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Tish Hinojosa

"Bus Stop Dreaming of a downtown San Antonio school girl...wishing I was old enough for Woodstock, wondering how my love for my parents' humble Mexican heritage and language would mix with idealistic American images of a musical future. Discovering my voice at fifteen and spending a young adulthood carving a path through folk music, to honky-tonks in my own adopted Northern New Mexico, to Nashville, and back to Texas again. Keeping our ears in the Hispanic world, our eyes on the road, across endless highways, through discussions social, musical, and where's-a-good-Mexican-restaurant...in an old Dodge van, my navigator and I. This pen's been writing. A&M calls this AMERICANA. These songs are *HOMELAND*."

--Tish Hinojosa



A&M PRESS DE PART MENT

B I O G R A P H Y

Tish Hinojosa is a singer-songwriter who is close to her roots, to her own regionalism. *Her* region is the Southwest--not necessarily the Southwest of Georgia O'Keeffe collectors and fancy Tex-Mex restaurants - but of Mexican immigrants in pursuit of the American dream, struggling daily to keep their families alive in a strange land. People like Tish Hinojosa's own parents, actually.

These are the themes -- themes of what one writer called "the strife and sweetness that make the southwest one of the nation's culturally richest nations" -- that make up *Homeland*, Tish Hinojosa's first A&M album. Appropriately, *Homeland* is also the first release in the label's new Americana series which will feature what A&M's A&R head Steve Ralbovsky calls "young progenitors of native music, folk, country, or anything else." "Americana" by its very definition includes everything that makes up the culture and people of this melting pot we call home.

Tish Hinojosa (pronounced Ee-no-hoe-sah) was born and raised in San Antonio, the youngest child of Mexican immigrants who spoke little English. Her musical upbringing was as varied as her bi-lingual background. As a child, Tish would listen to the Beatles and Joan Baez and wish she was old enough to go to Woodstock, yet she also loved Hispanic crooners like Roberto Carlos and Rafael.

Hinojosa discovered her own voice at age 15. Her first professional musical experiences came immediately after high school, when she sang jingles for Latin radio and landed a singles deal with Lado a/Cara label, for whom she had two Top 10 regional hits while still a teenager.

She later relocated to Taos, New Mexico, where she spent seven years. In Taos, she was inspired by the local music scene, an off-shoot of the Austin, Texas folk progressive sound filtered through the New Mexico prism; she also worked with the area's most prominent artist, singer-songwriter Michal Martin Murphey. Along the way, she released a self-produced EP featuring three original songs.

In 1983 she moved to Nashville. It was there that Tish was signed by Mel Tillis Productions, which led to a deal with the MCA/Curb label; her one recording for MCA/Curb, a duet



with Craig Dillingham entitled "I'll Pull You Through," was released in 1986 and became the national theme song for the Red Cross.

She no doubt could have stayed in Nashville, churning out Top 40 country hits penned by the Music Row regulars. But Hinojosa wanted to be herself, expressing her socio-cultural concerns with her own songs, making music the way she wanted. She returned to Taos, and after two years, moved with her husband, Craig Barker, and their two children to Austin, where she now makes her home.

Hinojosa was no stranger to the Austin music scene when she moved there. She has been on the bill of the Kerrville Folk festival since winning the New Folk Songwriters competition at the festival in 1979.

Clearly, Hinojosa's heritage is of vital importance to her art. And it hasn't always been easy being part of two cultures, she admits. "When my family would go to Mexico," she recalls, "We'd always be called Las Americanas; here in the States, we'd be called Mexicans. Even now, I'm still walking the line between being called 'a Hispanic artist' as opposed to just 'an artist.'

"But I've always incorporated Spanish folk songs and themes in my music, even when I was with a band playing a country gig somewhere. It's important to me to show Hispanics that I'm one of them, that I'll never forget them, even though I am an American; that's why my album opens with the 'Border Trilogy' [a trio of songs addressing the struggles and triumphs of the Mexican immigrant] instead of a love song. But somehow, the two cultures fit together, especially now, when America seems to be riding a sort of Hispanic wave."

Indeed, the success of a band like Los Lobos, who've seamlessly melded traditional Mexican folk music with stone American rock 'n' roll while creating a strong identity of their own, has been an inspiration to Hinojosa. In fact, on *Homeland* Tish explores a variety of musical forms – western swing, country and western, folk, straight pop – all from a unique Hispanic perspective. And while other Spanish-speaking artists have treated their careers as two separate entities, one for the Latin market and one for the American. Tish is determined to combine the two.

The presence on *Homeland* of producer Steve Berlin, himself a member of Los Lobos, will certainly help Hinojosa achieve that goal: Berlin also plays on the album, along with Los Lobos' Cesar Rosas and Louie Perez. "[Berlin] brought some great twists to the music," says Tish. "He's a very creative guy, and he taught me a lot about what a song can be. He challenged me; he took away some of the straight country and folk elements, which broadened the music and will help open up my audience, too."

As far as that audience is concerned, Tish doesn't worry about impressing them with social consciousness. "I don't want to cram my stuff down people's throats," she says. "If they want to listen to something because the music has merit – if they just like the melody – then maybe the message will get through, too; and if that happens, the song might mean that much more."