

Rosie Flores BIO 2024

Rosie Flores, triple-threat Texas musician, has never allowed the challenge of navigating the male-centric worlds of rock and country music slow her down. In fact, she often drew upon those challenges as source material in sharply observed songs she not only wrote and sang with authority and passion, but also brought to life musically as a widely respected lead guitarist in a string of notable bands.

Rosie is one of the 2024 NEA National Heritage Fellows! In September 2024 she accepted her gold medal award at the Library Of Congress, appearing at the Kennedy Center as well as the White House.

A daughter of San Antonio whose musical journey also has included quality time in Austin, Los Angeles, and Nashville, Flores has adroitly absorbed, helped preserve, and extended the musical legacies of influential Texas musicians as varied as country music's King of Western Swing Bob Wills & His Texas Playboys, blues guitar master T-Bone Walker, and Tex Mex innovator Doug Sahm.

In the 1970s, she became one of the most celebrated performers on the "cowpunk" circuit (a hybrid of punk rock and country), alongside such other rising stars as Dwight Yoakam, Lucinda Williams, Rank & File, and Los Lobos (2021 NEA National Heritage Fellows). The release of her 1987 debut solo album Rosie Flores proved her to be a singer and songwriter of the first rank, and helped lay the foundation for what coalesced into the alt country movement.

Flores became the first Latina to crack Billboard's country music chart. For her enthusiastic participation in and ongoing promotion of Austin's deep and wide music scene, including the annual South by Southwest Conference, the city has proclaimed Rosie Flores Day in 2006.

Flores has remained a spark plug live performer for more than five decades, a goosebump-inducing electric guitarist and songwriter as well as champion of the trailblazers who preceded her. Notably, she lured pioneering rockabilly heroines Wanda Jackson (2005 NEA National Heritage Fellow) and Janis Martin ("the female Elvis") back into recording studios and onto concert stages for lauded late-career rejuvenations. Flores won a 2007 Peabody Award for her narration of the NPR rockabilly documentary, *Whole Lotta Shakin'*.

Tapping her Mexican heritage, Flores formed Las Super Tejanas with singer-songwriter Tish Hinojosa, accordionist Eva Ybarra (2017 NEA National Heritage Fellow), Shelly Lara, and Las Madrugadoras mariachi trio.

Her esteem has only grown over the years, to the point where she and her music are included in Middle Tennessee State University's History of Country Music courses. She was afforded a

prominent spotlight position in the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum's exhibition "Western Edge: The Roots & Reverberations of Los Angeles Country-Rock" in Nashville.

By Randy Lewis, covered pop music for the Los Angeles Times from 1981-2020, with special emphasis on country and Americana music.