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UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Media Release

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New CSRC publication explores unprecedented collection of 20th century Mexican and Mexican American recordings, now online at UCLA

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The UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press (CSRC) announces the release of *The Arhoolie Foundation's Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings*, the sixth volume in The Chicano Archives series designed to stimulate new critical and historical research based on archival sources. The text was written by Los Angeles music journalist Agustín Gurza (*Los Angeles Times*, *OC Register*) with contributions by Jonathan Clark and collector Chris Strachwitz.

The Strachwitz Frontera Collection is the largest repository of commercially produced Mexican and Mexican American vernacular recordings in existence. It contains more than 130,000 individual recordings. Although border music is the focus of the collection, it also includes notable recordings of other Latin forms, including salsa, mambo, sones, and rancheras. More than 40,000 78 rpm recordings, all from the first half of the twentieth century, are now available free to the public [online](#) through the University of California's Digital Library Program. The digitization project is ongoing.

The book's contributors used this remarkable resource as a window into Mexican American popular culture in twentieth century, as well as an underreported history of the American music industry, which saw a U.S. market for Mexican music as early as the 1920s. Essays also cover specific genres (corridos, mariachi music), their themes (machismo, racism, and intercultural conflict), and the inspiring story of how the collection came to be.

The book, which includes 75 b/w photographs, also offers a rich appendix of lists, such as:

- Top fifty most popular performers
- Top fifty most popular songwriters
- Top twenty most popular genres
- Thirty corridos that define the genre
- Forty notable mariachi recordings

The book examines numerous songs, genres, themes, composers, and performers in order to tell the stories behind Spanish-language music in North America in the first part of the twentieth century. The book also explores the efforts to preserve and promote this unique aspect of American cultural

history through the Strachwitz Frontera Collection. “There was very little emphasis on documentation and preservation among Mexican recording companies, unlike those in the U.S.,” says Gurza. “If Strachwitz hadn’t done what he did by buying these lots of records, they all would have been lost. He rescued an entire portion of the culture for history.”

The digitization project was initiative through the CSRC with primary support from the Los Tigres del Norte fund at UCLA. Additional funding was provided in part by Arhoolie Records, the UCLA Library, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Lucasfilm Foundation.

Review copies: *The Arhoolie Foundation’s Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings* is distributed by University of Washington Press. For a review copy, please contact Phoebe Daniels at phoebea@u.washington.edu. You may also contact the CSRC Press at support@chicano.ucla.edu.

About Chicano Archives: The award-winning Chicano Archives series brings together resources related to major Chicano special collections, drawing primarily on collections in the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Library. The goal is to facilitate access to these collections and to stimulate new critical and historical research based on archival sources.

The CSRC Press was founded in 1969 to provide a voice for young Chicana/o academics who could not find mainstream publishers. The Press’s contribution to academic scholarship continues to grow as Chicana/o and Latina/o studies develop in new directions.

The UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center was established in 1969, integrating multidisciplinary research projects with an active library and archive, academic press, and community partnerships. Current research areas include public health, education, economic security, media, and the arts.

To learn more about the CSRC, visit [our website](#), [Wikipedia page](#), [Facebook](#) or [email us](#).

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