

FREDDY FENDER

TEXAS TUNES

1. Before The Next Teardrop Falls
2. Wasted Days And Wasted Nights
3. Secret Love (Live)
4. My Special Prayer
5. Ooh Poo Pah Doo
6. Since I Met You Baby
7. Come Back Home
8. I Can't Stop Loving You (Live)
9. Jambalaya (On The Bayou) (Live)
10. I'm Leaving It All Up To You

SONGS FROM THE SOUTHWEST

1. Vaya con Dios
2. Mean Woman (Live)
3. Money
4. Walking Piece Of Heaven (Live)
5. Going Out With The Tide
6. Next Time You See Me (Live)
7. Woolly Bully (Live)
8. Six Days On The Road (Live)
9. Mexican Rose (Live)
10. There's Something On Your Mind

SPANISH SERENADE

1. Breaking Up Is Hard To Do
2. Get Out Of My Life Woman (with Tommy McLain)
3. Roses Are Red (Spanish Version)
4. Donna
5. The Chokin' Kind
6. La Bamba (Live)
7. Whiskey River (Live)
8. Almost Persuaded
9. The Wild Side Of Life
10. Just Because (Live)



ITEM # SBOX 69332

FREDDY FENDER

With a unique brand of music that blends musical styles from north and south of the border, Freddy Fender became the greatest musician in Mexican-American history. Listening to the music of this legend, one can trace the traditions at the heart of American music, from early Rock 'n' Roll, Blues, R&B and finally Country music. And of course, all of Freddy Fender's music is influenced by his Hispanic heritage.

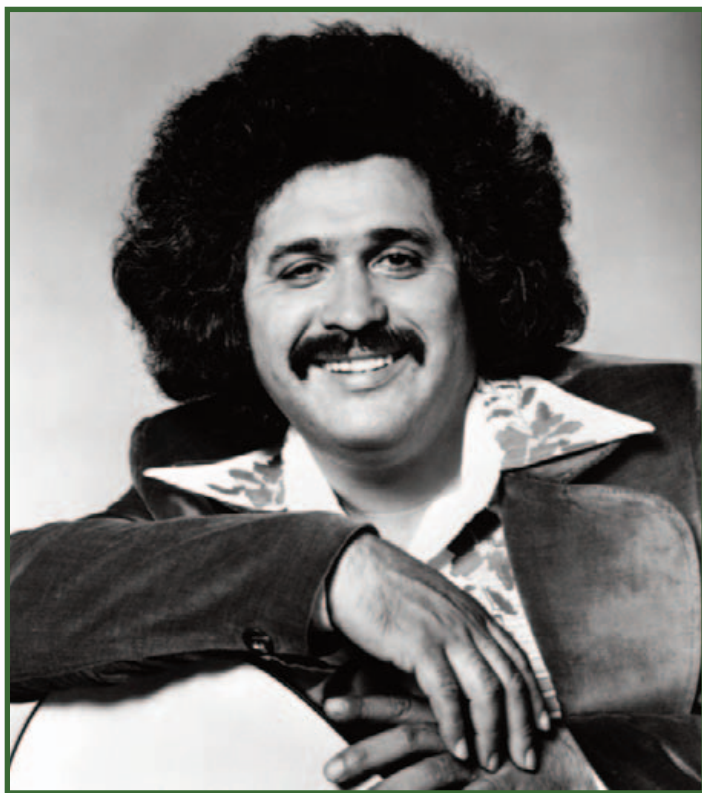


Photo Courtesy of Everett Collection

He is one of the true pioneers of Tex-Mex music. Whether it's a ballad crooned with his soulful tenor, or a driving Tex-Mex rocker, his music is fueled by a journey that has had its share of ups and downs. The exciting music in *Original American Classics* is culled from Freddy Fender's heyday, at the cusp of super stardom. It features some of his biggest hits including "Before The Next Teardrop Falls," "Secret Love" and "Wasted Days And Wasted Nights."

Born Baldemar Huerta (June 4, 1937) in the Rio Grande Valley town of San Benito, Texas, Fender grew up in the barrios of El Jardin, a poor Latino neighborhood near the Texas-Mexico border. The first music he heard would leave a lifelong impression on him – Mexican traditional songs and the Conjunto, Tejano and Tex-Mex sounds of the region. He was the child of migrant workers who spent many months of the year

working on farms across the South and Midwest harvesting crops. As Freddy recalled, they "worked beets in Michigan, pickles in Ohio, baled hay and pickled tomatoes in Indiana. When that was over came cotton picking time in Arkansas. All we really had to look forward to was making enough money to have a good Christmas back home."¹

On these working sojourns, he heard the Blues sung by Black field workers and laborers – this music would also leave an indelible mark on Fender's musical life. Back at home, he acquired his first guitar; it had three strings, no back and a used stretched sardine can for a soundbox, but it was the beginning of a dream. At age 10, he made his first appearance on a local radio station performing a hit song called "Paloma Querida" – a second performance of the song won him a tub of groceries at an amateur talent contest.

After an ill-advised stint in the Marine Corps at age 16, Fender began pursuing music and playing in local Texas honky tonks and bars. With the name "El Bebop Kid," he recorded his first two songs in 1957, laying down an original called "Ay Amor" with the flip side "No Seas Cruel" (a Spanish version of the Elvis' hit "Don't Be Cruel") released by Falcon Records. Fender was inspired by the new Rockabilly sound that was creating waves across America. Amazingly, his "No Seas Cruel" reached #1 in Mexico and South America, and Hispanic Rock 'n' Roll was born!

In this period, Fender also recorded Spanish versions of other popular hits including Harry Belafonte's "Jamaica Farewell," Richie Valens' "Donna" and Hank Ballard's "The Twist." Freddy Fender's "Tex-Mex Rockabilly" sound earned him a contract with Imperial Records (the home of Fats Domino and Ricky Nelson). In 1959, Baldemar Huerta made the decision to adopt the stage name Freddy Fender ("Fender" came from the headstock of his electric guitar), hoping to reach a larger Gringo audience. He also had a hit with a song he had written called "Wasted Days And Wasted Nights" – it was the first time he made the national charts.

Unfortunately, Fender's initial success was short-lived and the song "Wasted Days And Wasted Nights" turned out to be an omen for bad times to come. While performing at a nightclub in Baton Rouge, Fender was yanked off stage and arrested for possession of two marijuana cigarettes; he was convicted and sentenced to 5 years in prison. Fender was paroled by then-Governor Jimmie Davis, after serving three years at Louisiana's notorious Angola State Prison, but he was warned to stay away from the corruptive influences of the music scene.

The next few years were spent trying to reignite his career, playing scattered gigs at clubs like Papa Joe's on Bourbon Street (where he shared the stage with performers like Aaron Neville and Dr. John). Playing in and around New Orleans, where – he developed an interest in R&B and Cajun funk.

After his efforts went unheralded, Fender returned back home to “The Valley” in Texas where he worked as an auto mechanic, and also enrolled at Del Mar College to major in Sociology.

But Fender could not hide from music or the many fans that remembered his earlier recordings. One such fan was Tex-Mex cult legend Doug Sahm (founder of The Sir Douglas Quintet) who recorded a version of “Wasted Days And Wasted Nights” in 1970. He sought out Fender, who was living in relative obscurity in Corpus Christi at the time. Sahm also re-introduced Fender to Houston-based producer Huey P. Meaux, whom Fender had met briefly years earlier – it turned out to be a fateful meeting that would change Freddy Fender’s music career forever.

While working on tracks in the studio, Meaux approached Fender with the music for a Country song he wanted him to overdub vocals for. It was called “Before The Next Teardrop Falls.” The song, written by veteran songwriters Ben Peters and Vivian Keith, had been recorded and charted previously for a singer named Duane Lee in 1968, but then had knocked around Nashville. Fender recalled unceremoniously “The recording only took a few minutes. I was glad to get it over with and I thought that would be the last of it.”² At the time, Fender considered himself more of a R&B singer, although he definitely had performed Country numbers in the past.

The song was a heartbreaking ballad with a beautiful melody that was perfectly suited for Fender’s tender, soulful delivery. Meaux provided Tex-Mex-style backing with accordion and Spanish guitar that gave the song an even more original flavor.



Photo Courtesy of Showtime Music Archives Toronto

Adding Country music to Freddy Fender’s repertoire turned out to be a winning move (though he also continued to perform Rock ‘n’ Roll and R&B-infused material as well).

“Before The Next Teardrop Falls” made Freddy Fender a Country music star and a household name across America. The song remained on the top of the Country charts for two weeks and amazingly climbed to #1 on the Pop charts as well. It sold over 1 million copies and

was certified Gold. He was also awarded the Country Music Association’s Single of the Year honor. Through the years, other Country stars like Brenda Lee and Dolly Parton have recorded the song made famous by Fender.

Like so often is the case, success bore even greater success, and momentum propelled Fender to the top of the Country charts repeatedly in 1975. The song “Secret Love” earned #1 status shortly thereafter, only to be followed by a song that Fender established as a signature song early in his career -

“Wasted Days And Wasted Nights” also peaked at #1. The remainder of the 1970s were Freddy Fender’s glory years. Hits and classics like “Since I Met You Baby,” “Vaya con Dios” and “Walking Piece Of Heaven” further proved that Fender was a burgeoning star and a legend in the making.

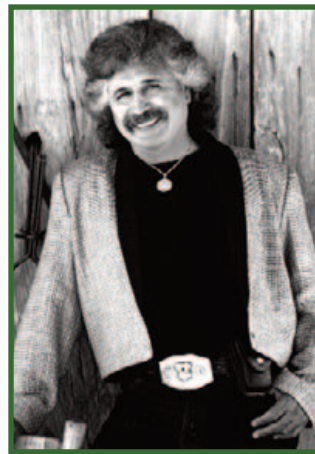


Photo Courtesy of Everett Collection

In the years that followed, the accolades continued to pile up for Freddy Fender. There are far too many to list, but to name a few: he became an inductee in the Tejano Hall of Fame in 1987, had a street named in his honor in San Benito called Freddy Fender Lane and he was given a Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. He has also performed at the Inaugural Balls of both President George Bush and President Bill Clinton. In the process of achieving critical praise and recognition, Freddy Fender established himself as a respected actor when he co-starred in Robert Redford’s 1989 film *The Milagro Beanfield War*.

In the 1990s, Freddy Fender was a central figure in the Tex-Mex supergroup the Texas Tornados, comprising some of the genre’s most legendary and talented stars, including Flaco Jiminez, Doug Sahm and Augie Meyers. The group won a Grammy for Best Mexican / American / Tejano Music Performance for the song “Soy de San Luis” in 1990. He continued his collaborative work with Los Super Seven, which featured Rick Trevino, Flaco Jiminez and members of Los Lobos. A crowning moment for Freddy Fender came in 2002, when his solo traditional album titled *La Musica de Baldemar Huerta* won a Grammy for Best Latin Pop album. He passed away on October 14th, 2006 at age 69.

LEGACY

Freddy Fender’s contributions to American music must be observed on a level beyond the charismatic voice, chart hits and critical raves. He has been a central figure in bridging the gap between American and Mexican music and culture. His unique voice has been fundamental in defining the sound of Tex-Mex border music. He has spread awareness of Hispanic history, music and culture north of the American border and he has been embraced as a hero in Mexico since his early 1950s hits. *Original American Classics* includes many of Freddy Fender’s defining songs – music that he conveyed with passion, music that made him a legend.

Footnotes:

- 1 Bill Miller, Ed., Blue Chip Radio Report, March 1999.
- 2 Allmusic.com (Song Review By Bill Janovitz)

