



STUDIO OCHENTA ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT

MIJA (ENGLISH) – Mija Música: El acordeón

[00:00:00] - Luis López

Before we start, we have exciting news! Adventure in Atacama, the interactive show produced by Studio Ochenta, has been nominated for Most Innovative use of Audio at this year's Lovie Awards! And if you liked the show, please vote for us! Check this episode's shownotes for the link where you can cast your vote. Thanks!

[00:00:21] - Gavilán

From a house at the top of a hill comes the sound of vallenato. You can hear abuelo Lolo playing the caja. With el Guacho beside him playing the guacharaca. And on the accordion?

A girl named Paloma. She wears her long black hair in a braid. And she's practicing the latest paseo my grandpa taught her.

The music ends, and Lolo smiles. "Ándale, mija, you're ready now," he says. Profe Lolo had taught her well.

[00:01:11] - Gavilán

My name is Gabriel, but everyone calls me Gavilán. I'm from Monterrey, in Northeastern Mexico. And several years ago, life led me across the border to New York. But destiny has now brought me back to this city.

In this episode, I'll tell you what I learned about abuelo's instrument of choice: the accordion. And about someone who got to know him much better than I did.

[00:01:44] - Gavilán

I'm at abuelo Lolo's burial.

[00:01:51] - Gavilán

Wearing one of his performance suits complete with hat and boots. I'm drowning in it but I don't mind. I feel closer to him like this, like I'm in one of his shows. Güelita Yoya sits beside me.

With a fan in one hand and flowers in the other.

The whole neighborhood is here to see him off. And right there, next to the grave, is Paloma. Playing the accordion. Her long, black braid fades into her dress.

[00:02:37] - Gavilán

I hadn't seen her in ages, so when the ceremony ends, I go talk to her.

[00:02:43] - Gavilán

You see, as any self-respecting regiomontana (that's what we call people from Monterrey), Paloma grew up listening to norteña music.

Los Cadetes de Linares, Ramón Ayala, Los Tigres del Norte. And when her parents gifted her her first accordion, she started learning every single song she listened to.

In fact, the accordion arrived in Monterrey twice. First, over a century ago, when immigrants fleeing unrest in Europe brought us the accordion sound through polka music... You know, I imagine some guy named Hans at a local party, bringing out his accordion, and the rancheros start tapping their boots... eventually leading to the musical fusion that became huapangos norteños... I mean, of course that didn't happen, but can you imagine?

And you can still hear this music in the city and in the ranches, played with accordion and bajo sexto.

And the accordion's second arrival... was in the form of vallenato records. Records that found their way to the city through collectors. They told stories of missing one's homeland, And folks who came to Monterrey from other states further south: from San Luis Potosí, Zacatecas, Veracruz could hear themselves in these songs from the countryside of Colombia.

[00:04:11] - Gavilán

One day, profe Lolo saw her playing at a baptism. And everything changed. He taught her to love vallenato. A music from Colombia that found a second home in Monterrey. A city with a few

neighborhoods that are affectionately called “Colombia chiquita”. Because the accordion was already in our DNA.

After learning all that, it didn’t take long for Paloma to fill her repertoire with paseos, sones, and cumbias.

She played alongside Lolo at piñatas, quinceañeras, and all sorts of gigs. In fact, in one of his frequent visits to the city. Gabriel García Márquez, GABO *himself*, saw them playing in the street once. He shook Paloma’s hand and complimented her playing. Then he looked at grandpa Lolo, smiled, and said “¡lindo sombrero!”.

[00:05:07] - Gavilán

As I hear all this, I feel a sort of sadness. And I’m not gonna lie, I’m a bit jealous too. Of everything she got to live with Lolo while I was in New York.

But honestly, that jealousy waters down when I remember that she might actually know the answer to my question...

I ask her if she knows what the phrase on Lolo’s accordion meant. “Cuanto más lejano el cerro, más sabroso el cafetal” / “The farther the hill, the richer the coffee”.

She thinks about it for a few seconds, then smiles. “It does sound like him. But I think the person who might know more about that is your grandma.”

[00:05:54] - Gavilán

I’m not sure how to approach my güelita Yoya when the funeral is over. As everyone leaves and says goodbye, I finally get close to her. She looks so small. She holds onto my arm as we start walking together.

How do I ask about this song that speaks of something I know nothing about, and maybe she doesn’t either.

Maybe it’s about a another life he had, or worse, its about a life he wishes he had without her... One where he travels far away...

Am I only gonna make things worse?

But before I can even ask her, she tells me to look at the horizon. It’s a beautiful day. Sunny. Warm. And under the Monterrey sun, in all their splendor, are the mountains.

[00:06:55] - Gavilán

I take a deep breath and finally ask her... And she laughs.

[00:07:06] - Gavilán

She laughs out loud, and everyone stares as she says, giggling: “Uy, miijo, that’s a long story. It’s almost lunchtime, we should head back home and I’ll tell you all about it.”

[00:07:22] - Gavilán

This show was produced by Studio Ochenta. Our executive producer is Lory Martínez.

Story, sound mixing, and original music by me, Luis López.

Our creative director is Lory Martínez.

Additional script editing by Maru Lombardo and Jeremías Juárez.

Our production coordinator is Catalina Hoyos

And our art is by William Guevara.

This week’s recommendation is Los Vallenatos de la Cumbia. Founded in 1985 in Monterrey, they were the first musical group from Mexico to become commercially successful playing Colombian cumbia and vallenato. In their unique style, of course. Check out our show notes and our website to take a listen.

FINAL DEL EPISODIO