

José Feliciano – The Best Of Jose Feliciano (1999)

Written by bluelover

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1 *The Last Time* 2 *Right Here Waiting* 3 *La Bamba* 4 *Rain* 5 *Light My Fire* 6
California Dreamin' 7 *Daniel* 8 *Affirmation* 9 *Stay With Me* 10 *You Send Me* 11
Mule Skinner Blues 12 *Chico And The Man* 13 *Jealous Guy* 14 *Angela* 15 *Y Volver*
16 *In My Life* 17 *Hi-heel Sneakers* 18 *Che Sera Sera*

One of the most prominent Latin-born performers of the pop era, singer/guitarist Jose Feliciano was born September 10, 1945, in Lares, Puerto Rico; the victim of congenital glaucoma, he was left permanently blind at birth. Five years later, he and his family moved to New York City's Spanish Harlem area; there Feliciano began learning the accordion, later taking up the guitar and making his first public appearance at the Bronx's El Teatro Puerto Rico at the age of nine. While in high school he became a fixture of the Greenwich Village coffeehouse circuit, eventually quitting school in 1962 in order to accept a permanent gig in Detroit; a contract with RCA followed a performance at New York's Gerde's Folk City, and within two years he appeared at the Newport Jazz Festival. After bowing with the 1964 novelty single "Everybody Do the Click," he issued his flamenco-flavored debut LP *The Voice and Guitar of Jose Feliciano*, trailed early the next year by *The Fantastic Feliciano*.

Unhappy with the direction of his music following the release of 1966's *A Bag Full of Soul*, Feliciano returned to his roots, releasing three consecutive Spanish-language LPs -- *Sombras...Una Voz, Una Guitarra, Mas Exitos de Jose Feliciano* and *El Sentimiento, La Voz y La Guitarra de Jose Feliciano* -- on RCA International, scoring on the Latin pop charts with the singles "La Copa Rota" and "Amor Gitana." With 1968's *Feliciano!*, he scored a breakthrough hit with a soulful reading of the Doors' "Light My Fire" that launched him into the mainstream pop stratosphere; a smash cover of Tommy Tucker's R&B chestnut "Hi Heel Sneakers" solidified his success, and soon Feliciano found himself performing the national anthem during the 1968 World Series. His idiosyncratic Latin-jazz performance of the song proved highly controversial, and despite the outcry of traditionalists and nationalists, his status as an emerging counterculture hero was secured, with a single of his rendition also becoming a hit.

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In 1969 Feliciano recorded three LPs -- Souled, Alive Alive-O, and Feliciano 10 to 23 -- and won a Grammy for Best New Artist; however, he never again equalled the success of "Light My Fire," and only the theme song to the sitcom Chico and the Man subsequently achieved hit status, edging into the Top 100 singles chart in 1974. Throughout the 1970s Feliciano remained an active performer, however, touring annually and issuing a number of LPs in both English and Spanish, including 1973's Steve Cropper-produced Compartments; he also appeared on the Joni Mitchell hit "Free Man in Paris," and guested on a number of television series including Kung Fu and McMillan and Wife. In 1980 Feliciano was the first performer signed to the new Latin division of Motown, making his label debut with an eponymous effort the following year; his recorded output tapered off during the course of the decade, although he occasionally resurfaced with LPs including 1987's Tu Immenso Amor and 1989's I'm Never Gonna Change. A school in East Harlem was renamed the Jose Feliciano Performing Arts School in his honor; in 1996, he also appeared briefly in the hit film Fargo. ---Jason Ankeny, Rovi

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