



Jonah M. Kessel / Lake Tahoe Action

Finger guitarists Dan Vargas, left, plays rhythm while Julian Martin picks the melodies to create their nuevo flamenco music.

Martin & Vargas

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the Spanish genre.

“My background was bossa nova,” he said. “Kenny Rankin, Michael Franks, Larry Carlton and pianist Antonio Carlos Jobean, godfather of bossa nova. That was my influence. So I know all these chords and Julian knows all these scales.

“I was more on the strumming part of it. He was looking at the melodies and I was looking at it from the rhythm side. You need the two parts together to make it work.”

Nuevo flamenco, which began in the early 1990s with Germany’s Ootmar Liebert, is an international

blend of music, which Martin said is a combination of Spanish classical, traditional flamenco and bossa nova.

Traditional flamenco is Middle Eastern scales on the Spanish classical guitar melded with Moroccan percussions. Bossa nova, created in Brazil in the late 1950s, is a mixture of samba and New York bebop jazz.

Martin and Vargas sometimes add percussion, as often is the case at the Lakeside Beach Grill with conga player Jim Copel.

Although some nuevo flamenco guitarists, such as Jesse Cook, use a pick, that technique would never be incorporated by Martin and Vargas.

The sound is organic and timeless, with the guitarists’ fingers on strings and percussionist’s palms on skin.

“The fingers really feel the music,” Vargas said. “A pick would be something in between you and the guitar.”

Martin would prefer not having to worry about breaking a nail at his construction job. Vargas is a pool and lake maintenance worker and lifeguard at Incline Village. Both are residents of South Lake Tahoe.

Martin and Vargas hope they can someday quit their day jobs and focus entirely on music. They are working on an album they expect to be released this fall. They have about 13 originals, including a few written at the outdoor cafe.

“They seem to be inspired not only by the crowd but also the natural surroundings,” said Lakeside Beach Grill owner Zan Barker. “When the sun sets they just seem to hit a fevered pitch.”