

EXCLUSIVE!!!

Five-Time Grammy Winner Flaco Jimenez Reveals the End of His Recording Career

Story and photos by Ramón Hernández

This is the exclusive news Flaco gave me last night, but before I reveal all the details in his own words, I will recap part of the five-time Grammy Award winning accordionist's history. And to write a story about Flaco is like trying to reinvent the wheel because what can you say about Flaco that hasn't been said and written about before?

To write that the "Patron Saint of Conjunto Music" has recorded with Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, Buck Owens, Dwight Yoakum, Freddy Fender, Dr. John, Ry Cooder and Peter Rowan and although he didn't record with Elvis Presley, he did meet him and recorded with his Jordanaires.

He has performed alongside Linda Ronstadt, Los Lobos, The Mavericks, Emmy Lou Harris, John Hyatt and Bryan Ferry to name a few. Therefore all this facts are nothing new.

The fact that he is extremely popular in Europe, Scandinavia and the Orient makes him a world class accordion virtuoso. And although he is too humble to bring it up, he has performed at the Monteux Jazz Festival in Switzerland, New York's Central Park and locally with the San Antonio Symphony, thus the man has class.

Mark Guerrero, son of the musician who is considered to be the "Father of Chicano Music" had this recollection, "In February of 1998, I had the pleasure and privilege to work with Flaco in Paris, France at the Cite de la Musique. Flaco's band was on the bill with my father, Lalo Guerrero. I was there as lead guitarist and musical director of my dad's band. The two bands did a finale of three songs together for which I rehearsed with Flaco the previous afternoon. I would sing him a part and he'd play it back note for note. At one point in our band's rehearsal, we were playing a bluesy song and Flaco walked in and joined us playing blues on the accordion. He jammed with us on a few songs and showed why he's a legend."

To go into detail on the fact Flaco has acted opposite Woody Allen and Sharon Stone plus had his music featured in five movie soundtracks would be a waste of space in this article since anyone can find all this information on the Internet.

The Alamo City is really privileged to have the world's top two accordionists call this city their home. And yes, there are many parallels, for instance Hohner manufactured the corona II Flaco Jiménez Signature Model to celebrate the lifetime achievement of the musician who played Hohner accordions on more than 100 albums. Steve Jordan also helped the same company create the Rockordion. In addition, both are considered to be progressive accordionists.

"But he's a little more progressive than I am," the living legend said during an interview at his Southside San Antonio home on Highway 16.

"But my style is more technical and his is más alegre (more joyful)."

Moving on to whom, he feels would be able to fill his shoes, Flaco said, "There are many imitators and sound-a-likes, but none can compare to Dwayne Verheyden; and he's from the Netherlands.

"Dwayne is a whole different story because it's hard to distinguish both of us and it is hard to tell who's who when you hear us play. So I really respect his musical ability, especially for someone so young.

Verheyden, who performed at the Cadillac Bar with Max Baca, Roger "Rabbit" Garza, Frank Gómez and Al Gómez, really wowed the audience. However, as Rick "Güero Polkas" Dávila commented, "the 18-year-old Rick Nelson is indeed good, but he has to step out of Flaco's shadow and create his own sound in order to stand on his own and achieve success on his own as a solo artist."

It was a good point and good advice for all aspiring musicians. Nonetheless, Verheyden possesses all the necessary ingredients to become as famous as his mentor.

FLACO'S BOMBSHELL REVELATION

"My plan is to make my next recording my last recording," Flaco stated.

"I'm at the tail end of a CD I will release after New Years, but I don't have a title for it yet. It's a project I have been working on in my own studio. It's a production that features most of the musicians I've worked with since the beginning of my 55 to 56 years in the business.

"I've rounded up buddies who have helped me in my career -- Toby Torres, Jesse Ponce, Fred Ojeda and Hugo González. They're all playing bajo sexto and doing vocals; plus duets with Henry Zimmerle and Nick Villarreal," the 70-year-old heavyweight champion of conjunto music added.

"It's a sort of musical family reunion. The only one I couldn't include is "Henry "Big Red" Ojeda and couple other musicians, who have unfortunately passed on.

"It's sort of like a full circle and I'm not shooting for a million seller. I'm not doing it to make a killing, but for my own self-satisfaction."

Asked why he never wrote any of his own tunes, Flaco reflected on the question before answering, "I'm lucky I'm not a songwriter because they would have stolen all my work and I would never have seen a penny and that's why I concentrated on performing."

Also asked if he was re-recording all his early works, which originally came out in monaural, to digital productions for his fans to enjoy, Flaco said, "No, its new material since almost all ten songs are by many composers to give them the opportunity to make their work known. I even included a progressive cumbia and two country and western tunes. The only previously recorded tune is the bluesy "Honky Tonk" with a Tex-Mex sound."

So is this compact disc really Flaco's swan song?

"This is my last CD as a solo artist," the innovative accordionist said firmly.

"However, I will continue to record with whoever invites me to record on their album. So no, I am not going to quit performing and no, I am not going to retire."

Whew! What a relief; and by the way, Flaco's new CD will be released on Fiesta Records, his own label. In addition one will be able to hear snippets on: