

Hidalgo/Pérez bio January 2010

David Hidalgo and Louie Pérez started writing songs together when they were in high school, way before they ever became members of that group known as “just another band from East L.A.”: aka Los Lobos. As the main songwriters in one of the world’s most solid and long-lasting roots-rock enclaves, they’ve accumulated an outstanding collection of tunes. But Pérez and Hidalgo had never offered fans a chance to hear those songs in their purest, elemental form. Until now.

Tonight, you’re experiencing a very rare and special duet performance of favorites from their 4 decade collaboration, delivered along with stories about how those songs were born – and how they evolved into the versions you know and love.

Pérez has been considering this acoustic outing for years, ever since he heard Steve Earle do a solo showcase at the famed McCabe’s Guitar Shop in L.A. The performance was stunning, Pérez recalls, still awed by his memory of the mood Earle created using just his rough-as-tree-bark voice, one wooden guitar and his incredible tunes.

With a canon of work that includes such iconic songs as “Will the Wolf Survive?” from Los Lobos’ breakthrough album, 1984’s *How Will the Wolf Survive?*; “Kiko and the Lavender Moon,” from 1992’s *Kiko*; the title tunes from *Neighborhood, This Time* and *Good Morning Aztlán*; “Somewhere in Time” from *The Ride*; “Mas y Mas” from *Colossal Head*, and so many others, plus their Latin Playboys side project and soundtrack compositions (most notably for several of director Robert Rodriguez’s films), the time is finally right for Hidalgo and Pérez to survey their history as songwriters.

“We started this musical conversation back in about 1970, and we haven’t stopped talking,” Pérez says, sounding simultaneously amused and incredulous at the realization that it’s been so long. “That’s why it’s important for us to explain how it’s done; to sit down and say, ‘Hey, this is us as songwriters, this is where it all starts.’”

Actually, it started in an art class at Garfield High School in East L.A., home of the nation’s largest Hispanic community. Becoming fast friends, Hidalgo and Pérez began hanging out after school, composing songs Pérez says were usually about “some goofy girl.”

As they matured, so did their subject matter. Poverty, illegal immigration and other cultural issues made their way into Pérez’s verses, which occasionally revisit the East L.A. of his youth – a theme that has carried through to the band’s 2006 release, *The Town and the City*.

The latest of several Lobos albums to land on influential critics’ top 10 lists, *The Town and the City* provides yet another fine example of the creative connection these songsmiths share. Whether conjuring a minor-key rhythm that percolates with undercurrents of danger, as in “Kiko and the Lavender Moon,” or a groovin’ rocker like “Jenny’s Got A Pony,” Hidalgo’s blends of Latin-American, R&B, blues, soul, jazz and rock influences can inspire Pérez to find exactly the right words. Or vice versa.

“Over the course of the years, the ideal situation for David and me was always to sit down with a pencil and a pad of paper and a guitar and write a song,” Pérez says. It doesn’t often happen that way anymore, but they’ve developed a communication system that works just as well, one that’s evolved from snippets of ideas passed back and forth via mailbox drops to files delivered electronically. Or they’ll trade bits and pieces in the studio, and flesh them out on the spot.

“After so many years, there’s so much intuition here – I can’t even find any other word – where the music and the lyric just fits together in some incredible way. I don’t know what it is,” Pérez admits. He often falls in love with the demo version, but still finds amazement in a song’s metamorphosis from a thought to a fully realized track – a process that is still far from automatic.

“When we start to work up a song and we get in trouble, when all these beautiful colors are starting to turn into brown sludge, then its time to go back to the song,” Pérez says. “We always go back to, ‘You know, Dave, sit down and play it again. Sing it.’ And then it’s just, ‘Oh, there’s the song again.’”

Adds Hidalgo, “That’s what this is about: going to the song and really letting people hear its essence.”

But tonight is more than just a recital of songs and stories. It’s also a chance for you to ask questions about the music and the men who created it – and to go home with *The Long Goodbye*, a companion CD of never-before-released early collaborations and one previously unheard versions of a song you’ll know.

“They’re very cool songs,” says Hidalgo. “You do get the impression that you’re kind of looking at your graduation picture from high school, but there’s something very honest about it.”

As they near their fourth decade of making music together, there’s no time like the present to look back at where they’ve been.

“We’re here for a short amount of time and what’s going to remain?” asks Pérez philosophically. “For David and I, going all the way back to when we first met each other, what’s gonna remain is the songs.”

And what a legacy they are.

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