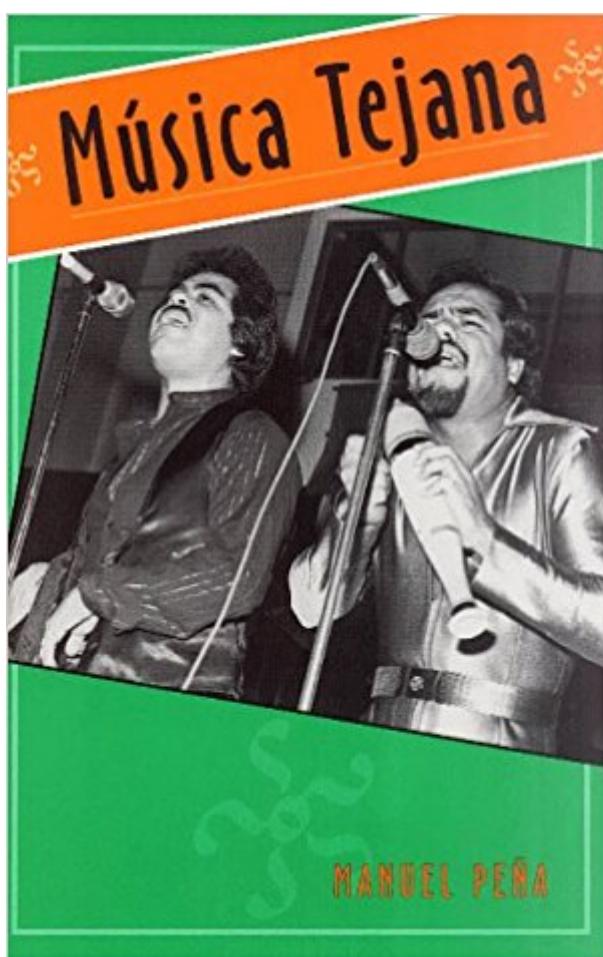


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# **MÃºsica Tejana: The Cultural Economy Of Artistic Transformation (University Of Houston Series In Mexican American Studies, Sponsored By The Cente)**



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Texas-Mexican music, or musica tejana, is not one single music but several musical and musico-literary genres, ensembles, and their styles, encompassing the corrido, cancion, and what author Manuel Pena calls the cancion-corrido. Musica 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 musica 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 Pena persuasively argues, they represent a transforming cultural economy and its effects on Texas-Mexicans. Pena traces the history of musica tejana from the fandangos and bailes of the nineteenth century through the cancion ranchera and the politically informed corrido to the most recent forms of Tejano music. In the beginning, he argues, music making was a function of "use-value" -- its symbolic power linked to the social processes of which it was an organic part. As musica 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. Musica Tejana thus gives not only a detailed overview of musica tejana but also analyzes the social and economic implications of the music. The breadth, depth, and clarity with which Pena has treated this subject make this a most useful text for those interested in ethnomusicology, folklore, ethnic studies, and Mexican American culture. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Manuel Peña, who received his Ph.D. in ethnomusicology and folklore from the University of Texas, has been a professor of anthropology and music at the University of Texas at Austin and California State University, Fresno. He is the author of *The Texas-Mexican Conjunto: History of a*

## Working-Class Music and The Mexican American Orquesta: Music, Culture, and the Dialectic of Conflict.

Pena's book is full of a lot of good and well researched information. My biggest problem with the book is that it's so terribly dense. I'm of the mind that you can be informative and compelling in your scholarly writing but yet still be accessible to many types of people-- not just other academics. It's important for people to see themselves in history in order to feel as if their history matters. Music can be, after all, one of the most democratic forms of expression and therefore is an excellent method by which to connect to people. Pena's book doesn't reach out to would-be students of Mexican American music-- it sits in a stuffy university office and waits for the students to come to it.

A well written book by an academic and musician who has a deep understanding of the history and dynamics of "Tejana" and, many other types of music. Manuel Pena continues to leave his mark as a premier ethnomusicologist.

Good historical read!

If you grew up in South Texas, as I did, then musica Tejana was as pervasive as country and western or rock and roll. In the 1960s you could hear Sunny Ozuna and the Sunliners or Little Joe and the Latinaires. Sunny made it in Top 40 with "Talk to Me" and then returned to his Tejano roots. Little Joe would become La Familia and shape a generation of musicians with songs like "La nubes" and become associated with the rise of Jose Angel Gutierrez and La Raza Unida political movement. Manual Pena gives you the history of various genres of musica Tejana from conjuntos to the late superstar Selena. No other book has managed to cover so much territory and still offer such a coherent view of music and culture.

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