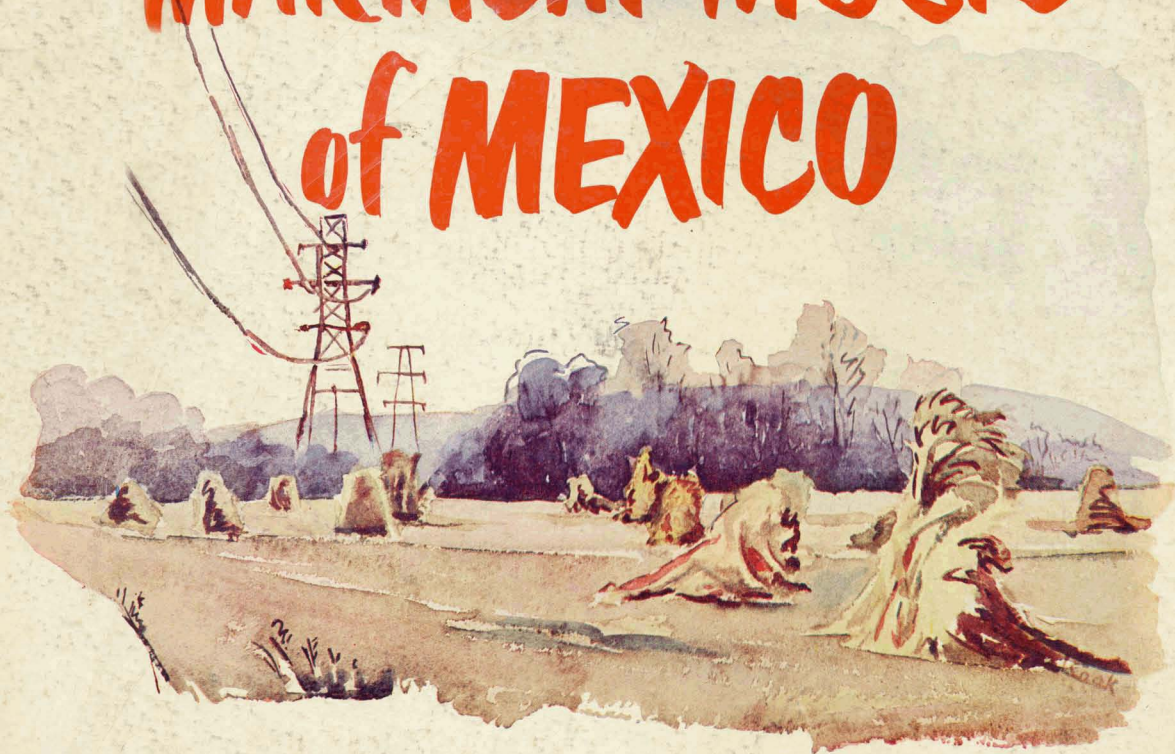




Road Recordings

long play 5014

MARIACHI MUSIC of MEXICO



Bands from:

Monterrey

Eronguricuaro

Apatzingan, and

Mariachi Square, in Mexico City

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Somewhere between the Thieves' Market and Aquiles Serdan in Mexico City is a small park known as MARIACHI SQUARE. Just off the main street and without benefit of signs, publicity or promotion, this is where the well-informed visitor goes on a Friday or Saturday night when he feels the urge for mariachi music. And from this obscure metropolitan focus on out into the trackless extremities of Mexico the mariachis play, play, and play, for this is music the Mexicans make not for the tourists, but for themselves. Wherever you go in all Mexico, there will always be a whistling, stamping, high-spirited mariachi band within walking distance.

MARIACHI, possibly from the French mariage, labels that special brand of music and instrumentation used for festive birthday and marriage celebrations. Some have called it Mexican "hillbilly", but in a broad sense it is folk music for it is mestizo, its Spanish roots re-created in new native forms from one to three centuries ago by the fusion of Indian and Spanish races which now makes up the majority of Mexican people. The small popular orchestras originally consisted of two violins, one viuela (a small 5-stringed guitar), one 6-string guitar, and a guitarron (literally a big guitar: a 5-string, deep-bodied guitar played by plucking like a harp). More recently, one or two trumpets have been added to the group for special contrapuntal effects and "to make more noise".

Almost every bandsman is an expert whistler, and his whistling has a highly practical function. Bands on the prowl in the Square will play for a few pesos. If pickings are lean the members spread out in their search for prospects. Once a patron is located, the band assembles from nowhere in the space of an upbeat, collected by a private code of whistles. From then on, whistles become a part of the music itself and a means for attracting more customers. The "Come-On" sequence (Side B, band 3) complete with whistles, calls, insults and jokes is typical.

A side -- (collected by Sam Eskin, December, 1954)

The three groups on this side might almost outline genus mariachi. The first four selections, recorded in Monterrey illustrate the more "polished", full-blown type performance born of fierce big-city competition between bands. (Malaguena makes an interesting comparison with the same number on Trio Leones #1080.)

Following this, a band from APATZINGAN -- a small town at the end of a gravel road deep in western Michoacán, ---this, a more primitive form, low in precision, high in spirits and cerveza.

The last two selections were recorded in ERONGARICUARO which isn't on the tourist map at all. In Central Mexico, located on the west shore of Lake Patzcuaro 36 miles southwest of Morelia, mariachi thrives with a virulence and practiced drive which rivals the best to be found in the more accessible centers of Mexico.



In Patzcuaro, Sam Eskin and Roberto have a chat.



Lago de Patzcuaro-60 mi S.W. is Apatzingan.



Somewhere out there lies Erongaricuaró, mariachi.

B side -- (collected in Mexico City by Eskin & Cook, February, 1954)
Basilio Garcia & band

1) LAS ALAZANAS (The red-brown horses)

A true zapateado, without singing. Fast, complicated rhythms appropriate for only the best pairs of dancers who want to really "show their stuff".

2) BAJO EL CIELO DE JALISCO (Under Jalisco Sky)

A lively polka, music obviously of European origin though probably composed in Mexico.

3) The "COME-ON"

Spontaneous recording of the calls, whistles, shouted insults and jokes with which the tourist or visitor is enticed into engaging the band.

4) EL CARRETERO (The Cart Driver)

One of the best of the traditional sones which goes back probably two centuries. The humorous words tell of a cart driver who wants to start his journey toward various towns (a different one is named in each verse), but each time he is stymied by lack of something important: a mule, a wheel of his cart, the reins, etc.

5) LA MADRUGADA (The Wee Hours After Midnite)

"In the early morning, when my love for you began to flower, I remembered your midnight kiss and the other one you gave me before dawn. . ."

6) LA NEGRA (The Dark-Skinned Girl)

Another traditional son with words that are amorous in character.

7) EL GUSTO

Gusto is practically untranslatable. It means pleasure and excitement and desire to share these emotions with others, all rolled into one. The words of this son jalisco refer to the excitement and good feeling generated during the course of a marriage or birthday party, with gusto of such proportions that even the dead revive to partake of the fiesta atmosphere.

El Gusto fades out into a short sequence taken on the move and at night from an automobile circling "Mariachi Square". At best, this is a difficult matter; on the prowl for pesos, the mariachi scrutinize closely every strange car in the square, soon become aware of anything as unusual as tape equipment operating within. Word spreads rapidly, and you are then confronted with the alternatives of paying all the bands in the square (they magically double in size), having your car overturned, or departing the area. We departed.

Acknowledgement is made for the valuable assistance of Jose Hellmer, folklorist of the Bellas Artes in Mexico City.

IMPORTANT

Do not order Road Recordings until you have read carefully the catalog descriptions. Descriptions are made as complete as possible in order to warn away those who would not be interested. . . Since WE CAN NOT ACCEPT RECORDS IN RETURN or for exchange in this "Limited Edition" series.

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