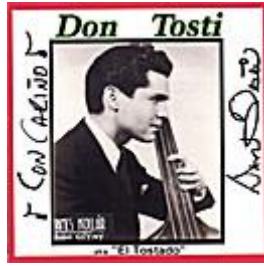


Mp3 Don Tosti Aka El Tostado - Latin: Latin Rap



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A classical mix of re-recorded 78rpm discs. Originally recorded in the 1940's, the late Don Tosti's (he died 08/02/04) compositions include many styles, celebrating the richness of chicano life. Also included, a different take on his Pachuco Boogie. 13 MP3 Songs LATIN: Latin Rap, LATIN: Bolero Details: In 1985 an obscure 78-rpm recording called Pachuco Boogie was added to the archives of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. Recorded in Los Angeles, California, in 1948 by a virtually unknown cast of young Mexican-American musicians, it had a thumping eight-to-the-bar boogie woogie piano, a nonsensical chorus that translated to "let the boogie burn" and a rap in Chicano jive that glorified the pachuco subculture of the zootsuit era. It struck a chord and became an underground anthem. A group of session players was hired by William Castillo, Discos Taxco owner, to accompany popular balladeer Ruben Reyes . As history would have it, the singer was a no-show and Castillo asked Tosti if he had anything he wanted to record. A seasoned player who went on the road with legendary jazz great Jack Teagarden (and subsequently Charlie Barnet, Jimmy Dorsey and Les Brown), he was ready to expose his musical talents as a songwriter and bandleader. It was the late 1940's and jump-blues pioneers such as Louis Jordan, Earl Bostic, Joe Liggins and Johnny Otis were transitioning the big band sounds of the regional territory bands to a more compact combo setting. It was then that Pachuco Boogie (Discos Taxco, 108) was written and recorded on the spot. First, they sketched out Pachuco Boogie, a jump blues with Tosti's outrageous calo (Chicano slang) rap as the "A" side. Guisa Gacha, a guaracha, was on the flipside. The sessions were done and released under the collective pseudonym of Cuarteto Don Ramon, Sr., the name of Tosti's long-lost father. It was during the years of the "James C. Petrillo Ban", when union musicians were prohibited from recording because of a dispute over radio and royalties. Yet, for Tosti, the timing couldn't have been better. These initial Tosti recordings captured the raw, rebellious spirit

of abandon that surrounded pachuco culture. It was a sound that Tosti and his quartet comprised of Raul Diaz (drums/vocals), Bob Hernandez (sax/flute), and Eddie Cano (piano) were well aware of from their excursions into Central Ave., where it was all happening. The music swung hard with bluesy improvisation: Raul Diaz scatting like a jazz singer, Hernandez blowing like a Chicano Lester Young and Tosti walking the bass like Jimmy Blanton. The affection for jazz and swing that these twenty-somethings developed somehow gave approval to mixing American influences with Latin music. But it was Tosti's calo raps that fascinated those who understood it. EL TOSTADO Don Tosti is the gifted musician whose life experience groomed him for fusing these Mexican and North American cultural elements. Born Edmundo Tostado Martinez in 1923 in El Paso, Texas, he grew up in the infamous Segundo Barrio where the gangs spoke a Chicano jargon called "calo". Raised by his two aunts (Pepita and Nena), he was enrolled in music studies as a young boy to escape from the negative influences of the neighborhood. But he couldn't escape the language and learned the "pachuco talk" as a young boy. Tosti proved to be a child prodigy who was playing violin with El Paso's Symphony by the age of 10. When he was 15, his family moved to Los Angeles, where he took up the saxophone. Inspired by his hero, Ernie Caceres (a young Chicano from San Antonio, Texas, who played alto sax in the Glenn Miller orchestra), he started a big band in high school to play local dances. According to Tosti, it was a dance promoter who changed his name from Tostado to Tosti to fit it on a poster. When Tosti graduated from Roosevelt High School, he studied accounting at L.A. City College. He had started playing acoustic standup bass after a military draft examination found a spot on his lung. Studying with noted German bassist Arthur Pabst, he developed excellent technical skills, but his passion was listening to the swing bands of Lucky Millender, Duke Ellington and others. One afternoon, while checking out the L.A.C.C. big band, he was persuaded by Chico Alvarez and Bob Fowler (both of whom would later join the Stan Kenton Orchestra) to fill in for an ailing bass player. It was during World War II and the college was chosen as the site for the Standard Transcription Services that produced special recordings by popular artists for the troops fighting overseas. A hawk-sight reader with a strong firm tone, Tosti played several charts with the band on the stand-up arco bass. Fate would have it that jazz trombone great Jack Teagarden was just finishing up a session and heard the band rehearsing. Tosti impressed him so much that Teagarden went over to meet him and immediately offered him \$200 a week to go on the road with his band. They were taking off for New York City in a day, and the bandleader had to know really quickly. When Teagarden offered him

\$250 a week, he realized he couldn't pass it up. Tosti had been born out of wedlock and knew very little about his father, Ramon Martinez, who met his mother while stationed at Ft. Bliss. He heard he lived in Dallas but had moved to Oakland, California. In 1948, while playing with Les Brown and his Band of Renown at a dance at the Pauley Ballroom at UC Berkeley, he checked the Oakland phone listings and called all the Martinez names in the book. Sure enough, he found his biological father and soon went over to meet him and a whole new family of brothers and sisters. He thought telling Don Ramon he was with Les Brown would impress him, but instead, the former military officer scolded him for not leading his own band and writing his own music. It shocked Tosti but he took it to heart. Don Ramon was a respected event promoter in Oakland who produced Fiestas Patrias celebrations and wrestling/boxing matches. He was also a pioneer radio broadcaster at KLX in Oakland, atop the Tribune Tower where he did a show called "South American Way". Tosti returned to L.A. with a newfound ambition and wrote a bolero---Vine Por Ti---that he presented to William Castillo of Disco Taxco. He got Ruben Reyes to record it and soon became a hit. It raised his musical profile, and a few months later, Pachuco Boogie would happen and set in motion a whole new Chicano perspective on North American pop music. "El Tostado" has enjoyed a fruitful career as a session player, arranger and bandleader around Los Angeles. Today, he lives in Palm Springs (still teaching and practicing daily) with his beloved chihuahua, "Cacaguita". Excerpted from an article by Jesse (Chuy) Varela for LATIN BEAT magazine (May 2003)

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