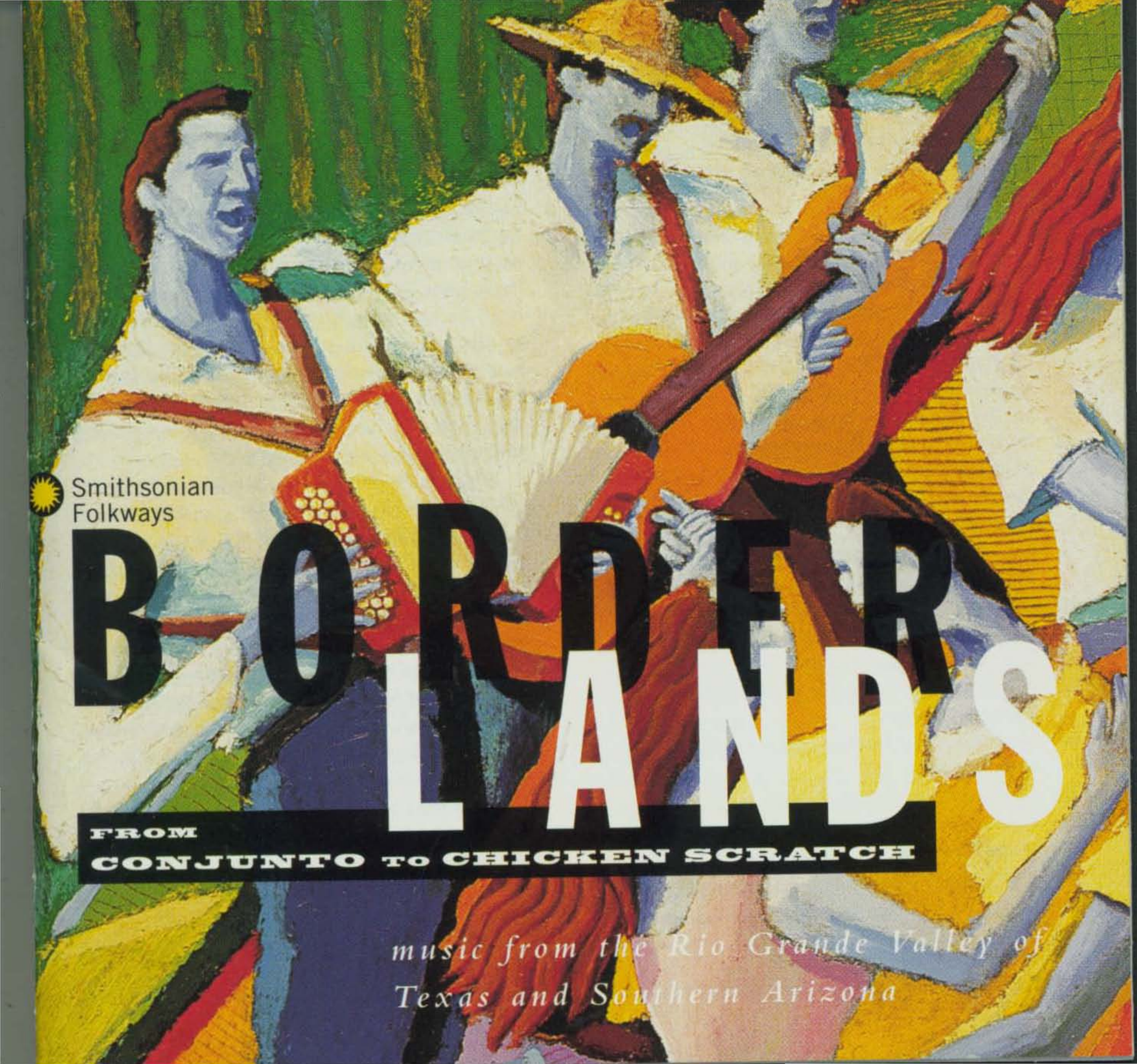
Smithsonian
Folkways
BORDER
LANDS
FROM
CONJUNTO TO CHICKEN SCRATCH
music from the Rio Grande Valley of
Texas and Southern Arizona

SMITHSONIAN/FOLKWAYS SF CD40418

BORDERLANDS FROM CONJUNTO TO CHICKEN SCRATCH

music of the Rio Grande Valley of Texas and Southern Arizona

Texas (Rio Grande Valley)

1. La Cuquita *Narciso Martínez* 3:03
2. Gregorio Cortez *Jesus Maya y Timoteo Cantu* 2:56
3. Aunque Me Odies *Lydia Mendoza* 2:41
4. Un Rato No Más *Beto Villa y su Orquesta with Carmen y Laura* 2:29
5. Un Adobe y Cuatro Velas *Los Donneños* 2:33
6. Mi Unico Camino *El Conjunto Bernal* 3:09
7. Angel de Mis Anhelos *Rubén Vela y su Conjunto* 3:55
8. Corrido de Gerardo Gonzáles *Ramón Ayala y los Bravos del Norte* 2:32
9. El Saino de Donna, Texas *Los Invasores de Nuevo Leon* 3:02
10. Dados Cargados *Los Cachorros de Juan Villarreal* 3:08
11. Caso Perdido *Los Dos Gilbertos with Beatriz Llamas* 2:53
12. La Calle Flores *Oscar Hernández* 3:05
13. Quedate *Roberto Pulido y los Clásicos* 3:40

Southern Arizona

14. San Javielpo Chu'kuy Kawi *Francisco Molina and Marcelino Valencia* 4:02
15. Ali Oidak Polka *Gu-Achi Fiddlers* 3:17
16. Old Man Rooster *The Molinas* 2:22
17. Madre Mia Chote *Southern Scratch* 3:20
18. Uwaldina y Juan Gonzales *El Conjunto Murrietta* 3:36

Produced by Texas Folklife Resources as a companion recording for the "United States-Mexico Borderlands" program presented at the 1993 Festival of American Folklife, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

This collection of recordings documents the music and culture of Mexican-American communities in the Texas-Mexico border region (lower Rio Grande valley) and of the Tohono O'odham Nation and Yaqui Indians who live in southern Arizona. Traditional and contemporary recordings are included, reflecting the rich cultural diversity of life on the Border. The compilation features both instrumental music and song, including *conjunto* and *norteño* traditions in Texas and *waila* and *pascola* dance music in southern Arizona–distinct forms found in these borderlands between the United States and Mexico.

Smithsonian Folkways
Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings
Center for Folklife Programs and Cultural Studies
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Introduction by Cathy Ragland

As folklorists, anthropologists, and historians have told us, the United States-Mexico border region is much more than the dividing line that separates two countries. It has been a life source for some and a cultural barrier for others. With the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in the mid-nineteenth century, families and friends in the lower Rio Grande Valley were suddenly separated by the same river that had been a source of survival for them. The region, which runs along the river as far west as the two Laredos, has evolved amid the friction between two political systems and created an independent society that has undergone a history of cultural and economic hardships.

Similarly, the Tohono O'odham Nation–formerly called the Papago Indians–have lived for centuries in the Arizona-Mexico border region and have constructed a society that has absorbed the impact of both Mexican and United States domination. Their neighbors, the Yaqui Indians, left behind their richly cultivated Sonoran farmland and crossed the Mexican border into Arizona as political refugees to escape extermination at the turn of the century. Preserving Yaqui customs and traditions has been vital to the communities, and they too have struggled to maintain a distinct identity in a changing environment.

The songs on this compilation were selected from recordings made by musicians who have lived and performed in the Rio Grande Valley and southern Arizona border region. Both the music and the musicians who recorded it are connected to the communities whose daily lives are constructed from a dynamic blending of religions, social systems, histories, identities, and politics. Influences from the politically dominant Anglo-American culture are often quickly absorbed, yet there continues to be a constant connection and reconnection with the traditions of these communities.

In many ways, the music on this recording reflects decades of conflict, change, the maintenance of identity, and the negotiation of a culture specific to the evolution of life on the border, as outlined by Américo Paredes in his essay on "Conflict and Identity on the Lower Rio Grande Border." The songs are arranged chronologically and display various musical styles from *conjunto* to *norteño* to *orquesta Tejana*. By arranging the songs in this way we hope to give the listener a sense of the development of these styles as well as an indication of the variety of music which can be found on the Texas and Arizona border.

In the Rio Grande Valley, the *corrido* (narrative ballad) made heroes of individuals and communities that withstood a history of domination, economic frustration, and misrepresentation. Today, the song form still survives–almost exclusively among *norteño* groups–though it also focuses on topical events specific to the Mexican migratory experience. Through the years, the *corrido* has come to characterize border society and the importance of individuals who fought for their rights as citizens. Similarly, in the same way that the *corrido* memorializes local heroes, other musical and stylistic developments become associated with those musicians and songwriters who have made lasting contributions. The history and development of music in the Rio Grande Valley is traced through pioneering musicians recognized within the border communities and throughout Texas and Mexico. In his essay on "The Texas-Mexican *Conjunto*," Manuel Peña links individual stylistic innovations, which contributed to the evolution of *conjunto* music in the Rio Grande Valley, to the strengthening of Mexican-American identity in Texas.

No single musician is a better example of the importance of individual contribution than Narciso Martínez, popularly referred to as "the father of *conjunto* music." Martínez is credited with the development of a right hand-dominated playing style on the accordion, along with innovations on the accompanying *bajo sexto* by his partner Santiago Almeida. It was the pairing of these tow instruments as well as the musical relationship established by Martínez and Almeida in the 1930s that set the foundation for Texas-Mexican *conjunto*.

Although this compilation contains *conjunto* selections from many of the music's most notable contributors, some important names may seem to be missing. Since this recording focuses on the music's roots in border culture, however, familiar San Antonio-based musicians such as Steve Jordan, Mingo Saldivar, and brothers Flaco and Santiago Jimenez have not been included. While the musicians who do appear on this recording may not be as familiar to audiences outside of South Texas, many are considered pioneers of *conjunto* music as well as related styles now performed by Texas-Mexicans.

The song selections for this region were made while bearing in mind the importance of individual contributions and musical innovation on the Rio Grande border. Again, it is important to note that the

musicians chosen from this area have lived and performed for most of their lives in the region. Each of these artists–from accordionist Narciso Martínez to composer/singer Lydia Mendoza to Mexican-American big band leader Beto Villa to *norteño* accordionist Ramón Ayala to *orquesta Tejana* band leader Roberto Pulido–are well-respected for their contributions to the music of the border. In many cases, especially with *El Conjunto Bernal*, Ramón Ayala, and Roberto Pulido, new musical sub-styles and sub-genres have since evolved from their contributions.

The endurance and popularity of the music in this region can be largely attributed to the local independent music industry. After World War II, when major labels had abandoned interest in Spanish-language music in the Valley in favor of the "real thing" from Mexico, local entrepreneurs Armando Marroquin and Paco Betancourt launched one of the first Mexican-American labels, IDEAL Records, in 1946. The popularity of the label's first recordings by artists such as Narciso Martínez, Lydia Mendoza, Beto Villa, Carmen y Laura, Tony de la Rosa, and others inspired scores of small labels like Falcón, Globe, Corona, El Zarápe, and Bego (co-operated by Paulino Bernal of *El Conjunto Bernal*) to become established in the region. These pioneering labels are no longer in operation.

This compilation is made up of songs from independent labels that are active in the region today, along with classic selections from the original IDEAL Records catalog, which is now part of the independently-owned Arhoolie Records in El Cerrito, California. On its own, Arhoolie Records, under the guidance of owner/producer/field recorder Chris Strachwitz, has almost single-handedly introduced Texas-Mexican *conjunto* and other music traditions from the Southwest United States to the rest of the world through its releases of traditional and contemporary recordings during the 1970s and 1980s.

Other, more recent selections were taken from the vast catalogs of three of the largest independent Texas-Mexican record companies and studios now recording and developing artists in south Texas: Joey Records in San Antonio, and Freddie Records and Hacienda Records, both in Corpus Christi. Joey Records, which also runs its own production plant, was established in 1966 by *conjunto* musician Joey López. Freddie Records was also created by a musician, *orquesta Tejana* band leader Freddie Martínez, in 1968. The formation of these labels came at a time when local musicians began to take more active roles in the recording and distribution of their music in the region. Both labels have developed extensive catalogs featuring hundreds of recordings by *conjunto* and *norteño* musicians from both sides of the border. Hacienda Records was founded by Roland and Rick Garcia, two entrepreneurial brothers, in 1978. It is focused on Texas-based *conjunto* musicians and has recently managed to break into the European market. In keeping with a long-standing south Texas tradition, all labels can be found in local stores specializing in Mexican-American music as well as in community-based outdoor flea markets located around the state.

Among the Tohono O'odham Nation and the Yaqui Indian communities situated in Southern Arizona, a richly varied musical tradition is at the core of community celebrations and ceremonial life. James S. Griffith begins his essay on "Native American Music from Southern Arizona" by establishing the fact that though Mexican and North American influences (European in older styles) are very much a part of music and other forms of expressive culture in the region, each group has faithfully preserved its Native American roots. With music playing a sacred role in tribal ceremonies and a functional role in celebrations, recordings of traditional Tohono O'odham music have been limited to field recordings made by folklorists and anthropologists until the early 1950s. Yaqui *pascola* music and Tohono O'odham *waila* music are associated with ritual dance customs still practiced today.

Most Tohono O'odham songs are passed down without titles or authors, though they are widely recognized within the communities. In that sense the songs –like the music tradition itself–belong to the community as a whole. There was no commercial recording activity in the region in the early part of the century which might have inspired a small local industry as in the Rio Grande Valley. However, small studios and labels have appeared recently in response to the popularity of a more contemporary form of traditional Tohono O'odham *waila* music now referred to as "chicken scratch." This compilation includes a popular recording by the group Southern Scratch. *"Madre Mia Chote"* is based on an old Mexican song melody, played in the German-influenced schottische dance rhythm which is the basis of the chicken scratch style. In fact, the word *chote* means schottische in the local language. In addition to maintaining its roots in the Tohono O'odham fiddle music, as heard on the track by the Gu-Achi Fiddlers, this primarily instrumental music form also fuses elements of Texas-Mexican *conjunto*, *norteño*, and rock. It is performed at feast days, baptisms, weddings, birthdays, and graduations as well as in local clubs and cantinas.

All of the southern Arizona selections on this recording were obtained from the Phoenix-based Canyon Records Productions. The label was established in 1951 by founder Ray Boley and was the first recording studio in the city. Outside of the Library of Congress and Folkways, Canyon was the only company to record, produce, and distribute Native American music in the United States on a large scale. The fiddling traditions of the Tohono O'odham and Yaqui Indians in southern Arizona are featured in the company's catalog along with recordings from other Native American groups around the state. The label is known for its impressive catalog of chicken scratch recordings, which has helped further the popularity of the music and encouraged independent recording activity within the Tohono O'odham community itself.

Conflict and Identity on the Lower Rio Grande Border by Américo Paredes

Conflict–cultural, economic, and physical–has been a way of life along the border between Mexico and the United States, and it is in the so-called Nueces-Rio Grande strip where its patterns were first established. Problems of identity also are common to border dwellers, and these problems were first confronted by people of Mexican cultures as a result of the Texas

Revolution. For these reasons, the Lower Rio Grande area also can claim to be the source of the more typical elements of what we call the culture of the Border.

If we view the border not simply as a line on a map but, more fundamentally, as a sensitized area where two cultures or two political systems come face to face, then the first border between English-speaking people from the United States and people of Mexican culture was in the eastern part of what is now the state of Texas. And this border developed even before such political entities as the Republic of Mexico and the Republic of Texas came into being. This area–presently Tamaulipas and the southern part of Texas–was originally the province of Nuevo Santander. Nuevo Santander differed from the other three northernmost provinces of New Spain–New Mexico, Texas and California–in an important way: it was the least isolated of the frontier provinces. Great expanses of territory separated the settlements in New Mexico and California from the concentrations of Mexican population to the South. The same was true of the colony of Texas until 1749.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo settled the conflict over territory between Mexico and the United States, officially at least. It also created a Mexican-American minority in the United States, as has often been noted. But it did not immediately create a border situation all along the international line. The *Nuevomejicano* in Santa Fe, the *Californio* in Los Angeles, and the *Tejano* in San Antonio were swallowed whole into the North American political body. The new border–an imaginary and ill-defined line–was many miles to the south of them, in the uninhabited areas that already had separated them from the rest of Mexico before the war with the United States. The immediate change in customs demanded of *Tejanos*, *Californios*, and *Nuevomejicanos* was from regional subcultures of Mexico to occupied territories within the United States.

Such was not the case with the people of the Lower Rio Grande. A very well defined geographic feature–the Rio Grande itself–became the international line. The river, once a focus of regional life, became a symbol of separation. When the Rio Grande became a border, friends and relatives who had been near neighbors now were legally in different countries. If they wanted to visit each other, the law required they travel many miles up or down stream, to the nearest official crossing place, instead of swimming or boating directly across as they used to do. When they went visiting, they crossed at the most convenient spot on the river; and, as is ancient custom when one goes visiting loved ones, they took gifts with them: farm products from Mexico to Texas, textiles and other manufactured goods from Texas to Mexico. Legally, of course, this was smuggling, differing from contraband for profit in volume only. Such a pattern is familiar to anyone who knows the Border, for it still operates, not only along the Lower Rio Grande now but all along the boundary line between Mexico and the United States.

There was generally favorable disposition toward the individual who disregarded customs and immigration laws, especially the laws of the United States. The professional smuggler was not a figure of reproach, whether he was engaged in smuggling American woven goods into Mexico or Mexican tequila into Texas. In folklore there was a tendency to idealize the smuggler, especially the *tequilero*, as a variant of the hero of cultural conflict. The smuggler, the illegal alien looking for work, and the border-conflict hero became identified with each other in the popular mind. They came into conflict with the same American laws.

Border conflict, a cultural clash between Mexican and American, gave rise to the Texas-Mexican *corrido* in the 18th century. As the *corrido* (topical narrative folk song) emerged, it had assimilated the older romance originally from Spain. Novelesque romances became *corridos* adapted to local conditions. One presumes the existence of some remnants of heroic romances in the echoes found in the language of the *corrido*. The first hero of the *corrido* is Juan Nepomuceno Cortina, who is celebrated in the 1859 *corrido* precisely because he helps a fellow Mexican. Other major *corrido* heroes are Gregorio Cortez (1901), who kills two Texas sheriffs after one of them shoots his brother; Jacinto Treviño (1911), who kills several Americans to avenge his brother's death, and Rito García (1885), who shoots several officers who invade his home without a warrant. Still sung today is *"El Corrido de Mariano Reséndez,"* about a prominent smuggler of textiles into Mexico, circa 1900. Reséndez and his activities were so highly respected that he was known as "*El Contrabandista.*" The *tequilero* and his activities, however, took on an intercultural dimension; and they became a kind of coda to the *corridos* of border conflict.

It was a peculiar set of conditions, prevailing for a century, that produced the lower border *corrido*, an international phenomenon straddling the boundary between Mexico and the United States and partaking of influences from both cultures. Though the *corrido* owes a great deal to the romance and Mexican balladry, the English-speaking culture also had its influence on border balladry. The Anglo-American served first of all as a reacting agent, but the border Mexican's attitudes about the Anglo-American and his customs become part of border culture as well. The American folklorist, particularly the folklorist of Texas, finds the balladry of the lower Border as much his province as that of the Mexican ballad student. Transcending national boundaries, the border heroic *corrido* belongs to Texas as much as to Mexico. A product of past conflicts, it may eventually serve as one of the factors in a better understanding.

The Texas-Mexican *Conjunto* by Manuel Peña

Historically, the accordion-based folk ensemble known as *conjunto* emerged as a powerful musical tradition among working-class Texas-Mexicans. Beginning sometime in the 1860s or 1870s, the recently introduced diatonic button accordion was appropriated by rural *norteños*, *Tejanos* specifically, among whom it acquired a strong regional identity by the turn of the twentieth century. Combined with a unique Mexican instrument known as a *bajo sexto* (12-string bass-rhythm guitar), and sometimes with a native folk drum called *tambora de rancho* ("ranch drum"), the accordion had established itself as the preferred instrument for working-class celebrations among *norteños* and *Tejanos* by the 1890s.

Most of the *conjunto* repertory utilized was of European extraction and included the polka, mazurka, schottishe, waltz, and redowa. One regional genre from

Tamaulipas, Mexico, the *huapango*, rounded out the usual repertory of *conjuntos* until World War II. Beginning in the 1920s, companies such as RCA Victor (Bluebird), Decca, Brunswick, and Columbia (Okeh) entered the musical scene in the Hispanic Southwest in the hope of repeating the success they had experienced with African-American music since the early 1920s. Under the impetus of the big labels, which encouraged commercial activity in the form of record and phonograph sales, radio programming and, especially, increased public dances (many in *cantinas* or bars), musicians were encouraged to experiment. By the end of the 1930s, the *conjunto* had begun to assume the stylistic features that would characterize the ensemble during its maturity in the post-World War II years.

The most important change came in the 1930s when accordionist Narciso Martínez, who was living in the Texas border town of San Benito, began his recording career. Martínez had abandoned the old Germanic technique by virtually avoiding the bass-chord buttons on his two-row accordion. Instead, he concentrated on the right-hand, melody buttons. The sound was instantly recognizable as different: a brighter, snappier, and cleaner tone. Martínez left bassing and accompaniment to his partner, *bajo sexto* player Santiago Almeida, who took the opportunity to display the distinct tonalities of that instrument. The *bajo sexto* was not new to the accordion ensemble, but in the past it had to compete with the bass-chord elements on the accordion itself.

Martínez's new style became the hallmark of the surging *conjunto*, just as Almeida's brisk execution on the *bajo sexto* created the standard for future *bajistas.* Together, the two had given birth to the modern *conjunto*, a musical style that in its cultural reach would challenge even the formidable *mariachi* for breadth and depth of public acceptance. Indeed, by the 1970s, it could be said that the *conjunto* was the most powerful symbol of working-class culture, outdistancing even the *mariachi* as the emblem for a working-class musical aesthetic. Martínez, however, remained an absolutely modest folk musician until his death at 80 in June 1992

Meanwhile, the years following World War II witnessed the rise to prominence of younger musicians–*la nueva generación* (the new generation), as Martínez himself called the new crop of accordionists. In 1949, accordionist Valerio Longoria, who was inspired by Martínez, was the first to introduce vocals into the ensemble, which prior to World War II had restricted itself almost exclusively to the instrumental form. After Longoria's move, most of the older genres–redowa, schottishe, etc.–were abandoned, and the polka rhythm and the lyric song, in the form of the *cancion ranchera* (either in *vals* or polka time), became the staple of the modern *conjunto*.

Several highly innovative performers followed Longoria. Among them, most notably is Tony de la Rosa, who better than anyone else established the most ideal *conjunto* sound in the mid-1950s, in the form of a slowed-down polka style, delivered in a highly staccato technique that was the natural end-point to the snappy technique established by Martínez. *Los Relámpagos del Norte,* a group from the Mexican border town of Reynosa, made significant contributions in the 1960s, synthesizing the modern *conjunto* from Texas with the older Mexican *norteño* style to create a sound that carried the tradition to new heights in popularity, both in Mexico and the United States. When the leaders of *Los Relámpagos,* Cornelio Reyna and Ramón Ayala, went their separate ways, the latter formed another group, *Los Bravos del Norte,* and that group went on to make significant contributions in the 1970s that have since kept the *norteño* tradition at its peak.

But perhaps the label of "greatness" belongs to a *conjunto* that had its origins in Kingsville, Texas in 1954–*El Conjunto Bernal*. Led by accordionist Paulino Bernal and his brother Eloy on *bajo sexto*, *El Conjunto Bernal* are responsible for bringing the *conjunto* style to new heights, as the mastery of each of the brothers as an instrumentalist allowed them to probe the very limits of the *conjunto* style. *El Conjunto Bernal*'s experiments paved the way for more sophisticated developments of the tradition. Since the 1960s, despite *conjunto's* relative conservatism, the tradition has in fact expanded far beyond its original confines along the Texas-Mexico border. In the last thirty years, the music has taken root in such far-flung places as Washington, California and the Midwest, as well as in the Mexican border states and as far south as Michoacán and Sinaloa. As it spreads its base in the United States, *Tejano conjunto* and *norteño* music styles continue to articulate a Mexicanized, working-class ethos, thus helping to preserve Mexican culture wherever it has taken root on American soil.

Notes on the Selections

Texas (Rio Grande Valley)

1 La Cuquita (polka) 1946 *Narciso Martínez*
Accordionist Narciso Martínez was born in the Mexican border town of Reynosa and was brought to San Benito, Texas by his parents when he was one year old. He made his first recording in 1935 with *bajo sexto* (12-string bass-rhythm guitar from Mexico) player Santiago Almeida. Now deceased, Martínez lived his whole life in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas and is recognized as "the father of *conjunto*." This polka was one of the first releases in 1946 for IDEAL Records. Like many other accordionists of his time, Martínez's compositions were inspired by popular European dance rhythms imported into the region such as the polka, *vals* (waltz), mazurka, and schottische. This polka is an exceptional demonstration of Martínez's right-hand-dominated, briskly articulated playing style. Almeida's occasional counter-melodic breaks on the *bajo sexto* enhanced that instrument's role in the ensemble. The duo's move away from the traditional "European" polka to a more distinctive Mexican-American style is also evident in this recording.

2 Gregorio Cortez *(corrido)* 1949
Jesus Maya y Timoteo Cantu
Many early *corridos* (topical narrative ballads) were performed and recorded in the Rio Grande Valley by vocal duo groups, especially during the 1920s and 1930s. Very often these musicians accompanied themselves with a *guitarra sexta* (six-string guitar) or *bajo*

sexto. By 1949, when this recording of the classic "Gregorio Cortez" border *corrido* was made, it had been shortened to accommodate the juke box. The slightly pinched, quavering *dueto* vocal style of Jesus Maya and Timoteo Cantu enjoyed its height of popularity in the 1920s and early 1930s. The male *dueto* was usually accompanied by the traditional *corrido* strum (one-two-three) played on a guitar. This recording also features accordionist Narciso Martínez, whose popularity in the Valley was so great that he appeared on many IDEAL recordings. This version of "Gregorio Cortez," whose well-documented conflict with Texas lawmen in 1901 is the focus, is adapted from one of the oldest variants of this *corrido* still in existence today.

En el condado de El Carmen/ miren lo que ha sucecido;/ murió el Chirife Mayor,/ quedando Román herido.

Otro día por la mañana,/ cuando la gente llegó,/ unos a los otros dicen/ no saben quien lo mató.

Se anduvieron informando,/ como tres horas después,/ supieron que el malhechor/ era Gregorio Cortez.

Insortaron a Cortez/ por toditito el estado,/ vivo o muerto que se aprehenda/ porque a varios ha matado.

Decía Gregorio Cortez,/ con su pistola en la mano,/ no siento haberlo matado,/ al que siento es a mi hermano.

Decía Gregorio Cortez/ con su alma muy encendida/ no siento haberlo matado,/ la defensa es permitida.

Decían los americanos,/ si lo vemos qué la haremos./ si le entramos por derecho/ muy poquitos volveremos.

Gregorio le dice a Juan,/ muy pronto lo vas a ver,/ anda háblale a los chirifes,/ que me vengan a aprehender.

Cuando llegan los chirifes,/ Gregorio se presentó,/ por la buena sí me llevan/ porque de otro modo no.
Y agarraron a Cortez,/ ya terminó la cuestión,/ la pobre de su familia/ la lleva en el corazón.

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

The following morning/ when 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 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 by 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.

3 Aunque Me Odies (*bolero*) 1954 *Lydia Mendoza*
Lydia Mendoza is quite possibly the best known female singer in the history of Mexican-American music. She started her singing career in the Rio Grande Valley at a very young age, performing with her traveling musical family, *Cuarteto Carta Blanca*. In the early 1930s she began her solo career, accompanying herself on guitar and performing passionate love songs (*canciones*) throughout Texas, California, and Mexico. Responding to the popularity of the Cuban *bolero* among American and Latino big bands, Mendoza's rendition of *"Aunque Me Odies"* ("Even If You Hate Me") is exceptionally rich. Her robust, but well-tempered voice–which has some connection to the dramatic Italian *bel canto* singing style that influenced Mexican singers during the mid-nineteenth century–explores a full range of expressions. On this recording Mendoza is accompanied by accordionist Tony de la Rosa, whose smooth, refined style made him the most popular player from the Rio Grande Valley to follow Narciso Martínez.

Quiero mirarme en esos ojos/ que me desprecian/ quero besar tus labios rojos/ que me maldicen.

Quiero sentir el palpitar/ cuando suspiras/ y así decirte que aunque me odies/ seré tu amor.

Entre tus ojos miro el desprecio/ que tú me guardas/entre tus labios hallo el veneno/ que me has de dar.

Déjame verme en esos ojos/aunque me hieran/ déjame verte, aunque me muera/ después de amar.

I want to see myself in your eyes/ that despise me so much,/ I want to kiss those lips of yours/ that speak evil of me.

I want to hear your heartbeat/ when you sigh/ and to tell you that although you hate me/ I will always be your love.

I see the disdain in your eyes/ that you reserve for me;/ in your lips I find the poison/ that you have to give me.

Let me look into your eyes,/ although you wound me;/ let me look at you, although I die/ after loving you.

4 Un Rato No Más (*bolero-mambo*) 1950
Beto Villa Orquesta with Carmen y Laura
Alberto Villa, from the small town of Falfurias in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, was one of the best known Mexican-American big band orchestra leaders in the United States, touring throughout the Southwest, California, Florida, Illinois, and Kansas. Villa's band is distinguished for merging elements of Mexican and *Tejano* influences–*orquesta típica*, the accordion, *huapangos*, polkas–with American big band and Latino rhythms popular in his day. Contemporary *Tejano* groups featuring brass instruments, such as *Little Joe y la Familia, Isidro López y su Orquesta* and *Roberto Pulido y los Clásicos*, owe much of their stylistic influences and popularity to the legacy Villa and his orchestra created in the Rio Grande Valley. In

this 1950 recording, *"Un Rato No Más"* ("Only A Moment"), Villa's orchestra accompanies the singing sister duo of Carmen and Laura Hernandez. Female duos in Texas-Mexican music were popular in the late 1930s and well into the 1940s. The crisp, polished style featuring a lead soprano voice resembled American sister duos widely popular at that time. Their style contrasts the nazalized folk style of Mexican-American male *duetos* and the more emotional delivery of solo female singers such as Lydia Mendoza. Carmen y Laura were celebrated for their close, resonant harmonies and sophisticated charm.

Presiento entre tu vida y mi vida/ hay algo que no podemos negar/ y quisiera poder tenerte a mi lado/ un rato tan sólo un rato no más.

Para quererte como jamás a nadie he querido/ para besarte como a ninguno nunca besé/ y darte con mucho amor en mi pecho/ la vida que estoy viviendo por ti.

(repetir)

I have a hunch that between us/ there is something we cannot deny/ and I would love to have you by my side/ for a moment if only just a brief moment.

To love you like I have never loved another/ to kiss you like I have never kissed another/ And give you with all my heart/ the life that I'm living for you.

(repeat)

5 **Un Adobe y Cuatro Velas (*ranchera-vals*)** 1980
Los Donneños
Ramiro Cavazos and Mario Montes, known collectively as *Los Donneños,* were originally from the northern state of Nuevo León, Mexico. In 1948 the duo named themselves after the small Texas border town of Donna where they settled to work in the fields. Accompanying themselves on accordion and *bajo sexto*, *Los Donneños* were celebrated for their memorable interpretations of classic *rancheras* (pastoral lyric song usually sung to a polka or waltz rhythm) and *corridos*. The duo often performed without bass and drum accompaniment, though later recordings such as this one featured them with a full band. Taking their cue from early *corrido*-singing *duetos* and *norteño* bands such as *Los Alegres de Terán* and *Los Relámpagos del Norte, Los Donneños'* strained harmonies elevated the intensity of the tragic and deeply romantic lyrics they often sang. Popular among fans on both sides of the border of *norteños* and *conjuntos* alike, there has not been a *dueto* combination that has captured the passion of the *ranchera* so eloquently as *Los Donneños.*

Un adobe y cuatro velas/ me pondrás cuando me muera/ vas a hechar sobre mi cuerpo/ el primer puno de tierra.

Cortarás laurel del campo/ me las llevas al panteón/ las pondrás sobre mi tumba/ figurando un corazón.

No estés triste vida mía/ pronto he de volver por ti/ para seguirnos amando/ que te entierren junto a mí.

Enredado en un petate/ y mi cruz de encino roble/ la pondrás sobre mi tumba/ con las letras de mi nombre.

No estés triste vida mía/ pronto he de volver por ti/ para seguirnos amando/ que te entierren junto a mí.

An adobe gravestone and four candles/ you'll put over me when I die,/you'll throw on my body/the first handful of dirt.

You'll cut laurel from the countryside/ you'll bring them to the cemetery,/ you'll put them over my grave/ in the shape of a heart.

Don't be sad my love/ soon I'll return for you,/ so that we can go on loving each other/ let them bury you next to me.

Wrapped in a straw mat/ and my cross made of live oak,/ you'll put it over my grave/ with the letters of my name.

Don't be sad my love/ soon I'll return for you,/so that we can go on loving each other/ let them bury you next to me.

6 **Mi Unico Camino (*ranchera-vals*)** 1958
El Conjunto Bernal
El Conjunto Bernal are celebrated for their early stylistic innovations which broadened the popularity and scope of *conjunto* music in Texas. Formed by brothers Eloy and Paulino Bernal in Kingsville, Texas, in 1952, the group fused the working-class *conjunto* base (accordion and *bajo sexto*) with influences from classic Mexian music traditions such as vocal trios and *mariachis*. In 1958, the group broke new ground with this recording of the heart-wrenching *ranchera "Mi Unico Camino"* ("My Only Path"), played in waltz time. The group's sonorous three-part harmonies and musically sophisticated arrangements brought the traditional *conjunto* to new levels of artistic expression. This classic performance by the Bernals marks the beginning of a mature, creatively expressive, and modern *conjunto* sound. To this day, there are *conjuntos* who exclusively perform in the instantly recognized "Bernal style."

Tragio una pena clavada,/ como puñalada en mi pensamiento./ Como carcajada que se hace lamento/ como si llorando se rieran de mí./ Es la vida pasada que siento,/ reprochar el haber sido así.

Mi pecado y mi culpa serán/ conocer demasiado el dolor,/ y las penas y los desengaños/ que por tantos años me ha dado el amor./ Por si acaso quisieras volver/ olvidando tu viejo rencor,/ me hallarás frente a un trago de vino/ mi unico camino que me dio tu amor.

En mi jardín un jilquero,/ se murió primero,/ quien no comprendiera./ Se secó la fuente que nunca debiera,/ y una madreselva también se secó./ Mi cariño como ave agorera,/ sin besarme también me dejó.

Mi pecado y mi culpa serán/ conocer demasiado el dolor,/ y las penas y los desengaños/ que por tantos años me ha dado el amor./ Por si acaso quisieras volver/ olvidando tu viejo rencor,/ me hallarás frente a un trago de vino/ mi unico camino que me dio tu amor.

I carry a fixed grief/ like a stabbing pain within my

thoughts./ Like a guffaw that becomes a lament/ as if in my crying they would laugh at me./ It's my past that I regret/ I will condemn it having been as it was.

My sin and my fault will be/knowing pain all too well./ And the sorrows and disillusions/ that love has given me for so many years./ If somehow you might want to return/ forgetting your old resentments,/ you'll find me in front of a cup of wine/ the only road your love left me.

In my garden a goldfinch died first,/ who wouldn't sympathize?/ A fountain dried up when it never should have,/ and a honeysuckle vine also wilted./ My love like a bird of ill omen/ also left without giving me a kiss.

My sin and my fault will be/ knowing pain all too well./ And the sorrows and disillusions/ that love has given me for so many years./ If somehow you might want to return/ forgetting your old resentments,/ you'll find me in front of a cup of wine/ the only road your love left me

7 Angel de Mis Anhelos (*ranchera*) 1992
Rubén Vela y su Conjunto
Since he began performing in the mid-1950s, Rubén Vela has become one of the most visible and prolific *conjunto* accordionists in the Rio Grande Valley and South Texas. Vela emerged on the *conjunto* scene at a time when the evolution and modernization of the traditional style was solidified with the introduction of amplification and electrification and the *cancion ranchera* had overtaken the instrumental polka. He became one of the first band leaders to forge what has become a very active touring circuit for *conjunto* musicians in South Texas and across the United States. As heard on this recording, Vela is known for his lucid, melodic accordion playing, a style that represents a skillful fusion of early innovators Narciso Martínez, Manuel Guerrero, and Tony de la Rosa. This performance is pure, downhome, dance hall *conjunto* with its slowed-down, shuffle-rhythm tempo (an innovation associated with Tony de la Rosa) and rich *dueto* harmonies. *"Angel de Mis Anhelos"* ("Angel of My Dreams") is a classic *ranchera* which has been part of the standard *conjunto* repertoire since the early 1950s. It is also one of Vela's most requested songs.

Las alas me la trajieron,/ las olas me la llevaron;/ y lejos de mi se fueron,/ aquellos labios que me besaron.

Mi alma se encuentra triste/ porque tu amor ya le habia faltado;/ y desde que tu te fuieste,/ no sabes prieta cuanto he llorado.

(coro)

Por ti, ay, por ti./ Por ti, mi prietita linda,/ perdí toda la esperanza,/ perdí toditita mi alegría.

(échale, mi chiquititititita)

Cruzando los anchos mares y/ bajo el pálido azul del cielo,/ ando en busca de mi prieta./ Ella es el ángel de mis anhelos.

Wings brought her to me/ waves took her from me/ and far away from me they went/ those lips that kissed me.

My soul is filled with sadness/ in the absence of your love/ and since you left me/ you have no idea, my lovely dark one, how I've wept.

(chorus)

You, oh, you/ because of you my lovely little dark one/ I lost all hope/ I lost all my happiness.

Across the open seas and/ beneath the pale blue sky/ I'm searching for my lovely dark one./ She is the angel of my dreams.

(chorus)

8 Corrido de Gerardo Gonzáles (*corrido*) 1976
Ramón Ayala y los Bravos del Norte
In the mid-1960s accordionist and singer Ramón Ayala was part of the hugely popular *norteño* group, *Los Relámpagos del Norte* (The Lightening Bolts of the North). *Norteño* music, found in parts of Northern Mexico and now the United States, is similar in instrumentation to *conjunto* but rhythmically and stylistically it has roots in the Mexican *bandas* (brass bands) and *mariachis* still popular in Mexico. Originally from Reynosa, Nuevo León, Mexico, *Los Relámpagos* became the first widely accepted *norteño* group in Texas. Their crossover success resulted from a blending of elements of *conjunto* (particularly Ayala's expressive accordion playing) and *norteño*. The group was also more dedicated to performing *corridos*, which by the late 1950s had been all but abandoned by *Tejano conjuntos* and were being associated more with *norteños*. The group disbanded in the early 1970s and Ayala's own group, *Los Bravos del Norte* (The Braves of the North), continued the tradition. With his group, Ayala has become the most popular *norteño* band leader in both Mexico and the United States today. Though his popularity began with migrants in the Rio Grande Valley, today he is a champion of workers across the United States and continues to record new and classic *corridos* that speak to the migrant experience. Notice the raspy, slightly pinched *dueto* singing style which harks back to the sound of *Maya y Cantu and Los Donneños*.

Ya todos sabían que era pistolero./ Ya todos sabían que era muy valiente./ Por eso las leyes ni tiempo le dieron,/ el día que a manslava y cobardemente le dieron la muerte.

(coro)

En Bronsvil estuvo un tiempo prisonero/ y al ser sentenciado, de ahí se fugó./ Se vino a Reynosa, su pueblo querido./ Gerardo Gonzáles en forma cobarde, la muerte encontró.

Era decidido. Ni no le temían,/ sus enemigos ni la policia./ A punta de bala lo hiceron pedazos./ No pudo salvarse, tenía en el cuerpo catorce balazos.

(coro)

Vuela palomita a llevar el mensaje,/ te vas de Reynosa al lado americano,/ le cuentas a todos que le han dado muerte/ a un compañero y fiel pistolero de "Chicho" Cano.

Yes, everyone knew that he was a gunslinger./ Yes, everyone knew that he was fearless./ That's why the authorities didn't give him a chance/ the day, when without taking any risk, they cowardly killed him.

(chorus)

In Brownsville he waited in prison./ Upon being sentenced, from there he escaped./ To Reynosa he fled,

his cherished town./ Gerardo Gonzáles in a cowardly ambush, met his fate.

He was resolute. His enemies/ nor the police feared him./ At close range they shot him to pieces./ He couldn't save himself, he had fourteen bullet wounds.

(chorus)

Fly little pigeon and take the message./ Go from Reynosa to the American side./ Tell everyone that they have killed/a companion and loyal gunman of "Chicho" (Narciso) Cano.

9 El Saino de Donna, Texas *(corrido)* 1988
Los Invasores de Nuevo León
Following closely on the heels of Ramón Ayala, *Los Invasores de Nuevo León* (The Invaders from Nuevo León) are one of the top *norteño* groups in Texas, especially among Mexican migrant populations. Also originating from the northern state of Nuevo León in the early 1970s, they have developed a huge following in the dance halls and *cantinas* on the Rio Grande border, and more recently, in California, Idaho, Illinois, and Washington. Like many *norteño* groups, *Los Invasores* primarily perform *corridos*, *tragedias* (tragic songs), and *rancheras*. Today, many of the *corridos* they play were written by local songwriters or are from the vast repertoire of border ballads. This modern *corrido*, *"El Saino de Donna, Texas,"* plays out issues of identity between Mexicans and Texas-Mexicans. The scene is a horse race which takes place in the Mexican border town of Matamoros and ends in the surprise victory of the "two-toned" horse from Texas over the proud dark horse from Mexico. *Los Invasores'* performance of this song is a fine example of contemporary *norteño* style: the rural *dueto*-influenced harmonies, waltz-time rhythm peppered with *banda*-style drum rolls, throbbing tuba-like bass, and accordion melody heard only at the end of each stanza or quatrain.

Matamoros, Tamaulipas,/ día doce de diciembre/ de Tamaulipas y Tejas/ de dondequiera hubo gente./ Vinieron a las carreras/ al Tahualshal nuevamente.

Ahí jugaron dos cuacos/ muy finos de cabo a rabo./ Corrieron en cuatrocientas/ el oscuro con el saino./ En dolar, en las apuestas/ bajo contrato firmado.

Oscuro y cuarto de milla,/ muy ligero y muy bonito/ por ser su santo es día/ lo marcaban favorito./ La gente al verlo decía,/ que era el mentado 'lupito.'

El saino de Donna, Tejas/ como 'el menso' presentaron./ Cuando paseaban las besitas/ las apuestas aumentaron./ Ramón Martínez y 'el talas'/ quince mil dolar casaron.

Al estruendo de las cuerdas/ saltaron muy parejitos/ y a las trecientas cincuenta/ no era 'menso' ni 'lupito.'/ Llegando a las cuatrocientas/ 'el menso' sacaba el pico.

'El menso' se fue a su cuadra/ con otro triunfo en su haber./ Cuando quieran la revancha/ se las puede concedar;/ Ramón Martínez se llama,/ el dueño de ese corcel.

Matamoros, Tamaulipas,/ twelfth of December/ from Tamaulipas and Texas/ there were people from everywhere./ They came for the races/ at Tahualshal once again.

There, two horses competed,/ very fine, from top to bottom./ They ran four-hundred meters,/ the dark one against the two-toned./ In dollars, the bets under/ a signed contract were made.

The dark one, running at a quarter mile/ agile and very beautiful,/ because it was the horse's birthday that day/ they marked it as the favorite./ Upon seeing it the people would say,/ that it was the famous 'lupito.'

The two-tone from Donna, Texas/ was presented as 'the dummy.'/ When the horses were paraded/ the bets increased./ Ramón Martínez and 'lazybones'/ bet fifteen thousand dollars.

At the snap of the reins/ they jumped evenly;/ and at three hundred fifty/ 'dummy' and 'lupito' were neck and neck./ At the four hundred finish, 'dummy' won by a nose.

The 'dummy' returned to it's stable/ having triumphed again./ Whenever you want a rematch/ it can be arranged;/ Ramón Martínez is his name/ the owner of that fine steed.

10 Dados Cargados (*corrido*) 1981
Los Cachorros de Juan Villarreal
Los Cachorros (The Cubs) are based in the Mexican border town of Reynosa, Nuevo León. The group's accordionist and songwriter, Juan Villarreal formed the band with his brother in the mid-1960s. *Los Cachorros* are widely known on both sides of the Texas-Mexican border where they still perform today. In addition to performing classic *corridos* written by Mexican and *Tejano* songwriters, *Los Cachorros* are best known for original songs written by Villarreal himself. *"Dados Cargados"* ("Loaded Dice"), about a man who nearly looses his ranch to a fixed game of craps, was a big hit for *Los Cachorros* in 1981. Partly because the group rarely performs outside of the border region, Villarreal's *corridos* are often based on actual events that occur in the small communities, usually involving "ranch life" on both sides of the border. Like his ballads, Villarreal's accordion playing is unusually crisp and wildly colorful for typical *norteño* style. However, his passion for creating an "atmosphere" for his songs has been taken up by popular contemporary *norteños* such as *Los Terribles del Norte* and *Los Tigres del Norte*.

-Ese cuatro no lo vuelves a ver.
-¿Por cuánto?
-Por el rancho de los Arados.
-¡Va!

A un lugar clandestino/ a Horacio Aquirre invitaba/ a una jugada de dados/ que le tenían preparada.

Al fin de tanto insistirle/ la invitación aceptó,/ y a la voz del siete al once/ la jugada comenzó.

Horacio con mucha suerte/ le entró, ganando en los dados./ Pero en una parpareada/ le avientan dados cargados.

Comenzó a cambiar su suerte./ Horacio desesperado,/ y empeñé sus escrituras/ de su rancho los Arados.

Al habar Horacio perdido/los contrarios se llevaron,/ en sus miradas decían:/ Horacio está terminado.

Horacio así se decía:/ la suerte me ha abandonado;/ por pura curiosidad/ voy a revisar los dados.

Lo que he pardido no pago,/ les he jugado derecho./ He revisado los dados;/ la tración tiene su precio.

Sacó su pistola Horacio/ y a sus contrarios mató./
Querían verme en la calle/ y no se les concedió.

Con el permiso señores/ ya terminé mi canción/ dicen
que yo soy Tejano/ soy de China, Nuevo León.

-You'll never see that four again!
-How much?
-For the ranch of The Plow.
-Play it!

To a clandestine place,/ Horacio Aquirre was invited/
for a game of craps/ which had been prepared for him.

Finally, after so much insistence/ he accepted the invitation/ and at the call of seven and eleven/ the game began.

Horacio, with a lot of luck/ started a winning streak./
But in a blink of an eye/ they threw in loaded dice.

His luck started to change./ Horacio became desparate,/
and hocked the deed/ to his ranch, The Plow.

Having lost, Horacio's/ opponents agreed/ their expressions confirmed/ Horacio is finished.

Horacio told himself:/ Lady luck has abandoned me;/
just out of curiosity/ I'm going to check the dice.

What I have lost I'm not paying/ because I have played fair./ I have checked the dice,/ your game has its price.

Horacio pulled out his gun/ and killed his opponents./
They wanted to see me penniless/ but they failed.

Pardon me gentlemen/ I have ended my tale./ They say
I'm a Texan/ but I'm from China, Nuevo León

11 Caso Perdido (*ranchera*) 1991
Los Dos Gilbertos with Beatriz Llamas
Los Dos Gilbertos' first recording was made for the Valley-based independent Falcón Records label in 1975. In those days, accordionist Gilberto García was flanked by accordion pioneer Gilberto López, making them one of the few *conjuntos* featuring two accordionists. López quit the band in the late 1970s due to illness; García continued on as the group's sole accordionist and added his son, Gilberto Jr., on drums, which allowed him to keep the group's original name. Today, García's densely resonant accordion sound (due to a *conjunto* accordionists' tradition of retuning the instrument) along with the band's full-bodied vocal harmonies and lively rhythms make the Edinburg-based group the favorite among contemporary *conjunto* dance hall bands in south Texas. This recording by the group topped the local *Tejano* music charts in the summer of 1991. Part of its success is the solo vocal performance of Mexican-born and San Antonio-based vocalist Beatriz Llamas, though the group is enormously popular on its own. Llamas was one of the few women (other than Lydia Mendoza) who performed with both *mariachis* and *conjuntos* in the border region during the 1950s and 1960s. Her strong, emotionally riveting voice is linked to her many years performing with *mariachis* in floor shows throughout Texas and Mexico. *"Caso Perdido"* ("Lost Cause") is a *cancion* about a love gone sour and was written by Llamas who claims she has "lived every word of this song."

Creo que ya me decidí/ de olvidarme ya de ti/ pues
eres caso perdido.

Yo mi vida te entregué/ y todo te lo di/ y no supiste
agradecerlo.

Vete ya no te quiero ver/ ni quiero yo saber/ si te ha
ido bien o mal/ no me interesa.

Eres como todos los demás/ que te burlas nada más/
de las mujeres.

(coro dos veces)

Tu algún día me buscarás/ y no me encontrarás/ yo te
lo juro.

(repetir)

I believe I've decided/ to forget you now/ because
you're a lost cause.

I handed you my life/ and gave you everything/ yet,
you didn't know how to appreciate it.

Leave me, I don't want to see you/ nor do I care to
know/ how you have been;/ I'm not concerned.

You're just like all the rest,/ interested only in deceiving/ women.

(chorus, two times)

You will one day search for me,/ but you won't find
me;/ I swear it.

(repeat)

12 La Calle Flores (*huapango*) 1975
Oscar Hernández
In 1965 Oscar Hernández joined the progressive *El Conjunto Bernal* as its second accordionist while still in his teens. Unlike most accordionists in the Rio Grande Valley where he grew up, Hernández plays the chromatic, five-row button accordion. His years with the Bernales allowed Hernández to experiment with new key combinations and to stretch the tradition beyond its limits. Today, as leader of his own group, Hernández is highly regarded by musicians and fans alike as an important figure in the development of the modern *conjunto* sound. Hernández's repertoire is filled with the standard polkas, waltzes, *rancheras*, *cumbias*, and *huapangos*, though his technique and arrangements reflect his innovative spirit and signature sound. This example of a Mexican *huapango* (different rhythms rapidly alternating or appearing simultaneously) was arranged by Hernández and is a good example of his ability to update and expand upon the tradition without losing sight of its defining nuances. This performance proves why Hernández is an original.

13 Quedate 1987
Roberto Pulido y los Clásicos

Roberto Pulido, also from Edinburg, is a successful and influential pioneer of the *orquesta Tejana* sound. He began performing in 1973 with his group, *Los Clásicos,* which has its roots in the big-band sound of Beto Villa and his orchestra. Pulido, along with forerunners *Little Joe y la Familia* and Sunny and the Sunliners, forged a polished, cosmopolitan, dance band sound that appealed to the expanding Mexican-American middle class population in South Texas. However, due in part to his background as the son of migrant workers, Pulido was also attracted to the accordion-based conjunto sound of Narciso Martínez, Tony de la Rosa, and Rubén Vela. Pulido's band merged the traditional accordion/*bajo sexto* instrumental base with brass instruments and jazz, rock, and country-inspired arrangements, for a sound that appealed to younger *Tejanos*. Today, Pulido's sound is itself the forerunner of the more commercially prominent *musica Tejana* style. With the typical polka-inspired *ranchera* rhythm at the core of his sound, Pulido's high-pitched tenor updates the *corrido* vocal style, but without the *dueto* harmonies. The accordion, however, played by Pulido's uncle Lionel, maintains its place in the forefront of the sound, squeezing out a continuous run of spirited polka melodies throughout the song.

Quédate conmigo esta noche/ te invito a una copa/ te cantare canciones/ que dicen cosas bellas.

Quédate conmigo esta noche/ y compartamos juntos su magia negreneña./ Quédate conmigo esta noche,/ hagamos una fiesta bajo la luna llena.

Contaremos las estrellas,/ a ver quien cuen más./ El que gane destapará champaña/ se queda hasta mañana, vente te voy a enseñar.

Ves aquel lucero que brilla en el cielo,/ este el que concede los tres desos, ayer yo le pedí./ Que esta noche vinieras y conmigo estuvieras, y dijeras sí.

Al buen lucero pidele tres deseos,/ mientras yo te admiro y te repito que te quiero amor/ le pedí por ti./ Que a ti se realice los deseos que pedistes,/ y que seas feliz.

Ves aquel lucero que brilla en el cielo,/ este el que concede los tres bellos deseos amor,/ ayer lo le pedí./ Que esta noche vinieras y conmigo estuvieras,/ y dijeras sí.

Al buen lucero pidele tres deseos,/ mientras yo te admiro y te repito que te quiero amor/ le pedí por ti./ Que a ti se realice los deseos que pedistes,/ y que seas feliz.

(repetir)

Stay with me this night,/ I invite you for a drink/ I'll sing you songs/ about beautiful things.

Stay with me this night/ and we'll share together its black magic./ Stay with me this night,/ let's have a party under the full moon.

We'll count the stars,/ let's see who counts the most./ The one who wins will open the champagne,/ will stay until the morning,/ come, I'll show you how.

Do you see that morning star that shines in the heavens?/ This is the one which grants the three wishes/ that I asked of it yesterday./ That tonight you would come and be with me,/ and say yes.

Ask three wishes of that good star while I admire you/ and repeat that I love you,/ my love, I asked it for you./ May your wishes come true,/ and may you be happy.

Do you see that morning star that shines in the heavens?/ This is the one which grants the three wishes/ that I asked of it yesterday./ That tonight you would come and be with me,/ and say yes.

Ask three wishes of that good star while I admire you/and repeat that I love you,/my love, I asked it for you./May your wishes come true,/and may you be happy.

(Repeat)

Southern Arizona

Native American Music from Southern Arizona
by James S. Griffith

The presence of two major Native American tribes near Tucson, Arizona adds a special degree of cultural complexity to the Arizona/Sonora border. The Tohono O'odham Nation (formerly the Papago Indian Reservation), the second largest reservation in the United States, is situated west of Tucson. In addition, there are four communities of Yaqui Indians, descendants of nineteenth century political refugees from Sonora, Mexico, in the Tucson area.

Each of these groups maintains traditional music which results from long contact with Hispanic culture. The Yaquis utilize the European-style harp and violin to accompany a ritual solo dancer called the *pascola.* The *pascola* acts as ritual host of Yaqui religious *fiestas,* in a complex blend of native and European ideas and practices which has probably been a part of Yaqui culture since the seventeenth century, with the arrival of Jesuit missionaries in Yaqui country.

The *pascola* wears leg rattles consisting of long strings of butterfly cocoons which have been filled with sand in order to make a rustling noise when they are shaken. In this way, the *pascola* is said to communicate with the insect world as he dances. From the *pascola's* belt dangle small brass bells, which jingle as the dancer moves. The music the *pascola* makes as he dances may be heard accompanying the violin and harp on this record, accentuating and elaborating on the rhythm of the dance tune.

The Tohono O'odham play and dance to a kind of music that they call *waila* in their own language. The word comes from the Spanish *baile* for "social dance." The older style of *waila* band consists of two violinists, one or more guitarists, a snare drummer and a bass drum player. The instruments were probably introduced to the Tohono O'odham by missionaries before 1800, and were in place within the culture by the mid-nineteenth century, when such new dance rhythms as the polka, schottische, waltz, and mazurka arrived on the scene.

The modern style of *waila*, with its saxophones, button accordion, electric guitars, and trap drum set, owes much to the *conjunto* style of the Texas-Mexican border. Melodies come from a variety of sources: the older repertoire of the Tohono O'odham string bands, popular Mexican tunes, and popular American tunes. Tunes do not travel with names attached in this tradition, so it often takes an expert tune-detective to make the appropriate connections. The modern *waila* repertoire includes polkas, two-steps, and *cumbias*. *Waila* music is strictly instrumental, with only one or two exceptions. Like the Yaqui music mentioned earlier, it is played exclusively by men.

Finally, there have been several Yaqui *norteño* groups in southern Arizona, featuring vocals in two and three-part harmony. Such a group was Tucson's *El Conjunto Murrietta,* heard on this record. Yaqui *norteño* music tends to be in the mainstream of the style and sung in Spanish, although every now and then a group will sing a song or two with Yaqui lyrics.

This isn't the only Native American music in southern Arizona, of course. Tohono O'odham still sing the old-style songs for the Circle Dance and other traditional dances. Yaquis accompany their Deer Dance with a remarkable body of traditional sung poetry which reaches into the intensely spiritual regions of Yaqui culture. On the intertribal level, there are several Powwow drums, including at least one drum that specializes in songs in the Yaqui language. All these musical styles and others add to the rich cultural mix so typical of any border region, and of this stretch of the border in particular.

14 Yaqui pascola music: San Javielpo Chu'kuy Kawi 1980 *Francisco Molina, violin; Marcelino Valencia, harp*
Violinist Francisco Molina has been playing violin as well as harp for *pascola* dancers since 1938. He is a well respected member of the Yaqui community and popular teacher. One of his students is forty-six-year-old harpist Marcelino Valencia who regularly accompanies Molina and also performs for a variety of celebrations and ceremonies. The *pascola* dance is one of the most distinctive and best known of the Yaqui ceremonial dances. The *pascola* ("old man of the fiesta") is the ritual host of most religious and non-religious ceremonies among the Yaqui Indians of the lower valley. Rattles made of dried cocoons of giant silk moths are tied around the dancer's legs above the ankles and accentuate the rhythmic pattern set by the accompanying violin and harp. This song, *"San Javielpo Chu'kuy Kawi"* ("Black Mountain in San Xavier") is like many of the songs in the *pascola* repertoire, which are usually based on stories about people, animals, or places. The harp is played in a percussive manner to accentuate the shifting rhythms for the dancer while the violinist carves out the melody. The primary melody is repetitive, like most Yaqui dance music, but the subtle rhythmic breaks and and quick melodic turns give the song its sense of movement and rhythmic complexity.

15 Ali Oidak Polka 1988 *Gu-Achi Fiddlers*
From the village of Gu-Achi, the Gu-Achi Fiddlers are the first local fiddle band ever to make a commercial recording. The group members are all descendants of musical families and have sons who are musicians in various chicken scratch and fiddle bands. Gu-Achi fiddle bands represent a rich tradition dating back to the mid-nineteenth century among the Native American Tohono O'odham people of southern Arizona. The Tohono O'odham reservation begins a few miles south of Tucson and extends to the Mexican border. The Gu-Achi Fiddlers perform on instruments traditionally associated with *waila* bands which were introduced to the Indians by Catholic missionaries when Arizona was part of New Spain. Originally assembled to provide music for Mass, nineteenth-century Indian musicians absorbed popular European dance rhythms such as the polka, mazurka, quadrille, and two-step. Tunes such as this one, called "Ali Oidak Polka" by the Gu-Achi Fiddlers, are played at a lively two-step pace. Notice the booming bass drum which plays a circular pattern deep in the song's background: it is connected to Native American ceremonial drumming in the region. Though the *waila* tradition still remains in rural desert villages, it is rapidly being overtaken by the more popular chicken scratch bands.

16 Old Man Rooster (polka) 1975 *The Molinas*
The Molinas, led by Virgil Molina, Sr., and Larry Molina, were the undisputed "Super Scratch Kings" in the 1970s and 1980s. The group has won many "battle-of-the-bands" contests and earned their title at Tohono O'odham festivals and weekend celebrations throughout southern Arizona. An almost exclusively instrumental musical genre, chicken scratch is the popular music of the Tohono O'odham people. Also based on European rhythms such as the polka, schottische (*chote*), and mazurka, and descended from the fiddle-dominated *waila* tradition, chicken scratch is also strongly influenced by Mexican *norteño* music. Chicken scratch bands such as this one, usually feature both accordion and saxophone playing the melody and are accompanied by a rhythmic core of drums, guitar, and bass. The term "chicken scratch" is taken from an old dance which is likened to the way a chicken scratches the ground for food and is believed to have been traditionally performed to the mazurka rhythm. This example of a song the group calls "Old Man Rooster" is an interesting take on a traditional Anglo-American folksong done in the contemporary chicken scratch style. Because most traditional O'odham songs are handed down orally and without titles, some Anglo-American folksongs have also ended up in the local repertoire with new names and arrangements.

17 Madre Mia Chote (schottische) 1992
Southern Scratch
Southern Scratch is one of the most active bands in the region and features prominent musicians such as bass player Ron Joaquin, guitarist Ben Jose, and accordionist Rupert Vavages, whose father Lester Vavages plays fiddle with the Gu-Achi Fiddlers. Unlike *conjunto* and *norteño* bands from Texas and Northern Mexico, the schottische (*chote* in the local language) is the dominant dance rhythm in the chicken scratch repertoire. *"Madre Mia Chote"* is also a popular song, usually played in waltz time, by Texas and Mexican groups. This superb performance varies the standard melody line in novel ways and clearly illustrates the characteristic chicken scratch saxophone and accordion combination.

18 Uwaldina y Juan Gonzáles (*corrido*) 1978
El Conjunto Murrietta
El Conjunto Murrietta is made up of both Yaqui and Tohono O'odham members. However, the group plays Mexican border-style *norteño* music sung in the Spanish language. The growing popularity of *norteño* music in migrant communities across the United States, as well as the prevalence of the *norteño*-influenced chicken scratch in southern Arizona, has prompted the demand for such groups within Yaqui and Tohono O'odham communities. In addition to local clubs and bars in Tucson, groups like *El Conjunto Murrietta* play at church *fiestas*, weddings, birthday parties, and other social events on the Tohono O'odham Reservation and in Yaqui communities. *"Uwaldina y Juan Gonzáles"* is a tragic *corrido* which ends with a humorous twist. This *corrido* has been in the local repertoire for many years and was taught to the Murrietta brothers, Richard and Johnny, by their Tohono O'odham father. Notice the rhythm resembles the quick-paced polka heard on the track by the Gu-Achi Fiddlers. As in the popular chicken scratch bands, the electric guitar plays the strong beat, rather than the *bajo sexto* heard in most Texas-Mexican bands.

Para empezar a cantar/ primero pido el permiso,/ lo que pasó el once de/ junio ganaré me verás.

De los que se aman mucho/ que hasta la vida perdieron,/ Uwaldina y Juan Gonzáles/ viniendo de Pueblo Nuevo.

Uwaldina le decia/ sí te quiero y te amo mucho,/ pero casarme no puedo/ porque no tengo el divurcio.

Juan Gonzáles le contesta/ mostrándose muy tirano,/ metió mano a su pistola/ y un tiro no más le dio.

Luego que la vio caer/ su pistola preparó,/ apuntándose a la frente/ y un tiro no más se dio.

Al ver a los dos tirados/ hasta el cielo se nubló,/ Uwaldina y Juan Gonzáles/ viniendo de Pueblo Nuevo.

Por eso no sirve creer/ en los hombres casados,/ que tengan mucho cuidado/ las madres que tengan hijas.

Ya con ésta me despido/ con las hojas de un nopal,/ este corrido yo canto/ con un vaso de mezcal.

I bid your permission/ before I begin to sing,/ about what happened the eleventh day of June/ I'll be rewarded, you'll see.

About the two who so loved each other/ that they lost even their lives./ Uwaldina and Juan Gonzáles/ who came from Pueblo Nuevo.

Uwaldina said to him:/ "I do want you and love you very much,/ but I can't marry you/ because I don't have a divorce."

Juan Gonzáles answers her,/ showing himself to be very grand,/ he took his pistol in hand/ and took only one shot.

After seeing her fall/ he prepared his pistol again,/ aiming at his forehead/ he took only one shot more.

Seeing the two lying on the ground/even the sky clouded over,/ Uwaldina and Juan Gonzáles/ who came from Pueblo Nuevo.

That's why it's no good believing/ in men who are married,/ mothers should take great care/ of the daughters they have.

Now I'll say good-bye/ with the leaves of a cactus,/ for this ballad I sing/ with a glass of mezcal

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About the record labels

The songs on this compilation were licensed from the following independent record companies. Each has extensive catalogs of music from the Texas-Mexico and southern Arizona border region.

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Freddie Records, 6118 South Padre Island Drive, Corpus Christi, TX 78412 (Tex-Mex *conjunto, norteño, orquesta Tejana,* and more).

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Joey International, 6703 West Commerce Street, San Antonio, TX 78227 (Tex-Mex *conjunto, norteño, orquesta Tejana,* and more).

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Texas Folklife Resources (TFR), founded in 1984, is a non-profit, statewide service organization, dedicated to the preservation and presentation of traditional arts and culture in Texas. TFR is based in Austin but its research and programs are conducted statewide. The organization sponsors exhibits, concerts, workshops, and media programs intended to celebrate and perpetuate contemporary Texas folklife and folk arts. For more information on TFR and its programs, call (512) 320-0022.

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