

Música Tejana: Nuestra Música

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Música Tejana, or Texas–Mexican music, is contagious and makes you want to dance. Its diverse beat can be a polka, a cumbia, a bolero, or a ranchera. It can also have influences from other musical styles such as disco, pop, rap, country, and reggae. Música Tejana sounds come from a variety of instruments, including accordions, synthesizers, electric guitars, congas, or “pitos” (horns). This type of music, known as “Tejano” in the contemporary period, is extremely popular in Texas and other parts of the United States and Mexico.

Despite its popularity, a great deal of misunderstanding about this music persists. Is *música* Tejana, for instance, a particular form of music that has lost its ability to “connect” with its audience because of its commercialization or is it still “culturally meaningful” to Tejanos? Is this music, in other words, an “organic” symbol of Tejano culture, or has it become a “superorganic” commodity to be consumed by an anonymous mass disconnected from the history and culture of Tejanos?¹ Is *música* Tejana based on the accordion, the saxophones, the keyboards, or is it a mixture of these? What types of songs comprise this music? Some commentators, for instance, have argued that “Tejano” is *conjunto* or accordion-based music that has been “urbanized” and modernized. By modernization, these commentators generally argue that the traditional *conjunto* sound incorporates more instruments, especially the keyboards, and bor-

rows heavily from other music forms like rock and country.² Others argue that Tejano is either an extension of Mexican music in general, a modified form of *música norteña*, that is, *conjunto* music from northern México, or a mixture of *conjunto* music and country and western sounds.³ Manuel Peña argues that Tejano is a particular type of music that is “synthesizer-driven.”⁴ Vilma Maldonado, a journalist for the McAllen *Monitor*, states that Tejano music also includes the styles popularized by *orquestas* and *grupos* of the 1960s and 1970s.⁵

Which of these is a more accurate definition of this complex music? Is *música* Tejana culturally significant for Chicanos and Chicanas? What is the relationship between *música* Tejana and *norteño* music, or *música* Tejana and Mexican music? What about American musical forms? How do they relate to *música* Tejana? This essay is aimed at answering these types of questions.

Before I begin, let me clarify several key terms. One of these is “Tejano,” and the other is Texas–Mexican music or *música Tejana*, its Spanish equivalent. Tejano is not the same as *música Tejana*. Tejano is a term of recent vintage that refers to the music played by Tejano artists in the latter part of the twentieth century. It came into common usage in the 1980s, but most commentators do not agree on what it means. The term Tejano, then, generally means whatever one chooses it to be. In my view, it is not a useful term for understanding the historical complexity and diversity of this music.⁶

Música Tejana, on the other hand, is not specific to any particular time period. It is also much broader and more inclusive than Tejano and allows for the existence of other possible musical forms and styles. As used in this essay, *música Tejana* comprises all the musical genres, forms, and styles that have existed in the Tejano community, at least since the nineteenth century.⁷

Other terms to clarify are Tejanos, Mexican Americans, and Anglos. Tejanos are individuals of Mexican descent who were born and raised in Texas. The term Mexican American refers to individuals of Mexican descent who are born or raised in the United States. Tejanos are all Mexican Americans, but not all Mexican Americans are Tejanos. Anglos generally are individuals of northern European descent, but the term refers to the entire white population residing in Texas. The definition of Anglo varies throughout the southwest. In New Mexico, for instance, an “Anglo” was anyone who was not Indian, Spanish-Indian, or Mexican descent. According to Nostrand, even blacks were considered “Anglos.”⁸

Música Tejana, then, is not a single music but a complex set of musical forms, styles, and genres. It is comprised of five distinct essential elements.

First, *música Tejana* is a particular form of border music. Its unique sounds were created or performed by Tejanos living along the Rio Grande border and those who are “on the border” of two distinct cultural worlds. The concept of the border includes two dimensions, a physical and a metaphysical.

The physical notion of the border refers to a particular location encompassing those communities along both sides of the Rio Grande. In other words, it includes the areas of South Texas and northern México. The latter includes the northern Mexican states of Tamaulipas and Nuevo León.⁹ The former encompasses a geographical area of the state that extends from Corpus Christi on the east, to San Antonio on the north, to Laredo on the west, and to Brownsville on the south. From the Spanish colonial era in the mid-1700s to the middle of the nineteenth century, South Texas actually encompassed the region from the Nueces River to the Rio Grande border.

According to Armando C. Alonzo, this area was considered a part of the “*gobierno*,” or government, of Nuevo Santander (1797-1824) and later Tamaulipas (1824-1845). Spanish/Mexican authorities and colonists, in turn, generally viewed the smaller territory occupying the space from San Antonio to the Louisiana border as “Texas.” After the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 and the establishment of an international border, San Antonio came to be recognized as part of the South Texas “homeland.”¹⁰

Música Tejana, although originating along both sides of the border, was nurtured mostly in South Texas. This is particularly true in the twentieth century. Distinct areas of this region contributed in their own ways to the development of its content and style. The lower border region, for instance, became the music’s historical “breeding ground.” It produced the originators of the *conjunto* ensemble such as Bruno Villarreal, Narciso Martínez and Valerio Longoria and created many of the corridos popular in the Tejano community.¹¹ The San Antonio area, in turn, became a center of strong support and active promotion of the various forms of *música Tejana*, especially *conjunto* music, probably because it had the largest concentration of Tejanos in the state for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Sam Suniga, archivist and researcher for the Tejano Music Awards, also argues that San Antonio historically has had one of the highest per capita rates of Tejano composers and songwriters in the state.¹² Alice and its surrounding communities,



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Conjunto Bernal

including Corpus Christi on the Gulf Coast, on the other hand, became the creative centers of this music.¹³

The Alice area, in particular, played a key role in the creation, promotion, and popularity of *música* Tejana during the past six decades.¹⁴ In addition to consolidating the *conjunto* style of playing, musicians from this area created two distinct ensembles—the *orquesta* Tejana and the *grupo Tejano*. Alice also was the home to Ideal Records, one of the most significant Tejano recording companies of the post-World War II era. From 1946 to the 1960s, it popularized the various forms of *música* Tejana and recorded many of the leading conjunto, orquesta, and female musicians. In the 1970s, Corpus Christi continued and expanded this rich tradition of musical recordings. In the early years of this decade, it became and continues to be the home to Freddie Records and Hacienda Records, two of the most influential forces in the Tejano music industry during the 1970s and 1980s. Together these three studios

recorded most of the major artists that shaped the contours of *música* Tejana during the twentieth century. Among the most influential musicians recorded by these companies were Lydia Mendoza, Laura y Carmen, Beto Villa, Isidro López, Tony de la Rosa, Conjunto Bernal, Los Relámpagos del Norte, Ramón Ayala y Los Bravos del Norte, Los Fabulosos Cuatro, Carlos Guzmán, Laura Canales, Sunny Ozuna, Freddie Martínez, Augustoín Ramírez, and Selena.

Música Tejana has also been created or performed by Tejano musicians who do not live in South Texas. Two of the most popular Tejano musical groups of the 1980s and 1990s, La Sombra and La Mafia, for instance, were from Chicago, Illinois, and Houston, Texas, respectively. Despite their distance from South Texas, these musicians continued to play border music because they were on the “border” of two clashing cultures. Used in this manner, the concept of “the border” means more than simply a geographical or physical space. It also refers

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to a series of “sites” or arenas that are present “wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle, and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy.”¹⁵ Those who live on “the border,” then, refers to those living the contradiction of being socially and culturally distinct in a society that despises differences. It also applies to those trying to negotiate the ever-present pressures of assimilation and ethnic loyalty. An example of this is the *orquesta* Tejana of the post-World War II era and the music it developed in response to the Tejano’s “middle” position between an unappreciative dominant society and a large group of working-class *Méxicanos*.¹⁶

Second, *música* Tejana is a Tejano creation; that is, it has been created, adapted, or performed by Tejanos to meet the musical sensibilities of other Tejanos. As early as the 1920s, Tejanos were demanding that traditional Mexican music reflect their sensibilities by including instruments and singing styles with which they could identify and appreciate. In the early part of the twentieth century, much of this focused on the sounds of the accordion. In post-World War II years, Tejano musicians continued to adapt Mexican music to meet Tejano musical sensibilities in several ways. They incorporated vocal singing in general and female duet singing in particular into *música* Tejana, which had been mostly instrumental. They also supported the continued use of the accordion and the bajo sexto instrumentation in *conjuntos*. Finally, they incorporated the unique sounds of the saxophone and the trumpet (*los pitos* or horn section as it came to be known years later) to create the *orquesta Tejana*. In the second half of the 20th century, Tejanos continued to adapt this music by adding organs, brass instruments, electric guitars, and keyboards. Additionally, they played and sang the lyrics of these songs in a style unique to them.

Because it is an “indigenous” creation, *música* Tejana has reflected this community’s unique historical experiences in the state. Prior to the middle of the twentieth century, most of these experiences were based on a rural economy, a subordinate social status, a traditional patriarchal culture, and constant conflict with Anglos. In the second half of the twentieth century, the Tejano community became more urbanized, acculturated, occupationally diverse, and less patriarchal. They also experienced better relations with the dominant Anglo group and with mainstream institutions.¹⁷ In all its various forms and through its content, music reflected these experiences.

Corridos, for instance, played a key role in expressing and reflecting the historical conflict between Anglos and Mexicans in South Texas in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹⁸ *Corridos*, as several scholars have noted, are ballads that narrate a story and are sung to a simple tune.¹⁹ They emerged and developed during a century of profound and violent changes along the Rio Grande and South Texas that em-

braced the years from 1836 to the 1930s.²⁰ In many ways, *corridos* were the product of a subordinate society whose only means of fighting the dominant Anglo powers was symbolic.²¹ Representative of this type of *corrido* and its hero was “The Corrido of Gregorio Cortez,” an individual who single-handedly fought the Anglo law and won.²² After 1930, the *corrido* remained culturally significant, but it declined in popularity. It also shifted its focus from the cultural hero to the helpless victim. By portraying helpless victims rather than potent cultural heroes, the newer *corridos* after the 1930s aroused sympathy for the victim and spurred Texas-Mexican communities to take collective action for the benefit of all. The real hero in these *corridos* turned out to be the organized and politically active community as a whole, not the individual.²³

Canciones, or traditional Mexican songs, on the other hand, reflected the continuity and change of Mexican culture in the state.²⁴ *Canciones* were comprised of several types and, in addition to *corridos*, included, among others, *canciones típicas*, *canciones rancheras*, and *canciones románticas*. Throughout most of the nineteenth century, the *canción típica* and the *corrido* dominated the vocal music of Tejanos.²⁵ The *canción típica* became increasingly important by the latter part of the nineteenth century, but by 1900 the *canción romántica*, a *canción* “subtype” was rapidly becoming dominant among Tejanos.²⁶ In the twentieth century, the *canción ranchera* emerged as a dominant type of song among Tejanos.

Canciones dealt with a variety of themes, most of which focused on non-political topics, especially love. For this reason, they tended to reflect the continuity of traditional Mexican rural culture in the state. They rarely reflected the profound changes within Mexican culture as did *corridos*. Although *canciones* tended to reflect the traditional cultural practices of Tejanos, in some cases this was not so. The “treacherous woman” theme popular in the *canción ranchera*, for instance, consistently portrayed Mexican women as traitorous and unfaithful to men. However, reality indicated that men, rather than women, were more likely to be unfaithful. These types of songs reversed existing gender norms in the Tejano community and thus did not accurately reflect them.²⁷

Música Tejana also reflected the emerging social differences within Tejanos. Instrumental dance music, for instance, reflected the growing class distinctions of this community. The *orquestas* and *grupos* reflected the rise of the Tejano lower and middle classes, whereas the *conjunto* reflected the dominance of the working classes.²⁸

Likewise, *canciones*, especially the *canción típica* and the *canción romántica*, reflected social differences within the Tejano community. The former was associated with working-class aesthetics and the latter with a middle-class one. Stated differently, the former was generally of a folk or working-class nature, with simple tune and lyrics, of anonymous composition, and often of ancient ori-



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Flaco Jiménez

gins. The latter was more specifically associated with modern Latin American urban culture and its attraction to European music imported to the Americas, especially Italian music. These distinctions remained submerged among Tejanos until the 1920s, when the *canción típica* acquired a new label and became known as the *canción ranchera*. The new *ranchera* then became the property of the disfranchised masses on both sides of the border.²⁹

After World War II the *canción ranchera* and the *canción romántica* solidified their positions within the social class structure of the community.³⁰ Despite these differences, there was never a rigid dichotomy.³¹

Finally, *música* Tejana reflected the specific ethnic identity of the Tejano population. This music was more than simply a response to subordination or a reflection of social differences. For many, it was also an expression of pride in the *México* ethnic identity as it developed along the border and throughout the state of Texas. The use of distinct in-group labels for this music reflects this pride. Under pressure to assimilate in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, they used Spanish-language terms such as *fandangos* and *bailes* to indicate pride in their music. In the post-World War II period, they called their music by distinct labels such as *conjunto*, *orquesta*, or, more generally, Tex-Mex music or *música* Tejana. In the 1960s and 1970s, Tejanos referred to the diverse styles of music as La Onda Chicana. Re-

cent uses of the term “Tejano” and all its derivatives, for example, Tejano proud, totally Tejano, and puro Tejano reflect this ethnic pride. “Tejano (in the 1990s) is, as much as anything, an attitude,” argues Hector Galan, the noted Mexican-American cultural videographer. “It’s as if to say: ‘This is us.’”³²

Because Tejanos have created, produced, and performed this music, it has remained culturally meaningful to them. Commercialization and internationalization has definitely impacted this music over time, especially in the last several decades, but

it has not lost its ability to affirm and reaffirm distinct ethnic and social bonds. *Música* Tejana, in other words, has not succumbed to the dictates of the capitalist markets and become a mere commodity as suggested by Manuel Peña.³³ It is not a “detached form of entertainment,” nor is it a “commodity that is consumed atomistically.” Instead, it is a powerful symbol of Tejano ethnic and cultural identity and an instrument of purposeful and meaningful social interaction for a people who live along the border and who are on the border of two distinct worlds.

Third, *música* Tejana is mostly Mexican music sung in Spanish. Because it is based on Mexican music, it is rooted in the history of the Americas. More specifically, its roots lie in the musical heritage of Spain and indigenous America and in the interactions between these two major groups.

Música Tejana is also intimately related to *norteño* or northern Mexican culture. Between the 1700s and the mid-1800s, this music was an integral part of the Spanish and Mexican culture brought by settlers to the northern frontier of México and shaped or influenced by local and regional conditions. In the period after 1848, however, northern Mexican culture was fractured as a result of the establishment of the Rio Grande as an international border. Although this culture was similar on both sides of the border, commentators soon began to make distinctions between the Mexican culture found in

South Texas and the Mexican culture found in northern Mexico. The former eventually came to be known as Tejano culture, the latter as *norteño* culture. Both, however, came from one primary source—central Mexico. This phenomenon helps to explain the presence of similar cultural and musical forms on both sides of the border.

Unfortunately, little is known about how this music (and the culture of which it is an integral part) was brought to Texas, how it was played, or what instruments were used to play it. The little information available we have is from the last one hundred years. Much of the following comments are thus based on the music's development since the latter part of the 1800s.

Generally speaking, Texas-Mexican music has been comprised of a diverse and changing repertoire of songs and dances. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, polkas, *huapangos*, *vales* (waltzes), *schotises* (schottisches), and mazurkas were the major dance forms in *música* Tejana. Since the 1940s, new ones such as *boleros*, mambos, *danzones*, and *cumbias*, as well as fox-trots, rhythm and blues, soul, funk, rock, country, and pop have been added to Tejano music.

Tejano music also is comprised of a variety of *canciones* or songs, such as *canciones típicas*, *románticas*, *corridos*, and *rancheras*, sung to a variety of beats including polkas, *vales*, *baladas*, and *cumbias*.

Despite this diversity, *música* Tejana in the twentieth century has been based primarily on the polka beat. Polkas, like other Mexican folk dances such as the *vals* (waltz) and the *schotis* (schottische), are European in origin. They were brought to México by the elite in the early nineteenth century and to the Southwest by the German, Bohemian, Italian, and Czech immigrants who settled in central Texas and in northern Mexico during the first half of the nineteenth century. Sometime after the 1850s, Mexican musicians on both sides of the border appropriated these dance forms and made them their own. The French invasion of Mexico in the 1860s most likely reinforced these and other European musical and dance traditions throughout northern Mexico and the southwestern United States.³⁴

The polka emerged as a dominant form of Tejano dance music sometime in the early twentieth century, probably as a result of the rise of recorded music and of desires for dancing among the Mexican origin population. The dominance of the polka is reflected in the historical recordings made by Arhoolie Records in the early 1970s. According to these comprehensive and representative recordings, 37% of all *conjunto* music recorded in the years from 1927 to 1941 were polkas. The next largest categories of dance forms were the *schotis* and *vals* at 19% and 12%, respectively.³⁵

In the post-World War II period, the polka continued its dominance as all types of groups constantly played it. The polka beat also became more popular during these years with the rise of the *ranchera Tejana*. This type of song is quite different from the *ranchera Mexicana*. In México, the *ranchera* is a particular

type of rural-based *canción* that became popular during the early twentieth century.³⁶ The content of these songs spoke about male notions of honor, love, and life in a rural environment, usually the *rancho* (ranch).³⁷ Mexican *rancheras* were sung to a variety of beats and played mostly by mariachi groups. The Texas *ranchera* retained its emphasis on male notions of honor, love, and life, but the rhythms and the type of groups that played this music were different. Unlike the Mexican *ranchera*, the Tejano version was sung mostly to a polka beat. It was performed by the three major types of Tejano groups, none of which were mariachis: female-based duets, accordion-based *conjuntos*, and saxophone-based *orquestas*.

In the post-World War II period, the *ranchera*, that is, the polka with lyrics, as well as the instrumental polka, became the dominant form of song and dance in *música* Tejana. The increased demand for dancing among the Tejano population and the easy steps accompanying the polka probably led to its dominance. Despite its popularity, by the end of the twentieth century, the *cumbia* became a strong competitor to the *ranchera* and emerged as the most popular type of song and dance in the community.³⁸

Another essential element of this music is its language. For all intents and purposes, Texas-Mexican music is Spanish-language music. Although a few songs have been recorded bilingually or in English only, the vast majority of them are sung in Spanish.³⁹ The Spanish language, in association with the polka and *ranchera*, keeps this music rooted in Mexican culture.

Moreover, Spanish-language music is the most important means for preserving Tejano culture in the United States. Although Spanish-language institutions, such as the press or the TV, are readily found in Tejano communities throughout the state, most of these are aimed at the immigrant population. Tejanos, most of whom are native born for the most part, are exposed to and socialized by English-speaking institutions such as public schools, radio, or print media. Tejano music is the only means currently available within the English-speaking Tejano population that promotes Spanish. For this reason, this music has become a crucial instrument for preserving the community's link to its cultural heritage in a country that is rigidly assimilationist and non-appreciative of ethnic differences.

Fourth, although *música* Tejana is mostly Mexican music, it has consistently been updated and modernized over the decades. The notion of "modernization" has changed over the years and depended, in many cases, on what has been popular in American or Mexican music at different points during the twentieth century. The modernizing of *música* Tejana occurred in complex ways involving several overlapping processes.⁴⁰ One of these was its selective incorporation of American, Caribbean, and Latin American rhythms and instruments. Another was the appropriation, adaptation, and inclusion of other distinct musical styles. I discuss some of these processes below to illustrate their

complexity in a tentative effort to illustrate the diverse ways in which Mexican music has been modernized, rather than to give a comprehensive list of all these possibilities.

1. Incorporation of different types of instruments

Some groups utilized instruments and styles associated with American or Latin American groups to play Mexican music. During the post-World War II era, for instance, Beto Villa and Isidro López utilized the saxophones, trumpets and other instruments associated with both American and Latin American *orquestas* of that period to play their music. Little Joe, Sunny Ozuna, and Freddie Martínez in the 1960s and 1970s also used

the saxophones and trumpets, but they added organs and electric guitars to the instrumental mix. These musical instruments were associated not with orchestras of that era, but with rock and soul groups.

Grupo musicians of the most recent period, for example, Mazz, Selena, and La Mafia, modified the instrumental mix while adding keyboards to their ensembles. In the 1970s, a few

groups such as Country Roland and Country Roland, Jr., utilized the violin, the steel guitar, and the vocal singing style of country music to play Tejana tunes. Despite the diversity of instruments associated with various musical styles, these groups continued playing mostly traditional Mexican music. The addition of these instruments as well as the unique ways of playing them led to the creation of an evolving Texas-Mexican sound over the decades.

2. Incorporation of other musical influences

Throughout the twentieth century, a few innovative performers took selective rhythms from diverse musical styles and incorporated them into Mexican music. They chose from a wide variety of styles and from the instruments, songs, and dances associated with them. Most of these rhythms came from two major strands of popular music within the United States, rhythm and blues and rock and roll, and from Latin America and the Carib-

bean. These rhythms were creatively crafted onto traditional Mexican tunes. The result was an updated style of Mexican music such as “jazzy” *boleros*, “rock-influenced” polkas, “pop” or “rap” *cumbias*, “bluesy” *baladas*, and “big-band style” *rancheras*.

Occasionally, Tejana musicians provided only “touches” of music from other styles. Their incorporation into Tejana music was brief enough so that it did not interrupt the beat of the song. Let me cite two examples, one from Letty Guval and the second from El Conjunto Bernal. In the mid-1990s, Guval, a popular Tejana performer, recorded a *ranchera* entitled “Sentimiento.” At key points in the song and only for a few brief seconds, she incorporated some *banda* rhythms. The *banda* rhythms, in turn, were

played by a tuba, an instrument not usually associated with *música* Tejana. This *ranchera* then only had “touches” of *banda* in it; it was not a *banda* song nor was it a “tuba-based” *ranchera*.⁴¹

In the late 1970s, El Conjunto Bernal recorded a *balada* with touches of rock. In the song entitled “Senda Sin Luz,” Bernal opened up with a couple of seconds from the Doors’ most popular song, “Riders of the

Storm.” Bernal continued using the well-known organ rhythms of this popular rock group throughout the song, but without losing the flavor of the ballad.⁴²

3. Addition of other rhythms

Most Tejana groups were quite diverse with respect to the music that they played. In addition to polkas, *rancheras*, and *baladas*, they also played dance tunes from other musical styles. Again, the tunes selected were diverse and varied between groups and across time. Beto Villa, for instance, recorded a variety of Latin American tunes such as mambos, *boleros*, *danzones*, *porros*, and *guarachas*. He also recorded several fox-trots and ragtime tunes.⁴³ During the 1950s, Little Joe and Sunny recorded rhythm and blues and rock and roll songs.⁴⁴ In the last several decades, *grupos* Tejanos such as Mazz, Selena, and Emilio recorded a variety of mariachi, *banda*, disco, rock, dance, and country music. In many cases, the American popular tunes were sung in



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Carlos Guzman

both Spanish and in English. *Conjunto* groups were not as experimental as *orquestas* or *grupos* but they occasionally recorded *boleros*, *cumbias*, and rock and roll.⁴⁵

Although Tejano musicians were quite versatile and played all types of music, non-Mexican tunes comprised only a small percentage of the total songs that they performed. The vast majority of songs in their repertoire, in other words, were Mexican tunes. This distinguished them from Mexican Americans in other parts of the country. In places such as Los Angeles, for instance, Mexican-American groups played mostly English songs and either ignored, rejected, or grudgingly played Mexican music.⁴⁶

4. Adaptation and appropriation of non-Mexican and Mexican tunes

The more creative artists at times recorded tunes from various styles, reinventing them to meet Tejano musical sensibilities. In other words, they “Tejanoized” the songs for their fans.⁴⁷ Steve Jordan, for instance, recorded a Buck Owens song “Together Again” and added the accordion to it so that it could be danced in Tejano nightclubs.⁴⁸ Mingo Saldivar, a *conjunto* artist from the 1960s took the popular Johnny Cash song “Ring of Fire,” rearranging it as a *ranchera* and adding bilingual lyrics.⁴⁹ Priscila y sus Balas de Plata took the popular disco song, “I Will Survive,” and transformed it into a *cumbia* with lyrics.⁵⁰

Traditional Mexican songs, on occasion, have also been reinvented for a Tejano audience. Ricardo Castillo, lead vocalist for La Diferenzia, for instance, in the late 1990s took a popular Juan Gabriel ballad, “Querida,” and rearranged it as a *ranchera* for Tejano audiences. It was extremely well received throughout the state, as indicated by its constant playing on Tejano radio stations in places such as Corpus Christi and Houston.⁵¹

5. Blending of ensembles and styles

Under some circumstances, Tejano groups blended diverse vocal traditions, ensembles, and musical styles. The *orquesta* and *conjunto* musicians of the late 1940s and early 1950s combined the vocal singing tradition with the social dance music of Tejanos to create contemporary *música* Tejana. A few musicians such as Conjunto Bernal, the Royal Jesters, and Los Dinos incorporated three and four-part harmony sounds into Tejano music in the 1960s and 1970s.⁵² Isidro López in the 1950s, on the other hand, blended the *conjunto* and the *orquesta* ensembles to create a new sound that he called “Texachi” (a mixture of mariachi and Tejano).⁵³ Roberto Pulido, in the 1970s, blended the *orquesta* and the *conjunto* sounds to create progressive *conjunto*.⁵⁴ Emilio in 1989 added a new element to this progressive *conjunto* sound when he incorporated the *grupo* sound of the synthesizer into the *conjunto*.⁵⁵ In the 1970s, Country Roland and others combined the country music of Anglo America with Mexican music to create Chicano country.⁵⁶

6. Local rhythms

Not all the musical traditions incorporated or combined with *música* Tejana were “foreign” in origin. A few of them were indigenous to Mexico. The most well known of these traditions in the contemporary period, I would argue, is the *huapango*, a dance form and song type from southern Tamaulipas and northern Vera Cruz. The drums of the early twentieth century likewise were of indigenous origins.

The incorporation, adaptation, appropriation, or blending of ensembles and styles, as shown above, has occurred throughout the twentieth century, leading to the distinct sounds known as *música* Tejana.⁵⁷ Undoubtedly, more research needs to be conducted on these processes if we are to truly understand its complexity and nature.

Fifth, *música* Tejana is played by a variety of musical ensembles, not simply just *conjuntos*. By this I mean that different types of groups using particular mixes of instruments and vocalists play this music. It includes vocal groups of varying sizes as well as four distinct ensembles—*conjuntos*, *orquestas*, *grupos*, and country bands.⁵⁸ Most of this music is for dancing purposes. The only exception to this is the vocal singing tradition. This type of musical performance, unlike the others to be discussed later, is sit-down or listening music, not dancing music. Historically, vocal singing has occurred in intimate family settings, in theatrical productions, and in a few selected community gatherings.⁵⁹

Vocal singing, as the name implies, was based on individuals singing a variety of songs including lyrical hymns, children’s songs, *canciones de amor*, *corridos*, and *rancheras*. The number of individuals who have sung these lyrics historically has varied between one and three. If only one person sang, he or she was known as a *solista*. If two persons sang, it was known as a *dueto*, if three of them sang, it was known as a trio.

Prior to the 1940s, vocal singing in Texas was usually male-dominated and accompanied by a guitar, a violin, or, on occasion, an accordion. After the 1940s, females were added to the mix of vocal singers. Female singers, both duets and *solistas*, were accompanied by a variety of instruments, including accordions and saxophones or trumpets. Beginning in the late 1940s, the vocal singing popularized by *las mujeres* (women) was incorporated into existing musical ensembles such as the *conjunto* or the *orquestas*. This in effect led to its decline as a viable tradition in Tejano music. It also led to the gradual exclusion of Tejanas from the recording industry since most of the vocal singers for the *orquestas* and *conjuntos* were male.⁶⁰

Although *música* Tejana encompasses the vocal singing tradition, it is mostly made up of musical ensembles devoted to social dance music. Over the last century and a half, four distinct ensembles have played Texas–Mexican music: *orquestas*, *conjuntos*, *grupos*, and country bands. The Spanish terms “*orquesta*,” “*conjunto*,” and “*grupo*” generally make reference to

a group or association of musicians, but, in Texas, they have distinct meanings.⁶¹

The nineteenth-century *orquesta* was based primarily on string instruments such as violins, psalteries, vihuela, mandolins, guitars and contrabass. Occasionally, other instruments such as trumpets, trombones, clarinets, or tubas were used. If brass or wind instruments were used with the former, the ensemble was called an *orquesta típica* (typical orchestra). If only brass and wind instruments were used, they were *orquestas de "pitos"* (wind/brass orchestras) and called *bandas*. Those that used only string instruments were known as *orquestas de cuerda* (string orchestras). *Bandas* emerged in the latter part of the nineteenth century and were not as popular as the other types of *orquestas*, especially among Tejanos. The other two types of *orquestas*, on the other hand, were readily found among the elite and working-class groups in México and in South Texas during the 1800s. *Orquestas*, in general, however, came to be identified with the middle classes in México by the latter part of the nineteenth century and in Texas by the early twentieth century.⁶²

In the post-World War II era, the *orquestas* changed as some musical instruments were either dropped or replaced by new ones.⁶³ In the two decades after the Second World War, saxophones, among other instruments, became extremely important in the modern *orquestas*. Organs and electric guitars were added to this particular ensemble in the 1960s and 1970s. These types of *orquestas*, in combination with other ensembles and the music that they played, came to be popularly known as "La Onda Chicana" during these two decades.⁶⁴

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The *conjunto* was divided into two structurally distinct groups. One of these was known as a traditional *conjunto*, the other one as a progressive *conjunto*. The difference between these two types of *conjuntos* was not in the types of music they played, but in the particular types of instruments used.

The traditional *conjunto* was based primarily on the one-row or two-row button accordion, but it also consisted of two gui-

tars, one of which was a bajo sexto, and a drum. Several theories as to the origins of the accordion have been proposed. One of these is that German and Czech immigrants who settled in San Antonio introduced it to Mexicans in the mid 1800s. The popularity of this instrument then spread southward. Manuel Peña says that German immigrants most likely introduced it to Mexi-

cans in Monterrey in the same time period and it traveled northward.⁶⁵ Chris Strachwitz states that it was probably introduced to Mexicans in the Rio Grande Valley during the same time period and that it traveled both north and south.⁶⁶ Still another scholar argues that it came by way of the Gulf Coast.⁶⁷

The other important instrument of the traditional *conjunto* was the bajo sexto, a twelve-string

bass guitar. Scholars are unclear about how the bajo sexto reached Texas. Unlike accordions, which for the most part are made in Germany or Italy, bajo sextos are made in Texas and México.⁶⁸

The progressive *conjunto* adds one or more instruments to the basic four instrument ensemble. Among the instruments added, especially in the last three decades of the twentieth century, were the "pitos" (a set of saxophones and/or trumpets) and the keyboards (both organ and synthesizers). Roberto Pulido y Los Clásicos initiated the progressive *conjunto* tradition in the 1970's when he added two saxophones to the traditional *conjunto*. Emilio Navaira added a new sound to the progressive *conjunto* ensemble in 1989 when he deleted the horns and instead added keyboards, especially the synthesizer, to the traditional *conjunto*.

The *grupo Tejano*, a relatively new innovation, is anchored in the keyboards, especially the organ and the synthesizer. Additionally, it utilizes a variety of string and wind instruments, drums (percussion), and vocal singers. Prior to the early 1990s, these types of groups did not utilize the accordion in their music.

The *grupo Tejano* is slightly different from the *grupo* phenomenon in Mexico. In Mexico, *grupos* are keyboard-driven as in Texas, but the musicians specialize in romantic ballads or in *cumbias*.⁶⁹ In Texas, they do not specialize in *baladas* only; *grupos*



Photo Courtesy of: Tejano Artist Music Museum, Inc.

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also sing or play a variety of other tunes such as *cumbias*, *rancheras*, country, and pop. Their repertoire, in other words, is more diverse than that of *grupos Mexicanos*.

Grupostejanos originated in the 1960s with the formation of Los Fabulosos Cuatro, but they did not emerge as a powerful force until the 1980s. The number of *grupos* expanded significantly during the last two decades of the twentieth century. Among the most popular *grupostejanos* in the 1990s were Mazz, La Mafia, and the former Selenia y Los Dinos.

The Chicano country bands are unique to *música Tejana*. These types of groups have at least three general characteristics. First, they are small and have between four and six persons to the ensemble. They also depend on two important instruments for their sound, a violin and a steel guitar. Second, the vast majority of vocalists sing with a country twang. Third, these bands play traditional country music and traditional Mexican music but in their own style. For the most part, they “Mexicanize” traditional country music and “countryfy” traditional Mexican songs such as “Los Laureles” or “Las Margaritas.” The former is done by singing the lyrics in Spanish or bilingually, the latter by playing Mexican tunes with these instruments and by singing them with a country twang.

Little is known about the Chicano country bands or where they originated. The earliest recording of country music by a Tejano artist is in 1949. In this year, Johnny Herrera, from Corpus Christi, recorded the country music standard “Jealous Heart” in English and in Spanish for the Melco label. Two years later, he recorded the same song as “Corazon Celoso” for Decca Records. Herrera’s recording, however, was done with saxophones, trumpets, and the accordion, instruments associated with the *orquesta* style popularized by Beto Villa in the late 1940’s.⁷⁰ He did not utilize the steel guitar and violin of traditional country groups.

The Chicano country bands, that is, those that sang with a country twang and used the violin and steel guitar in their recordings, probably originated sometime in the 1950s or 1960s along the lower Rio Grande Valley and became popular in the following two decades.⁷¹ One of these groups, The Country Roland Band, became extremely well known in the early 1970s and influenced other Tejano groups such as Rudy Tee Gonzales y Sus Reno Bops, Snowball & Co., Roberto Pulido y Los Clásicos and Mazz.⁷²

Música Tejana, then, is a particular form of border music developed by Tejanos for Tejanos. Because it is an “indigenous” creation, this music reflects the musical sensibilities of Tejanos, their complex historical experiences, their internal differentiation, and their ethnic identity. *Música Tejana* has been and continues to be a culturally significant symbol of collective pride, although it is extremely popular among non-Tejanos and in areas outside of South Texas. It is an organic symbol of Tejano life

and not merely a commodity to be sold on the capitalist market. Several different types of ensembles, not merely *conjuntos*, also play *música Tejana*. In addition to *conjuntos*, this music is comprised of the vocal singing tradition and three other dance ensembles: *orquestas*, *grupos*, and Chicano country bands. Each of these ensembles has emerged at particular periods of time, competed with each other and other musical styles popular in the Tejano community, and risen or fallen from public view because of important social forces such as shifting aesthetic desires within the Tejano population, the introduction of new technologies, urbanization, and commercialization. In the early part of the twentieth century, for example, various types of *orquestas* and *conjuntos* emerged as popular musical forms in the Tejano community. In the latter part of the twentieth century, *grupos*, Chicano country bands, and other hybrid ensembles with different mixes of musical instruments emerged and competed with *orquestas* and *conjuntos* for dominance.

Música Tejana likewise is rooted in select Mexican musical traditions comprised of many different types of songs and dances. Despite this diversity, the Mexican polka and the polka-based *ranchera* Tejana dominated for most of the twentieth century. This, however, began to change in the 1990s as a result of the increased popularity of the *cumbia* dance rhythm and the perceptible decline of the *ranchera*.

Finally, although *música Tejana* is rooted in Mexican musical traditions, it has been significantly modernized and updated over the decades. A variety of instruments and dance rhythms from other musical styles, for instance, have been incorporated into *música Tejana*. Texas–Mexican performers have also appropriated, adapted, or added a variety of distinct but different styles to this music and fashioned a sound that reflects their sensibilities and experiences. No one can say for sure what the future holds for *música Tejana*, but whatever new forms and styles emerge will definitely relate to the historical experiences, internal differences, and ethnic identity of the Tejano community. This music, in other words, will continue to be culturally significant to the Tejano population, regardless of its popularity or commercialization, because it is, in essence, an indigenous creation. ■



Notes

- 1 Manuel Peña, *Música Tejana* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1999), 3-14.
- 2 Ramiro Burr, "Conjunto faithful to converge at San Antonio festival," *Houston Chronicle*, May 11, 1997, 10.
- 3 For different definitions of Tejano see Jon Pareles, "Niche Music..." *New York Times*, late edition, Sun May 14, 1995, Sec. 4, 2; Burr, "Conjunto faithful..." 1997, 10; Marty Racine, "Making the Music," *Houston Chronicle*, August 16, 1992, 8; and Thaddeus Herrick, "Go Tejano!/Music's appeal oversteps traditional boundaries," *Houston Chronicle*, February 9, 1995, 5.
- 4 Peña, xi, 184-186.
- 5 Vilma Maldonado, "Defining Tejano hard because it encompasses so much," *The Monitor* (McAllen, Texas), October 14, 1997, 4A.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 See Peña.
- 8 See Richard L. Nostrand, *The Hispano Homeland* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 99.
- 9 For an overview of the distinctiveness of the border in Tejano history see Américo Paredes, *With His Pistol in His Hand* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1957), 7-32.
- 10 Armando C. Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy: Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734-1900* (Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 1998, 3.
- 11 Joe Nick Patoski, *Selena: Como La Flor* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1996), 12.
- 12 Sam Suniga. Personal interview with author, San Antonio, Texas November 18, 2000.
- 13 Patoski, 12-13.
- 14 Alice, Texas, a rural community 45 miles west of Corpus Christi, in fact, was officially declared in the summer of 2000 as the "birthplace" of *Música Tejana* by the state legislature. Carlos Truan, State Senator from the Corpus Christi area, discussed this legislative proclamation at an induction ceremony honoring over twelve artists and pioneers of the Tejano music industry. The author was chosen to be one of the presenters at the induction ceremony on Friday, August 25, 2000 at the Knights of Columbus (KC) Hall in Alice, Texas.
- 15 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mextiza* (1987), preface.
- 16 Manuel Peña, *The Texas-Mexican Conjunto: History of a Working Class Music* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), 24.
- 17 For a historical overview of Mexican Americans in Texas see Arnoldo De Leon, *Mexican Americans in Texas: A Brief History*, 2nd ed. (Wheeling, Ill.: Harland Davidson, Inc., 1999) and David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987).
- 18 Peña, *The Texas-Mexican Conjunto*, 24.
- 19 Dan William Dickey, *The Kennedy Corridos: A Study of the Ballads of a Mexican American Hero* (Austin: Center for Mexican American Studies, University of Texas, Austin, 1978), 7. On *corridos* in general see also Américo Paredes, *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and its Hero* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958).
- 20 Paredes, 129-150.
- 21 Peña, *Música Tejana*, 30.
- 22 This as well as other corridos can be found in *Corridos y Tragedias de la Frontera: First Recordings of Historic Mexican American Ballads*, Arhoolie, CD 7019 and CD 7020. For an analysis of the "Corrido of Gregorio Cortez" see Paredes, 1958.
- 23 Peña, 77.
- 24 Peña, 39. Peña notes that in the latter part of the century a new type of *ranchera* emerged. He argues that this "Texo-centric" *ranchera* was a variant of the *ranchera* that accepted the Texan myth of bigness. See p. 39.
- 25 Peña argues that the *canción típica* was also known as a *canción Mexicana* in the early part of the century. Peña, p. 50.
- 26 Peña, 39.
- 27 Peña argues that the treacherous woman theme was a form of ideology displacement that transposed issues of class relations to the gender domain. Peña, 54. Lydia Mendoza bucked the practice of casting women as deceitful lovers. For some examples see the collection of hits during the 1930s. Lydia Mendoza, *Mal Hombre*, Arhoolie CD-7002, 1992.
- 28 The unique instrumentation of the *orquesta*, *grupo*, and *conjunto* ensembles will be explained in a later section.
- 29 Peña, 50-51.
- 30 *Música romántica* acquired the label of *música moderna* in the post-WWII era. Peña, 60.
- 31 The *ranchera* and the *romántica* illustrated a much larger relationship between the country and the city and its ideological articulation. The concepts of *lo ranchero* and *jaiton* encapsulated the ideological contradictions embodied in the concepts of the city (capitalism) and the country (feudalism) an idealized rural communitarian experience accompanied by backward, uncivilized peon and an idealized modernizing urban middle-class experience. Peña, 63.
- 32 Thaddeus Herrick, "Go Tejano!/Music's appeal oversteps traditional boundaries," *Houston Chronicle*, February 9, 1995, 1.
- 33 Peña, 3-14.
- 34 Burr, 1999, 105.
- 35 See Strachwitz, Vol. 4, n.d. (ca. 1973)
- 36 Sordo Sodi notes that there are various types of *ranchera* songs. One of these is the *canciones norteñas* played by *norteño groups*. These songs were at one time accompanied on the vihuela. Beginning in 1850, harp, vihuela, and psaltery were used in the accompaniment of these songs. Around 1890 the *jarana* and guitar came into use; the accordion appeared still later. *Canciones norteñas* became popular in the capital in the 1920s. From there they radiated all over the country. The *norteño* ensemble, as it is known in the 1970s, thus was not more than 25 years old. Cited in Antonio Gonzalez, *Mexican American Musicians; A History* (Houston: Privately printed, no date), p. 98.
- 37 Peña, 51-53, argues that the *canción ranchera*, sung primarily by vocal duets, became powerfully charged with class and gender implications in the second quarter of the twentieth century. The songs were gender biased and coalesced around the theme of the treacherous woman. This theme, however, reversed existing gender norms, rather than reflected them.
- 38 For examples of the relative increase in *cumbias* during the 1990s see the following two albums: Intocable, *Intocable*, Capitol EMI, CD-H2724349517820, 1998; Selena, *Baila Esta Cumbia*, Capitol-EMI, Casette 4077990524, 1992.
- 39 Little Joe, for instance, recorded the song "Las Nubes" bilingually in the late 1970s. Ram Herrera recently recorded "A Never Ending Love," a *ranchera* with English lyrics. For a sophisticated cultural and musical analysis of "Las Nubes" and several other songs by Little Joe see Manuel Peña, *Mexican American Orquesta* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 244-259.
- 40 These processes have been called "bimusicality" by Peña and "hybridity" by Burr. For a complex analysis of the former see Peña, *The Mexican American Orquesta*, especially 227-274. On hybridity see Burr, 1999, 15-39.
- 41 Letty Guval, Miles de Suenos, A.B. Wick Records 001, 1994.
- 42 *Conjunto Bernal*, Aurora, GS160, 1983. This is probably the date of its re-issue. I originally heard the album in the summer of 1978 when I moved to Santa Barbara, California. My cousin, Elias Soto, a displaced Tejano living in California, had gone to Texas and bought it for his listening pleasure. He introduced it to me the first day I visited him in Santa Barbara. This album then must have been recorded in the late 1970s.
- 43 To hear some of his original recordings issued between 1948 and 1954 see *Beto Villa: Father of Orquesta Tejana*, Arhoolie CD 364, 1992.
- 44 For examples of this type of music see Sunny & the Sunliners, *Little Brown Eyed Soul*, Key-Loc, KL-3005, n.d. and Little Joe and the Latinaires, *Unbeatable*, Tomi Records, tlp1002, n.d. All the songs in these albums are in English and recorded during the early 1960s.
- 45 In 1957, for instance, El Conjunto Bernal recorded a rock and roll song entitled "La Novia Antonia." This selection can be found in *Tejano Roots: Raíces Tejanas*, Arhoolie, CD 341, 1991.
- 46 Peña refers to this development as the "triumph of the anti-ranchero. See Manuel Peña, *The Mexican American Orquesta* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 166-199.
- 47 Some groups have Tejanoized other styles so that they reflect the experiences of Mexican Americans in the barrio but have not rearranged the tunes so that Tejanos can dance them. One of these is Randy Garibay, the great Tejano bluesman. He records old-time blues but with lyrics that reflect the experiences of Mexican Americans in the barrios of San Antonio, Texas. See, Randy Garibay, *Barbacoa Blues*, Angelita Mia Production Company, [no CD number], 1997 and *And Cats Don't Sleep*, Angelita Mia Production, RGCD-3943, no date.
- 48 The song can be found in *Steve Jordan: The Many Sounds of Steve Jordan*, Arhoolie, CD-319, 1990. See selection number 19.
- 49 This song can be heard in *The Best of the 11th Annual Tejano Conjunto Festival*, (1992). (San Antonio: Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center Produc-

- tion, 1992).
- 50 See selection number 7, "Sobrevivire," in Priscila y Sus Balas de Plata, *Todo Por Ti*, Fonovisa, B000009R4V, 1999.
- 51 Throughout the fall of 1999 I constantly heard this song on KQQK, 106.5 FM in Houston and in several radio stations in Corpus Christi, including KUNO, 1400 AM, KSAB, 99.9 FM, and KMIQ/Majic 105.1 FM.
- 52 For an example of three-part harmony in the *orquesta* style of Música Tejana see Los Dinos, *Los Dinos*, Falcon Records, FLP-2057, n.d.
- 53 Burr, 1999, 135.
- 54 Pulido has countless of albums and CDs illustrating his unique combination of the *orquesta* and the *conjunto* sounds. For an example from the late 1970s see Roberto Pulido y Los Clásicos, *El Primo*, Falcon, ARVLP-1056, 1979.
- 55 See, for instance, Emilio Navaira & Rio Band, *Sensaciones*, CBS, CRC-80329, 1990.
- 56 Country Roland recorded a large number of albums in the 1970s and early 1980s. For one example of his music see Country Roland, *Mr. Chicano Country*, Falcon, ARVLP-1062, 1980. For an example of the variety of Chicano country bands that recorded during the latter part of the 1970s and the early 1980s see Various Artists, *The Best of Chicano Country, Vol. 2*, Falcon, ARVLP-1075, 1982. This latter album has songs by Roberto Pulido y Los Clásicos, Texas Country Band, Cactus Country Band, Country Roland Sr., and Country Roland, Jr.
- 57 For an excellent analysis of this process as reflected in the modern *orquesta* see Peña, *The Mexican American Orquesta*, 1999, especially 227-274.
- 58 One other type of group was the *banda*. *Bandas* utilized mostly wind-based or brass instruments such as clarinet, cornet, flutes, trumpets, trombones, and tubas. Many of them also had one or two sets of drums. Although some *banda* groups have been popular in the Tejano community, especially along the border, no *banda* group recorded Tejano music during the 20th century. The association of *banda* music with military functions or marching bands among the popular imagination probably accounts for this lack of popularity among Tejanos.
- 59 Americo Paredes, *A Texas-Mexican Cancionero: Folksongs of the Lower Border* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).
- 60 Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr. "The Rise of Recorded Tejano Music in the Post-World War II Years, 1946-1964," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 19, Number 1 (Fall 1999): 26-49.
- 61 Several scholars have used the term "Tejano" synonymously with what I call "*grupo*." Tejano however is an ambiguous and confusing term that encompasses all groups currently playing Música Tejana. Even Peña himself provides two confusing definitions of "Tejano." In the preface, he argues that Tejano is comprised of "the most recent crop of synthesizer-driven ensembles and their styles," XI. Later he expands this definition and argues that Tejano is comprised of "the various Texas-Mexican musical groups and their styles" played in the 1990s. (184). Ramiro Burr, the well-known music columnist for the *San Antonio Light* argues that "Tejano" includes all types of musical styles, including the *orquestas* that originated in the post-World War II era and the progressive *conjuntos*. See Burr, 1999, 197.
- 62 Chris Strachwitz, [liner notes], *Tejano Roots/Raíces Tejanas: The Roots of Tejano and Conjunto Music* Arhoolie, CD341, 1991; Chris Strachwitz, [liner notes], *Mexican American Border Music: Volume 5-Orquestas de Cuerdas: The End of a Tradition*, Arhoolie, CD7018, 1996; Chris Strachwitz, [liner notes], *Mexican American Border Music, Vol 4-Orquestas Tipicas, The First Recordings, 1926-1938*, Arhoolie, CD7017, 1996; Peña, 1999, 118-127.
- 63 The songs and dances played by these *orquestas* also changed over time. The changing repertoire is discussed in a later section.
- 64 For a history of "La Onda Chicana" and the major *orquestas* playing this music during the 1960s and 1970s, see Peña, 1999.
- 65 Peña argues that it most likely originated in Mexico. Violent confrontations between Anglos and Mexicans in Bexar discouraged its use in the Mexican community. German settlements, especially workers in Monterrey probably introduced it to the community. Peña, *The Texas-American Conjunto*, 33.
- 66 Chris Strachwitz, [liner notes], *Texas-Mexican Border Music, Vol 4: Norteno Accordion, Part 1: The First Recordings*, Folklyric Records, LP9006, n.d. (ca 1973).
- 67 Adrian Trevino, *Tejano Music, 1830-1930: An Informal History* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: Trellis Publishing Company, 1990).
- 68 The bajo sexto has a thicker neck than a regular guitar and has a feature called a "cutaway," which improves resonance. The electric bass replaced the bajo sexto's bass function in many *conjuntos* in the 1950s, and today the bajo sexto mainly serves as a rhythm instrument. Burr, 1999, 58.
- 69 They also do not give billing to any members of the group. Burr, 1999, 102.
- 70 Patoski, *Selena*, 23.
- 71 For a sampling of this music see the following LPs: Country Roland, *Las Margaritas*, Falcon, ARVLP-1057, 1979; Country Roland Band, *Rancho Grande*, Falcon, ARVLP-1052, 1978; Country Mingo, *The Outlaw*, Falcon, FLP-5041, 1980; The Texas Country Band, *Valle de Palmas*, Falcon, ARVLP-1065, 1980; Country Roland, Jr. *Mucho Macho*, Falcon, ARVLP-1064, 1980; Various Artists, *The Best of Chicano Country, Vol. 2*, Falcon, ARVLP-1075, 1982.
- 72 For a sampling of the country music recorded by these artists see Rudy Tee Gonzales y Sus Reno Bops, *Country, Teardrop*, TD-2030, (ca. 1972); Snowball & Co., *Snowball & Co.*, Fireball, FLP-1001, n.d.. (see especially "Just Because," a Chicano country ballad); Roberto Pulido, in Various Artists, *The Best of Chicano Country, Vol. 2*, Falcon, ARVLP-1075, 1982; and Mazz, *Perfect 10*, Cara, CA-10B, 1977. Mazz recorded three country songs in their first album in 1977, "Algo Bonito," (Something Pretty) "El, (He)" and "Laura Ya No Vive Aqui" (Laura Doesn't Live Here Anymore). Unlike other Tejano artists, Mazz abandoned the use of the steel guitar and violin and played these songs using the synthesizer and rhythm guitar as its primary instruments.