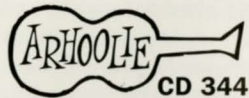


Conjunto Bernal

"MI UNICO CAMINO"



1. MI UNICO CAMINO (DAR) (Ranchera) (1637-A, 2447-A, LP103) (12/1958)
2. NETO'S POLKA (Paulino Bernal) (Polka) (LP160)
3. LAS PALABRAS DEL AMOR (DAR) (Bolero) (1415-B, LP170) (11/1956)
4. LORETTA POLKA (Paulino Bernal) (Polka) (LP160)
5. SERA IMPOSIBLE (Adam Perez) (Ranchera) (1298-B, LP133) (12/1955)
6. MI BORRACHERA (José A. Morante) (Ranchera) (1255-A, LP133) (1955)
7. BALLROOM POLKA (Paulino Bernal) (LP141)
8. DESTINO CRUEL (Eloy Bernal) (Ranchera) (6/1959) (1696-A, LP103)
9. AL FIN MUJER (DAR) (Ranchera) (LP160)
10. PA' QUE ME HAGO ILUSIONES (Manuel E. Gonzalez) (Ranchera) (1653-A, LP133) (Early 1959)
11. SI ACASO VUELVES (Valerio Longoria) (Ranchera) (1248-B, LP133) (1955)
12. HOY NO ES AYER (Tony De La Rosa) (Polka) (LP141)
13. DESPRECIO (Paulino Bernal) (Bolero) (1167-B) (3/1955)
14. MUJER PASEADA (Daniel Garces) (Ranchera) (1167-A) (3/1955)
15. FIDEL CASTRO (Paulino Bernal) (Polka) (1689-A, LP103) (8/1959)

16. MELODIAS MEXICANAS (P. & E. Bernal) (Potpourri) (1689-B, LP103) (8/1959)
17. QUIEN TE LO DIJO (Tomás Mendez) (Ranchera) (1466-A, LP103) (4/1957)
18. AZUL CIELO (Miguel Martinez) (Shotis) (1311-A) (3/1956)
19. CAMINITO DE RIELES (Chucho Mendoza-José L. Morales) (Ranchera) (1470-A, LP103) (4/1957)
20. CONNIE (Paulino Bernal) (Polka) (LP160)
21. MARIA BONITA (A. Lara) (Polka) (LP 160)
22. AL REGRESAR (Paulino Bernal) (Bolero) (Vocal: Ruben & Paulino) (1518-B) (Late 1957)
23. SENTIMIENTO Y RENCOR (Eloy Bernal) (Ranchera) (1614-B, LP133) (10/1958)
24. LA CHUPARRASA (B. Collazo) (Polka) (1321-A) (2/1956)

Paulino Bernal - vocals & accordion; **Eloy Bernal** - vocals & bajo sexto; **Ruben Perez** - first voice on trio selections and several duets; plus bass and drums.

Recorded in Alice, Texas by Armando Marroquin for IDEAL Records between 1954 and 1960. Re-issue produced by Chris Strachwitz for Arhoolie Productions by contractual agreement with Paulino Bernal. Cover by Wayne Pope

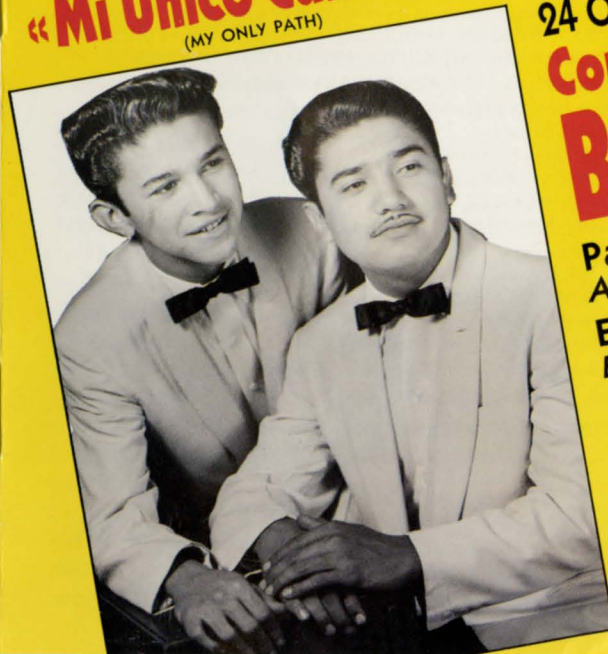
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TEJANO ROOTS

OVER 60 MINUTES OF CLASSIC TEJANO MUSIC

"Mi Unico Camino" (MY ONLY PATH)



24 Original Hits by
Conjunto
BERNAL

Paulino Bernal
Accordion
Eloy Bernal
Bajo Sexto

IDEAL



Paulino Bernal - vocals & accordion; **Eloy Bernal** - vocals & bajo sexto; **Ruben Perez** - first voice on trio selections and several duets; plus bass and drums.

Numbers in parenthesis refer to original **Ideal** catalog number on 78, 45, or LP release. Date in parenthesis refers to the approximate date of the original recording session.

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OTHER RELEASES IN OUR TEJANO ROOTS SERIES:

CD/C 341 **Tejano Roots/Raices Tejanas** featuring 24 selections by CONJUNTO BERNAL, ISIDRO LOPEZ, BETO VILLA, NARCISO MARTINEZ, CHELO SILVA, FREDDIE FENDER, TONY DE LE ROSA, LYDIA MENDOZA, JUAN LOPEZ, CARMEN Y LAURA, VALERIO LONGORIA, WALLY ALMENDAREZ, and others. CD includes 24-page booklet with lyrics, history and photos.

CD/C 342 **Conjunto Accordion Champs**

CD/C 343 **Tejano Roots: The Women** featuring 22 selections by CHELO SILVA, CARMEN Y LAURA, LYDIA MENDOZA, HERMANAS GUERRERO, LAS ABAJENAS, ROSITA FERNANDEZ, HERMANAS SEGOVIA, DELIA Y LAURA, HERMANAS MENDOZA, HERMANAS CANTU, and others. CD includes 28-page booklet with lyrics, history and photos.

CD/C 344 **Conjunto Bernal: "Mi Unico Camino"** 24 Original Hits.

CD/C 363 **Isidro Lopez: "El Indio"** 24 Original Hits.

CD/C 364 **Beto Villa: 24 Original Hits** by the first Tejano *orquesta*.

CD/C 366 **Freddie Fender: 24 Original Hits.**

CD/C 367 **Corridos de La Frontera**

CD/C 368 **Orquestas Tejanas: "The Formative Years"**

OTHER TEJANO & CONJUNTO RELEASES:

CD/C 311 **Los Pinguinos Del Norte & Fred Zimmerle's Conjunto Trio San Antonio**
"Conjuntos Norteños"

CD/C 317 **Santiago Jimenez, Jr.: "El Mero, Mero De San Antonio"**

CD/C 318 **Flaco Jimenez: "Ay Te Dejo En San Antonio y Mas"**

CD/C 319 **Esteban "Steve" Jordan: "The Many Sounds of Steve Jordan"**

CD/C 336 **Valerio Longoria y su Conjunto: "Caballo Viejo"**

CD/C 3027 **Flaco Jimenez: "Flaco's Amigos"** (with Ry Cooder, Peter Rowan, etc.)

CD/C 7002 **Lydia Mendoza: "Mal Hombre"** and other Original Hits from the 1930s.

El Conjunto Bernal: "One of a Kind"

Texas-Mexicans have always been prolific music makers. They have been the music trendsetters among Mexicans in the Southwest throughout most of the 20th century. In fact, beginning in the 1930s, the Texas-Mexicans created the two most powerful regional styles ever to emerge among Mexicans anywhere — *orquesta* (note Arhoolie CD/C 368 **Orquestas Tejanas: The Formative Years**), and *conjunto* (note Arhoolie CD/C 341 **Tejano Roots** and CD/C 342 **Conjunto Accordion Champs**).

The best of the *conjuntos* is, beyond a doubt, **El Conjunto Bernal**. Described by connoisseurs of *conjunto* music as "the only one of its kind" and "twenty years ahead of its time," El Conjunto Bernal is well-known for its tremendous range of innovation. Its musical experiments spanned the gamut of *conjunto*, from the traditional polka to Latin music such as the *bolero*, *cha cha cha*, and even American rock and roll. El Conjunto Bernal owed much of its originality and meteoric

rise to fame to the genius of its founder, **Paulino Bernal**.

Paulino Bernal was born June 22, 1939, in Raymondville, deep in South Texas. Reared in the grinding poverty that visited most of the Texas-Mexicans of his generation, Paulino was forced to quit school when he was in the seventh grade. An accomplished accordionist by that time, he left school he says "to try and earn money and get us out of the poverty in which we found ourselves."

Bernal's mother was a divorcee, and early on she moved to Kingsville, where Paulino, his older brother **Eloy**, the younger Luis, and three sisters were all forced to pick cotton, cucumbers, and other crops to help support the family. One day, a man came by the house selling a guitar, and Mrs. Bernal "with great sacrifice," bought it for the boys. Paulino soon learned enough to play in the *cantinas* with an elderly accordionist, where he picked up tips to help buy food for



Paulino Bernal

the Bernal family.

But Paulino's future lay with the accordion. He remembers hearing the best accordionists of the late 40s and early 50s on the radio — **Narciso Martinez, Valerio Longoria, Tony de la Rosa** — all of whom were recording for the largest Texas-Mexican company at the time, **Ideal Records**. Paulino dreamed of joining their ranks, and when a friend of his was given an accordion as a gift, it was Paulino who spent the most time practicing on it. Shortly afterward, on a trip to visit their father in the Rio Grande Valley, Eloy was given a *bajo sexto* by his father, and the Bernals were soon on track toward their future.

Los Hermanitos Bernal launched their musical career in 1952. They were hired to play a dance in nearby Premont — Paulino on accordion, Eloy on *bajo sexto*, and a friend, Adan Lomas, on drums. According to Bernal, "a lot of people attended, and they liked the Bernal Brothers so much, they kept calling us back." They began playing in nearby Fulfurrias

and in Alice, the home of the powerful **Ideal Records**. Soon the Bernal Brothers came to the attention of Armando Marroquin, the man who recorded all the artists for Ideal Records.

The Bernal Brothers were first recorded as the backup *conjunto* for some of the duets then popular among Texas-Mexicans, such as Carmen y Laura (note CD 343 **Tejano Roots: The Women**). In March 1955, Marroquin gave the Bernals their chance as headliners, and a 78 rpm record was released with the *canción ranchera* ("country song") **Mujer Paseada** ("Travelled Woman") on one side and the romantic *bolero* **Desprecio** on the other. With the release of their first record, the Bernal Brothers quickly put their cotton picking days behind them forever and soon joined Valerio Longoria and Tony de la Rosa as the top *conjuntos* in the state of Texas.

El Conjunto Bernal recorded prolifically for **Ideal** between 1955 and 1960 and some of the best sides, including the monster hits: **Mi Unico Camino** and **Sentimiento Y Rencor**,

both from late 1958, are on this CD and cassette.

Marroquin began taking them on tours throughout the Southwest and beyond where they always played for packed houses. They were especially popular in Arizona where local band leader Pedro Bugarin was fond of featuring them with his *orquesta*. In fact, according to Paulino, he and Eloy used to sit in with Bugarin's band, and some of the band musicians would in turn sit in with El Conjunto Bernal. This exposure to band music inspired Paulino to branch out of the normally simple *ranchero* music of the *conjunto* into the more sophisticated style of the *orquesta*.

When Armando Marroquin ended his relationship with **Ideal** Records around 1960, El Conjunto Bernal stayed with him and recorded for his new label, **Nopal** Records. Shortly however, El Conjunto Bernal relocated to McAllen, in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, across the border from Mexico. Bernal began working with Victor Gonzalez and the two

men founded **Bego** Records (the company name a combination of their two last names). The **Bego** years represent some of Conjunto Bernal's most innovative work. It was at this time that Paulino attracted the most talented musicians in the *conjunto* tradition to his group.

In the late 1960s Gonzalez bought out Paulino's interest in **Bego** Records and Paulino went on to found **Bernal** Records, which also produced many outstanding hits by El Conjunto Bernal. By this time however, Paulino had given up performing in favor of the administrative aspects of show business. He ran the recording company, hosted a regional TV music show, and generally concentrated on the promotional aspects of the business. Meanwhile Oscar Hernandez and other very able accordionists picked up the slack and carried on the tradition of excellence begun by Paulino. During this same time, success in the music field took its toll on Paulino and he succumbed to the allure of alcohol and drugs.

In 1972, however, a cook Paulino

had hired to work in a restaurant he owned changed his life by converting him to the teachings of born-again Christianity. From that day on, Paulino gave up the life of alcohol and drugs to devote himself to preaching. He also resumed his career as accordionist, only this time he did so in the service of Christianity. He started a new recording company, **Bernal Christian Records**, under whose banner he has continued to develop his inimitable style. As he once commented in an interview, "People who knew me before lament that I'm not playing anymore. They don't seem to realize that I play more now than I ever did before!"

In every major musical tradition, there are individuals and groups which distinguish themselves as leaders with their talent and innovative genius. El Conjunto Bernal is clearly one of these in the *norteño* music tradition and Arhoolie Productions feels distinctly privileged to offer this CD/C. Featured here is the best of El Conjunto Bernal from its formative

years at **Ideal** Records. The group came of age during the glorious years with **Ideal** establishing itself as the greatest in the *conjunto* tradition. We believe that upon listening to this CD/C, those who appreciate *norteño* music will agree that El Conjunto Bernal was indeed "one of a kind." (Chris Strachwitz and Manuel Peña — 1992)

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Conjunto Bernal

"Mi Unico Camino"



Over 60 Minutes of Historic TEJANO MUSIC

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2. NETO'S POLKA (Polka)
3. LAS PALABRAS DEL AMOR (Bolero)
4. LORETTA POLKA (Polka)
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6. MI BORRACHERA (Ranchera)
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9. AL FIN MUJER (Ranchera)
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24. LA CHUPARRASA (Polka)



Paulino Bernal - vocals & accordion; **Eloy Bernal** - vocals & bajo sexto; **Ruben Perez** - first voice on trio selections and several duets; plus bass and drums.

Recorded in Alice, Texas by Armando Marroquin for **IDEAL** Records between 1954 and 1960. Re-issue produced by Chris Strachwitz for Arhoolie Productions by contractual agreement with Paulino Bernal.

Accordionist/singer Paulino Bernal is one of the true superstars of *Conjunto* music. With his brother Eloy on *bajo sexto* and the addition of Ruben Perez as a third voice, **Conjunto Bernal** broke the traditional barriers of this Texas dance music by introducing three-part vocal harmonies, a sound widely popular among middle class Mexicans, and incorporating an *orquesta* sound into their arrangements. Here are 24 original hits recorded in the 1950s with plenty of polkas showing off Paulino's superb accordion.

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