

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Transitions and Fusions

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### Roberto Amaral's FUEGO EXÓTICO Comes to the El Portal Theatre for Two Shows

Roberto Amaral has more than a few interesting stories from his rock star days with [CARMEN](#) in the early 70's. Scouring the grocery stores of London trying to find the ingredients to make chicken enchiladas for David Bowie. Or looking up from the wooden platform upon which he was dancing and recording Flamenco footwork at London's Air Studios only to realize that Paul McCartney was peaking in to see what the noise was.



Roberto Amaral.

The brushes with fame came often during that 5-year period with CARMEN, including being introduced to the world by David Bowie in his legendary Midnight Special television show in Britain, and a 40-city sold out North American tour as opening act for Jethro Tull. Writing, recording and performing with his friends and fellow Angelinos David Clark Allen and Angela Allen Barr, and living in London was an exciting but volatile life. As happened too often with talent in the early days of rock, a financial scandal with their manager and record company meant an untimely end to their career as CARMEN.

After CARMEN, Amaral returned to his dance roots, back where he began his professional career at the young age of 17. In that short 4 year period prior to CARMEN, Amaral had established himself as a highly respected dancer and choreographer who would quickly rise to stardom and achieve international recognition and acclaim as lead dancer and guest artist with many of the world's most renowned Flamenco companies.

Transitioning back and forth between music and dance was relatively easy when you're in your teens and 20's trying to launch a career. Making the transition from dance back to music at almost 70 is proving a little more of a challenge. "Music, at least the energetic and rhythmic kind I write and sing, is usually youth-driven. It's difficult to get noticed at my age. Legacy music acts that have been around for a long time are having a revival on the casino circuit. Breaking back into music is hard. And I can't dance the way I have been doing for the past 50 years forever!" says

Amaral during a pause from rehearsing his upcoming show. “But, whenever I sing there will always be some sort of accompanying movement. It’s a natural impulse, something organic. I will always perform with the sensibility and feeling of a dancer.”

“I had a thriving career in Flamenco until a car accident in 1998 injured my neck. I didn’t perform again until 2009. I was still teaching, but the pain from my neck injury prevented me from spotting turns as tightly as they should be – I just couldn’t snap my neck the way I needed to. And now that I’m nearing 70, I don’t know how much more high physical impact I can put on my body. Because of my neck, I have headaches almost every day, but for the past 20 years I’ve somehow managed to cope by taking daily pain medication.”

With an impressive resume as a dancer and choreographer spanning over 50 years, he’s always been a gifted singer and songwriter. “Music has always been a big part of my life – ask my dance students. I’m singing for their Flamenco classes nearly every day. But this new chapter of my professional life is something I’ve wanted to do for so long, and now I feel blessed to have this opportunity to go for it!”

## **The Passion of Flamenco – The Soul of R&B – The Fire of Latin**

**Roberto Amaral brings his latest live concert project *FUEGO EXÓTICO* to the intimate [El Portal Theatre](#)**

**in North Hollywood on Saturday, October 14, for 2 shows**



Keyboardist Joey Navarro.

The combined talents onstage for FUEGO EXÓTICO feature an all-star lineup of Southern California artists the include: keyboardist Joey Navarro, drummer Joey Heredia, Flamenco guitarist Andres Vadin, electric guitarist Michael Angel Alvarado, percussionist Ronnie Gutierrez, bassist Alfredo Lopez, singers Gabriel Gonzalez and Shandrelica Casper, and dancers Pamela Laurant, Misuda Cohen and Ashley Almada, with Amaral himself taking center stage on lead vocals and castanets. These brilliant artists have an extensive list of prestigious individual credits crossing many music formats, as well as working with music icons from Stevie Wonder and Gladys Knight to Mariah Carey and Babyface, from Sheila E and Tower of Power to El Chicano and Tierra.

“Each of these musicians and singers has a major music career of their own, so to bring them all together to work with me is very exciting. They often headline with their own bands across California and play on international tours. The people they have played with over the years is literally a who’s who of not only Latin music but also Pop, R&B and Jazz. But besides combining all those genres into my music, it’s the Flamenco flavor that makes this band extra special. And that flavor will be provided by the exceptional Flamenco guitarist Andres Vadin and my fantastic Flamenco dancers. Add to that the killer rhythm section of Heredia, Gutierrez, Navarro, Alvarado

and Lopez, as well as the hot Salsa/R&B vocals of Gonzales and Casper, and you have a world class band that is going to tear up the house!" said Amaral during our interview at his Van Nuys dance studio.



Roberto released his first solo CD "[The Freedom](#)" in [Joey Heredia](#) on drums.

2015. It's a compilation of his newest songs as well as a retrospective of some of the songs he's penned over the last 25 years. Amaral refers to his songs as "exotic contemporary," a unique fusion of different genres including Pop, Rock, Latin, Jazz, Flamenco, R&B and Arabic.

Roberto Amaral was born of Mexican and Brazilian parents and grew up in the melting pot that was the Latino barrio of East Los Angeles in the '50's and 60's where he was exposed to many different types of soulful music. His mother played Flamenco, Jazz and classical records at home. He heard Pop on the radio. He sought out R&B and Soul in the record stores. His early varied musical influences are clearly evident in his distinctive style of singing, writing and layered production. He is definitely the embodiment of the word fusion.

And his personal brand of musical fusion includes languages. "It's interesting to me to hear the current discussion of bilingual songs hitting the [top of the charts](#). '[Despacito](#)' had a great run, but it's certainly not unique. CARMEN was writing and performing music in Spanish and English over 40 years ago," says Amaral of today's Latin music. '[Bulerias](#)' from CARMEN's [Fandangos in Space](#) (#46 on Rolling Stone's greatest progressive rock albums) is a classic example. CARMEN was the first band to fuse Flamenco with progressive orchestral rock.

Now with his new band FUEGO EXÓTICO, Roberto Amaral continues to solidify his unique place in the worlds of music and dance as an innovator and fusion artist. "In this show, my music will get the full sound of a live big band in a way people have never heard it before," says Amaral.



Flamenco guitarist Andres Vadin.

"Roberto Amaral is one of the most talented performers I've ever worked with. He's put together a fantastic band," said Joey Navarro during a break in rehearsals. Music director and keyboardist Navarro charted all the songs for the show and provided some engineering expertise for the cover of 'Anyone Who Had a Heart'. Including this Burt Bacharach and Hal David classic in the show might seem like an odd choice. "I've loved the song ever since it first came out in the early '60's," says Amaral. "I was such a fan of the composers and their many remarkable collaborations with Dionne Warwick. And I always felt that this song had such interesting syncopation, with rhythms and chord structures easily adaptable to a Latin and Flamenco interpretation. Luther Vandross did a smooth jazz

version, but everyone else stays pretty true to the original. My stylized version will be different for people familiar with the song, but still true to the melody.”

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Eclectica Entertainment presents *Roberto Amaral's FUEGO EXÓTICO* for 2 shows on Saturday, October 14, at the historic El Portal Theatre in North Hollywood. Roberto's latest music video 'Anyone who had a Heart,' the Bacharach and David classic, can be found on [Youtube](#). Show and ticket information can be found at the El Portal Theatre [website](#), or by calling the Box Office at 818-508-4200

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2017**

**(4pm & 8pm)**

**The El Portal Theatre**

**5269 Lankershim Blvd.**

**North Hollywood, CA 91601**

[www.elportaltheatre.com](http://www.elportaltheatre.com)

Box Office: (818) 508-4200

For further info: (805) 813-7212 [www.amaralstudio.com](http://www.amaralstudio.com)

Find the Amaral Studio on [Facebook](#) and Instagram

'The Freedom' can be found on [cdbaby.com](http://cdbaby.com)

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