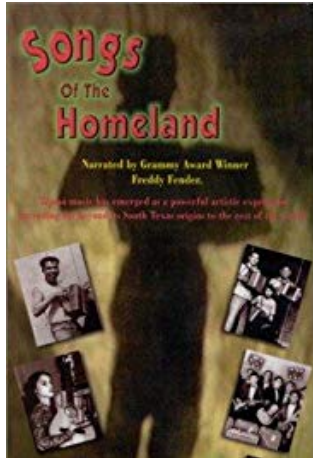


Movie Kit



American
Spaces

Songs of the Homeland



Director: Hector Galan
Year of Release: 1995
Narrated by: Freddie Fender
Rating: None
Length: 1 hour
English level: Medium - Hard

Themes: Hispanic Heritage, Cultural Diversity

Please note:

- This movie is available at **no charge for American Spaces using Kanopy streaming videos**, through eLibraryUSA. Kanopy is available only through the American Spaces Staff Resources section of eLibraryUSA (<https://elibraryusa.state.gov/resources.html>). American Spaces may request eLibraryUSA accounts by emailing americanspaces@state.gov.
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Warning/General Advisory

This film is acceptable for audiences of all ages.

Synopsis (from Kanopy website)

Filmed on location throughout Texas, *Songs of the Homeland* tells the story of Tejano music. This critically acclaimed documentary features images of the past and present and includes performances and interviews with musical pioneers such as Tony de la Rosa, Valerio Longoria, Lydia Mendoza, Isidro Lopez, Sunny Ozuna, Mingo Saldivar, and Little Joe Hernandez.

Context

The word “**Tejano**” is the Spanish word for “Texan,” and is also derived from “Tejas”, a Native American name for “Texas,” which meant “friends.” Tejanos are Hispanic-Americans who are residents of the state of Texas. Some of them are descended from the original Spanish-speaking settlers of Texas and northern Mexico.

Tejano music originated from the Mexican-American community in Texas. While the music has influences from Mexico and other Latin American countries, the main influences are American. Tejano music is a unique reflection of the Mexican American spirit. If you go to a South Texas dance hall on a Friday or Saturday night, you may see happy Tejano couples dancing in their cowboy hats and western boots. Tejano music, as noted in the film, was also heavily influenced

by the German and Czech settlers to 19th century Texas who brought their button accordions and oom-pah style music. Tejano culture is sometimes referred to as “Tex-Mex.”

Freddie Fender, the narrator of **Songs of the Homeland**, was a Tejano singer who was born in southern Texas. He became a nationally successful recording artist in America when his music also became popular on the Country and Western music charts.

Key Vocabulary/Places

- **Tejano** – can be used to identify a person of Hispanic descent living in Texas.
- **Chicano or Chicana** - a broadly-used term for people of Mexican origin living in the United States; historically, this term was used as a derogatory label for poorer Mexican-Americans.
- **Make-shift recording studio** - a low cost recording studio that engineers or musicians can set up in their house or garage.
- **Conjunto music** – the Spanish word “conjunto” means group. Tejano conjunto music was born in southwest Texas and frequently features a button accordion and a bajo sexto or twelve string guitar.
- **Chicano Movement** – a civil rights movement of the 1960s whose goal was to gain empowerment for Mexican-Americans.
- **San Antonio** – called the capital of Tejano music, San Antonio is a large city in southern Texas.

Discussion Questions

- How did the European settlers influence the music being played by the Mexican Americans in South Texas?
- What is meant by the statement that Tejano music exists between two worlds? Discuss the different cultural and musical influences that formed Tejano.
- Why do you think Tejano music is called “people’s music”?
- What kind of music do you like to listen to? Do you have any kind of music in your communities or culture which is a synthesis of different cultures, like Tejano music?
- In the documentary, Pat Jasper, the Director of Texas Folklife Resources, says that in Texas, there is “a universe of exchange...it’s a place where lots of different communities, even if they weren’t speaking to each other, their musical traditions and their artistic traditions were.” What traditions do you have in your city or country that allow different communities to come together?