



March 1982

## LOS ILLEGALS

They threw me on a bus  
That headed one way  
I was being deported for  
Washing dishes in L.A.!

—“El Lay”

En un camion sin vuelta  
Me pusieron  
Por lavar platos en el Lay  
Me deportaban

—“El Lay”

**F**or a first record, Los Illegals' "El Lay" makes an unmistakable impression. Its lyrics are direct, its attitude up front, and its musical energy powerfully centered. Los Illegals' musicianship and intensity reflect both the group's youth, and their strong conviction—creating music that expresses a unique cultural situation which their Hispanic East Los Angeles background places them in. ("El Lay" will be the very first bi-lingual single that A&M has ever released. Although numerous A&M recording artists have recorded their hits in Spanish after the original English versions were a success, "El Lay" is the first single to be initially produced and recorded in both languages.)

"Our music," explains lead singer Willie Herrón, "is the product of being torn between two cultures, Mexican and American. We're not going to put our culture aside, but we're not going off to the Third World either. We're here, and being here, in this situation, makes us who we are."

Who Los Illegals are:

Jesus Velo—bass, vocals; Bill Reyes—vocals, drums; William Franklin Herrón—lead vocals, synthesizer, organ; Tony Valdez—vocals, rhythm, melody guitars; and Manuel Valdez—vocals, lead guitar.

To say that the Illegals' music is roots-conscious is a major understatement. All five musicians are old enough to have seen and heard East Los Angeles legends like The Midnighters, Premiers and Cannibal & the Headhunters, and young enough to, in Jesus Velo's words, "want to synthesize the sound of those '60's bands and '80's technology. Our music updates that sound, with jazz, psychedelia and Latin feels."

Los Illegals formed in 1980, though the members had all played in numerous other groups before. The Valdez brothers come from a family that includes Mariachi musicians; drummer Bill Reyes' father encouraged his son's career from an early age, and both Velo and Herrón picked up their instruments in their teens. A sixth member (who sang lead) from Los Illegals' original line-up left last year and Herrón assumed the spot. The present personnel seems to have found the right combination of talent and temperament to connect.

The band's intense performance and its concern with relevant social themes won Los Illegals quick comparisons to Los Angeles' punk groups. "We don't feel any particular connection to that scene," says Jesus Velo, "because we'd be doing what we're doing whether or not there was a punk scene going on in Los Angeles."

The uncompromising attitude and obvious pride in what they're about, make Los Illegals distinctly different from the majority of new Los Angeles bands now crowding the clubs and airwaves. At present, the group is at work on its first album (which will surely contain such strong original compositions as "Secret Society," "Guinea Pigs" and "Wake Up John").

For the time being, "El Lay" will provide a forceful, and clearly-stated introduction to Los Illegals.

