

Tejano Music

Tejano music has had a tremendous influence on the Chicano culture and still continues to this day. In the 1990's the term "Tejano" was considered the umbrella term under which various Texas-Mexican and other Chicano groups were labeled (Tatum, 2001). However it was the Mexican Revolution that ranged from 1910-1917 that the genre of Tejano music first came about. Tejano music combines Mexican polkas, "baladas" which are love songs in slow tempo, as well as elements of rock, pop, country, reggae and even rap (Tatum, 2001). Tejano music is sometimes called conjunto music because it involves the use of accordion ensembles as well as guitars and bass like instruments.

Tejano music originated in the state of Texas and is sometimes referred to as "Tex-Mex" because of the area of origin.

There have been many success stories in the Tejano music industry. A few of these artists include La Mafia, Emilio Navaira, Carlos Santana, and the "Queen of Tejano" Selena Quintanilla Perez. In this paper I will discuss the impacts that Selena and Carlos Santana had on the Chicano culture as well as Tejano music.

Selena Quintanilla Perez is considered the Queen of Tejano music. She was born in Freeport, Texas in 1971 and just at the age of twelve she was doing public concerts. At age fourteen her and her group Los Dinos recorded their first hit called "Give me a Kiss" (Tatum,2001). Selena came from a music background, in which her father Abraham was a former musician himself. Selena's family was also part of the band. Her brother played bass guitar and her sister played the drums. It is said that Selena grew up speaking English, but her father taught her to sing in Spanish so she could resonate with the Latino community. Her father had pulled her out of school in the eighth grade; however she still earned her high school diploma at age seventeen.

Selena had a fast growing career. In 1987 during the Tejano Music Awards, she won best female vocalist of the year as well as performer of the year. She was also the first Tejano musician ever to win a Grammy. In 1992, she married Chris Perez who was also a guitarist in her band. Apart from performing, Selena began designing her own clothes and started her own boutique simply called "Selena Etc." in 1994. She even went as far as having in-house beauty salons in her two boutiques. She knew the importance of school and at the peak of her career she would visit schools and talk to kids about the importance of education. She also helped out with the D.A.R.E. program which was to help teach kids about drug abuse and to be clean.

Selena was a very gifted Chicano/Latino artist. Selena's life was tragically cut short by the president of her fan club, Yolanda Saldivar who was embezzling money from her. When Selena's family had found out that Yolanda was stealing money from her fan clubs, they decided to fire her. Three weeks after the firing of Yolanda, Selena had met up with her to try to receive financial records that Saldivar refused to turn over at a hotel in Corpus Christi, Texas. When Selena asked again for the paperwork, Saldivar pulled out a pistol and shot Selena. While Selena was trying to flee, she was shot again in the shoulder and was chased by Yolanda. Selena died on March 31st, 1995 from loss of blood.

The impact of Selena's murder was detrimental to the Latino culture. They had lost an icon that they had truly loved. Selena's funeral drew more than sixty thousand mourners. When George W. Bush was the governor of Texas, he declared April 12th 1995; which was Selena's birthday as "Selena Day" in Texas. In 1995 Selena was also inducted into the Latin hall of fame.

Another gifted Tejano musician is Carlos Santana. Carlos Santana was born on July 20th, 1947 in Jalisco, Mexico. Santana was highly influenced by music in early childhood life. By the age of five he knew how to play the violin, and by age eight he could play the guitar

(biography.com). Santana was heavily influenced by Ritchie Valens, because there were few Latinos in American rock and pop music.

In 1960, Carlos's family moved to San Francisco; however he stayed in Tijuana to hone his musical skills at local clubs. (Tatum,2001). The 1960's really brought Santana's music into the limelight. He was growing increasingly popular in the San Francisco area and he was able to add to musical diversity that was already happening there.

In a span of over twenty years his band would produce eight gold albums and seven platinum albums. In 1997, he won the Chicano Lifetime Achievement award, and was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1998. Also in 1998, Carlos and his wife Deborah started the Milagro Foundation which was to help underprivileged youths. Santana has also used his profits to help fight AIDS. Carlos has also won ten Grammy awards and three Latin Grammys by 2002.

Carlos Santana is still continuing to play music to this day. He is very appreciative of where music origins come from and the people who he idolized as well as the people he likes watching perform to this day. To back up this statement, I found a quote of his in response to the term "Latin Explosion". "First of all, the music that people call Latin or Hispanic is really African. So Black people need to get the credit for that. Number two, Latin people are very passionate, and the music that we love is definitely Afro-rooted -- whether it's Bob Marley or Afro-Cuban -- because it deals with rhythms" (Santana, 2000).

In conclusion, Tejano music has had an impact all over the world. Chicano artists such as Selena Quintanilla Perez and Carlos Santana have shown the world a glimpse of Chicano culture. These two artists did more than just stick to their music and life on the road. These artists made an impact especially on the struggling youth of all ethnicities.

Although not many of their songs pertained to the struggles of everyday life, their personas have inspired many to join their fundraisers. Selena had a dream to help kids stay on the right path by not doing drugs and to stop at nothing to pursue the dreams that they had. She was not just a musician; she was also a clothes designer because it was something that she had always wanted to do. She was influenced by people like Janet Jackson and Paula Abdul and in turn she became an idol to many young women as well. Jennifer Lopez who played Selena in the movie made about her life was influenced by her and said that it was an honor to portray her.

Carlos Santana had a major impact not only on Chicanos, but on many kids and adults who were aspiring musicians. His foundations and contributions have helped millions and have given hope to those who really need it. Tejano music, although not mainly played today has had some tremendous impact on our society by inspiring the youth to engage in music and do what makes them happy.

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