

**SPEAKER** Por Mientras Vamos Cameros from Saint Paul, Minnesota. [SPANISH] coming at you, Los Mundiales.

**1:**

[CROWD CHEERING]

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[SINGING IN SPANISH]

**BILL** The crowd is still sparse at 8 o'clock this Saturday evening at the Majestic Ballroom where Los Mundiales opens for a **WAREHAM:** Texas band that will take the stage a few hours later. But the music energizes the 100 plus people, some of whom have waded through half a dozen other acts during the all-day show. A few couples take the dance floor right away. Many more join a few songs later during a more up tempo tune, something drummer Hector Costilla explains is called a cumbia.

**HECTOR** For the younger generation, they-- I know, for the Hispanics, they like-- rather than polka, they go for the cumbia. It's **COSTILLA:** more like a mambo, where they-- it's a Latin dance, which I couldn't even tell you where it originated. But they like it more. It's more like a disco type.

**SPEAKER** Yeah.

**2:**

- It's  
Hispanic  
disco.

[UPBEAT MUSIC]

[SINGING IN SPANISH]

**BILL** The favorite cumbia dance step looks something like a cross between country line dancing and the more free form **WAREHAM:** movements you'd find on American Bandstand. Couples stand side by side rather than face to face, then shuffle and shimmy in a circle around the dance floor. It's clearly a hit in the Cottage Grove Ballroom where various Latin style concerts get booked a couple of times a month. Los Mundiales also finds regular work in a few other cities around the region where small Hispanic communities have sprung up, including Wilmer and Grand Forks.

What sets Los Mundiales apart from the other acts on the local circuit is Jese Ramos's accordion. While many bands have modernized the Tex-Mex or conjunto sound with synthesized keyboards, Los Mundiales adheres to tradition. Ramos has been playing accordion since age 11 back when it was a mainstay of most dance bands in his native San Antonio. The instrument favored by conjunto artists bears only passing resemblance to the one wielded by polka musicians in this region.

**JESE RAMOS:** Those are a piano accordions and this is a button accordion, but it's mostly a little different than a piano accordion. It's made in-- the one I got is made in Germany and Italy. I think is where it comes from. But it's a little harder than piano playing because it's different sound in and out. It's a different style. But they usually use it on that kind of music. It's mostly all the musicians, that are playing this kind of music, that's what they use, you know, like in Texas and all.

**BILL WAREHAM:** Band members say the accordion earned their opportunity to play the Ordway with Los Lobos. They alone used the instrument at a battle of the bands to determine the opening act. And guitarist David Costilla, Hector's brother, thinks judges wanted to present what's expected to be a mostly white audience with the most authentic slice of Hispanic culture they could find.

**DAVID COSTILLA:** I don't think it's going to be much of a surprise to us as much as it is going to be to the crowd hearing in the Hispanic Tex-Mex music.

**BILL WAREHAM:** Tex-Mex music isn't totally foreign to mainstream pop. '60s hits Woolly Bully and 96 Tears relied on organ riffs lifted straight from conjunto. And Freddy Fender built a country career borrowing liberally from the traditional style. But Los Mundiales shows little interest in anglicizing its act, knowing just enough songs in English to get through typical wedding reception requests. After 15 years together playing the hits of other Tex-Mex bands, they don't so much want to get off the Latino dance hall circuit as they want to bring the music to new audiences. Hector Costilla says their ambition is evident in their name.

**HECTOR COSTILLA:** If you can picture a big globe, that's what Mundiales means, is just to-- like an international band.

**SPEAKER 2:** And is that what you see yourself?

**HECTOR COSTILLA:** We're trying. We're trying.

**BILL WAREHAM:** Los Mundiales drummer Hector Costilla, in addition to brother David on guitar and Jese Ramos on accordion, the band features Jose Medina on vocals and bass guitar. I'm Bill Wareham, Minnesota Public Radio.

[SINGING IN SPANISH]