

**This interview with
FLACO JIMENEZ
was conducted by the Library of the Congress
on June 8, 2021**



Library of Congress: How did you prepare as you got ready to record the 1992 “Partners” album?

Flaco Jimenez: When I went into the studio--for any of my recording sessions--for every song, I improvise the melody. I don't read music. I put the accordion [track] down as the song is done. I never write notes for it. I do it by ear. I improvise, I listen to the song and then I know exactly what to put in there.

LOC: How do you define “conjunto” music?

FJ: “Conjunto” was born right here in San Antonio. It means “more than three” instruments, four or more...an accordion and two vocalists, singing and harmonizing. It's not really in the books or whatever because now the major labels call it “Tex Mex.” Conjunto came, originally, out of the jam sessions of the Mexicans and Texans.

LOC: How did you recruit the guest players—from Emmylou Harris to Linda Ronstadt to John Hiatt to Stephen Stills to Dwight Yoakam—to take part on this album?

FJ: I didn't have the means to locate them. The producer—Bill Halverson—he searched for the guys and the others to put on the album. He made it happen.

But I was REALLY HAPPY about it. I was surprised he got them all and I kept thinking, “Man I'm going to record with some heavy weights!”

It was all a different experience for me. I enjoyed it a lot since I got to meet in person all the great players.

LOC: How did you first come to play the accordion?

FJ: My grandfather played the accordion. He learned to play by going to dances at the turn of the century when the immigrants from Poland, along with the Czech and German settlers, all came to this area. He got interested in that music and learned to play all the polkas. My grandfather learned to play a one-row accordion.

My dad learned from my grandfather. My dad and I are both self-taught. He played European polkas as well and managed to buy a two-row accordion.

When I started, I learned the two-row from my dad. In my early teens, I managed the three-row.

I had the musical blood in me.

LOC: Looking back on the album “Partners” now, is there anything you wish you had done for it but didn’t? Or do you consider the work “complete”?

FL: I think it was complete. We didn’t really rehearse the album or whatever. It is so spontaneous. We practiced the song when we recorded them! We put all our efforts into that feeling for that certain song.

The songs that are in there were really fit for partners, for “Partners,” if that makes sense.

LOC: You are still performing today, aren’t you?

FL: Well, of course, due to COVID, we lost so many gigs last year but it’s finally lifting now. I’m 82 right now but can’t wait to get back on stage. I’m all set to rock and roll!