



STUDIO OCHENTA ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT

MIJA (ENGLISH) – Mija Música: El vallenato

[00:00:01] - Gavilán

Every song has a story. And the first time I listened to this vallenato it was like greeting an old friend. It's hard to explain what the sound of that accordion makes me feel. There's a sort of joy. And also longing. But there's one particular line that made me discover something about myself... My family, and my home. Listen...

[00:00:37] - Gavilán

Sorry, I think I'm getting ahead of myself a little. Let's take it from the top.

[00:00:46] - 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 visit my home town.

[00:01:04] - Gavilán

Today I'm back in Monterrey for the first time in what feels like forever. I'm here for my grandpa Lolo's funeral. I'm in his room, looking at his stuff. All his relics from the past. To be honest, I didn't really know him that well. The last time I saw him I was...un huerco. That's what we call kids here. In Mexico we have tons of words for kids. Morritos, escuincles, chamacos, chilpayates... But in my house, we were huercos. And my güelita tells me that when I was a huerquillo. My grandpa Lolo loved to sing me his songs.

[00:01:47] - Gavilán

You see, he was a musician and he had a faded green record player, with a whole bunch of vinyl records. One day, I was curious, so I grabbed the first one I saw. On the cover, it said "cumbias and vallenatos for my friends."

[00:02:06] - Gavilán

I took it out of its sleeve, and Lolo was like “aguas, mijo, be careful. Here. Let me show you!”

[00:02:17] - Gavilán

“First you lift the needle,” he said. “Then you put it right here, the closest you can to the edge of the record. And then... you wait.”

[00:02:35] - Gavilán

He turns it up a little, and after a few seconds of the song, we get to this line:

[00:02:42] - Song

“Cuando abro brecha y sigo el sendero

Y encuentro nuevos, verdes terrenos,

A San Cristóbal llevo en mi pecho,

Y lloro por esos cerros”

[00:03:06] - Gavilán

“I carry San Cristóbal with me in my heart...and I weep for its hills.” I listened to my grandfather sing these two lines so long ago, and I never quite understood them. Cause as far as I know, my grandpa Lolo wasn’t from any town called San Cristóbal. He was from this little town in Veracruz called Zongolica, and he came here when he was twenty five years old. It’s sad that my chance to ask him about any of this is gone. And that’s why I decided to investigate And tell you this story.

[00:03:41] - Gavilán

In my grandpa’s room, next to the record player, I can see his hat hanging on the wall. It’s a sombrero vueltiao, from Colombia. It’s got all these black stripes that go around its brim and its crown. I try it on. It fits me pretty well! And it looks kinda nice. But here’s the funny part:

[00:04:03] - Gavilán

My grandpa Lolo never went to Colombia And he doesn’t know anyone from there either. Grandpa Lolo had three friends, including his wife. And none of them lived farther away than the elote guy who’s always on the corner next to the church. And in every one of the pictures that he pinned on the wall, next to his hat, he’s got an accordion in his hands, and a warm grin on his face.

[00:04:28] - Gavilán

I look out the window from his bedroom. From here you can see the greatest pride of this city: its mountains. Our house in Monterrey is at the top of a hill. I see the Cerro de la Silla, which looks like a saddle. El Cerro de las Mitras, with its many sharp peaks. El Cerro del Topo Chico, which is where the sparkling water comes from, by the way. And the long Sierra Madre Oriental. They all paint the landscape and blend together in the horizon.

[00:04:59] - Gavilán

But I don't see any "Cerro de San Cristóbal" or anything like that. ¿What did Grandpa Lolo mean by that? My grandpa, who never left this city, whom I regret not knowing better. And who carried in his heart a song that would reveal it all.

[00:05:15] - Gavilán

In this series I'll share the story of my grandfather and of his greatest passion: vallenato. I want to know why this music, that was born thousands of miles away from here made him... and me... feel at home.

[00:05:36] - 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 the album "Barrio Bravo" by Celso Piña. Celso is undoubtedly Monterrey's most successful cumbia and vallenato musician. And this album is perhaps his most iconic because of the ways he plays with these musical styles and creates something new out of them.

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