



Música Tejana: The Cultural Economy of Artistic Transformation (University of Houston Series in Mexican American Studies, Sponsored by the Cente)

Manuel Peña

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Texas-Mexican music, or *música tejana*, is not one single music but several musical and musico-literary genres, ensembles, and their styles, encompassing the *corrido*, *canción*, and what author Manuel Peña calls the *canción-corrido*. Música tejana also includes two major regional ensembles and their styles—the *conjunto* and the Texas-Mexican version of the *orquesta*. A more recent crop of synthesizer-driven ensembles and their styles, known since the mid-eighties as "Tejano," is another representative of *música tejana*.

Despite their diversity, these various ensembles, genres, and styles share two fundamental characteristics: they are all homegrown, and they all speak after their own fashion to fundamental social processes shaping Texas-Mexican society. As Peña persuasively argues, they represent a transforming cultural economy and its effects on Texas-Mexicans.

Peña traces the history of *música tejana* from the *fandangos* and *bailes* of the nineteenth century through the *canción ranchera* and the politically informed *corrido* to the most recent forms of Tejano music. In the beginning, he argues, musicmaking was a function of "use-value"—its symbolic power linked to the social processes of which it was an organic part. As *música tejana* was swept into the commercial market, it added a second, less culturally grounded dimension—"exchange-value"—whereby it came

under the culturally weakening influence of the commercial market. Since the 1940s, the music has oscillated between the extremes of use- and exchange-value, though it has never lost its power to speak to issues of identity, difference, and social change.

Música Tejana thus gives not only a detailed overview of *música tejana* but also analyzes the social and economic implications of the music. The breadth, depth, and clarity with which Peña has treated this subject make this a most useful text for those interested in ethnomusicology, folklore, ethnic studies, and Mexican American culture.

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