

1. **VIVA MOJARA** (polka) (DAR)
2. **VIVA MI DESGRACIA** (vals) (DAR)
3. **PATRICIA** (mazurka) (DAR)
4. **A LA VIRGEN DE SAN JUAN** (vals)
(Pedro Ayala)
5. **LA MARCHA ZACATECAS**
(polka/marcha) (DAR)
6. **MEMORIA AL SENATOR
KENNEDY** (vals) (Pedro Ayala)
7. **LA PICONA** (polka) (DAR)
8. **MI PASION** (vals-bajito) (DAR)
9. **LA HIRA** (polka) (Pedro Ayala)
10. **SILENCIO DE LA NOCHE**
(vals) (DAR)
11. **BRINCANDO CERCAS** (huapango)
(Pedro Ayala)
12. **EL ZURCO** (redova) (Pedro Ayala)
13. **SALIDA DE LOS FRANCESES Y
ADIOS MAMA CARLOTA** (marcha)
14. **SALVADOR** (vals)
15. **BAILE EN EL PATIO** (redova)
16. **MORIR POR TU AMOR** (vals)
17. **MARGARITA** (polka)
18. **ROSITA** (vals)
19. **PERLITAS MEXICANAS** (polka)
20. **LAS 3 DE LA MANANA** (vals)
21. **LA TAMALADA** (shottish)

22. **LA PALOMA** (danza) (PD)
23. **JESUSITA EN CHIHUAHUA** (polka) (PD)
24. **SENTIMIENTO** (vals)
25. **EL NARANJAL** (polka) (Pedro Ayala)
26. **AMOR EN LA PLAYA** (vals) (Pedro Ayala)
27. **QUIERO VERTE** (polka)

Pedro Ayala - accordion on all selections:

1-12: recorded September 24, 1968, at Pharaoh Studios for Joe H. Gonzalez and originally issued as El Pato LP 1010: "Viva Mi Desgracia"

13-24: recorded at House of Falcon studios in McAllen, TX, in 1973, produced by Arnaldo Ramirez V. with Hermanos Ayala accompanying Pedro Ayala. Originally issued as Falcon LP 4035: "Adios Mama Carlota" (Polkas y Valses del Tiempo de Juarez).

25-27: recorded in 1948: # 25: with Eugenio Gutierrez - alto sax; Lupe Torres - guitarra; Carlos Gonzales - contrabajo; (original issue: Falcon 78 rpm # 03). #26: original issue: Falcon 78 rpm # 24A. #27: with Torres y Gonzales; (original issue: Falcon 78 rpm # 10).

All masters purchased from Falcon Records in 2000.
Re-issue edited and produced by Chris Strachwitz

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Huapangos
Polkas
Valses
Redovas
Mazurkas
Marchas

**El Monarca
Del Acordeon**



Pedro Ayala

“El Monarca Del Acordeon”

“Style, grace, and elegance” are typical words used to describe royalty. These same words are certainly appropriate to describe the featured artist of this CD. In the Texas Mexican-American world of conjunto music *don* Pedro Ayala was known simply as “El Monarca Del Acordeon,” The Monarch of the Accordion.

Pedro Ayala was born on June 29, 1911, in General Terán, Nuevo León, Mexico, a small town south of the border from McAllen, Texas (the town of General Terán, incidently, also has its name in the annals of *norteño* music as the hometown of the famous duo, Los Alegres de Terán). In 1919, at the age of eight years old, during the chaos of the Mexican Revolution, Pedro and his family came to the United States and took up residence in Donna, Texas, a small farming community located in the lower Rio

Grande Valley. It was here that Pedro Ayala would live until his death on December 1, 1990 – all the while raising a family and making a name for himself in the world of *musica regional*. Along with Narciso Martínez, Santiago Jiménez, Antonio Tanguma, Bruno Villareal, and a few others, he was one of the pioneers of *norteño* and conjunto music.

By the age of six Pedro was already a budding musician, playing alongside his father and other family members on a *tambora* (large drum) that his father made for him. His father, Emilio Ayala, played both accordion and clarinet professionally and was an original member of the famed *orquesta*, “Los Montanesses del Alamo.” Several of Pedro’s siblings also played instruments, including an older sister and an older brother who played violin and accordion, respectively, and a younger

brother who played guitar. In 1928 tragedy struck the Ayala family. Pedro’s older brother, Francisco, who was already gaining fame as an accordionist, and was a featured performer at many of the local dances, was brutally murdered after a dance north of Weslaco, Texas, a small community east of Donna. In the aftermath of this tragedy, Pedro’s mother, Carlota, silenced the Ayala musical tradition, a silence that lasted for two years.

The early thirties found Pedro sustaining himself and assisting his family by working on the family farm. His father had changed careers and was now farming. Farming was difficult work, and it required the participation of the entire family to sustain themselves. They now lived southwest of Donna and, on occasion, a next door neighbor, an elderly lady by the name of María Ramírez, would ask *don* Emilio for assistance in making a trip to town. *Don* Emilio would assign Pedro to this task. In 1931, on one of these trips to Donna, Pedro met his



future wife, Esperanza. Although she was barely ten years old, Pedro already knew that this was the woman he was going to marry and even said so to her and her parents. Four short years later, on February 3, 1935, Pedro Ayala and Esperanza Benitez López married in Saint Joseph's Catholic Church in Donna. They would be married for the next fifty-six years and have a total of ten children, seven who are still alive today, three of which would go on to fame as Los Hermanos Ayala.

Pedro's first instrument of choice was actually the guitar and not the accordion. As he was growing up in the twenties, Pedro frequently played alongside his brother Francisco at many of the local dances. He occasionally dabbled with his brother's accordion and would even play a tune every once in a while at some of these dances, but he preferred to play the guitar, as his brother was already the family accordionist. After his brother's untimely death, Pedro decided to abandon the guitar and pick up the accordion, perhaps

in memory of his brother. By the early to mid-thirties an Ayala was once again heard playing accordion at local dances and social gatherings.

By 1935, after he had married Esperanza, Pedro decided to pursue music as a full-time career. He continued to perform at many of the established dance *patios*, literally outdoor patios made for dancing, and became the featured musician for many functions throughout the Rio Grande Valley. Although he did not record during these early years, his reputation spread by word-of-mouth, and he was highly sought-after for his unique and danceable style. The Ayala music business became a family affair, as both he and his wife were promoting dances (in addition to still doing back-breaking field labor with the rest of the family). Pedro also started tuning and repairing accordions. His first job in 1934 was to tune an accordion for *don* Rafael Elizondo, father of the famous musical ensemble, "Las Rancheritas," an all female mariachi group who later gained notoriety

in the fifties, sixties and seventies.

In 1948 Pedro Ayala made his first recordings for New York-based Discos Mida , then starting their "Series Mexicana." The discs were apparently produced as a precursor for Falcon Records by its founder Arnaldo Ramírez Sr. The six sides really did not do much to enhance Ayala's popularity but impressed Mr. Ramírez enough to allow Pedro to become the house accordionist for the Falcon record label, giving him the opportunity to record with many great artists of the era. Artists such as Luís Pérez Meza, Dagoberto Rodríguez, Luís Aguilar, Juanita García, Las Hermanas Gongora and many, many others were supported by Pedro Ayala's wonderful accordion sound.

In 1949 Pedro Ayala recorded, "El Naranjal" (#25 on this CD), an instrumental polka that set the stage for immediate and widespread exposure. Arnaldo Ramírez named this composition in recognition of the devastating freeze of 1948-49, in which over seventy-five percent of the citrus crop was lost. Thus

began an extensive recording career that would span four decades. Through the years Pedro Ayala recorded with many of the prominent labels including Falcon, Ideal, Bego, R y N, and others. His style remained relatively unchanged through the years and he never ventured far from the traditional melodies that he had grown up with. He was one of the few musicians who continued to use the saxophone in his recordings as well as in his live performances. He also maintained the traditional six-string guitar as opposed to the ubiquitous bajo sexto that had become the preferred instrument of other musicians.

In the summer of 1951 Pedro Ayala joined forces with one of conjunto music's legendary guitarists, Lorenzo Caballero. For the next five years they set the stage on fire, touring throughout the State of Texas, appearing on radio show after radio show from the Rio Grande Valley to North Texas, as well as appearing on several television shows. By the late fifties, his three sons, Pedro Jr., Ramón and



Emilio were already joining their father on tour, including his first outside of Texas to Pauliere, California. This was the first of many tours that would take Pedro Ayala and his family across the entire United States.

Conjunto musicians of that day (as well as of today), would help each other, and Pedro was no different. When two young men from his home town needed an accordion to record their first record, Pedro Ayala provided the instrument. The duo went by the name of Abrego y Ortiz, and later went on to fame as Los Alegres de Terán. Through the years, many young people visited Pedro Ayala with hopes of learning how to play the button accordion. Of them, some, like Rubén Vela, Gilberto Pérez, and Mario Montes, would go on to greater fame. Others, including numerous nieces and nephews, while not becoming stars, still shared in the talents of one of the genre's most liked and respected musicians.

Pedro Ayala continued to tour throughout the United States,

accompanied by his sons or performing solo. In the latter part of his life Pedro Ayala received many of the well-deserved accolades that only a lifetime of dedication can bring. Inducted into the Tejano Conjunto Hall of Fame in 1982, he continued to perform at the annual Tejano Conjunto Festival in San Antonio, Texas for the next nine years. His last performance there was seven months before he passed away. Three trips to Washington, D. C., at the invitation of the Smithsonian Institution brought Pedro Ayala and conjunto music in general the proper recognition and respect from mainstream society that was previously lacking. In 1988 the National Endowment for the Arts bestowed a National Heritage Fellowship Award

upon Pedro Ayala, honoring him for his lifelong dedication to Texas-Mexican Conjunto Music and for his contribution to the American Musical landscape in general. While he appeared in many folk festivals across the nation and was included on several compilation recordings honoring the American folk music tradition, it was always his love of playing for his own community that he most cherished. Because of this dedication to his people and their music he will be admired and respected for years to come and will be fondly remembered solely as, "El Monarca Del Acordeon."

— David Champion, Jr.
Rio Grande Valley, Texas
January 2001

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PEDRO AYALA – El Monarca Del Acordeon

27 Instrumentals by the Monarch of the Accordion

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- 2. VIVA MI DESGRACIA** (vals)
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Pedro Ayala - accordion instrumentals
with various accompaniments.

Pedro Ayala, along with Narciso Martínez, Santiago Jiménez, Antonio Tanguma, Bruno Villareal and others, was one of the major pioneers of Norteño and Conjunto music. This CD contains 2 complete albums from the 60s and 70s, plus 3 original 78 RPM sides from 1948.

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