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# HOMEGROWN 2013 *The Music of America*

Traditional Ethnic and Regional Music and Dance that's "Homegrown" in Communities across the U.S.

AN ACQUISITIONS & PRESENTATION PROJECT

# LOS TEXMANIACS



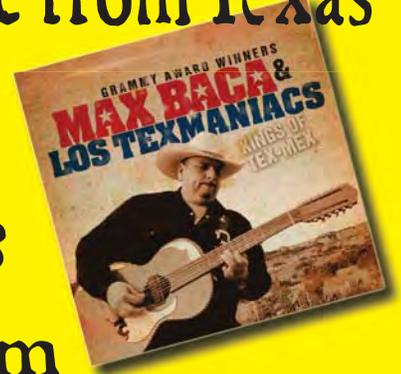
IN CELEBRATION OF  
HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

## Traditional Conjunto Dance Music from Texas

FREE AND OPEN  
TO THE PUBLIC

Wednesday  
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12 NOON – 1 PM  
Coolidge Auditorium

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# LOS TEXMANIACS

## Traditional Conjunto Dance Music from Texas

The world has a few ambassadors of conjunto, a heavily polka-based south Texas traditional music featuring a three-row, diatonic button accordion. Flaco Jimenez, Steve Jordan, and Mingo Saldivar have hit the world-wide stage representing this fiercely regional music, but the genre now also has an ambassador of the bajo sexto, the second, and crucial, instrument of this conjunto pair - a twelve string bass guitar of Mexican origin - and that is Max Baca of Los Texmaniacs.

Baca, age 46, fronts this conjunto, which is on a mission to take a comparatively little-known music genre to a world audience. Conjunto is not unknown in the lands of the southwestern U.S. or northern Mexico, of course, or in states where a diaspora of Texas-Mexicans, mostly following migrant farmworker routes, have settled and continue to live the music. But compared to other traditional genres of American music, conjunto has received little attention outside of folklore and ethnomusicology circles, perhaps because it's difficult to translate and communicate this deeply embedded sound and cultural feeling to outside listeners.

Baca has figured out how to do just that, and has carved out a niche for his band on the world music stage. Baca can educate and guide his audience from the performance stage in an entertaining way. In the middle of their hard-driven show Baca will temporarily dismiss the electric bassist and drummer to feature a more acoustic set of songs with his accordionist, playing vintage conjunto tunes like the historic polka "La Chicharronera," recorded by Narciso Martinez, the recognized father of conjunto music, on the Bluebird Record label in 1936.

In order to do that, Max needs a competent accordionist and he's had a few of those over the course of the group's history. He started off with Michael Guerra when he founded the group in 1997, but it was his partnership of six years (2006-2012) with David Farias (now age 50) formerly of Los Hermanos Farias of San Antonio and the popular Tejano band, La Tropa F, that solidly placed Los Texmaniacs on the world music stage. It was during this time that Texmaniacs recorded two albums for Smithsonian Folkways Recordings — the Grammy-award-winning *Borders y Bailes* in 2009 and *Texas Towns & Tex-Mex Sounds* in 2012.

Farias has moved on and Los Texmaniacs has now morphed into a family band with its newest member, young accordionist Josh Baca, age 22, Max's nephew. This is perhaps Texmaniacs 3.0, the version that was most meant to be but that took a few years to incubate. Young Josh admired his uncle Max since he was very young, and would jump fences

in their native New Mexico homes to go hang out and "jam" with his uncle at age five. By the age of eight, Josh had made his first pilgrimage to the Tejano Conjunto Festival in San Antonio, where he played accordion and bajo sexto with other very young conjunto musicians.

In his teens Josh made the permanent move to the heartland of conjunto, San Antonio, Texas, where he played with Tejano band Grupo Vida for a few years until the opening with his uncle came up. He suddenly went from a local dance hall and club scene to an international folk music festival circuit touring the U.S. and Europe, with his uncle still providing some training. But the Baca musical gene made him ready and kicked in immediately. Other members of the group include Lorenzo Martinez, age 46, on drums, from California, and the newly incorporated bassist and vocalist Noe Hernandez, age 41, from the Rio Grande Valley.

Max and Josh are preceded in this music by Max Baca Sr. of Albuquerque, Max's father and Josh's grandfather, who fronted his own conjunto band, Los Hermanos Baca, for many years. Max and his brother Jimmy (Josh's father) performed since a very young age; by age 12 Max was already playing bajo sexto in the family band. It was at the age of 17, however, that Max' life changed when his idol, conjunto icon Flaco Jimenez, invited him to perform with him and join the Tex-Mex rock-n-roll group, the Texas Tornados. Jimenez, Doug Sahm, Augie Meyers and Freddy Fender gave Max a whole new perspective in what is possible in conjunto music, with an accordion and bajo sexto.

"You can play anything on the bajo sexto," says Max, "not just conjunto — rock-n-roll, blues, country, even jazz." That influence and vision continues in Los Texmaniacs, where Baca continues to showcase traditional conjunto but also fuses it with other world music sounds, appealing to a wider audience.

Cristina Ballí, Executive Director  
Texas Folklife, Austin Texas

*The American Folklife Center was created by Congress in 1976 and placed at the Library of Congress to "preserve and present American folklife" through programs of research, documentation, archival preservation, reference service, live performance, exhibition, public programs, and training. The Center includes the American Folklife Center Archive of folk culture, which was established in 1928 and is now one of the largest collections of ethnographic material from the United States and around the world. Please Visit our web site <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/>.*

