

Recuerdos de

Lydia Mendoza

la Alondra de la
Frontera con Orquesta Falcon

1. MUNDO ENGANOSO (2:34) (cancion)
2. INVIERNO EN ABRIL (2:48) (bolero)
(Rafael Ramírez)
3. LA PRIETA (2:12) (cancion)
4. NOMAS LO QUE SOY (2:30) (bolero)
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5. LARGA CONDENA (2:50) (cancion)
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14. TRES CARTAS (2:26) (cancion)
15. CANTANDO (2:47) (cancion)
(Mercedes Simone)

Lydia Mendoza – vocals
(& 12 string guitar on many
selections) accompanied by
Orquesta Falcón including
accordion, mariachis, etc.

Original recordings made
by Falcón Records, McAllen,
Texas ca. early 1970s

All selections previously
unreleased

Cover photo from Falcón
Records archives

CD release edited and pro-
duced by Chris Strachwitz

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El Cerrito, CA 94530, USA
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de la
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Recuerdos de **LYDIA MENDOZA**

con su guitarra y Orquesta Falcón

LYDIA MENDOZA, the great, legendary first star of Tejano and vernacular Mexican music began her recording career playing the violin with her family (as Cuarteto Carta Blanca) in a hotel room in San Antonio, Texas in 1928 when she was only 12 years old. In 1934 she became a solo star when she scored her first hit “Mal Hombre” accompanied only by her 12 string guitar. Lydia Mendoza soon became known as “La Alondra de la frontera” (The Meadowlark of the Border) and “La Cancionera de los pobres” (The Songstress of the Poor) as her fame spread via her recordings from the southwest throughout the Spanish speaking Western hemisphere.

On these recordings, which have never been released before, Lydia appears primarily as a singer, accompanied occasionally by her famous 12 string guitar but mostly by various popular ensem-

bles. Lydia does not recall who arranged the music for this date but it was obviously well planned and the musicians, who remain unknown, are all of the highest quality from the very sensitive and excellent accordionist to the violinist in the mariachi. You hear Lydia’s fine, strong and emotional voice delivering a great variety of songs, many of which were not in her usual repertoire. Two of the songs were composed by Rafael Ramírez, brother of Arnaldo Ramírez who was the owner of Falcón Records.

Since suffering a stroke some years ago, Lydia Mendoza has been living in a rest home in San Antonio, Texas, but her mind is as sharp as ever.

Lydia can be contacted in care of her daughter, Yolanda Hernández Mendoza at (210) 433-3447 and I know she enjoys visitors.

Chris Strachwitz – 2005

Excerpts from the book: *Lydia Mendoza – A Family Biography*
Compiled and introduced by Chris Strachwitz and James Nicolopolulos

Lydia Mendoza:

“One Texas label I have recorded for practically from the start is Discos Falcón. My sisters and I have recorded hundreds of songs for Discos Falcón over the years. I recorded a bunch of seventy-eights with them. I believe it was about 1949 or 1950, they called me then to come and record. Then I stopped recording with them for a while, but went back to them again during the 1960s and ’70s. For instance, I made an LP of Christmas songs for Falcón... I did another LP of songs for Mother’s Day.... And just a few years ago they put out a very big line of LPs in Mexico with all of those recordings I made for them back in the early ’50s.”

Arnaldo Ramírez “Mr. Falcón”:

“When I first brought Lydia to

record for Falcón, it wasn’t a question of running into her by accident or anything like that. Lydia Mendoza was pretty well known. I went looking for her, I didn’t just run into her.

I remember when I was a youngster, before I ever thought about making records, the song ‘Mal Hombre’ was heard all over. ‘Mal Hombre’ was the first record she made, and it’s also her biggest hit. Then over the years she has had many other big records, like ‘Celosa’ (‘Jealous’) and some of those others. She was an institution. I mean, I had a lot of respect and admiration for her long before I even thought of getting into the record business. So when I had a chance to touch base with her and approach her on the possibility of recording for my company, for me, it was really something – an opportunity.

And Lydia didn't defraud me; she didn't disappoint us one bit, because the very first release—number ninety-seven, I can't forget that number was a real big hit record.... ['Bsando La Cruz']

And I remember, in Ciudad Juárez, in Mexico, boy! That's where most of the success of that record started, right in that area, in that region... Lydia Mendoza made her first numbers for Falcón on August 17, 1950.

Up through 1962, all her recordings were not on a royalty but on a fixed pay basis. We started paying her \$25.00 per record and then upped it to \$35.00. While this amount appears to be small now, it was a substantial sum then. In 1968 we had an agreement with Lydia to record on a royalty basis with an advance of \$150.00 per LP.

Later on we increased the amount to \$200.00 and \$400.00 for both her recordings and compositions.

Lydia's first recordings were

mostly released on 78s. We later released ten LPs containing 120 songs—plus we made four more LPs that Falcón never released. We also put out one LP with ten songs by Juanita and Maria. [Lydia's sisters]

Most of the songs Lydia recorded for me at Falcón, I gave her. But I was also surprised at the number of songs she had from way back. I mean, she would remember all the words and the melody, everything. Lydia'd know just about any song that you could think of.

She knew all those old songs, but then she was also very fast in learning new songs.

I found that out because I gave her a lot of original material. Lydia was quick; sometimes she would come in and learn the new songs right here in the studio.

Yes, Lydia Mendoza was quite an institution within the recording industry."

Lydia Mendoza:

"Actually, back in the early '50s, there was another record company down in South Texas that was even bigger than Falcón at that time; it was called Ideal [note: Arhoolie CD 392 – 'The First Queen of Tejano Music' for her Ideal recordings]. The recording side of Ideal was run by a man from Alice, Texas, named Armando Marroquín. When Marroquín first came to look for me, I was still recording for Falcón Records. Then I started to make some recordings with Marroquín and Ideal Records. After a while Falcón called me back. Since I didn't have a contract with Marroquín, I resumed recording with Falcón as well – I would go back and forth. I recorded for both of them without a contract.

The difference was that Marroquín put groups—mostly conjuntos—with me. I got to record with Tony de la Rosa, with Narciso Martínez, with all

of those artists. And there with Falcón: just with their orchestra and the guitar, nothing else.

Because of the experiences that I've had with a few of the smaller Texas recording companies, I usually prefer to record for a set price in advance and not worry about royalties.

For instance, back in 1978 I recorded an LP in Corpus for a composer that has a little company down there, Discos Gaviota. His name is Johnny Herrera, and they were all songs of his. It was the same old thing: 'Well, Lydia, I'll give you so much in royalties.' 'No, I don't want to do it that way,' I said, 'just pay me a set price, and that will be the end of it.' Because some of these local companies never report anything to the artista."

Arnaldo Ramírez:

"Throughout the years, Lydia would go and sing and record all over

the place. I guess she was recording for everybody, she was in demand.

And I still have about three LPs of her material, good material I haven't released [some of it appears for the first time on this CD!]. The time has not been right. It's hard to sell records right now [1984]. Three years ago, maybe we could have taken a chance, but right now it's real tough; we've got to be very cautious.

Lydia's music is international. She had this particular sound that nobody else had. As soon as she started hitting on those strings, you knew it was Lydia Mendoza. And there's always these particular songs that would cater to any audience. That's how she was popular in South America, in Colombia.

Actually, Colombia has a lot of similarity in their songs to the Mexican songs, the romantic songs. But anyway, Lydia was an international artist, as far as I'm

concerned. She didn't just appeal to the audience here in Texas, the Southwest. She would say in one of her songs, she says: 'I'm la cancionera de los pobres, cancionera, nada más.' ('The songstress of the poor, I'm just a songstress, that's all.')

Well, heck, she catered to more people than just the poor. I can assure you of that. Her records are sold all over the Spanish-speaking world. All over, seriously, I mean it. When you get to selling something to the Puerto Ricans, you're really going over the fence, you know, because that's a different type of music completely. The feelings are different in their music. But then, all of the Spanish-speaking go to the basics.

Once you get to that common denominator, and Lydia Mendoza had this talent to reach the common denominator, then she would sell to the Puerto Ricans, and sell all over the world."

OTHER RECORDINGS AVAILABLE BY LYDIA MENDOZA:

Arhoolie CD 392: Lydia Mendoza –
First Queen of Tejano Music

(Ideal recordings)

Arhoolie CD 490: Lydia Mendoza –
La Alondra de la Frontera – Live!

(Concert in Berkeley, CA, 1982)

Arhoolie CD 3012: Lydia Mendoza –
La Gloria de Texas (San Antonio, Tx 1979)

Arhoolie CD 7002: Lydia Mendoza –
Mal Hombre (historic first recordings)

Arhoolie CD 7008: Lydia Mendoza –
Vida Mia (more historic first recordings)

Arhoolie CD 430: Las Hermanas
Mendoza – *Juanita y Maria*
(Azteca recordings)

Lydia Mendoza is seen in the classic
Brazos Film VHS/DVD # 104: "Chulas Fronteras" (by Les Blank & Chris Strachwitz) singing several songs in the main film and more in the extra bonus

30 minutes added for the DVD. Filmed in south Texas in the 1970s – a documentary on Texas-Mexican border music. The DVD includes the 60 minute film **Chulas Fronteras**, the 30 minute film **Del Mero Corazon**, plus: 30 minutes of previously unreleased bonus footage featuring Lydia Mendoza, Narciso Martinez, Jose Morante, Los Hermanos Cardenas, and Los Alegres de Teran. \$25.00.

Book: the award winning book by Chris Strachwitz and Prof. James Nicolopoulos: **Lydia Mendoza – A Family Autobiography** (Arte Publico Press – Houston, Tx) deals with the long career of the famed singer and her family of musicians and vaudevillians, includes a complete discography – 409 pages. Hard cover only. \$25.00.

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Lydia Mendoza is the great, legendary first star of Tejano music who began her recording career in 1928 when she was only twelve years old.

These previously unissued selections (recorded in the early 1970s) present her primarily as a singer accompanied by her own 12 string guitar, mariachis, and a fine orchestra which includes a superb accordionist.

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