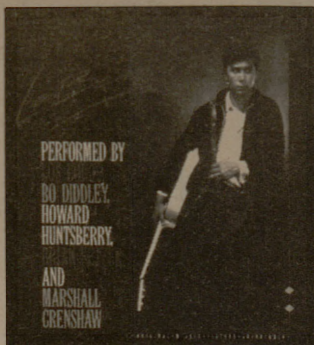


reviews



**"La Bamba — Original Motion Picture Soundtrack" Various Artists
Slash Records
★★★★**

When Luis Valdez was looking for a band to recreate the music of Ritchie Valens for his film "La Bamba," Los Lobos was the only logical choice. Los Lobos said that they felt it was their "spiritual obligation" to go through with the project.

Los Lobos has been

dedicated to keeping the spirit of Valens' music alive. A killer version of Valens' "Come On, Let's Go" was included on the band's 1983 EP, "... And a Time to Dance." In concert, Los Lobos performs a version of "La Bamba" that is capable of bringing down the house. It's about time that Los Lobos committed more of Valens' material to disk.

The first side of the "La Bamba" soundtrack is filled with Los Lobos' versions of Valens' tunes. The classic "La Bamba" gets a more than ample treatment as does "Come On, Let's Go." Valens' tender ballad, "Donna," is also recreated with love.

Sandwiched between Valens' great hits are three lesser known songs from his first album. "Ooh! My Head" and "Framed" are great '50s-style rockers that get new life from Los Lobos. "We Belong Together" is a wonderful ballad that should be put up beside

"Donna" for style and feeling.

Side two contains recreations of other music from the film. Howard Huntsberry performs a mediocre version of Jackie Wilson's "Lonely Teardrops." Marshall Crenshaw, who got his start imitating John Lennon on the "Beatlemania" show, does an impressive imitation of Buddy Holly on "Crying, Waiting, Hoping." Crenshaw certainly looks more like Holly than Gary Busey did in "The Buddy Holly Story." Former Stray Cat guitarist Brian Setzer does the best version of Eddie Cochran's "Summertime Blues" since the Who.

Los Lobos performs two non-Valens songs, "Charlena" and "Goodnight My Love," on side two that don't quite make the groove.

The best thing about the "La Bamba" soundtrack album is that you can take home some of the great music from the movie. A major and

unfortunate omission is that the album does not contain Los Lobos' traditional version of "La Bamba." In the film, when Valens and his brother visit a Mexican brothel, they see a Mariachi band (Los Lobos) performing "La Bamba" and Valens then gets the idea to turn it into a rock song. The members of Los Lobos are virtuosos on traditional Mexican folk instruments and a

traditional version of "La Bamba" would make the album almost perfect.

All three of Valens' original albums are available in a boxed set compiled by Rhino Records called "The History of Ritchie Valens." Rhino has plans to release Valens' albums, "Ritchie Valens," "Ritchie" and "Live at Paicoma Junior High," seperately.

—Review by Karl Pallmeyer

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"La Bamba"
Written and directed by Luis Valdez
Starring Lou Diamond Phillips, Esai Morales and Rosana De Soto
★★★★

Ritchie Valens is one of rock 'n' roll's greatest tragic figures. At the age of 17 he had three hits and was on his way to becoming a major star. But his career was cut short on February 3, 1959 by a plane crash that also took the lives of rock stars Buddy Holly and the Big Bopper.

"La Bamba," a title taken from the name of a Mexican folk song that Valens turned into a rock 'n' roll hit, is Ritchie Valens' story. The film shows Richard Valenzuela as he rises from the citrus groves of southern California and becomes Ritchie Valens the rock star.

Like the liner notes in Rhino Records "The History of Ritchie Valens" collection, La Bamba covers all of the high points in Valens' career. We see, through recurrent flashbacks, that one of Valens' childhood friends was killed by

the wreckage of two colliding planes. We see Valens joining his first rock band. We see Valens getting a recording contract. We see Valens' first song, "Come On, Let's Go," hit the charts. We see Valens write his second hit, "Donna," when his white girlfriend's father refuses to let Donna date him because he's hispanic. We see Valens adapt "La Bamba" into his style, creating one of the greatest rock 'n' roll songs of all time. We see Valens appear on "American Bandstand." We see Valens on tour with Buddy Holly. We see Valens win the coin toss that allowed him to take Cricket guitarist Tommy Allsup's set on the plane that never made it to its destination.

The problem with "La Bamba" is that all of the events of Valens' life are known to any serious fan of popular music and there are no real surprises. But one of the things that helps to save the film is the portrayal of Valens and his relationship with his family.

Lou Diamond Phillips presents Valens as a nice kid who wanted to make music and use his music to make

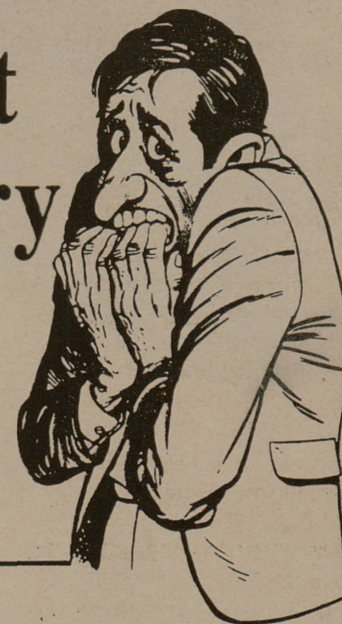
others happy. He is dedicated to his family and his friends. Valens' half-brother, Bob Morales (Esai Morales), is a tough kid who is either causing or having problems. There is great love between the two even though there is a conflict of their basic personalities. Connie Valenzuela (Rosana De Soto) is in the unfortunate position of trying to be a mother to two very different sons.

The music in the film is incredible. Valens' music is recreated by Los Lobos, a Mexican-American band with a great reputation for making great music. The performances of Los Lobos as Ritchie Valens, Marshall Crenshaw as Buddy Holly and Brian Setzer as Eddie Cochran are well worth the price of admission.

The best thing about the film is the overwhelming sense of love that went into the project. The cast, the director and the musicians all seem to have a great admiration of Valens' music and it shows through. That is what makes the film worth seeing.

—Review by Karl Pallmeyer

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