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LA-based guitarist and composer VAHAGNI releases “Imagined Frequencies” on Sept 8, 2015;

New CD follows 2014 world tour with Afro-Spanish jazz singer BUIKA, who contributes guest vocals on traditional Armenian folk song “Hov Arek Sarer Jan”

Weaving flamenco, classical, jazz and folk music into a fresh guitar sound;

CD also features Sebu of indie pop group Capital Cities

Soundcloud: <https://soundcloud.com/vahagni/sets/imagined-frequencies>

EPK with videos: <http://www.vahagni.com/#!epk/c6lz>

“Beautiful music. When I hear it I feel a tickle in my head and start to smile” -- BUIKA

It’s easy to make things sound complex. What’s much harder is to make complexity sound easy. In *Imagined Frequencies*, his latest recording scheduled for release on September 8, Los Angeles-based guitarist and composer **Vahagni** weaves in both, his playing and his compositions, strands from several styles and traditions — **flamenco and classical music, Armenian music and jazz**. Yet the overall result has a rare, easy-on-the-ear quality that belies its many influences.

“At the end of the day we are all searching for a melody, for a story in the music,” says the Armenian-born guitarist. “And when I write, even when it gets very abstract or might have dissonances, I think naturally about the melody as a way to tie everything together.”

Imagined Frequencies, which features a program of original compositions and one strikingly fresh arrangement of the Armenian traditional song “**Hov Arek Sarer Jan**” interpreted by **Afro-Spanish singer Buika**, who also appears in the video, covers a broad musical ground, subtly and elegantly. It is his third album as a leader and, says Vahagni, it’s a true snapshot of himself as composer, player and producer.

“There is more of me in this album than in any other of my recordings,” he says. In fact, his development as a player and composer is accompanied here by his growth as a producer. On *Imagined Frequencies* (Vahagni Music), Vahagni turned the studio into another instrument “producing, editing and, basically, doing everything to shape the sound of the record. I just fell in love with the creative process in the studio.” *Imagined Frequencies* includes traditional instruments and performances but also extensive post-production “sound design.” This includes the use of pre-recorded material such as bits of an interview by Spanish painter Salvador Dalí (heard on “**Sketches of Dalí**”) to taking a section of a piece and, through sound manipulation, creating an entirely new song, as in “**Ghost Ships**” featuring **Sebu** of the indie pop group **Capital Cities**.

Born Vahagn Turgutyán in **Yerevan, Armenia**, then part of the Soviet Union, Vahagni (pronounced Va-HOGG-nee), is the son of Sarkis Turgutyán, a guitar soloist for the National Philharmonic Orchestra of Armenia, and Satenik Shahnazaryán, a theatrical actress. In September 1991, just weeks before the official

dissolution of the Soviet Union, the family moved to **Los Angeles**, where they had friends and relatives. Vahagni was only six, but by then, his musical foundation had been established.

“In my house there were primarily three types of music: Armenian folk music, classical music and flamenco,” explains Vahagni. His father’s passion for flamenco began after seeing a television special featuring the great Spanish guitarist Paco de Lucia. After that, recalls Vahagni, “he became obsessed and taught himself to play flamenco.”

Vahagni started playing guitar at 9, but early on, his father didn’t allow him to play flamenco. “He wanted me to learn classical technique, the classical repertoire and how to read music first —and he enforced it. He felt it was an important foundation,” recalls Vahagni. “But a couple of years of classical studies were enough for me. By the time I was 11, I started playing flamenco.” His father’s favorites — flamenco masters such as Ramon Montoya, Sabicas and Niño Ricardo — became his early influences.

At about that time Vahagni also became intrigued by classical music and jazz, he says. “I started with the fathers — Beethoven, Bach, Mozart — then Stravinsky. It was the same process with jazz: a lot of Miles, Trane, John Scofield, Pat Metheny, Jarrett, a lot of Bill Frisell and then more modern stuff.”

Meanwhile, having learned everything his father knew about flamenco, Vahagni decided that the next thing to do was to go directly to the source. He didn’t know anybody in Spain and, by his own account, “didn’t speak a word of Spanish,” but in 2004 he moved to **Andalucía**, the lively and sunny cradle of flamenco.

He studied with maestro **Paco Serrano**, went to *tablaos* and played “as much as I could, anywhere they’d let me,” he says. “That’s all I did.”

One thing is to learn the technical aspects of flamenco, but immersing himself in the culture of flamenco also taught Vahagni about “the energy” that finds expression in that music. “That is something you have to feel to understand it,” he says. “You can’t learn that from books. Nobody can explain it to you.”

In all, he spent the next three years alternating between long stays in Andalucía and stretches back home in Los Angeles. A highlight of his apprenticeship was playing for one of his idols, the legendary guitarist **Manolo Sanlúcar** who, on the spot, offered to take him as a disciple. But when the maestro’s health problems delayed their work together, Vahagni embarked on his professional career. “I played a lot in LA. All my paying gigs were in the jazz scene or with jazz cats, that’s where I learned the most,” he says. “And then I also started recording an album. The moment to study with Sanlúcar and be a student again had passed — but I still stayed in touch with him.”

He recorded **Short Stories**, his first album under his own name, in 2008, and in 2012 released **Solitude**, an album that featured 11 original tracks and an arrangement of an Armenian folk song.

In 2014, his work caught the attention of Afro-Spanish singer **Buika** who was looking for an exceptional guitarist, versed in flamenco but with a modern global sound, to accompany on her world tour. It was, he says, “a great experience. I was working with one of my favorites and learning a lot. We played every continent except Africa.”

In *Imagined Frequencies*, Vahagni distills all his musical and cultural influences into a soulful yet elegantly uncomplicated sound. “It’s just music,” he says. “I don’t want listeners to think about what makes this fusion. It’s just music. As long as you enjoy it, you can call it anything you want to.”

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