

# Delve Deeper into "Al Otro Lado"

A film by Natalia Almada

This multi-media resource list, compiled by Paul Baren of the San Diego Public Library in partnership with the American Library Association, provides a range of perspectives on the issues raised by the upcoming P.O.V. documentary "Al Otro Lado" that premieres on August 1, 2006 at 10 p.m. on PBS (check local listings at [www.pbs.org/pov/](http://www.pbs.org/pov/)).

The proud Mexican tradition of corrido music — captured in the performances of Mexican band Los Tigres del Norte and the late Chalino Sanchez — provides both heartbeat and backbone to this rich examination of songs, drugs and dreams along the U.S./Mexico border. "Al Otro Lado" follows Magdiel, an aspiring corrido composer from the drug capital of Mexico, as he faces two difficult choices to better his life: to traffic drugs or to risk his life crossing the border illegally into the United States. Performance footage by corrido superstars are interspersed with the day-to-day struggles of Magdiel as he embarks on an uncertain journey. "Al Otro Lado" explores the world of drug smuggling, illegal immigration, and the corrido music that chronicles it all. An Official Selection of the Tribeca Film Festival.

## ADULT NONFICTION

**Dwyer, Augusta. *On the Line: Life on the US-Mexican Border*. London: Latin American Bureau, 1994.** An investigative report by Canadian journalist, Augusta Dwyer, on the 2000-mile long US-Mexican border. It promotes the public understanding of border issues.

**Edberg, Mark Cameron. *El Narcotraficante: Narcocorridos and the Construction of a Cultural Persona on the U.S.-Mexico Border*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2004.** Since the late 1970s, a new folk hero has risen to prominence in the U.S.-Mexico border region and beyond—the narcotrafficker. Celebrated in the *narcocorrido*, a current form of the traditional border song known as the *corrido*,

narcotraffickers are often portrayed as larger-than-life "social bandits."

**Ford Jr., Don Henry. *Contrabando: Confessions of a Drug-Smuggling Texas Cowboy*. El Paso, TX: Cinco Puntos Press, 2004.** From the 1970s through the mid-1980s Ford made his living as an outlaw, smuggling marijuana across the U.S./Mexico border in the Big Bend region.

**Herrera-Sobek, Maria. *Northward Bound: The Mexican Immigrant Experience in Ballad and Song*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993.** Traces Mexican emigration to the United States from 1848 to 1991 through the lyrics of Mexican ballads (*corridos*) and contemporary popular songs (*canciones*).

**Maciel, David R. and Maria Herrera-Sobek, eds. *Culture Across Borders: Mexican Immigration & Popular Culture*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1998.** The first book-length study to analyze a wide range of cultural manifestations of the Mexican immigration experience, including art, literature, cinema, *corridos* (folk songs), and humor.

**Martinez, Oscar J. *Border People: Life and Society in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1994.** Based on firsthand interviews with individuals from all walks of life, *Border People* presents case histories of transnational interaction and transculturation, and addresses the themes of cross-border migration, interdependence, labor, border management, ethnic confrontation, cultural fusion and social activism.

**Martinez, Oscar J. *Troublesome Border*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1988.** Provides a balanced treatment of the evolution of a cultural transition zone between distinct national entities.

**McDowell, J. H. *Poetry and Violence: The Ballad Tradition of Mexico's Costa Chica*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000.** Book and CD. Provides an in-depth study of a

body of poetry that takes violence as its subject: the Mexican ballad form known as the *corrido*. Through interviews with *corrido* composers and performers, both male and female, and a generous sampling of ballad texts, McDowell reveals a living vernacular tradition that amounts to a chronicle of local and regional rivalries.

**Poppa, Terrence E. *Drug Lord: The Life and Death of a Mexican Kingpin: A True Story*. New York: Demand Publications, 1998.** An exposé of the connections between crime and government in Mexico. This is the story of Pablo Acosta, the notorious scar-faced Mexican drug lord.

**Quinones, Sam. *"The Ballad of Chalino Sanchez" in True Tales from Another Mexico: The Lynch Mob, the Popsicle Kings, Chalino, and the Bronx*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2001.**

Through interviews and storytelling, Quinones presents an excellent view of the informal economy and various means that are used to get around Mexico's system of social, economic and political organization.

**Riding, Alan. *Distant Neighbors: A Portrait of the Mexicans*. New York: Knopf, 1984.** A former Mexico City bureau chief for the *New York Times*, Riding shows himself to be a sympathetic, informed observer of the complex changes wracking Mexican society and is especially insightful about recent political and economic turbulence and the tension between the Mexican majority and the "Americanized" minority.

**Rotella, Sebastian. *Twilight on the Line: Underworlds and Politics at the U.S.-Mexico Border*. New York: Norton, 1998.** Rotella, who covered the U.S.-Mexican border from 1961 to 1996 for the *Los Angeles Times*, offers a searing, colorful portrait of the depth of the drug world's penetration into Mexican politics, its linkage to U.S. gangs and its impact across the border.

**Strong, Arturo Carrillo. *Corrido de Cocaine: Inside Stories of Hard Drugs, Big Money, and Short Lives*. Tucson, AZ:**

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**Harbinger House, 1990.** In this grim exposé, Strong argues that the grinding poverty of Mexico produces people who will do almost anything to earn money. The author interviewed people throughout the Tucson area, mostly Mexican-Americans, all involved in the drug trade in some way. He has put their oral accounts together with brief introductions and an afterword.

**Wald, Elijah. *Narcocorrido: A Journey Into the Music of Drugs, Guns, and Guerrillas*. New York: Rayo, 2001.** Journalist and musician Wald takes a yearlong journey through Mexico and the southwestern U.S. tracking down composers and performers of the *narcocorrido*, a modern spin-off of the 19th-century Mexican folk ballad (*corrido*).

## BOOKS IN SPANISH

**Astorga Almanza, Luis Alejandro. *Drogas sin Fronteras*. México: Grijalbo, 2003.**

**Duran, Gwen C. *Famosos Corridos de Narcos*. Selector, 1996.**

**Hernandez, G. "El Corridor Ayer y Hoy: Nuevas Notas para su Estudio." In J. M. Valenzuela Arce, ed., *Entre la Magia y la Historia: Tradiciones, Mitos y Leyendas de la Frontera*. Tijuana, B.C., México: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 1992.**

**Poppa, Terrence E. *El Zar de la Droga: La Vida y la Muerte de un Narcotraficante Mexicano: Una Historia Verdade*. Demand Publications, 1998.**

**Ramos, Mario Arturo. *Cien Corridos: Alma de la Cancion Mexicana*. Mexico: Oceano, 2002. Book and CD.**

**Tinajero Medina, Rubén. *El Narcocorrido: Tradición o Mercado?* Chihuahua, Chih., Mexico: Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua, 2004.**

**Valenzuela Arce, Jose Manuel. *Jefe de Jefes: Corridos y Narcocultura en Mexico*. Barcelona: Plaza y Janes, 2002.**

**Wald, Elijah. *Narcocorrido: Un Viaje al Mundo de la Musica de las Drogas, Armas y Guerrilleros*. New York: Rayo, 2001.**

## MAGAZINE ARTICLES

**Burr, Ramiro. "Narcocorrido Crackdown in Mexico Has Mixed Effect on Sales, Airplay." *Billboard*, 15 March 2003, Vol. 115 Issue 11, p. 28.**

**Burr, Ramiro. "Still Roaring after 30 Years." *Billboard*, 11 November 2000, Vol. 112, Issue 46, p. 50.**

**Burr, Ramiro. "Though Sánchez Dies, Corrido Lives On." *Billboard*, 20 April 2002, Vol. 114, Issue 16, p. 50.**

**Herrera-Sobek, M. "The Theme of Drug Smuggling in the Mexican Corrido." *Revista Chicano-Riqueña*, 1979, Vol. 7 Issue 4, p. 49.**

**Kun, J. "Narcocorridistas," *Village Voice*, 2 December 1997, p. 67.**

**Nicolopoulos, J. "The Heroic Corrido: A Premature Obituary?" *Aztlan*, 1997, Vol. 22 Issue 1, p. 114.**

**Simonett, Helena. "Narcocorridos: An Emerging Micromusic of Nuevo L.A." *Ethnomusicology*, Spring/Summer 2001, Vol. 45 Issue 2, p. 315.**

**Wald, Elijah. "Narcocorridos: A New Ballad Tradition." *Sing Out!* Spring 2002, Vol. 46, Issue 1, p. 72.**

## MAGAZINE ARTICLES IN SPANISH

**Astorga, L. "Los Corridos de Traficantes de Drogas en Mexico y Colombia." *Revista Mexicana de Sociologia*, 1997, Vol. 59 Issue 4, p. 245-261.**

**Garcia Torres, G. "Los Corridos de Ines Chavez Garcia: Lirica de una Leyenda Moderna." *Aztlan*, 1997, Vol. 22, Issue 1, p. 49-71.**

**Ramirez-Pimienta, J.C. "Corrido de Narcotrafico en los Anos Ochenta y Noventa: Un Juicio Moral Suspendido." *Bilingual Review*, 1998, Vol. 23, Issue 2, p. 145-156.**

## NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

**Collier, R. "Drugs Muscle into Mexican Music Mix: Trafficking Theme Hits Popular Nerve." *San Francisco Chronicle*, 17 October 1997, p. A1.**

**Cearley, Anna. "Book of Mexican Folk Songs Criticized." *San Diego Union – Tribune*, 27 February 2005, p. A25.**

**Hamilton, Denise. "The Story of Narcocorridos – Right or Wrong; Elijah Wald's Book Documents the History of the Controversial Ballads that Heroize Mexican Drug Traders." *Los Angeles Times*, 27 February 2002, p. E1.**

**O'Connor, Anne-Marie. "Drug Ballads Hit Sour Notes; Music: Officials Are Trying to Ban the Mexican Equivalent of Gangsta Rap, Saying It is a Bad Influence." *Los Angeles Times*, 30 September 2002, p. B1.**

**O'Connor, Anne-Marie. "Traditional Ballads in a New Key; Narcocorridos are the Latest Version of Mexican Folk Songs, but Critics Worry They Romanticize Crime." *Los Angeles Times*, 3 January 1997, p. 1.**

**Marizco, Michael. "Some Shun Mexican Drug Ballads, but Narcocorridos Remain Popular." *Arizona Daily Star*, 13 March 2005, p. B1.**

**Quinones, Sam. "Narco Pop's Bloody Polkas." *Washington Post*, 1 March 1998, p. G1.**

**Quinones, Sam. "The Tiger's Tale; Los Tigres del Norte is an All-American Success Story, Starring Hard-Driving Mexicans from Sinaloa." *Los Angeles Times*, 16 December 2001, p. 1.**

**Schwartz, Jeremy. "Mexican Songs Tell Tales of Drug Lords;**

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'Narcocorridos' Mix Traditional Music with Slices of Gangsta Life." *Austin American Statesman*, 25 March 2005, p. A23.

Wald, Elijah. "The Ballad of a Mexican Musical Tradition: Corridos Are Still Celebrating Outlaws, Even in the Age of the War on Drugs." *Boston Globe*, 18 January 1998, p. K1.

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## AUDIO

**Corridos y Narcocorridos: Un Viaje al Mundo de la Musica de las Drogas, Armas y Guerrilleros.** Fonovisa Inc., November 29, 2001. This album, designed to accompany Elijah Wald's book "Narcocorrido: A Journey into the Music of Drugs, Guns, and Guerrillas" is the first to survey the modern *corrido* boom. It focuses on the work of the genre's defining band, Los Tigres del Norte, with examples of other styles and artists showing the breadth and variety of the current scene.

**Heroes & Horses: Corridos from the Arizona-Sonora Borderlands.** Smithsonian Folkways, March 26, 2002.

A joint project of the University of Arizona Southwest Folklore Center and Smithsonian Folkways, this CD covers nearly the entire range of regional experience, from songs of the Mexican Revolution to mining to horse racing. The focus here is on the older style of *corrido*. See also: [www.mustrad.org.uk/reviews/corridos.htm](http://www.mustrad.org.uk/reviews/corridos.htm)

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## VIDEOS/DOCUMENTARIES

"Maquilapolis." A film by Vicky Funari and Sergio De La Torre. ITVS, 2006. (60 min.) Carmen, a worker in a *maquiladora*, and her friend Lourdes confront labor violations, environmental devastation and urban chaos, reaching beyond their daily struggle for survival to organize for change, taking on both the Mexican and U.S. governments and a major television manufacturer. [www.pbs.org/pov/pov2006/maquilapolis](http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2006/maquilapolis)

"Senorita Extraviada." A film by Lourdes Portillo. Women Make Movies, 2001. (74 min.)

Investigates the disappearance of young women from assembly plants that line the Mexican-American border.

[www.pbs.org/pov/pov2002/senoritaextraviada](http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2002/senoritaextraviada)

"Escuela." A film by Hannah Weyer. Women Make Movies, 2002. (76 min.) For vivacious Lilianna Luis, her debut as an all-American high school freshman is immeasurably complicated by the fact that her Mexican-American family makes its living following the harvests from Texas to California.

[www.pbs.org/pov/pov2002/escuela/](http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2002/escuela/)

"The Sixth Section" A film by Alex Rivera. SubCine, 2003. (26 min.) Captures a dynamic form of cross-border organizing through the story of "Grupo Unión," a small band of Mexican immigrants in upstate New York devoted to raising money to rebuild the town they left behind.

[www.pbs.org/pov/pov2003/thesixthsection](http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2003/thesixthsection)

"Amandla! A Revolution in Four Part Harmony." A film by Lee Hirsch. ATO Pictures, 2002. (108 min.)

Music's role in the South African struggle against Apartheid.

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

"The Forgotten Americans." A film by Hector Galan. Galan Inc., 2000. (60 min.) A day in the life of people living along the Texas-Mexico border.

[www.pbs.org/kfrc/forgottenamericans](http://www.pbs.org/kfrc/forgottenamericans)

"Go Back to Mexico!" A film by Hector Galan. Galan Inc., 1994. (57 min.) One woman's attempt to illegally immigrate from Mexico to the United States.

"Zoot Suit." A film by Luis Valdez. Universal Pictures, 1981. (103 min.) The director's brother, Daniel Valdez, plays the lead character and composed the songs to this story of the zoot suit riots in 1940s Los Angeles.

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

"Traffic." A film by Steven Soderbergh. Bedford Falls

Productions, 2000. (147 min.) Multiple stories centering on America's war on drugs.

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

"Maria Full of Grace." A film by Joshua Marston. HBO Films, 2004. (101 min.) A young girl becomes a drug mule when she is confronted with unemployment.

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

"Sinaloa: Tierra de Hombres." A film by Christian Gonzalez. Producciones America, 1994. (90 min.)

Bronco, a mercenary drug smuggler, faces problems when one of his underlings makes off with part of his gang's loot. In Spanish.

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

"Maquila: A Tale of Two Mexicos." A film by Saul Landau and Sonia Angulo, 2000. (55 min.) Presents the pros and cons of the *maquiladora*, an export manufacturing program established by NAFTA in the 1960s.

"A Day Without a Mexican." A film by Sergio Arau. Eye on the Ball Films, 2004. (100 min.)

Shows what would happen in California if every Mexican disappeared for one day.

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

"My Family, Mi Familia." A film by Gregory Nava. Majestic Films International, 1995. (128 min.)

Chronicles three generations of an immigrant family.

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## WEB SITES

P.O.V.'s "Al Otro Lado"

[www.pbs.org/pov/pov2006/alotrolado](http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2006/alotrolado)

Includes an interview with the filmmaker, resources, special features and more.

Smithsonian Center for Latino Initiatives

[http://latino.si.edu/researchandmuseums/presentations/chewsanchez\\_papers.html](http://latino.si.edu/researchandmuseums/presentations/chewsanchez_papers.html)

A center devoted to advancing the knowledge and contributions of Latinos in the United States.

Elijah Wald - Narcocorrido

[www.elijahwald.com/corrido.html](http://www.elijahwald.com/corrido.html)

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A website to accompany his book about the music of drugs, guns and guerrillas.

## **The Borderlands Encyclopedia** [www.utep.edu/border/inf.html](http://www.utep.edu/border/inf.html)

A multimedia instructional resource on contemporary issues of the U.S.-Mexico border.

## **Corridos Sin Fronteras** [www.corridos.org/](http://www.corridos.org/)

Website for the Smithsonian sponsored traveling exhibition showcasing *corridos*.

## **Texas Online Handbook** [www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/CC/lhc1.html](http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/CC/lhc1.html)

Informational text regarding Texas-Mexican *corridos*.

## **Center for Immigration Studies** [www.cis.org/topics/illegalimmigration.html](http://www.cis.org/topics/illegalimmigration.html)

Provides links to other immigration-related publications.

## **Los Tigres del Norte** [www.fonovisa.com/lostigresdelnorte.html](http://www.fonovisa.com/lostigresdelnorte.html)

Contains band's biography, videos and audio.

## **Jenni Rivera** <http://music.yahoo.com/artists/293212---Jenni-Rivera>

Includes biography and music of famous female *corridor* singer, Jenni Rivera.

## **Chalino Sanchez, El Pelavacas** [www.elpelavacas.com/](http://www.elpelavacas.com/)

Comprehensive fan site dedicated to famous *corrido* singer Chalino Sanchez.

## **Chalino Sanchez** [www.chalino.com/artistas/chalino](http://www.chalino.com/artistas/chalino)

Biography and discography of Chalino Sanchez.

## **U.S. Customs and Border Protection** [www.cbp.gov/](http://www.cbp.gov/)

CBP's goal is to protect America's borders against terrorism and illegal migration.

## **Secure Border Initiative: SBI net Program** [www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/toolbox/contracting/sbi\\_net/](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/toolbox/contracting/sbi_net/)

A comprehensive multi-year plan to secure America's borders and reduce illegal migration.

## **Mexican Migration Project** <http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu/>

A multidisciplinary research effort between investigators in Mexico and the U.S. whose mission is to advance our understanding of the complex processes of international migration and immigration to the United States. Data gathered by the MMP have been the source of a sizable amount of research on international migration.

## **Migration Information Source** [www.migrationinformation.org/issue\\_mar04.cfm](http://www.migrationinformation.org/issue_mar04.cfm)

Feature stories and other resources on U.S.-Mexico Migration.

## **Center for U.S. Mexican Studies** [http://usmex.ucsd.edu/research/research\\_migration.php](http://usmex.ucsd.edu/research/research_migration.php)

Since 1979, the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies has undertaken and supported serious, sustained research on Mexican migration to the United States. The purpose of this page is to give a brief overview of these efforts, past and present, and to point the user to various resources on the topic.