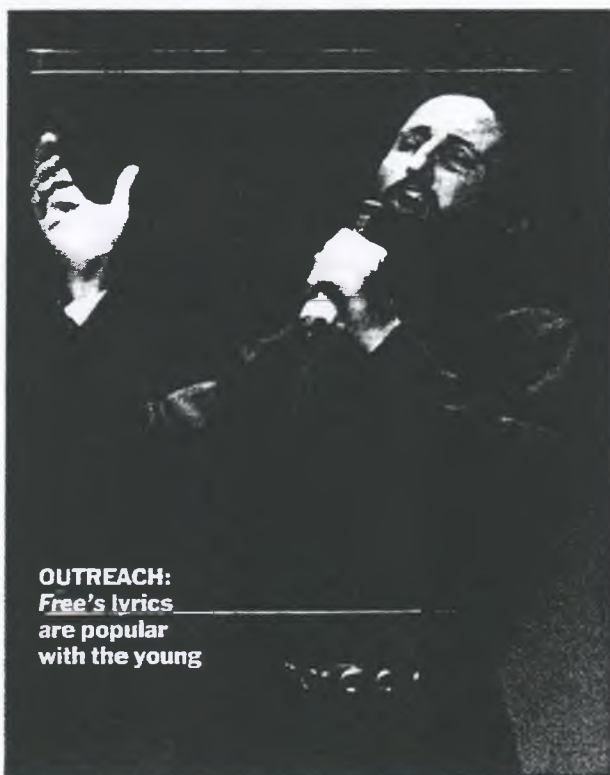
enforcing?" are the lyrics to one hit song. "We don't claim to be professional musicians," says Father Nektarios Moulatsiotis, the band's manager and spiritual leader. "We're missionaries. And modern times call for modern methods."

The band will put on three fund-raising performances—in New York, Boston and Chicago—to protest the death penalty in the U.S. In July, the monks kick off their first summer tour in Greece, starring in a string of charity concerts on the mainland and the island of Rhodes before returning in September to their monastery. The teetotal monks deejay on Athen's hottest teenage radio station and even appear on raunchy late-night talk shows—all as part of their "mission to mix with the youth," in the words of Father Nektarios.

Though Nektarios says Archbishop Christodoulos, the reform-minded leader of the Greek Church, has given the rock-'n'-roll missionaries his blessing, other prelates describe Eleftheroi as "utterly unseemly" and the monks' stardom as "incompatible with the humble dignity of the priesthood." "It's stuffy attitudes like these that distanced the youth from the Church in the first place," huffs Nektarios, who likes handing out glossy icons of Jesus and autographed pictures of the band to young fans. "We'll continue our mission, for we have neither sinned nor breached any code of monastic life." No vows of silence for these monks. —By Anthee Carassava/Athens

was released in March, and this month the band begins a U.S. tour. Religious disapproval of the band is odd given that its 15 members are Orthodox monks, and their music lashes out against the dangers of drugs, materialism, technology and globalization. "Our borders you're erasing/ What sort of a fascist regime are you

■ ELEFTHEROI's new CD is *By Your Side*. The group performs in Komitini, Northern Greece, Aug. 18; during a cruiseship concert in the Corinthian Gulf on July 20; on the island of Rhodes, Sept. 1 **WEBSITE:** www.freemonks.gr



OUTREACH:
Free's lyrics
are popular
with the young

YIORGOS KARAHALIS—REUTERS