SANTIAGO JIMENEZ JR.

Front: JUAN P. AROCHA, SANTIAGO JIMENEZ, JR.
Rear: JUAN VIESCA,
JUAN GARCIA

Santiago Strikes Again
SANTIAGO STRIKES AGAIN!

It’s Friday night at Lerma’s Night Club on San Antonio’s West Side. The large dance floor is crowded with couples dancing counter-clockwise around the floor. The music is loud and comes from a set of drums, an electric bass, an amplified bajo sexto (heavy 12 string guitar), and an accordion whose right side is held up to the PA mike and squeezed right into it giving a piercing, slightly distorted sound to the lead instrument which drives the music the entire evening. The tunes vary from slow waltzes, to cumbias, huapangos and on to the ever popular polkas. Most songs are sung in the dueto style with the bass player joining the leader who nevertheless enjoys doing some songs especially boleros, by himself. This is “conjunto music” (conjunto = group) at its best dished out by Santiago Jimenez Jr. who has been playing dances for over twenty years following in the footsteps of his father, Don Santiago Jimenez who is one of the founding fathers of this accordion music in the San Antonio area. Santiago Jr. is very much his own man even though he has often been in the shadow of his more famous brother Flaco Jimenez who in recent years has gained an international following through his travels with Ry Cooder and Peter Rowan.

In 1981 I recorded an album by Santiago Jimenez Jr. which featured one of his own compositions, “El Corrido De Henry Cisneros” about the 1981 election of Henry Cisneros as the first Mexican American mayor of San Antonio (note Arhoolie LP 3004). He is one of the great bass players of all times and also adds enormously to the drive and feeling of the whole group. Side one of this album features instrumentals while on side two Juan Arocha joins Santiago Jr. on five vocals which are really an essential part of “conjunto music” even though the international folk audience will probably prefer the instrumental selections. In recent years Santiago Jimenez Jr. has appeared at many folk festivals here in the United States and in Canada and is quickly becoming one of our best ambassadors for Musica Nortena.

Chris Strachwitz

Santiago Jimenez Jr.—accordion & vocals
Juan Arocha—vocals
Juan Garcia—bajo sexto
Juan Viesca—string bass