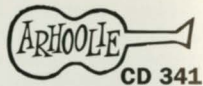


**TEJANO ROOTS / RAICES TEJANAS:**  
**The Roots of Tejano**  
**and Conjunto Music**



1. **Conjunto Bernal:** MI UNICO CAMINO (My Only Path)
2. **Narciso Martinez:** LA CUQUITA (Polka)
3. **Lydia Mendoza:** FELIZ SIN TI (Bolero)(Happy Without You)
4. **Tony De La Rosa:** CUATRO O CINCO FAROLAZOS (4 or 5 Shots of Liquor)
5. **Narciso Martinez:** AUSENCIA (Vals)
6. **Carmen y Laura:** POR TU AUSENCIA (Because Of Your Absence)
7. **Beto Villa y Su Orquesta:** MI PECOSITA (Polka)
8. **Jesus Maya y Timoteo Cantu:** GREGORIO CORTEZ (Corrido)
9. **Trio San Antonio:** UN RECUERDO QUEDO (One Memory Remained)
10. **Hermanas Mendoza:** TRES CONSEJOS (Three Pieces Of Advice)
11. **Juan Lopez:** LA PRIMAVERA (Redova)
12. **Juan Lopez:** LA TIJERITA (Polka)
13. **Valerio Longoria:** MUJER HERMOSA (Pretty Woman)
14. **Conjunto Bernal:** PENSAMIENTO (Bolero)(Thoughts)
15. **Chelo Silva:** QUIEREME VIDITA (Bolero)(Love Me, Dear)

16. **Beto Villa y Su Orquesta:** PACHUCA BLUES (Blues)
17. **Conjunto Bernal:** LA NOVIA ANTONIA (Rock)(Sweetheart, Antonia)
18. **Freddie Fender:** CORINA, CORINA (Blues)
19. **Eddie con Los Shades:** QUE MALA (Rock)(How Bad)
20. **Isidro Lopez y Conjunto Ideal:** CORAZON DEL PUEBLO (Sweet heart Of The Town)
21. **Isidro Lopez y Su Orquesta:** TARDE PA' ARREPENTIRNOS (It's Too Late To Change Your Mind)
22. **Agapito Zuniga:** PORQUE ME ABANDONAS (Why Are You Leaving Me?)
23. **Lydia Mendoza:** TU DESTINO (Your Destiny)
24. **Wally Almendarez:** LAS NUBES (The Clouds)

*All songs not otherwise designated, are Rancheras.*

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**NARCISO MARTINEZ ■ CONJUNTO BERNAL**  
**BETO VILLA ■ LYDIA MENDOZA ■ ISIDRO LOPEZ**

**TEJANO ROOTS**



**RAICES TEJANAS**

**TONY DE LA ROSA ■ FREDDY FENDER ■ CHELO SILVA**  
**VALERIO LONGORIA ■ CARMEN Y LAURA ■ Y OTROS MAS!**

## The Roots of Tejano and Conjunto Music

The roots of **Tejano** and **Conjunto** music are as widespread and diverse, and run as deep, as the traditions, cultures and people which gave them life. The main root is the music of Mexico with all its regional and class variations, its extraordinary range of songs and dances, and its social and religious musics ranging from the solo voice to the powerful sound of the *bandas* from Sinaloa to the highly stylized format of today's *mariachis*. The genteel, polished urban orchestras as well as the often untrained rural string bands, the romantic bolero singers, the smooth as well as the gutsy, male and female rural *ranchera* stars, the vocal trios, the Jarocho harp music of Veracruz, the Huastecan fiddlers and falsetto singers, the *danzon* and *mambo* orchestras, and above all the *norteño* sound of the accordion accompanying the duet vocals from the North, have all contributed to the sound of present day Tejano and Conjunto music.

The musical traditions of the Tejanos of South Texas and Norteños of Northern Mexico have been influenced not only by the mother country, Mexico, but also by their Anglo-American, African-American and immigrant neighbors like the Czechs, Bohemians, Moravians as well as the Ger-

mans and Italians. Industry, especially brewing, in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, was developed in part by German immigrants and the distributors of German-made accordions aggressively marketed the loud sturdy little "boom boxes" as far back as the late 1800s.

Norteño/Conjunto accordion pioneer Narciso Martinez learned many tunes from German and Czech brass bands. He'd listen with a friend who had a good ear and memory. The friend would whistle the tunes to Narciso when they got home allowing Narciso to transpose them to his accordion! Anglo-American fiddle music, Swing, Rhythm & Blues, and later Rock and Roll and Soul, were widely enjoyed by Tejanos. Dances by Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys were advertised in San Antonio's Spanish language daily paper **La Prensa** in the 1940s and were well attended by Mexican-Americans. In the 1940s, the Pachuco movement, (which originated in El Paso and spread from there to Los Angeles), had its musical roots in the swing and jump music of that era. Listen for a bit of the Bob Wills influence on Beto Villa's recording of *Pachuca Blues*, and for the Pachuco and Rock influence check out Freddy Fender as Eddie Con Los

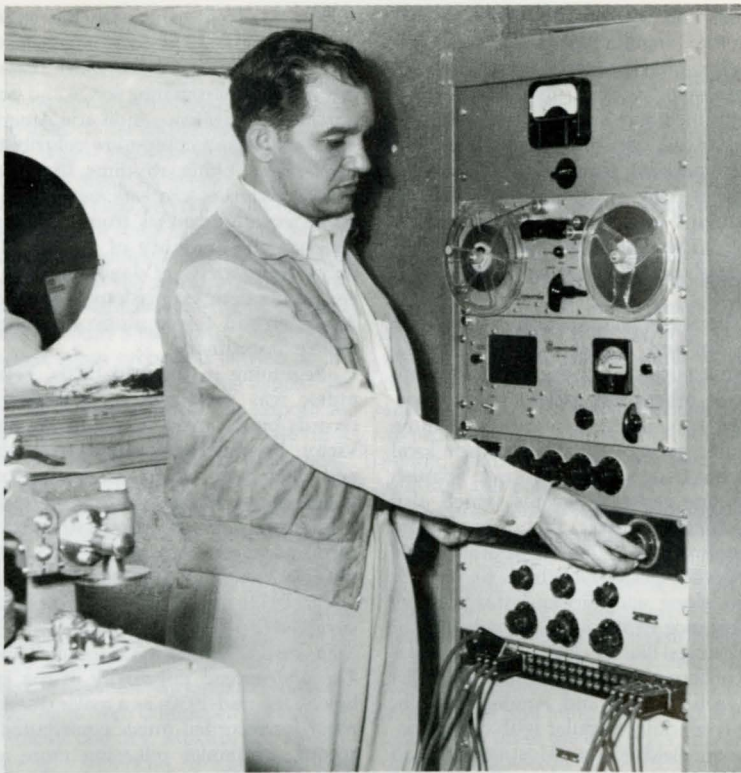
Shades and Mando Marroquin singing with the Conjunto Bernal. The Tejano orchestras, although inspired by the famous orchestras of Mexico, Cuba, and the Anglo world, included in their repertoires the popular folk dances of the region, especially polkas, waltzes, *redovas*, and *rancheras* along with the *danzones*, *mambos*, *boleros* and other Latin American dance styles. (The best of the early Tejano orchestras can be heard on ARH CD/C-368).

The songs were contributed by both Mexican and Tejano composers. Some became popular via the latest Mexican movies, others date back to Spain of centuries ago. Many new songs became popular through records heard on local juke boxes or via the then rare Spanish language radio programs which also presented live music. Tangos came from Argentina in the 1920s, Mexican stage and vaudeville performers introduced new songs along with old favorites at every appearance, while local *corridos* (ballads or story songs) like the classic *Gregorio Cortez* told of heroic bravery in the face of conflict between Tejanos and Anglos. *Corridos* were especially popular with *cantina* patrons and field workers. Most *rancheras* and *corridos* were sung to the polka or waltz rhythms which have been popular for

over a hundred years with the largely rural population. They continue to be the mainstay of dance bands in south Texas to this day. Many romantic songs and boleros came from Mexico and Latin America but local Tejano composers contributed their share. Other rhythms like *sones*, *redovas*, *mazurkas*, *schotishes*, *huapangos* and more recently, *cumbias* from Columbia, have caught the fancy of dancers. The range and variety of dance rhythms as well as of poetic expressions in Mexican-American and Tejano music and song is quite extraordinary.

Beginning in the mid-1920s, Tejano music was produced on commercial records by the major labels of the time: Victor, Brunswick/Vocalion, Columbia, and Okeh, who would employ regional talent scouts. These agents or entrepreneurs were often associated with music or furniture stores where record players and the discs were sold. The Great Depression of the 1930s forced all the labels which survived to produce cheaper records (35¢ each versus 75¢ common in the late 1920s). The widespread popularity of the juke box by the mid-1930s as a major disseminator for recorded music contributed to record companies releasing more and more vernacular and regional music. This is in contrast to the refined nationally





Armando Marroquin - 1950s

Right: Poster July 13,  
1956

Below, left:  
Paco Bettancourt

Below, right: Beto Villa

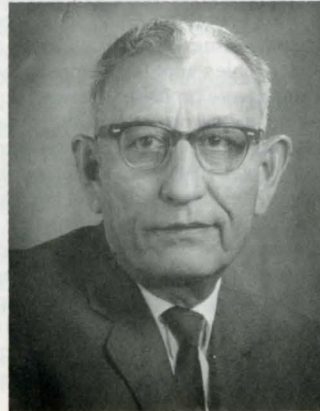
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Y Su Sensacional ORQUESTA **CANCIONERAS Mexicanas**  
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popular and classical music preferred by the middle class, which had always had the money to buy records and the gramophones to play them on.

By the 1940s and World War II, with its accompanying shortages of materials including shellac from which the records were pressed, the major record companies dropped regional and ethnic musics and even had difficulty filling the demand for popular music, which was promoted via national radio. This situation created a great demand, especially from juke box operators, for regionally popular artists and musics. This demand eventually made possible the success of home-grown record companies, such as IDEAL. With the end of World War II in 1945, millions of workers all over the country, especially those of rural background who had found work in the lucrative war industries, were making good wages and were willing and able to support their favorite regional musics, musicians and singers.

IDEAL Records was launched in 1946 after Armando Marroquin of Alice, Texas released several records by the vocal duet of Carmen y Laura, (his wife Carmen and her sister Laura) via a Los Angeles based firm. The success of these records in south Texas brought businessman Paco Betancourt from San Benito to Alice to

propose a partnership with Mr. Marroquin. Under the agreement reached by the two men, Armando Marroquin would get new recording equipment, a studio, make all the recordings, and receive all the records he needed for his juke boxes. Paco Betancourt for his part would arrange for the manufacturing of the discs and their distribution both in the U.S. and in Mexico.

Armando Marroquin (September 12, 1912 – July 4, 1990) operated juke boxes in *cantinas*, restaurants, and other businesses in the Alice area. Before the war, records by the best known local artists were readily available from the major labels on their depression-special cheap 35¢ labels like Blue Bird, Vocalion, Okeh, and Decca. Narciso Martinez, Gaytan y Cantu, and the first female star of Tejano music: Lydia Mendoza were probably the most popular. When record production almost came to a standstill in the United States during World War II (1941-1945), the record industry in Mexico quickly tried to pick up the slack. But, the combination of not having recorded the music from up north (Norteño) and U.S. Customs making it very difficult and even illegal to import records, left most juke boxes high and dry for want of local favorites. Mr. Marroquin had purchased a disc recorder and sold

acetate copies of recordings for up to \$5 each to music hungry juke box owners. The first recordings were made in Carmen and Armando Marroquin's kitchen. Carmen sang and a blind guitar playing neighbor, Reynaldo Barrera, backed her on guitar or *bajo sexto*. When the war ended, Mr. Marroquin contacted Four Star Records in Los Angeles, one of the first independent pressing and production companies, to manufacture his first mass-produced 78 rpm records.

Among those first commercial releases was the timely song "*Se Me Fue Mi Amor*" (which can be heard on Arhoolie CD/C-343 **Tejano Roots: The Women**) sung by Carmen and her sister Laura accompanied by another neighbor, Isaac Figueroa, on accordion. The sound of an accordion, both solo and backing singers, was rapidly becoming the attraction which drew listeners and dancers to *cantinas* and ballrooms. The theme of the song of that first record was "My love has left me, he has gone off to war" and it was an instant success throughout the Southwest. Once Armando and Paco began IDEAL Records, Armando supplied a steady stream of masters and soon went on the road with his rising stars: Beto Villa and his orchestra, singers Carmen and Laura, and accordion ace Narciso Martinez. This

successful triumvirate had all the elements to appeal to every strata of Mexican-American society in the Southwest during the immediate post war era. Armando Marroquin had a good sense for what music the public wanted to buy on records and he was soon besieged by talent from all over the south Texas area.

Paco Betancourt (January 15, 1903 - September 5, 1971) owned and operated the Rio Grande Music Co. in San Benito, Texas, primarily a retail record shop which, according to John Phillips from whom I purchased the IDEAL masters, also serviced over a hundred juke boxes and 25 pin ball games by 1946. In the 1920s Paco Betancourt had built and operated the Queen Theatre on Main Street in Brownsville, the first theatre in the Valley to show talking movies. He eventually sold out to a chain and went into the record business. By 1950 Tejano and Conjunto music had become a substantial business for record producers, juke box operators, nightclub, ballroom, and bar owners, composers, as well as the singers and musicians who comprised the orchestras and *conjuntos*.

Success brought competition and several smaller companies, including Falcon Records in McAllen, Texas, were soon on the scene. Due to their location



close to the border, these companies recorded many artists from Mexico, especially from rural areas in the state of Nuevo Leon. Along with increased opportunities for the artists, problems and complaints arose and the partnership between Armando Marroquin and Paco Betancourt came to an end around 1959 although the two remained good friends. Mr. Marroquin retained the services of some of the artists, the recording studio, and started his own label, Nopal. Paco Betancourt's Rio Grande Music Co. continued to distribute the IDEAL label from San Benito where a studio was opened and new recordings were made by Paco and John Phillips. Some of the engineering chores were soon taken over by a talented young local singer and musician who also recorded for the label, named Baldemar Huerta who would soon be known to the music world as Freddy Fender. Many of the best artists however, including Paulino Bernal, went on to greener pastures at other labels or formed their own production companies. Towards the end of his career, Mr. Betancourt entered politics and was elected mayor of San Benito, Texas.

I purchased all IDEAL masters in 1990 from John Phillips, Sr. who had inherited all the rights to the label. John's grandfather on his mother's side was a brother of

Paco Betancourt's father. The Betancourt brothers had both been officials of the Mexican government under the Diaz regime and were sent from Mexico City to Matamoros to supervise customs and immigration. When the revolution spread through Mexico the Betancourt family fled across the Rio Grande to Brownsville and lost their property in Mexico. Paco Betancourt grew up during the boom days of the 1920s and as an enterprising young man started several businesses. John on the other hand, born in 1922, grew up in the depth of the Depression and went to work for Pan American Airways in the early 1940s. After World War II, Pan Am relocated their Western regional headquarters and John did not want to make the move. He stayed in San Benito and in 1946 went to work for Paco Betancourt and IDEAL Records when the label was releasing record number 15. While Paco shipped masters, ordered the 78 rpm records pressed in California, made up the label copy, packed and invoiced in the shop, John was responsible for sales and contacting the various wholesalers, shops, and juke box operators throughout the southwest. When the partnership with Marroquin ended and the master recordings no longer poured in from Alice, Texas, John was made responsible for installing a

recording studio next door and a record pressing facility in the back of the Rio Grande Music Co. building. From that time on Paco and John Phillips did most of the recordings in San Benito and pressed the records, which by 1960 were all 7" 45 rpm or 33 1/3 rpm LP discs.

Armando Marroquin was the perfect recording director. He got along well with the musicians, had a good ear for talent and for what the public wanted to hear, and obtained a good sound with the recording equipment on hand. Looking back at the many fine master recordings he produced for IDEAL, we begin to realize how much excellent and historic Tejano and Conjunto music has been preserved on record thanks to the many talented singers and musicians and the tireless and patient Armando Marroquin.

I personally have been interested in Tejano and Conjunto music for over 30 years and have recorded **Flaco Jimenez, Trio San Antonio, Santiago Jimenez, Los Pinguinos del Norte**, and others for ARHOOLIE. I have been an avid collector of historic 78 rpm recordings from south Texas and have made many of these available again on LPs and Cassettes on the Folklyric label. In the 1970s I produced two documentary films, **CHULAS FRONTERAS** and **DEL MERO**

**CORAZON** with film maker Les Blank and editor Maureen Gosling. These films/videos have introduced some of the best historic *Tejano* and *conjunto* artists, songs, *corridos*, and dance musics to audiences around the world. (See our catalog for details.)

When it came to my attention that IDEAL Records was for sale and that, contrary to local rumors, the masters were not lost or destroyed but carefully stored at the Rio Grande Music Co. building in San Benito, I suddenly found myself in the position of the ultimate record collector. I felt obligated to buy these priceless artifacts of a vital and strong culture not my own, to preserve this wonderful music for future generations and rescue it from oblivion. I have spent the past year listening to a lot of the tapes and 78s and contacted many of the leading artists to get their approval and stories. The music is no doubt the most important aspect of the IDEAL catalog, but I feel that these pioneer recordings of Tejano music deserve special attention. These recordings and the musicians and singers who created them are a part of our national heritage. Lydia Mendoza, Narciso Martinez, and Valerio Longoria, all of whom are represented in the IDEAL catalog, have been honored by receiving the National Heri-

tage Award from the National Endowment for the Arts and many of the other artists have received formal recognition in one way or another. The songs are part of the vernacular literature of the people of south Texas and like books, deserve to be in libraries, class rooms, and homes. We hope that these researched presentations on CDs and cassettes of **The Roots of Tejano and Conjunto Music** will be appreciated and enjoyed by the people of south Texas as well as by new audiences around the globe. (Chris Strachwitz - 1991)

#### The artists and the songs:

*Note: Name in parenthesis after song title indicates name of composer. (DAR)= Authors Rights Reserved. Next is the type of song followed by the IDEAL release or catalog number(s), followed by the approximate date the recording was made. The performances were re-mastered from acetates, test pressings and 78s for selections recorded between 1946 and circa 1952. By 1953 Mr. Marroquin had obtained a tape recorder and master tapes were recorded on 7 inch reels - usually four "cuts" per tape. From IDEAL # 900 forward most tapes have been preserved and the remastering was done from the original tapes.*

**1. Conjunto Bernal: MI UNICO CAMINO** (My Only Path) (DAR) (Ranchera) (ID 1637-A, 2447-A) (January 1959) Ruben Perez - first voice, Paulino Bernal - accordion & third voice, Eloy Bernal - *bajo sexto* & second voice.

There is a sorrow cleft like a dagger into my thoughts. Like a guffaw that closes off the lament as if by crying they were laughing at me. It's the past that I regret, I will condemn it having been as it was.

My sin and my fault was probably knowing suffering too well, and the sorrows and disillusionments that for so many years love has given me. If perhaps you should return, forgetting your old bitterness, you will find me in front of a shot of liquor, the only road your love left open to me.

First a goldfinch died in my garden, who wouldn't sympathize? The fountain dried up and the honeysuckle also went dry, my love like a bird of ill omen, without kissing me, she too left me.

Paulino Bernal was born June 21, 1939 in the Rio Grande Valley and grew up in Kingsville. With his older brother Eloy he formed **El Conjunto Bernal** in 1952 when a love for music, a determination to escape the life of field workers, and the reality of supporting their mother and four other brothers and sisters, inspired them to come

up with a unique sound in *conjunto* music. Both were good singers and Eloy was soon known as the best *bajo sexto* player in the area while Paulino quickly became a master of the accordion. Armando Marroquin heard about the brothers and brought them to Alice first to back up singers Carmen and Laura (note Arhoolie CD 343 - **The Women**) and then to let them record on their own. Conjunto Bernal soon became one of the most popular *conjuntos* in south Texas. (Conjunto Bernal's best recordings for IDEAL are available on Arhoolie CD/C-344). In contrast to the usual vocal duets, this recording signaled the first time a *conjunto* had incorporated three part vocal harmonies, a sound widely popular in Mexican music and which had propelled Trio Los Panchos to international fame. Paulino Bernal went on to become one of the true super stars of *conjunto* music and for the last twenty years has turned his talents to interpreting Christian music.

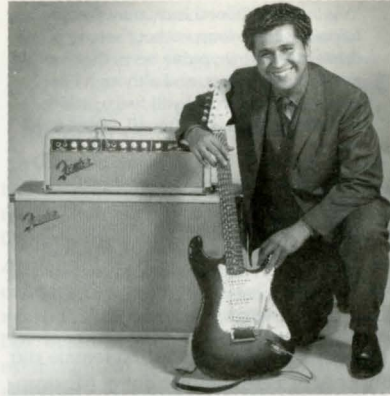
**2. Narciso Martinez: LA CUQUITA** (N. Martinez) (Polka) (ID 01-A) (April 1946) Narciso Martinez - accordion, Santiago Almeida - *bajo sexto*.

This polka was the A side of the very first recording released by IDEAL in 1946.

Narciso Martinez was a well established name by then not only in *conjunto* or accordion music of south Texas but among folk dance aficionados all over the country and in Mexico. His pre-war recordings had been widely distributed and were popular not only with Tejanos but were marketed to Polish-Americans, Cajuns, Basques, and other ethnic groups who enjoyed accordion instrumentals. (Narciso's 1930s recordings can be heard on Arhoolie/Folklyric Cass-9017). Mr. Marroquin used Narciso's talents extensively not only as an accordion instrumentalist but also to back up many singers, especially those who recorded during the first five years of the label's existence. (The best of Narciso's IDEAL recordings are heard on Arhoolie/Folklyric Cass-9055.) Today Narciso Martinez lives in retirement near San Benito and as the acknowledged "Father of Conjunto Music" makes appearances at the annual Conjunto Music Festival in San Antonio sponsored by Juan Tejeda and The Guadalupe Cultural Center.

**3. Lydia Mendoza: FELIZ SIN TI** (Happy Without You) (José Morante) (Bolero) (ID 480-A) (August 1950) with Beto Villa's orchestra.





*Above, left: Lydia Mendoza  
Above: Narcisco Martinez  
Left: Juan Lopez*

*Opposite, top left: Paulino Bernal  
Top right: Freddie Fender  
Lower left: Isidro Lopez  
Lower right: Tony De La Rosa*



You told me: "Good luck, may you find happiness." So long without seeing you, I don't know how you've been, they've told me so many things, and although I'm happy without you, I still feel a little something, because, after all, I used to be yours.

What nostalgia I remember! It really surprises me! But I don't know if there in your eyes I see something strange in you. Tell me what's going on with you, and although I'm happy without you, I still feel a little something, because, after all, I used to be yours.

Lydia Mendoza is the first female star not only of Tejano music but of Mexican-American music as a whole. Born in Houston, her recording career began in 1928 when she accompanied her family (**Quarteto Carta Blanca**) at a San Antonio hotel room where OKEH Records had set up their portable studios for auditioning and recording local talent. In 1934 Lydia made a hit with her first solo recording of the tango "*Mal Hombre*" which has been associated with her throughout her long and distinguished career. (Lydia's first recordings, including the original hit of "*Mal Hombre*" are available on Arhoolie/Folklyric CD-7002 and on Arhoolie C-219 while her best recording from the 1980s is Arhoolie C-3012 **La Gloria De Tejas.**)

**4. Tony De La Rosa: CUATRO O CINCO FAROLAZOS** (Four or Five Double Shots of Liquor) (Ray Monsivais) (Ranchera) (ID 1514-A) (November 1957) Tony De La Rosa - accordion, vocal by Tony & Chavez.

If I get drunk it's because I suffer very much, if I drink it's because I need you here in my life. Why deny it if you're my favorite one and if there's never a moment that I forget about your love?

Ay, what pain to live alone and without seeing you, I go along without knowing where I am, I drink constantly to drown this torment, if I'm drunk, there's nothing I can do about it.

When I drink four or five double shots, I feel a lump forming in my throat and little by little I begin to wail, my heart is crying out for you, it can't take it any more.

Tony De La Rosa is one of the most enduring names in the Conjunto field. Born in 1931 in Sarita, Texas, a small settlement in the vast King Ranch complex, 25 miles from Corpus Christi, he worked in the fields with his whole family. Tony's father bought him an accordion when he was ten years old and he learned from listening to Narciso Martinez's music on the radio. By 1947 Tony De La Rosa was going to Kingsville to play in the *cantinas*, if they would let him, shining shoes on the side. In 1950

he recorded for IDEAL and his popularity has never slackened since then. (Tony De La Rosa's best recordings for IDEAL are available on Arhoolie CD/C-362). Tony's rock steady beat and staccato style on the accordion made him the "King of the Polkas." This selection is a fine example of the playing and singing which have kept Tony De La Rosa's name out in front of the public to this day.

**5. Narciso Martinez: AUSENCIA** (DAR) (Vals) (ID 031-B) (July 1946)

A very popular waltz by the father of Conjunto music.

**6. Carmen y Laura: POR TU AUSENCIA** (Because of Your Absense) (Manuel Cass R.) (Cancion) (ID 1440-B) (February 1957) with Conjunto Bernal.

I've always lived in suffering because your absence is killing me, melancholy and a bitter flame agitate my every night's sleep, then I get to thinking that days go by like years, all without being able to forget you.

A dream revealed to me that you were going to leave me, perhaps because of this I was crying, I just can't forget. Farewell, I beseech you to come back and caress me, the man who has loved you, who has known how to love you so much.

I suffer your absence terribly because I live hoping that you won't forget me, I live sighing for you; you don't know how I felt when I was dreaming about you, and woke up to your picture, and then I went on crying.

Carmen and Laura (Hernandez), sisters born in the 1920s in Kingsville, were the first female duet to record for IDEAL. Carmen, the older sister, met her husband, Armando Marroquin, while he was in college. The newlyweds settled down in nearby Alice where they started the juke box business that eventually led to the establishment of IDEAL Records and the studio in their garage. The sisters recorded extensively with both *conjunto* and Tejano orchestras, especially Beto Villa's, and they toured as a popular ballroom attraction, sometimes with the addition of accordionist Narciso Martinez. (More selections by Carmen y Laura are heard on Arhoolie CD/C-343: **The Women**)

**7. Beto Villa y Su Orquesta: MI PECOSITA** (Pedro Ayala) (Polka) (ID 397-A) (November 1949).

Alberto "Beto" Villa (1915-1986) of Falfurrias, Texas was the leader of the first widely popular *orquesta tejana*. Born into a musical family, Beto got his first saxophone from his father who was the



leader of an *orquesta tipica*. Beto's early favorites were the famous American dance bands of Glenn Miller, Harry James, and Benny Goodman but he also appreciated the Latin bands of Luis Arcaraz and Xavier Cugat. Beto Villa became a fine saxophonist and also a well-liked and popular personality who played in various bands before forming his own orchestra. In 1947 Armando Marroquin recorded Beto Villa for the IDEAL label and insisted that the band include an accordion and that the arrangements and repertoire be appealing to the regional audiences. Often only a few members of Beto's regular band were used for recording and sometimes the entire rhythm section was replaced with just a *bajo sexto*. Many musicians felt that the records sounded corny but the public loved them and the band was soon in great demand all over the southwest and wherever Mexican-Americans were living or working. (Beto Villa's best IDEAL recordings are available on Arhoolie CD/C-364).

**8. Jesus Maya y Timoteo Cantu: GREGORIO CORTEZ** (P.D.) (Corrido) (ID 294-A) (May 1949) vocal duet with Narciso Martinez - accordion, Santiago Almeida - *bajo sexto*, & Merced Martinez - bass.

Maya and Cantu were a typical vocal duet of the period, accompanied by Narciso Martinez and his accordion *conjunto* for this recording. This is a very abbreviated version, designed to fit on one side of a juke box record, of the *corrido* (ballad or story song) about this border hero and enduring legend who stood up for his rights. This *corrido* is still heard today in *cantinas* and dance halls throughout south Texas, over 90 years after the event took place in 1901! (The first recording, a six minute version, is available on Arhoolie Cass-211: **Corridos**). Prof. Americo Paredes wrote a book about Cortez: **With A Pistol In His Hand** (Univ. Of Texas Press) and a few years ago **The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez** was made into a movie.

In the county of El Carmen, look at what has happened, the High Sheriff died, leaving Román wounded.

The following morning when the people arrived, they were saying to each other: "They don't know who killed him."

They went around asking questions and about three hours later; they found out that the wrongdoer was Gregorio Cortez.

They posted a reward for Cortez throughout the whole state: "Capture him dead or alive because he has killed several men."

Gregorio Cortez was saying with his pistol in his hand: "I don't regret having killed him, the one I'm sorry about is my brother."

Gregorio Cortez was saying with his soul all ablaze: "I don't regret having killed him, self-defense is permitted."

The Americans were saying: "If we see him, what will we do? If we face him head on, very few of us will return alive."

Gregorio tells Juan: "Very soon you will see it, go, tell the sheriffs to come and arrest me."

When the sheriffs arrived, Gregorio presented himself: "You take me because I'm willing, but not any other way."

Now they've captured Cortez, now the matter has come to an end; his poor, unfortunate family, he carries in his heart.

**9. Trio San Antonio: UN RECUERDO QUEDO** (One Memory Remained) (Henry N. Zimmerle) (Ranchera) (ID 1175-A) (March 1955) Fred Zimmerle - vocal & accordion, Andres Berlanga - vocal & *bajo sexto*, unknown bass.

Fred Zimmerle, born in San Antonio in 1931 of German/Mexican ancestry, has long been one of my favorite accordionists and his duet singing with old time troubadour Berlanga, brings chills down my

spine. This selection has some of the purest country style singing in Mexican-American music. Since 1946 Fred has led this popular **Trio San Antonio** and some of his more recent recordings can be heard on Arhoolie CD/C-311.

Beneath a green orange tree where there were roses and flowers, you gave me the first kiss as a sign of your love.

Remember those moments, I told you and you told me that you would give yourself to me because you loved me.

Upon seeing you in love, yielding in my arms, I gave you all of my love, the love of my life!

How beautiful is the lover who knows how to return love! Two lovers met who really knew how to love!

Now the tree has withered, only a memory remains, of the love of this woman imprisoned in my heart.

**10. Hermanas Mendoza (Juanita & Maria): TRES CONSEJOS** (Three Pieces of Advice) (José Morante) (Ranchera) (ID 484-B) (August 1950) with Beto Villa's orchestra.

Lydia Mendoza's sisters, Maria and Juanita, had an extraordinarily passionate duet vocal sound. They became famous

via their many recordings and personal appearances, first with the Mendoza Family stage show which toured extensively in the late 1940s, and then on their own until 1952 when their mother's death signaled the end of the *dueto*. Sister Lydia would usually accompany them on her 12-string guitar, (some of the best of those records made for the Azteca label are available on Arhoolie Cass - 3017), but for IDEAL Records, Armando Marroquin teamed the sisters with some of the best *conjuntos* and orchestras, as he also did for Lydia, to make their records have broader appeal.

My friends, all you "rounders," give me a minute to sing you my song. I don't have any beefs with anyone, but just for that, I don't want anyone to get me wrong.

I only want to give you three pieces of advice, don't laugh, because this is the truth. They're essential if you want to live to a ripe old age, or at least survive to a certain age.

If you have a mother, take good care of this good fortune. If you have a father, take good care of him too. Someone who doesn't have a mother is very unfortunate, and to be without a father is to suffer greatly.

I once had everything, now I have nothing, I only sought advice when it was too late, now I go through the world

singing, and I stop to tell you what I learned too late.

If you are "Don Juans," don't be too sure of yourselves, married women, in the end, are too much, they are all false hearted and will betray you, and you won't be able to complain.

Now I bid you farewell with my last advice: don't ever go looking for strange women, because the guy who goes looking for another's woman will always run into a rooster who wakes up earlier.

**11. Juan Lopez: LA PRIMAVERA** (Juan Lopez) (Redova) (ID 994-B) (December 1953) Juan Lopez - accordion, Adolfo Garcia - *bajo sexto*, Juan Trevino - bass.

Juan Lopez, born in 1922 in Jackson County between Victoria and Houston, became known as "El Rey De La Redova" and is often called an accordionist's accordionist. While a child, the family moved to Robstown and by age 18, Juan Lopez was playing professionally and made his first recordings in the late 1940s. Juan Lopez has composed and recorded innumerable instrumentals which are masterpieces of traditional south Texas accordion music. (The best of his recordings made for IDEAL are available on Arhoolie Cass - 3028).

**12. Juan Lopez: LA TIJERITA** (Juan

Lopez) (Polka) (ID 994-A) same as #11.

**13. Valerio Longoria: MUJER HERMOSA** (Pretty Woman) (Valerio Longoria) (Ranchera) (ID 935-B) (June 1953) Valerio Longoria - vocal & accordion and his conjunto.

Valerio Longoria, born in Clarksdale, Miss. in 1924, but raised in Kennedy, Tx., has been one of the most influential stylists in Conjunto music. He is well known for having introduced *boleros* into the *conjunto* repertoire in the late 1940s and with his fine voice has made hundreds of records over the past 43 years. In recent years Valerio has been an active accordion teacher in San Antonio and has introduced pure Colombian *cumbias* to his south Texas audiences. (Note his superb recent release on Arhoolie CD/C 336: **Caballo Viejo** and his best IDEAL recordings are available on Arhoolie CD/C 367).

**14. Conjunto Bernal: PENSAMIENTO** (Thoughts) (DAR) (Bolero) (ID 1376-B) (July 1956) (2:45) Paulino Bernal - accordion & vocal, Eloy Bernal - *bajo sexto* & vocal.

Thought, fragrance, tell her that I love her. I can't forget her, she lives in my soul, go and tell her so.

Tell her that I think about her, even if she doesn't think about me.

Fly, thought of mine, tell her that I adore her, tell her that I'm dying for her, go and tell her so.

**15. Chelo Silva: QUIEREME VIDITA** (Love Me, My Dear) (Salome Gutierrez) (Bolero) (ID LP 149) (June 1964) (2:30)

Chelo Silva (1922-1988), born in Brownsville, began her long career there at the Continental Club and made her first recordings for Falcon in 1954. She was the undisputed "Queen of the Bolero" and became a huge success not only in her native Texas, but in Mexico and South America where she recorded extensively. I saw Chelo Silva shortly before her death at Rosedale Park in San Antonio where she held the huge audience spell bound. They responded to her every word, her charismatic delivery and deep-felt involvement with each bolero while Flaco Jimenez improvised magnificently behind her. (Chelo Silva's best IDEAL recordings are available on Arhoolie Cass - 3031).

If they ask if you love me, don't deny what you think, tell them that you are now my life, my heart.

Tell them that even if many years go by, I will never forget you, nor will you



forget me. Tell them that now you love no other, that only death will separate us.

Let life go by peacefully, but don't leave me, because you will make me suffer. Love me, my life, like I love you, and you will make my soul a song, giving me your heart.

**16. Beto Villa Orquesta: PACHUCA BLUES** (Narciso Martinez) (Blues) (ID 404-A) (January 1950). Beto Villa's orchestra with Narciso Martinez - accordion.

Blues, Boogie Woogie, and Swing were the dance musics of the Pachucos and their influence was felt not only in El Paso and Los Angeles but even in the fairly traditional and conservative countryside of south Texas.

**17. Conjunto Bernal: LA NOVIA ANTONIA** (Sweetheart Antonia) (DAR) (Rock) (ID 1525-A) (December 1957) (2:44) Vocal by Mando Marroquin, Jr.

With this selection, sung by the record producer's son, it becomes clear that many young Mexican-Americans were fond of the sounds of Rhythm & Blues, some of which were evolving into Rock and Roll.

**18. Freddie Fender: CORINA, CORINA** (P.D.) (Blues) (ID LP 136) (September 1963) Freddie Fender - vocal & guitar.

Freddie Fender was born Baldemar Huerta in San Benito in 1936 and first heard Rock 'n' Roll when he enlisted in the Marines in 1952 and served in Okinawa and Japan. Upon discharge and under the influence of Elvis Presley, "Baldie" made his first records for Falcon in McAllen and was soon known locally as "El Bebop Kid." With his wonderful voice he was soon singing in English in Anglo night clubs, re-named Freddy Fender, and making records for various producers who pitched them to more widely distributed labels. Freddy got arrested in 1960 for possessing marijuana, at that time considered almost a capital offense in Louisiana! Eventually released on parole, he worked for IDEAL Records in San Benito as a recording engineer and made these recordings for his local fans. In the early 1970s Freddy Fender finally got lucky with a series of hits and has since become one of the few Chicano/Country superstars. Today he tours with the **Texas Tornados**. (The best of Freddy Fender's IDEAL recordings are available on Arhoolie CD/C 366 and the classic album by Eddie Con Los Shades is available on Arhoolie Cass 3032).

**19. Eddie con Los Shades: QUE MALA** (How Bad) (Freddie Fender) (Rock) (ID

1891-B) (January 1961) (2:22) Freddie Fender - vocal & guitar; Louis Moody - bass; "Little Herman" - drums.

**20. Isidro Lopez: CORAZON DEL PUEBLO** (Sweetheart of the Town) (Juan Colorado) (Ranchera) (ID 1203-A) (1955) Isidro Lopez with Conjunto IDEAL (probably Amadeo Flores - accordion).

My heart, you belong to the whole town, now when they see you, they point you out, what happened to the pride you used to have? Didn't you say that it was better without me?

Yesterday I saw you with your painted face, but I knew that your heart was crying, you can fool with who know you now, but you can't hide your pain from me.

I heard that you were seen very drunk, and that you were saying nothing mattered anymore, but I know that this was a lie, if I said the word, you'd come flying back.

If you want to come back to my side, just don't think I'm desperate, what existed between us is over, and if you come back, I don't want what's already been too much.

Although Beto Villa laid the ground work and led the most popular Tejano orchestra in the 1950s, it was Isidro Lopez, "El Indio," who put the modern Tejano

Orquesta sound on the map. Born May 17, 1933 in Bishop, Texas, Isidro Lopez was able to study alto saxophone while attending school in Corpus Christi. He was inspired by the sounds of **Los Madrugadores**, whom he heard on the radio from Mexico, and by various orchestras, including that of Beto Villa and Juan Colorado, with whom he made his first recordings for IDEAL. He has since worked and recorded with *conjuntos*, *mariachis*, and orchestras, including his own, which at times included up to 17 musicians. Today "El Indio" is singing and playing with his son, Javier who has taken over the leadership of the orchestra. (Isidro Lopez's best recordings for IDEAL are available on Arhoolie CD/C 363).

**21. Isidro Lopez y su Orquesta: TARDE PA' ARREPENTIRNOS** (It's Too Late To Change Your Mind) (Isidro Lopez) (Ranchera) (ID 1490-A, 2497-B) (August 1957). Isidro Lopez - vocal & alto sax.

If you don't love me, we're not going to fight about it, I know that you've got lots of guys, and that you can get them, other lovers that you can flirt with, to dominate and make them chase after you.

We're friends, and I'm going to give you advice, it's very late to change our minds now, we broke it off, may God forgive us.

**22. Agapito Zuniga y Sus Desveladores:** **PORQUE ME ABANDONAS** (Why Are You Leaving Me?) (DAR) (Ranchera) (ID 1187-B) (April 1955). Agapito Zuniga - accordion & vocal.

Why are you leaving me now that I'm loving you? The words that you told me are going to kill me.

How can you expect me to forget you, if you are my special favorite? Until I no longer see you, I'm the owner of your love.

Cruel woman, don't be so ungrateful, why are you leaving me for other lovers? Tell me if you want to stay with me, we'll go off somewhere else.

Even if it bothers them, I'm the owner of your love.

**23. Lydia Mendoza: TU DESTINO** (Your Destiny) (DAR) (Ranchera) (ID 2218-A, LP-143) (November 1964) Lydia Mendoza - vocal & 12 string guitar with Gilberto Lopez - accordion and his *conjunto*.

Go on your way crying because they have abandoned you, what you did to me, you've paid for with another. Poor you, now you're unhappy, passionate, embittered by love.

It's your destiny, woman, your destiny, it's what God wills, it's your road in life.

He knows well to whom to send the punishment, you're paying for what you did to me.

You go singing passionate songs, now it's you that's living the bitter life, with your haughtiness you thought you were something special, now you understand that you pay for everything in life.

**24. Wally Almendarez: LAS NUBES** (The Clouds) (DAR) (Ranchera) (ID EP-9, LP-118) (February 1962) (3:04) Probably Manuel Solis and Wally Almendarez - vocals, Chano Cadena - accordion.

It's all over now!, I can't go on, if I have to go on suffering, I would rather die. I go wandering through this world not knowing where to turn.

The years go passing by and I don't lose my hope. But sometimes when I'm singing I would rather cry. Why go on suffering if I can achieve nothing?

The clouds that pass by so high, stop and send down the drizzling rain, but they seem to pause and listen whenever they hear me sing, and they send down the drizzling rain.

They seem to fill my heart with joy, with waters they bring from the sea.

Wally Almendarez, (his name was always misspelled on the records as Armendarez), is Beto Villa's son-in-law.

He plays saxophone and worked with Beto during the last 4 years the band was together. Accordionist Chano Cadena became a well known artist in the lower Rio Grande Valley in the 1960s. This song first came out in Mexico but became a good seller for Wally Almendarez. In the 1970s *Las Nubes* became a big hit for Little Joe & La Familia, who can be seen singing it in the video **Del Mero Corazon** (available from Brazos Films c/o Arhoolie Productions).

Original recordings produced by Armando Marroquin in Alice, Texas (1946-1959) and by Paco Betancourt and John Phillips in San Benito, Texas (1960-1969) for IDEAL Records.

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5. Narciso Martinez: AUSENCIA (Vals)
6. Carmen y Laura: POR TU AUSENCIA
7. Beto Villa y Orq.: MI PECOSITA (Polka)
8. Maya y Cantu: GREGORIO CORTEZ
9. Trio San Antonio: UN RECUERDO QUEDO
10. Hermanas Mendoza: TRES CONSEJOS
11. Juan Lopez: LA PRIMAVERA (Redova)
12. Juan Lopez: LA TIJERITA (Polka)
13. Valerio Longoria: MUJER HERMOSA
14. Conjunto Bernal: PENSAMIENTO (Bolero)
15. Chelo Silva: QUIEREME VIDITA (Bolero)
16. Beto Villa y Orq.: PACHUCA BLUES
17. Conjunto Bernal & Mando Marroquin:  
LA NOVIA ANTONIA (Rock)
18. Freddie Fender: CORINA, CORINA (Blues)
19. Eddie con Los Shades: QUE MALA (Rock)
20. Isidro Lopez: CORAZON DEL PUEBLO
21. Isidro Lopez Y Su Orquesta:  
TARDE PA' ARREPENTIRNOS
22. Agapito Zuniga: PORQUE ME ABANDONAS
23. Lydia Mendoza: TU DESTINO
24. Wally Almendarez: LAS NUBES



From the heart of South Texas, 24 regional juke box hits from IDEAL Records, the first major Tejano owned and operated recording company (1946-1969). Pioneer accordion masters **Narciso Martinez** and **Juan Lopez**; Conjunto Stars **Paulino Bernal**, **Tony De La Rosa**, and **Valerio Longoria**; the first Tejano orchestras of **Beto Villa** and **Isidro Lopez**; "Las Grandes De Tejas": **Lydia Mendoza**, first woman star of Tejano music, known to every strata of Spanish speaking society throughout the Americas and **Chelo Silva**, queen of the Bolero; Lydia's sisters, **María** and **Juanita**; and the first female duet on IDEAL: **Carmen & Laura**. Super star **Freddie Fender** by himself and also with an early garage-rock classic under the pseudonym of **Eddie con Los Shades** along with other gems from the formative period of Conjunto and Tejano music. (For details see enclosed 24 page CD booklet.)

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