

Rocky Mountain News Trail Tales from Joe King

By *Justin Mitchell*

Rocky Mountain News Staff Writer

Besides always being up for a "Vamos a get down" good'time, Joe King" Carrasco is also a prime source for a well-spun true tale from the road.

That road is long, winding and strange With 270 some dates a year and a heavy booking schedule south of the border, where his creme de la jalapeno mix of Tex-Mex, rockabilly, polka, punk, mestizo and general dementia goes over like air conditioning in hell, Carrasco has had some, ah, unique, experiences. for instance, there's someone in Bolivia who seized all the videos Carrasco and his band, the Crowns, shot there for his 1987

Bandito Rock release.

"We made a video there for every song on the album. Then the promoter and the guy who brought me down there had a falling out and everything we shot was taken. It's still there. That's rock 'n' roll, or whatever. But the best thing about playing rock 'n' roll is that it takes you to real exotic places and keeps you moving. People will spot me on the Street in someplace like La Paz and yell: 'Ay, yi, yi, yi!' All in all, I'd rather be big in Bolivia than a working person here."

Then there was the incident late last year when, in route to a gig at a Hard Rock Cafe in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, his tour bus lost the brakes and careened into a stalled truck on some railroad tracks outside of the village of Tequila (honest).

"It was really a major accident," Carrasco reported. "The bus couldn't move and the people in the truck split, because in Mexico if you have a wreck, you go to jail. Someone came by with a tractor and pulled the bus into Tequila, and then we got a ride for seven hours in a pickup truck with our equipment, through jungles and mountains to

the Hard Rock. We pulled up in this beat up pickup, 'Yeah, we're the band'. It was nuts, just crazy. And earlier this year, prior to a St. Valentine's Day date in Boulder, the bus got stuck on Rabbit Ears Pass in a snowstorm outside of Steamboat Springs, forcing Carrasco to trek into the town with just his acoustic guitar to fulfill a concert obligation.

"Some of the band straggled in later at about 2 a.m. But it was fun. I write all my songs on acoustic guitar anyway. Look at Elvis. You can still rock 'n' roll and play an acoustic guitar."

Carrasco said his hectic touring and an admittedly shaky business sense have kept him from releasing a new album -- although he's got 18 songs recorded and is considering titles from Tatum Loreda to Manos Arriba (the latter nicked from Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid roughly translated it means "hands up")

"We need to get something out. I gotta get a deal. But I don't have anybody to hustle me. It comes down to a fast-talking pitchman and the last pitchman cost me about \$50,000. We were touring in Germany and came back to find out he'd run my American Express Card \$33,000 over the limit, plus a \$10,000 phone bill. Yeah, it kinda put me in a bind. You read about poor guys like Chuck Berry getting ripped off in the early days of rock 'n' roll and then wake up one day and there you are ... " Leavig a fellow with nothing to do but to pick up and continue to vamos a get down on the rock, soul 'n' salsa trail.

IF YOU GO

Joe "King" Carrasco and the Crowns; perform at 9:30 tonight and tomorrow at Herman's Hideaway, 1578 S. Broadway. Information: 778-9916