

STRUNZ & FARAH

BIOSKETCH

Performing together since 1979, Strunz & Farah are the innovators of an entirely new expression for the acoustic guitar. Well ahead of their time they created an original style that now is widely influential. Originally from Costa Rica and Iran respectively, Jorge Strunz and Ardeshir Farah have brought the musical influences of their native lands into their highly virtuosic, rhythmic, and improvisation-rich original instrumental compositions, inspiring fans and many guitarists worldwide. Their meeting in 1979 in Los Angeles, where they are still based, marked the first time that Latin American and Middle Eastern music, along with other important elements, came together on the guitar. They remain the undisputed masters of the style they created.

Jorge Strunz was born in Costa Rica. Given his first (three-quarter size) guitar at age 6, he grew up also in Colombia, Mexico, Spain, England, Canada, and the United States, studying and playing flamenco and classical guitar. He performed flamenco guitar professionally as a teenager, accompanying Spanish dancers and singers. He later also played electric guitar in numerous rock bands. He then turned to jazz and jazz fusion, and then focused on his own Latin American roots, Caribbean and Latin folk music. Strunz developed an original, lyrical style, and a way of playing guitar that is his own synthesis of hand techniques from flamenco, Latin folk and classical guitar combined with state-of-the-art virtuoso linear plectrum playing. In 1994 and in 1998, Strunz received two Presidential awards from the government of Costa Rica for his cultural contributions.

Ardeshir Farah was born in Tehran, Iran. While still a teenager, he moved to England for schooling. He played guitar since childhood, focusing on popular music and improvisation. He has performed and recorded extensively with many of the top expatriate Persian singers and musicians in the US who fled Iran after the Revolution. Farah was the first to use Middle Eastern inflections in a contemporary guitar setting. His distinctive touch has a unique exoticism.

The travels of his diplomat father brought Strunz to the United States, where he studied languages and linguistics at Georgetown University while playing music professionally at the same time, while Farah arrived as a student of architecture at USC, also playing professionally on the side. Farah chanced to see Strunz perform with his jazz-fusion group Caldera (4 albums on Capitol), and was very impressed by the music. Shortly afterwards, when the two guitarists met through a mutual friend, it was readily apparent that their individual styles had a natural affinity, and that their musical goals were similar, notwithstanding their different backgrounds.

They prepared a repertoire, began performing, and recorded their first project, *Mosaico* in 1980 (self-produced). Although record companies at that time were not ready for this new music, Los Angeles jazz radio embraced it and world/jazz industry pioneer Richard Bock got the duo signed to the prestigious jazz label Milestone for whom they recorded their

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revolutionary albums *Frontera*, 1983 and *Guitarras*, 1984. These records defined world music on guitar years before the “world music” category existed.

Since 1980, they have made 20 albums, 15 of which are studio recordings, including their very popular titles *Primal Magic* (1990), which topped the Billboard World Music charts, and the Grammy-nominated *Américas* (1992), and *Heat of the Sun* (on the top 10 Billboard World Music chart). Their latest recording is *Moods and Visions* (April 2014), celebrating 35 years of highly successful collaboration, continuing and evolving the duo's original synthesis of multi-cultural elements into a flowing, melodic and rhythmic acoustic guitar style of the highest virtuosity.

In their performances and recordings (which have sold about a million and a half), one can savor the fruits of one of the most unique yet enduring and harmonious musical collaborations in the world of the guitar.

The Music

S&F's music is perhaps best described as original multi-cultural acoustic instrumental improvisational guitar music, or world jazz. Their music emphasizes and luxuriates in sensuous melody and rhythm with a colorful and passionate expression, and is saturated with their cultural roots. Afro-Caribbean, Latin American folk, flamenco and Middle Eastern music all converge in an essentially jazz context, especially in the sense of improvisation, and is a unique contribution to the diversity of contemporary guitar music.

Renowned world, jazz, popular, and classical artists they have recorded collectively or individually with include Stanley Clarke, Sting, Hubert Laws, Dr. L. Subramaniam, Hayadeh, Gerardo Nuñez, Manoochehr Sadeghi, Jihad Racy, Edwin Colón Zayas, Liona Boyd, and Ashish Khan. They have also recorded with Joan Baez, and have recorded with and performed often with Jackson Browne.

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FACTS

Based in: Los Angeles, California

Musical Genre: World music and Jazz; Latin guitar (instrumental)

Latest Release: Moods and Visions, release date 4/15/14

Musicians: Jorge Strunz (from Costa Rica), Spanish guitar
Ardeshir Farah (from Iran), Spanish guitar

Rob Hardt: flute • Rick Keller, flute • Jorge Perez Sawa and Eliseo Borrero: bass • Luis Conte: Latin percussion • Majeed Ghorbanian: Middle Eastern percussion

Points of Note: Pioneering virtuosic guitar duo plays original compositions with improvisations. Always backed by an international ensemble of world-class musicians, they are a very powerful and popular live act. The music is their original blend of flamenco, Afro-Latin and Latin folk, Middle Eastern and jazz forms. Their CDs *Primal Magic* and *Américas* were named Billboard World Music Album of the Year and been nominated for a Grammy in the World Music category, respectively. *Heat of the Sun*, spent 4 months in the top 10 of the World Music chart. They have appeared on many TV shows including BET, PBS, and GMA. Together since 1979, Strunz & Farah have sold about a million and a half records and have profoundly influenced acoustic guitarists worldwide.

Languages spoken: Jorge is perfectly bilingual (although Spanish is his native language). Ardeshir's native tongue is Farsi, but speaks flawless English.

Additional Data: Jorge Strunz has received two Presidential awards from the government of Costa Rica for his cultural achievements.

Discography:

- *Mosaico*, 1982, Gitano, 1997, Selva
- *Frontera*, 1984, Milestone
- *Guitarras*, 1985, Milestone
- *Misterio*, 1989, AudioQuest
- *Primal Magic*, 1990, Mesa, 1999 Selva
- *Américas*, 1992, Mesa, 1999 Selva
- *Heat of the Sun*, 1995, Selva
- *Live*, 1997, Selva
- *Wild Muse*, 1998, Selva
- *Best of Strunz & Farah*, 2000, Selva
- *Stringweave*, 2001, Selva
- *Strunz & Farah In Performance DVD*, 2003, Selva
- *Rio de Colores*, 2003, Selva
- *Zona Tórrida*, 2004 Selva
- *Desert Guitars*, 2005 Selva
- *Jungle Guitars*, 2006 Selva
- *Fantaseo*, 2006 Selva
- *Journey Around the Sun*, 2011 Selva
- *Moods and Visions*, 2014, Selva

Record Label: Selva, Woodland Hills. The name means “jungle” in Spanish.

Management: Selva, Woodland Hills, CA • 818-703-1251 • selvasound@earthlink.net

Agent: Brad Stewart, Dynamic Artists • 510-558-4000 • brad@dynamicartists.com • www.dynamicartists.com

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PRESS EXCERPTS

- “Strunz & Farah have distinguished themselves as two of the planet’s most gifted acoustic guitarists.” — *Guitar Player*
- “Acoustic guitar players just don’t come better than these two...” — *Guitar Techniques*
- “The planet’s most staggering guitar duo finally gives us a live taste of their uplifting Latin-flavored acoustic fusion and the jawdropping technique which has stunned California audiences for almost 20 years...But speed aside, high-energy acoustic music doesn’t get any more moving than this.” (five out of five star rating) — *Total Guitar*
- “Devastating acoustic duo...considered by many to rank alongside the best guitar players in the world. They’ve...become one of the most respected and copied acoustic guitar duos in the US, with admirers worldwide.” — *Guitarist*
- “Bridging cultures and stunning audiences...fiery improvisations over pulse-quickenning tempos...they offer a fusion of influences that perhaps no other ensemble can boast.” — *Jazziz*
- “...essential listening...some of the most unbelievable soloing to be heard anywhere.” — *Guitar Extra*
- “Jorge Strunz and Ardeshtir Farah play with the swiftness of a desert wind and the burning passion of a Gypsy campfire...In addition to being talented arrangers and composers, their technical mastery of the instrument — especially in terms of speed — tests the boundaries of the human capability.” — *Guitar Player*
- “...Dazzling virtuosity and a cross-cultural repertoire that celebrated and sometimes fused Latin, Arab, European, Afro-Cuban, and American styles.” — *The Washington Post*
- “Strunz & Farah: IRRESISTIBLE!” — *Le Journal de Montreal*
- “Both guitarists are immensely gifted composers, with a masterful grasp of both melody and harmony, to say nothing of their phenomenal technique...” — *L.A. Weekly*
- “Both men match passion with speed, musical complexity and a steely precision rarely heard in popular music.” — *Los Angeles Times*
- “The presence of two nylon-string nirvana-seekers like Jorge Strunz and Ardeshtir Farah in one group is a near embarrassment of riches. As if each player’s virtuosity — fired by keen melodic inventiveness, harmonic sensitivity and careening finger speed — weren’t enough, their crisp duets are underpinned by a multiethnic, groove-conscious rhythm section. The result is a musical landscape redolent with tropical colors and rolling with flamenco thunderclaps.” — *Musician*
- “What they have created is truly magical. From the first note played, it is apparent that this is not some fly-by-night collaboration — Ardeshtir Farah and Jorge Strunz have been playing together as a duo for over a decade and this album of Worldbeat music establishes them as a leading force in this area.” — *Mac Report*
- “With their incendiary blend of flamenco color, driving Afro-Latin rhythms, and dazzling nylon string virtuosity...Strunz & Farah are spectacular live. For guitar lovers, the experience can be downright apocalyptic.” — *Guitar Player*
- “...these two players are fast becoming the talk of the Latin-jazz world...Strunz & Farah [are] visceral and exciting live...You see them soloing at a leisurely pace, and then all of a sudden they kick in the afterburners for some unplugged shred...If you dig the art of high-tempo alternate picking, these cats will make you drool...It’s simply uncanny to witness such a feat of sheer guitar virtuosity.” — *Guitar Shop*

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Latin Press Translated into English

"Strunz & Farah: a sublime duo of guitar" — *Todo-Norte*, Puerto Rico

"The guitarists' artistic virtues shone with masterful fulfillment"
— *Primera Hora*, Puerto Rico

"They came to do what they know best: to leave those present dazzled with their speed on the strings, with their electrifying 'hand to hand' exchanges, and with the amazing affinity with which they transform two guitars into one instrument." — *El Nuevo Dia*, Puerto Rico

"Their fresh language, replete with a totally new coloring, makes the ensemble a phenomenon of acoustic guitar. They achieve a fusion of jazz, flamenco, and the Latin culture."
— *La Nación*, Costa Rica

"Magic sounds that manage to escape reality and present new worlds to the listener, and the protagonists were the virtuoso guitarists Jorge Strunz & Ardeshir Farah."
— *La Republica*, Costa Rica

"From their presentation, one is made aware of the subtlety and excellence of their work, and the solidity of a truly fresh and novel ensemble can be appreciated."
— *El Comercio*, Quito, Ecuador

"Two hours of a profusion of "sabor" [taste] and mastery, which the public applauded throughout the show. Everything that can be said to describe the dexterity and professionalism of these two guitarists sounds inadequate...perhaps it is best to say that they were out of this world."
— *La Nación*, Costa Rica

"Without a doubt, it was an evening where the instrumental dialogue via the use of rhythms such as flamenco, Spanish rumba, salsa, and also merengue, delivered a balanced presentation, always maintaining the mastery, assurance, and virtuosity of the two guitarists."
— *El Nuevo Dia*, Puerto Rico

"The public threw themselves in frenetic pursuit of those two pairs of speeding, creative, luxurious and passionate hands...The 'Tico' [Costa Rican] and the Iranian have the distinction of being pioneers in their style... Velocity and digitation stand out [but] they are only two of the elements that drive a level of expression where the vertiginous is simply a support for inspired harmonic plays in the fusion of flamenco, Afro-Caribbean, and Middle Eastern styles. They made a gala of their dexterity and synchronicity."
— *La Nación*, San José, Costa Rica

"Within the world of musical creation, Strunz & Farah have been able, like very few, to blend their roots — ethnic, cultural, and social — to contemporary situations — adapting to first world influences, cosmopolitanism, and multilingualism — in a natural and harmonious manner."
— *La Opinión*, Los Angeles

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SPECIAL AWARDS & RECOGNITION:

- **Grammy nomination:** *Américas*: was nominated for a Grammy for "Best World Music Album" of the year. It was also #2 on the Billboard World Music chart for months.
- **Billboard's "World Music Album of the Year":** *Primal Magic* was chosen by Billboard for this honor; it spent 3 months at the top of the World Music chart, also making the Billboard top 200.
- ***Heat of the Sun*** spent 4 months on Billboard's World Music chart, mostly in the top 10. Billboard recognized it as among the top 5 World Music Indie records, and Strunz & Farah as among the top 10 World Music artists overall, and Selva as among the top 5 World Music Indie labels.
- **Presidential awards:** The President of Costa Rica and the Minister of Culture have given Jorge Strunz two awards including the "Premio a la Superación" (award for extraordinary achievement) in special recognition of his cultural contributions.

Performance Profile: Among many performances in many countries, a few stand out:

- **U.S. Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute:** S&F were featured at the CHCI annual Gala event, attended by the U.S. President, VP, members of the Cabinet & Congress in 1997.
- **Salon de Bellas Artes:** S&F have played Puerto Rico's top theater to full houses and rave reviews on three occasions.
- **Montreal Jazz Festival:** S&F played this festival many times, once in the premier spot on the biggest night for 85,000 people.
- **Meyerson Symphony Hall:** the Dallas Classical Guitar Society had two of their best-attended concerts of the season with Strunz & Farah at this prestigious fine arts venue.
- **Greek Theater:** S&F have played the Greek Theater, one of L.A.'s premier venues, twice.
- **Festival Internacional Cervantino:** S&F played this world-renowned fine arts festival in Mexico to an enthusiastic 8000 people.
- **Teatro Melico Salazar:** S&F have played at Costa Rica's largest theater over a dozen times, usually to packed houses.
- **Montreux Jazz Festival** in Montreux, Switzerland. Swiss press named them the "revelation" of the festival.
- **Festival Internacional de Guitarra** in Havana, Cuba: they were given the premier spot in the Teatro Nacional, and they played to a full and enthusiastic house.
- **Fiestas Quiteñas** in Quito, Ecuador: they have played these festivals a number of times.
- **Balboa Theater** in Panama City, Panama: their first visit in 1998 drew a capacity (1100) audience, with the promoter saying he could have filled it twice. They have since returned several times.
- **Martinique International Guitar Festival:** they performed at this prestigious festival in 1998.
- **Teatro Nacional**, Costa Rica: S&F have played this magnificent historic theater twice to capacity crowds.
- **Concord Pavilion:** S&F have played this prestigious venue 3 times, once with Miles Davis, once with Kenny Loggins, and once with George Benson and David Sanborn.
- **Heineken Jazz Festival**, Puerto Rico: S&F played this festival twice to an enthusiastic crowd of over 5000 people.
- **Royce Hall, L.A., Herbst Theater, S.F. & Beacon Theater, NYC:** S&F has played all these important venues.

They have also performed at many benefits for entities such as Doctors Without Borders, Amnesty International, Rainforest Action Network, Mountains Restoration Trust, CISPES, El Rescate, Children's Hospital of San Jose, Costa Rica, and others.

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DISCOGRAPHY

Moods and Visions (Selva, 2014. SV-CD 1017) • With Rob Hardt, flute; Rick Keller, flute; Jorge Sawa Perez, bass; Eliseo Borrero, bass; Majid Ghorbanian, Middle Eastern percussion; Luis Conte, Latin percussion.

Journey Around the Sun (Selva, 2011. SV-CD 1016) • With Rob Hardt, flute, clarinet; Keyavash Nourai: kamancheh; Carlitos del Puerto, Eliseo Borrero: bass; Jimmy Branly: cajon, percussion; Ali Tavallali, Majid Ghorbanian: tombek & tambourine, Luis Conte: congas, percussion.

Fantaseo (Selva, 2006. SV-CD 1014) • With Charlie Bisharat, violin; Ararat Petrossian: shvi; Carlitos del Puerto, Eliseo Borrero: bass; Jimmy Branly: drums; Joey de León: percussion; Majid Ghorbanian: Middle Eastern percussion.

Jungle Guitars (Selva, 2006. SV-CD 1013) • With Charlie Bisharat, violin; Eliseo Borrero, Guillermo Guzmán: bass; Jimmy Branly, Joey de León, Long John Oliva, Luis Conte, Ray Yslas, Luis Manuela: percussion; Luis Perez Ixoneztli: pre-Columbian winds & percussion; Paul Tchounga, Jimmy Branly: drums; Alberto Salas: synth pads.

Desert Guitars (Selva, 2005. SV-CD 1012) • With L. Subramaniam, Bijan Mortazavi, Charlie Bisharat, violin; Manoochehr Sadeghi, Santur; Danny Papakalos, bouzouki; Farhad Besharati, qanun; Omid Torbatian, JA Racy, ney; Omayya al'Ghanim, guitar; Hayadeh, Hengameh: vocals; Eliseo Borrero, Carlitos del Puerto, René Camacho, Randy Tico: bass; Luis Conte, Ray Yslas, Walfredo Reyes, Cassio Duarte, Long John Oliva: percussion; Souhail Kaspar, Majid Ghorbanian: Middle Eastern percussion; Alberto Salas: synth pads.

Zona Tórrida (Selva, 2004. SV-CD 1011) • With Charlie Bisharat, violin; Carlitos del Puerto, René Camacho, & Reggie Hamilton: upright bass; Eliseo Borrero: bass; Jimmy Branly, Joey de León, Ray Yslas: percussion; Pedro Eustache: flute; Chris Bleth: English horn; Cameron Stone: cello; Jihad Racy: nay; Souhail Kaspar, Majid Ghorbanian: Middle Eastern percussion.

Rio de Colores (Selva, 2003. SV-CD-1010) • With Charlie Bisharat: violin; Rene Camacho: bass; Joey de Leon: Latin percussion; Ramón Yslas: cajón; Jimmy Branly: drums; Pedro Eustache: flute; Alberto Salas: keyboards; Ulises pineda, kena, zampoña; Danny Papakalos: bouzouki; Ali Tavallali: tombak; Majid Ghorbani: tambourine; Omid Torbatian: ney; Chris Bleth: woodwinds; Michelle Whitson-Stone: harp.

Strunz & Farah In Performance (Selva, 2003. DVD-Video. SV-DVD-1009) • With Charlie Bisharat: violin; Eliseo Borrero: acoustic bass; Joey de Leon, Cassio Duarte, Ray Yslas: Latin percussion; Ali Tavallali: zarb & tombak; Rosa Roja: dancer.

Stringweave (Selva, 2001. SV-CD-1008) • Special guests: L. Subramaniam, Bijan Mortazavi: violin; Edwin Colón Zayas: cuatro; Liona Boyd: classical guitar. With Charlie Bisharat: violin; Eliseo Borrero & Carlitos del Puerto: bass; Alberto Salas: keyboards; Farhad Besharati: qanun; Luis Conte, Joey de Leon, Cassio Duarte & Ramón Yslas: Afrocuban percussion; Ali Tavallali, tombak; Majid Ghorbani, Middle Eastern percussion.

Best of Strunz & Farah (Selva, 2000. SV-CD-1007) • With Eliseo Borrero, Guillermo Guzmán, & Carlitos del Puerto: bass; Paul Tchounga & Joe Heredia: drums; Luis Conte, Long John Oliva, Cassio Duarte, & Ramón Yslas: Afrocuban percussion; Majid Ghorbani: Middle Eastern percussion; Charlie Bisharat, violin; Luis Perez Ixoneztli: pre-Columbian winds & percussion; Freddie Ravel & Ibrahim Parreño: keyboards; Danny Papakalos: bouzouki.

Wild Muse (Selva, 1998. SV-CD-1004) • With Carlitos del Puerto & Eliseo Borrero: bass; Paul Tchounga & Walfredo Reyes: drums; Luis Conte, Nengue Hernandez, Cassio Duarte, Papo Rodriguez, & Ramón Yslas: Afrocuban percussion; Majid Ghorbani: dombak & percussion; Charlie Bisharat: violin; Ramón Flores: trumpet; Eric Jorgensen: trombone; Freddie Ravel & Alberto Salas: keyboards; special guest: Danny Papakalos, bouzouki.

Live (Selva, 1997. CD & cassette. SV-1002) • With Eliseo Borrero: bass; Paul Tchounga: drums; Cassio Duarte: percussion; Ramón Yslas: percussion & cajon.

Heat of the Sun (Selva, 1995. CD & cassette. SV-1001) • With Eliseo Borrero: bass; Paul Tchounga: drums; Luis Conte, Juanito Oliva: Afrocuban percussion & cajon; Cassio Duarte: dombak; Charlie Bisharat: violin.

Américas (Selva, 1992, re-released 1999. SV-CD 1006) • With Long John Oliva: Afrocuban percussion & cajón; Paul Tchounga: drums; Guillermo Guzmán: bass; Luis Perez Ixoneztli: pre-Columbian winds & percussion, vocals; Luis Conte: percussion; Charlie Bisharat: violin; Antonio de Jeréz: palmas; Luis Manuela: güira.

Primal Magic (Selva, 1990, re-released 1999. SV-CD-1005) • With Juanito Oliva: Afrocuban percussion & cajón; Paul Tchounga: drums; Guillermo Guzmán: bass; Luis Perez Ixoneztli: pre-Columbian winds & percussion, vocals; Charlie Bisharat: violin; Joe Heredia: drums.

Misterio (AudioQuest, 1989. Tel. 800-747-2770. CDs & Audiophile LPs. WLA-CS-08) • With Ciro Hurtado: 3rd guitar; Charlie Bisharat: violin; Luis Perez Ixoneztli: pre-Columbian winds & percussion, chant.

Guitarras (Milestone, 1985. Tel. 800-227-0466. CDs..M-9136) • With Luis Conte: percussion; Miguel Cruz: percussion; Omayya al'Ghanim: guitar; Ashish Khan: sarod; Hayadeh: vocals; Majid Ghorbani: dombak & percussion; Quique Cruz: zampoña & kena; Hugo Pedroza: charango.

Frontera (Milestone, 1984. Tel. 800-227-0466. CDs.M-9123) • With Omayya al'Ghanim, Aris Quiroga: guitar; Luis Conte: percussion; Alex Acuña: drums; Randy Tico: bass; Eddie del Barrio: keyboards; Steve Tavaglione, Steve Kujala: flute; Stanley Clarke: acoustic bass; Manoochehr Sadeghi: santur; Majid Ghorbani: dombak & darbukah.

Mosaico (Selva, 1982, re-released 1997. SV-CD-1003) • With Dr. L. Subramaniam: violin; Luis Conte: percussion; Gregg Lee: bass; Omayya al'Ghanim: guitar; Ron Wagner: drums & marimba.