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## MUSIC - **Los Tigres: They're grrreat**



They got their start singing about drug smugglers, but four decades spent chronicling the Mexican-American immigrant experience has provided Los Tigres del Norte with a far broader musical mandate.

"Our songs are all about progress," said Jorge Hernandez, who with his brothers Hernan, Eduardo, Luis and cousin Oscar Lara comprise the world's most popular band playing norteno, a Mexican style with bouncy oompah beats powered by accordions, guitars, saxophones and percussion.

Los Tigres makes a rare local appearance tonight at Club Lido in Revere, an intimate venue compared to the stadiums where the band performs in Mexico for 100,000 or more.

The date comes on the heels of another big year for the group, which won its sixth Grammy on Sunday for its 55th album, "Detalles y Emociones."

Altogether, Los Tigres has sold more than 32 million albums while becoming the voice of Hispanic immigrants to the United States, both legal and illegal.

"We've been a voice speaking about what the real problems are," said the San Jose, Calif.-based Hernandez, Los Tigres' lead singer and accordionist. "We speak about the community, the government, politics and our culture in our songs."

When they first moved to California from Rosa Morada, Mexico, in 1968, Los Tigres wrote about the lives of drug traffickers in songs such as their first hit, "Contrabando y Traicion" ("Contraband and Betrayal"). While they never glorified the drug life, they pioneered a style called narcocorrido that caught on quickly during the '70s and '80s. While they still occasionally cover that material, their huge repertoire reflects the breadth of the subject matter they care about.

"We've been doing this for so many years that people identify with us," said Hernandez. "We're speaking about what they sometimes cannot say."

Some of that is cultural, which Los Tigres digs into on its upcoming album drawn from Mexican folk tradition, "Raices" ("Roots"). But much of what gets Los Tigres fans dancing and singing along are songs about the travails of Hispanic immigrants, such as "El Muro" ("The Wall"), which challenges the proposed fence along the United States and Mexico border.

"When they had the separation in Germany of the Berlin Wall, that didn't work," said Jorge Hernandez. "We get a little angry when we see things like this. As soon as they finish this wall, there's going to be a lot of different thinking among the people who live here. We point that out with a lot of straight words in our song."

The band's storytelling songs - corridos - range from romance to social injustice, but in the end, Hernandez says, they're about something even bigger.

"Our songs always give hope," he said.

*Los Tigres del Norte, at Club Lido, Revere, tonight at 9. Tickets: \$60; 781-289-3080.*