

# Eclectic guitar virtuoso

By Laura Wittner  
For the Herald

When he was 12, Ernesto Snajer was regarded as a virtuoso guitarist among his friends. He seemed able to play anything they wanted to listen to or sing, plus lots of things they had never heard of. He was already a musician when the rest of his peers didn't dare to think about what they were going to be. For him, however, those were times of learning basic skills, when he hadn't even decided that music would be his profession. But he was beginning to suspect it: "I had two passions," Snajer recalls, "guitars and basketball. But I'm too short."

Now, at 30, it is his colleagues who regard him as a virtuoso. Ernesto Snajer has played with, among others, Lito Vitale (he was part of his band from 1994 to 1997), Pedro Aznar, Ariel Ramírez, Jairo, Javier Malosetti, Verónica Condomí, Jorge Cumbo, Jacques Morelbaum, Juan Carlos Baglietto, Liliana Vitale and Víctor Heredia. He has also composed music for films, plays and TV programmes. He teaches music and pro-



Herald photo by Maricé Maser

## Ernesto Snajer

duces albums for other musicians, even works as a recording technician (actually, he has his own recording studio). He often plays a ten-string guitar that gives his music a peculiar sound. But what's most interesting about him is the way he built an impressive and original career, exclusively based on his personal choices and likings.

"I find it difficult to define my music," he reflects. "It is Argentine music, that's for sure, that's something you can say just by listening to it. Specially because of the rhythms (*chacareras*, *milongas*, *candombe*). But, besides having an 'electric background,' I guess the fusion of all the kinds of music I like is very recognizable."

And the kinds of music Snajer likes go through so wide a range that it is not surprising that his own work is hard to describe. "The first band to arouse my enthusiasm was The Beatles, and it was the only thing I listened to for many years. Music for children bored me, so I started off with them when I was 4 or 5. *Sgt. Pepper* is the

record that I've listened to most in my life. Even today, The Beatles continue to be present in everything I create," he says. "Afterwards, I became interested in other music styles, until slowly becoming what I am now: a music addict. I make no distinctions between genres."

Snajer, though, can distinctively list his main influences (it is also true that it takes him a couple of lines): Charlie Parker, Wes Montgomery, Miles Davis, Egberto Gismonti, Astor Piazzolla, Ralph Towner, John Mc Laughlin, Anibal Troilo, Atahualpa Yupanqui, Hermeto Pascoal and Horacio Salgán.

Semblanza was the name of the ("a little modern") tango and folklore group he formed at the age of 17. They won the 1988 Pre-Cosquín contest in the category "instrumental music," recorded three albums — *Semblanza I*, *33 1/4* and *Semblanza II* — and made four tours of Europe, performing in 12 different countries. In one of them, Denmark, he stayed for a whole year. There he met the Danish guitarist Palle Windfelt, with whom he formed a duo that made 5 tours of Denmark. The duo also

recorded its own CDs: *Guitarreros* (1991) and *Koben Aires* (1993).

After recording two solo albums — *Vuelos* (1996) and *87/92*, a compilation (1997) —, Snajer is presently preparing a new work with his band, the Ernesto Snajer Cuarteto — up to now, a quartet of three: Snajer, Alejandro Devries and Oscar Giunta (Jr.). The CD, which is due to come out by the end of this year, will be, according to the guitarist, "definitely Argentine, in contrast with *Vuelos*, that had more non-definable styles." It will include a *baguala*, a *zamba*, a *chacarera*, a *milonga*, a *chamamé* and a song by Piazzolla.

Snajer is also writing the score for a stage production of Strindberg's *Miss Julia* which will open next December, and planning a new tour with Palle for May, 1999, that will take them to Germany, Denmark and, probably, Spain.

Impressive as all of this may sound, Ernesto Snajer is very earthbound when it comes to express his current concerns: "struggling from paycheck to paycheck and registering my son in the kindergarten."