

**Interview with:**

# Angel Romeo

Managing Director at World Music Central and Progressive Rock Central, International Sales Director and Producer Ellipsis Arts, Owner Mindchild Records, General Manager Alula Records

---

**WM Oasis** - You have been writing about world music in many years. How come you developed such big interest in world music?

I grew up listening to rock, blues, pop and soul. Very early, I stumbled upon musical genres that fascinated me. Through Paco de Lucia and Manolo Sanlucar, I discovered flamenco music. I also became very interested in Celtic music from Ireland, Galicia (Spain) and Brittany (France). A friend introduced me to African band Osibissa. Through movies I discovered bluegrass. I discovered Moroccan music by watching TV broadcasts that reached southern Spain during summer vacations. Fusion band Shakti introduced me to Indian music and so forth.

**WM Oasis** - Your site is really the center and the heart of world music. You get info from the whole world concerning, festivals, events, concerts, production etc. Is there any difference in how people in different continents are interpreting the name world music?

**A. Romeo** - Yes, there is a big difference depending on the country. For example, in the USA, bluegrass, Cajun, blues, Tejano, Old Time, etc., are called American roots music. For us, however, it is American world music. In Spain, Flamenco is a separate category by itself, but outside of Spain and for us, it is world music from Spain.

Occasionally, some colleagues and publicists will categorize pop in a foreign language as world music. However, for us at World Music Central, pop is not world music because it has no traditional music roots.

**WM Oasis** - - As the creator of the world music central it's important for me to know how you yourself define the term world music, In South Africa

**A. Romeo** - Edit Piaf is world music and in France Johnny Clegg is world music. What is the right way of labeling?

We consider that any genre or style that incorporates traditional roots music is world music. We differentiate between traditional and contemporary. Under the contemporary category you can include all types of fusions, ranging from world jazz to global electronica.

As far as the two artists mentioned, Edith Piaf is French pop. Johnny Clegg played contemporary world music with his South African bands.

**WM Oasis** - World music, since the time the name has emerged, it has been subject for speculations, critics and negative interpretations. Why all this negative reactions from artists, ethnologist, producers, journalists etc.?

**A. Romeo** - I think the negative reactions come from a minority. Some don't like lumping together different genres under one single umbrella. I respect their opinions, but I think world music is a useful term if used appropriately.

**WM Oasis** - World music is still a confusing term for many people, each one give his own interpretation. Do you think the term world music is still valid and compatible today after 35 years?

**A. Romeo** - Yes, world music is still valid. It's used by numerous artists, festivals, record labels, etc.

**WM Oasis** - Bob Brown first used the term "world music" to describe the ethnomusicology program in the 60's. The same term, world music, was used as a marketing genre and took off after meetings that began in June 1987. In Sweden the term appeared in the end of the 70's when the Swedish folk and prog musicians began to introduce foreign music and that music got the name world music. What is the right definition of world music?

**A. Romeo** - As I indicated earlier, the correct definition is roots music from any country, whether it's traditional or contemporary. Some of our media colleagues phrase it slightly different, but it's essentially the same concept.

**WM Oasis** - Many people have given the credit of the world music expansion in USA to Paul Simon, David Byrne, and Ry Cooder for playing a vital role in helping to expand the world music market. Is it right according to you?

**A. Romeo** - They all played a crucial role, but let's not forget George Harrison (Ravi Shankar), The Rolling Stones (The Master Musicians of Jajouka), Miriam Makeba, and Mickey Hart of the Grateful Dead.

**WM Oasis** - Tinariwen who play western electric guitar is seen as a **world music band**, if we change the perspective and take the **rock band** Quintessence that in the 70's used Indian instruments in their music. Can we count Quintessence as a world music band? Same thing with Gotan Project that has electrified the tango...

**A. Romeo** - The roots component has to dominate the music. Quintessence was a psychedelic-progressive rock band with Indian influences. The rock element dominates so it was not really a world music band.

Gotan were not really the first to electrify tango. Progressive rock band Alas did this in the 1970s and Lito Vitale also incorporated tango in the 1980s-90s. Gotan is a French project with an Argentine musician. I think Bajofondo, an Argentine-Uruguayan project, is more interesting.

