

A black and white portrait of Rubén Funkahuatl Guevara, a Chicano music pioneer. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark, textured jacket and a headband. He has curly hair and is wearing dark sunglasses. His face is adorned with white, circular patterns, possibly body paint or tattoos, around his mouth and chin. The background is a blurred, light-colored wall.

ARTBOUND

**Con Safos:
The Story of Chicano Music Pioneer
Rubén Funkahuatl Guevara**

Screening Guide

About The Episode

When Rubén Guevara crossed the California-Mexico border to visit his ancestral roots in the Maya ruins of Palenque, Mexico, he had an epiphany about what to name his multidimensional creative purpose: Chicano culture sculpture. The CON SAFOS episode of Artbound introduces audiences to the decades-long legacy of artist, musician, and performer Rubén Funkahuatl Guevara. From singing, to poetry, to theater and more, Guevara helped put Chicano culture on the national stage as a major creative force lending visibility to the emerging Chicano political movement.

Born into a family of immigrant Mexican artists, Guevara's father's traditional music and his mother's small Hollywood fame set the foundation for a young man searching for his identity between two cultures. With reverence for his father's influence, and hooked by American jazz and rock music, Guevara began to invent his own sound. Troubled by Mexican Americans being looked down upon as recently arrived immigrants in the United States, as well as considered outcasts in their homeland, Guevara took it upon himself to refine the meaning of the label Chicano, flipping it into a desirable and celebrated identity to belong and connect with others.

From his beginnings in the Apollo Brothers doo wop group to collaborating with legends such as Frank Zappa as Ruben and the Jets, Guevara grew his interests to include experimental theater pieces and sound poems that commented on relevant social issues. He collaborated with legendary comics Cheech and Chong, and eventually, began his own record label to uplift other Chicano and Latinx artists across the diaspora. Throughout his career, Guevara was constantly reinventing himself. Finally, Guevara landed on an alter ego that was totally his own, Funkahuatl, "the Aztec God of funk," a culmination of his many years braiding influences into his own unique expression.

Guided by the phrase Con Safos—a term lifted from Chicano graffiti culture with multiple meanings, including "exempt from danger," and "this is protected, don't mess with it," Guevara pushed art to its limits, paving the way for an entire generation of Chicano/a and Latinx musicians to claim their rightful stage.





How to Host an Event

For both in-person and online screenings, a little advance planning can go a long way towards a fully engaged audience experience. Here are a series of tips for creating a memorable screening event.

Create Goals For Your Event

- Who is my primary audience for this screening?
- What do I want my audience to leave the event feeling or knowing?
- What kind of conversation and/or action do I hope to generate by this screening?

Design Towards Your Goals

- Will the audience be better served by an in-person, online or hybrid event set up?
- What event location will be easily accessible and supportive towards my goals?
- How much time should be planned for after-screening activities and discussion?
- Could the event benefit from any special guests, musicians, panels, or community members?
- Are there relevant local partner organizations that would be interested in co-hosting, publicizing or attending this event?

Plan and Prep

- Assign an event lead for the screening who will keep track of details and processes, as well as additional roles as needed. Such roles might include: Audio Visual specialist, host committee to welcome guests and direct them to their seats and a promotional lead/committee.
- Choose a strong event host who can facilitate introductions and post-screening activities in front of an audience.
- Troubleshoot technology in advance by touring the venue in person and testing equipment before the event occurs
- Create a run-of-show that details the event top to bottom, measured by time: who introduces the event and for how long? How long is the screening? How much time will be allocated to each activity after the screening ends?



Sample run of show

5:30 p.m.

Set up venue if in-person event and coordinate arrival time(s) for anyone helping

6:45 p.m.

Doors open if in-person event

7:10 p.m.

Welcome audience and introduce the evening's activities

7:15–8:15 p.m.

Screen episode

8:15–8:30 p.m.

Engage post-screening discussion

8:30–9:00 p.m.

Engage 1-2 post-screening activities

9:00 p.m.

Close out with thank yous, clean up event materials and break down venue

- Take measures for accessibility wherever you can when planning your event: Is the location wheelchair accessible? Can it be accessed by public transportation? Can spaces be reserved for participants with disabilities? Do you plan to use captions or bring ALA interpreters to the event? If you are hosting an in-person event, consider the ongoing pandemic and COVID-19 precautions.
- **Note:** By hosting a PBS SoCal | KCET content screening in your community, you are committed to making this event free to the public.

Publicize the Event

- At least 3 weeks in advance, send an invite via targeted emails and invitations to relevant individuals and groups.
- Use the templated invite and social media guides provided to promote your event.
- Post your event to multiple social media platforms with a link to RSVP to your free event.
- Continue to spread awareness for your event via newsletters and word of mouth!

Engage Your Audience During the Event

- Consider opening with a brief question related to the screening and invite attendees to share their thoughts out loud or as a journal prompt.
- Utilize this toolkit to engage the audience in post-screening activities!
- Please let us know how it goes by taking the provided partner survey.



Discussion Questions

- 1.** While watching CON SAFOS, what felt new and surprising to learn about? What was shared in the episode that resonated with your own life experiences? Had you heard of Rubén Funkahuatl Guevara before watching?
- 2.** When Rubén Guevara changed his name back to his birth name from the Hollywood-pushed pen name “Jay P. Mobey,” what statement was he making?
- 3.** When it was difficult to find validation as a Mexican American, not completely accepted in the United States or Mexico, in what ways did Guevara and his contemporaries self-validate or forge their own identities?
- 4.** In the episode, author Rubén Martínez shares that Guevara’s making Chicano culture and people unapologetically visible in Los Angeles, where Mexican Americans were excluded from the city’s leadership and mainstream depictions, was a part of “the movement.” How do artists play a role in political movements? Do you think it should be a conscious choice, or a responsibility for artists to consider with their platform?
- 5.** In what ways did Guevara make space for other artists who shared his Chicano identity, both intentionally and by simply being himself?
- 6.** The term Chicano originally held a negative connotation to describe Mexican Americans on both sides of the border. Guevara and others flipped the term on its head, defining it as a Mexican American who takes pride in and celebrates their culture. How can language be reclaimed by a group of people who share an identity? What other examples can you think of? How is this act empowering? How is it complex?
- 7.** Guevara’s sound poem C / S, an abbreviation for Con Safos, addressed racism experienced by Mexican Americans and Japanese Americans in the 1940s. Why did Guevara make these connections across these identities? What benefit is there to drawing parallels between the lived experience of different groups of people?
- 8.** Guevara used music to “tear down the wall that separates,” referring to the US-Mexico border. What power does music hold to unite people across borders and cultures? Can a global, unifying approach to music bring about real change, why or why not? Where have you witnessed this in broader culture, or in your own life?
- 9.** When Guevara met Frank Zappa, at first, he was suspicious of his work and its connection to Chicano culture, then he recognized the band’s rock theater as a tribute to pachuco culture and doo-wop, and eventually, joined forces with the musician. What is the difference between cultural appropriation and appreciation? Is it easy to tell the difference? Can you think of some recent examples of appropriation vs. appreciation?



Activity:

Cut-and-collage Poetry Slam

Time: 15–20 minutes

Materials: Printable word grid, scissors, blank sheets of paper, writing utensils, personal cell phones or digital camera

Introduction:

Rubén Funkahuatl Guevara used words in the form of lyrics, experimental theater pieces and sound poems to drive his creative expression, often through collaboration with his contemporaries. This activity invites participants to create their own poetry collective, using words sourced from Rubén Funkahuatl Guevara’s memoir, *Confessions of a Radical Chicano Doo-Wop Singer* to cut-and-collage poetry. This creative writing technique, in which words are chopped up and arranged to create a new text, can be traced to the Dada art movement of the 1920s, and was further developed and popularized in the 1950s and early 1960s, by writer William S. Burroughs.

Instructions:

1. Separate participants into small groups of three. Frame the exercise for participants by using the text in the above introduction. Invite each group to introduce themselves to their new poetry collective by sharing a song, band or artist they enjoy. Pass out writing utensils, paper, and copies of the printable word grid—one for each participant to have their own. (5 min)

2. Instruct participants to add a few of their own words to the bottom blank rows on their word grid. For example: (5 min)

1. A place you love
2. A person you love (their role: sister, mother, father, friend)
3. An identity you hold
4. Form of music you love
5. An adjective that describes you
6. A color you love

3. Place grids on top of each other to cut out the words quickly, trim along horizontal lines, then trim each word, offering the ability to move the words around. (5 mins)



Activity:

Cut-and-collage Poetry Slam (continued)

4. Invite participants to create their own poems by picking and choosing the words to collage three short texts. This can be done individually or as a group. These poems can be as abstract or concrete. Invite participants to play with sound and/or story in their collaging. Write down or take a photo of each poem. (10 min)

5. If time permits, share out. Welcome the poetry slam! Let's give a round of finger snaps and applause for our poets! At the end of the activity, invite each group to introduce their poetry collective and read at least one poem aloud. (5 min)

Optional: Take a group photo of the event, include photos of paper cut out poems and share with the hashtag #ConSafosPoetrySlam #ConSafosArtboundPBS

Word Grid



Los Angeles	there	sunshine	garden	museum	dimension
closed	neighborhood	friend	open	pink	melody
can	where	memory	yet	no	not
you	lone	should	red	honor	sunshine
she	stay	rose	see	hear	loved one
her	end	being	arm	love	talking
them	become	really	will	Chicano	anything
him	this	speaker	six	touch	grandmother
they	us	think	light	baby	sweet
his	way	neither	play	Chicanx	become
their	time	write	if	American	teach
why	video	jazz	soft	truthful	transform
spy	my	makes	remember	beauty	sail
sit	me	beast	night	necessary	family
say	your	heavy	lie	within	butterfly
and	tall	most	hand	dance	chocolate
for	us	never	take	sense	together
two	bring	some	sit	spoken	history
saw	to	park	tough	want	proud
you	at	bus	on	wish	con safos
we	nor	laugh	-ed	6th Street Bridge	forever

Word Grid



am	or	bicycle	-ly	downtown	like
as	person	car	-er	spill	L.A. River
my	despise	lovely	-s	self	darling
I	blue	forest	-ed	night	come
me	person	yellow	-ing	never	heart
is	catch	coffee	-ly	walk	mine
at	blue	hurt	-ing	short	happy
the	game	utopia	-er	long	angry

Word Grid 2



rock and roll	language	shape	confession	re-	below
dream	liberation	symphony	above	culture	more
frantic	cruising	tiny	doo-wop	blue	or
feet	sea	self	spider	elegant	struggle
embrace	art	joy	star	artist	city
could	honey	giant	eat	say	is
am	tv	legacy	sleep	can	free
great	delirious	cry	graffiti	brown	myself
way	woman	boil	future	smooth	un-
recall	passion	remember	look	danger	crazy
history	encore	theater	be	-able	his
elaborate	after	reveal	struggle	have	her
lowrider	mariachi	cool	luscious	glamour	their
beach	hot	doesn't	has	will	they
through	cold	man	death	less	Los Angeles
connection	are	swim	freedom	-ing	-ed
time	bold	wind	known	all	-ing
rock and roll	language	shape	confession	re-	below
dream	liberation	symphony	above	culture	more
frantic	cruising	tiny	doo-wop	blue	or
feet	sea	self	spider	elegant	struggle

Word Grid 2



always	monkey	mess	fashion	day	-ly
boy	radical	been	lazy	girl	-ing
was	see	still	brutal	fluff	-er
exempt	but	ache	scream	summer	-ous
sky	shadow	worker	love	being	-fully
worship	confidence	sausage	fast	fiction	-ful
Chicano	repulsive	diamond	goddess	dream	-r
journey	scream	remember	born	seek	at
burn	truth	surprise	were	in	the
the	game	utopia	hype	long	angry
me	my	we	I	6th Street Bridge	Chicanx
neighborhood	city	downtown	con safos	young	old



Further Learning

Learn more about **terms and topics** addressed in the CONS SAFOS episode:

The Chicano Movement, also referred to as **El Movimiento**, was a civil rights cultural, political and social movement led by people of Mexican descent. Inspired by groups such as the Black Panthers, the Chicano movement reclaimed a derogatory term as a symbol to reject assimilation, embrace and define their own unique culture, and to fight against discrimination in the United States. The movement reached its height between 1965–1975, and addressed issues such as farm workers’ rights, access to education, restoration of land grants and political visibility and representation.

Maya ruins are ancient architectural structures built by the Maya people. One of the longest and most advanced civilizations, beginning over two thousand years ago c. 250 BCE, the Maya invented the mathematical concept of zero, a complex calendar system, and developed hieroglyphics, a written language. The decline of the Maya civilization came with the arrival of Spanish colonizers and fell by 1697. Restored sites of Maya architecture include temple-pyramids, grand plazas, ball courts and palaces. These sites are found throughout Mesoamerica, a historic region which encompasses northern Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Belize, and central to southern Mexico.

Do your own research on the **artists and musicians** featured in the CON SAFOS episode:

Ruben and the Jets

Con Safos

Frank Zappa

Richard Foos

Cheech and Chong

Lou Adler

Los Lobos

Cannibal and the Headhunter

The Brat

Ozomatli

Lysa Flores

Chicano Batman

The Penguins

Don Tosti

Lalo Guerrero

Maldita Vecindad y Los Hijos del

Quinta

Santa Sabina

Caifanes

Tijuana No

Fobia

Mano Negra

Quetzal



Additional Resources

Engage *A Brief History of Chicano Rock, From Funk Rock to Punk Rock (And a Firme Playlist)* on [L.A. Taco](#), and learn about Ritchie Valens, a pioneer of Chicano rock at [TeachRock](#). Take it further by watching the [Chicano Rock! The Sound of East L.A. documentary](#).

Visit modern day [Rhino Records](#), founded by Richard Foos, now owned by Time Warner.

Learn more about the history of the Chicano Movement at [Facing History & Ourselves](#).

Explore more about the ancient Maya civilization [on the History channel](#). Learn about [La Ruta Maya Foundation](#) and their work to recover and preserve stolen Maya artifacts.

Read an extensive overview of *Mexican LA: History, culture and resistance* [on Al Jazeera](#).

Time travel into the 1960s avant-garde theater movement through this archived [New York Times article](#).

