

Brilliant Insights

Let me begin by saying I have come upon one of the most startling and curious observations in the course of human history: all songs are cha-cha's. All of them.

You think I'm mistaken or exaggerating? I shall illuminate your bewildered ignorance. Let us start with an easy one: Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land."

"This Land is your land, (*cha-cha*) This land is my land (*cha-cha*)
From California (*cha-cha*) to the New York islands (*cha-cha*)."...and so on.

Bob Dylan? Surely not, you would say. Picking one at random: "North Country."

"Well, if you're travelin' (*cha-cha*) in the north country fair (*cha-cha*),
Where the winds hit heavy (*cha-cha*) on the borderline (*cha-cha*),
Remember me (*cha-cha*) to one who lives there (*cha-cha*).
She once was (*cha-cha*) a true love of mine. (*cha-cha-cha*)."

If you're still not convinced, play the songs and keep cha-cha time. So is Sweet Adeline, the barbershop favorite.

"Sweet (*cha-cha*) A- (*cha-cha*) deline" (*cha-cha-cha*). I need go no further.

The Star Spangled Banner? Definitely a cha-cha. "Ohhhhh say (*cha-cha*) can (*cha-cha*) you see (*cha-cha-cha*) by the dawn's (*cha-cha*) early light (*cha-cha-cha*)?"

Waltzes? Polkas? Definitely cha-cha's. They just gave them different names in Vienna and Warsaw. Country Western? Hawaiian war chants? Elizabethan ballads? Bach two part Inventions? Gregorian Chants? All cha-cha's.

And graceless and clueless men who can't dance a lick can thank me for this universal rule. Clearly if all songs are cha-cha's, all dances are cha-cha's too. Any fool can learn to dance the cha-cha, but beware: you will be mobbed by beautiful women at La Tasca on Tall Boys' nights. Anyway, if you need help, I am an expert cha-cha dancer. Ask my wife.

Speaking of music, I am puzzled by another amazing phenomenon I have discovered while living in Mexico. No Mexican singer can sing on key. Believe me, I have a more than casual experience in making this pronouncement.

We live near the *Charro*, the stadium just off the *Tianguis* on *Calle Revolution*. At least twice a month I am able to test my hypothesis. The bands start warming up around 2:00 PM for the evening show. The tuba player oompahs his base notes, the trumpets blaaaaat their melodies and then the lead singer begins, at the top of his/her lungs, completely off key. It sounds as if trying to correct the discord, they sing louder, choosing sheer volume to correct the blatant disregard for the melody intended by the composer. But since nobody in the crowd can sing on key either, it seems to the fans to be the best they have ever heard.

In closing, since this is an article extolling my brilliance, I take full credit for the following observations, virtually unpublicized, though undeniably true.

1. All intersections in Mexico have signs pointing where you want to go but not posted in the direction you are going. The sign is always on the other side of the intersection for cars going in the opposite direction, never on the side in the direction you are going.

For example, you are driving from the Lake Chapala area and your destination is the beautiful colonial city of Pazquaro. On the way you come to the small village of Quiroga, there is a sign saying "Pazquaro 10 km." No problem, you say to yourself, smug in your amazing ability to translate kilometers to miles. As you go through the main plaza of Quiroga, there are many signs, but none signifying the direction to Pazquaro, so you logically continue past the intersection. If you are lucky...and stupid, endangering both you and other passengers in your vehicle...and turn around you will see a sign for Pazquaro which cars traveling in the opposite direction can read. If you don't turn around, you are Morelia bound about an hour out of your way.

So I have a bit of advice to all automobile manufacturers in Mexico. Put submarine turrets with periscope on all vehicles. Someone in the car should always look backwards when passing a key intersection so that the sign that is never in the direction you were going can be seen.

2. All directional signs in Guadalajara point to distant places you don't want to go to instead of some local area. For example, if all I want to do is drive to Costco, the sign inevitably tells me I am going to Juarez or Mexico City. Since

I am directionally challenged, I really don't want a quick stopover in Tijuana or Guatamala. Thus, I never get to Costco.

3. All Mexican doctors are required to have at least one of their names be Garcia. I know this to be a fact. My general practitioner is Dr. Garcia, my ophthalmologist is Garcia and my heart doctor is, I presume just to be certain of full compliance, Dr. Garcia Garcia. QED.

4. Now that I can speak a fair amount of Spanish, I wish to impart some rudimentary wisdom to those who are beginners. When you go to the store to buy charcoal briquettes for your barbeque, it is essential you ask for *carbón*, not *cabrón*. A *cabrón* is a very bad word person. The store owner told me politely that he did not sell *cabrónes* but I could try next door, a high priced liquor store run by his brother.

5. All Mexican songs have three words in them: *Corazon* (heart), *amor* (love) and *lo siento* (I'm sorry). Any song without at least one of these three words is not authentically Mexican. If the words somehow became illegal, all Mexican songs would be prohibited.

Oh. I almost forgot: all Mexican songs are cha-cha's.