

*Full
INSIGHT*

The Belly Dancer Magazine

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Leila Haddad; her
personal interview
with Oberon in the
next issue!

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& Dancer to Dancer Personal
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Dancer to Dancer

Featuring "Said El Amir" • JomDance

As Interviewed by Oberon (Photos by: Rainer Gutzmer & Nell Andres)



There is testosterone among us ... and now that I have your attention, you may be saying "so what" ... or ... something else entirely ... but let's agree that from the nervous days of Nijinsky and before, men have been raising eyebrows and interest by leaping fearlessly into the spangled world of "female" dominated dance arenas. They've been hated and heralded ... sometimes at the same time, but given our different mind and body structures, their approach to the dance is a fascinating study.

I was immediately engaged when my editor, Zaina Hart, asked me to interview a charismatic, energetic, outspoken and talented German Dancer. He is self-described as warm-hearted and disciplined with a zest for life. I also found him sophisticated, honest, with a quick, warm wit. Zaina and I agreed to include some of his charming accent in this piece - He says the world of our dance "has his heart and his breath-taking attention" ...ready to fall in love America? ...Said el Amir.



O. Said, I know you've worked with Momo Kadous and I see elements of his style in your dance - was he your first influence?
S. Momo was the first Egyptian teaching in Germany, so I was lucky to be able to study with him. I'm still greatly influenced by what I call "old style" Middle Eastern Dance. Really, what I learned mostly from Momo, was the feeling for the music and the soul of the dance. Most of my technique I credit to my first teacher, Yasmin al Ghazali. I still work with her very closely. I have also had American teachers, such as, Feyrouz, Zarefah, and I worked a little with Delilah from Seattle when she was in Germany.
O. How would you describe your personal style of dance and your goal in developing it?
S. As a European, I have always been beware / aware of this, and I am always working with this - let's say - freedom. As I grew up in a family which was interested in all kinds of cultural affairs, I too was interested, mostly in dancing, no matter what kind of direction. That is my very early years, six to fourteen years old. (Laughing). Nowadays, I still do not feel grown.

My own style? I do like to fuse Oriental Dance Jazz and Modern Dance. I just want to express exactly the content of the music in the best way. It's not possible in my eyes, to express exactly a song of Shakira, Madonna, Sting, Amir Diab, Hakeem and so on - all modern musicians, without fusion. I think of it as an ethnic, cultural style called "jomdance®". Jazz, Oriental and Modern Dance.
O. Interesting, because most of what you mentioned is considered alternative or "pop" music here and would not be considered for use in a "professional" category of a major American competition. How would you answer people who feel Middle Eastern Dance is being lost within the huge import of fusion, in particular, Modern dance and Jazz?

S. Well, to ignore music directions and influences is as if you ignore your own life! Can't be that I am always dancing "old stuff" to totally new music. That would be ridiculous! Imagine ... Mozart

bringing up Rock 'n' Roll, as he was in his time. Imagine all the people at that time and beyond, still doing the Mid-Age dances instead of the beautiful Minuets which are to be danced to this! Or imagine, to be more actual - we would still dance like this in the middle ages to the music of Robbie Williams - Ha, Ha, Ha!

O. So I see a bit of German Cabaret included in your dance style.

S. Concerning the German Cabaret, you are talking about my "Strip-tease". (A smiley face icon appears here). Well that was special for the United States, in order to be recognized, and ... Succeeded! (A devil-faced icon appears here). I think there is room enough for everybody. We still have middle ages dance. There are still some groups doing the Minuet, some people are still fighting for the traditional ways of Belly-dance. You know, even the word is not traditional, just to mention it. (Winking icon here). So why shouldn't there be a place for future dancing people?

O. Do you notice huge cultural style differences in this dance?
S. The U.S. as I see it, is faraway behind the times. (Sorry, you don't have to take that word for word - especially for this interview). Most of what I have seen is the traditional style of Egyptian dancing which I like very much. I just think that it does not work and fit anymore to the ideas of modern women, enjoying the same rights as men. Egyptian style is working with the awkwardness, ("what a word"), of young, "innocent" women. Well, that isn't actually what it is, they are only playing this role. O.K. - that is another subject - but isn't that stupid?

In Europe we have different styles every 500 Kilometers, depending on the local scene. This, apart from every 50 Kilometers, having another local pro who doesn't know the difference between, up and down or what the hell a plié is; There are also style differences from Germany to France to Spain and Italy. The style is really conditioned I believe, by the first teacher and the interest in developing one.

O. Do male and female dancers approach the dance differently?
S. Oooh! Difficult question. Comparing is a thing I do not like.

Everybody has their own style. In my view, it is impossible to compare male and female dancers. Alone, their bodies are so different that it is not possible.



O. What is "to die for" dancing, for you?

S. Jillina for the moment for me, and coming up, Djamila from Frankfurt, Germany - the awesome dancer that was with me at Rakkasah.

There is one thing that all famous and successful dancers have in common. They are working for the dance - not for themselves!

O. You are teaching Dance also?

S. I'm teaching a lot! Dance is my life and I live it. Since I do earn my living, only with dance, I am giving work-shops, creating choreographies on dancer's bodies and of course, performing.

O. Do you have specific goals for your teaching?

S. To transmit feeling for the music, self confidence, awareness for the art we do, humanity and zest for life! Totally forgot to mention that of course, I want to teach the best dance technique that is possible.

O. Do you have plans for getting your message out?

S. My future is clearly planned, (with open doors and windows to any sight and side of life). There will be, in four to six years, a settled academy for "jomdance®" in Munich, my home town. This academy is going to give a roof to all kinds of dancers who are into "sincere work". This means, I am employing those dancers and teachers who are really interested in their pupils and the art. Not "chi - chi's", "drags" and "wanna-be-loved" dancers. This is my main goal. I am, (this is the reason for my dignified goal), fed up with ignorant people in our dance scene, complaining about not being accepted as an artist, without even knowing what it means to put in the work and behave as an artist! I am really angry with people ignoring the underlying principles of art, (and any kind of dance brought to the stage is to be appraised as art), going onto the stage to perform whatever is possible without having supporting technique or, even a deep respect for what they are doing.

I want to bring Middle Eastern Dance to an adequate contemporary status which it already ought to be having. This is my vision of the future.

O. What moves you in a performance?

S. I am really touched when someone, even with the lowest or no technique, is dancing with his heart! I am impressed when somebody knows the music, is not doing a choreography, but still is able to "chat" with the audience - while he or she is dancing a "wolf" on stage. (Winking icon here). I am melting when I can lean back, enjoy the music and see a dancer's interpretation of the music, someone who is into his dance - like, Jillina.

O. What do you not like to see in a performance?

S. I am bored totally, when I see students from slightly advanced to "so-called professionals", doing choreographies in 4/4 rhythm, 4 to the left, 4 to the right, this and that - looks like a knitting pattern! It turns me totally off, when I see a desperate house-wife/belly-dancer on a T.V. show, announced as an Oriental Belly Dance Artist. (winking again).

O. What are the special gifts brought to this dance art by men?

S. (Laughing a lot)! Maybe stubbornness and Chickeness??? I don't know.

O. Recommend some of your favorite music to us please.

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S. To recommend music to others is difficult, but I will try anyway. Traditional music - La Belleza Contemplada - Larbi Akrim, El Arabi Serghini. Musica Andalusí de la Oud - "beautiful traditional music played with an incredible amount of heart." Raqs Sharqi recording - Helva Labadi - "really good stuff"! Modern Pop music - K*Maro - "Walad B'ladi" or Akon - "Belly Dancer" or a little less modern, Egyptian pop - Nancy Ajram - Sana Wara Sana (year after year). ... but this is just an overview of what I'm listening too - that

will be different in two days when I hear new music!

O. Said, what are your plans for the immediate future?

S. Next summer I will have my own DVD with a "pro warm-up and cool down" to music which is to be composed especially therefore.

Beginning in 2006, I begin instructing a formation for Belly Dancers going on the stage. It is called "jomdance®-stage-dancer-formation", become a professional dancer in only 2 years. I am not starting at zero. Already very good knowledge in oriental dances is required.

The formation will cover all themes like posture, turns, tension and releases, breath-working, floor work of modern dance, dynamic in dance, stage attitudes, lightning etc. etc. etc.

The formation will be parted into 5 serial modules. It is only possible to get into the next level, when you have passed the intermediate examination after each module. This is guaranteeing that the level of all pupils will be equalized until the end of the formation.

This jomdance®-formation is a logical progress development of the European-wide existing formation of belly dance technique ESTODA® - ESsential Technique of Oriental DAnce. This formation is also built on a serial module procedure. It is also working over two years and you also have to pass intermediate examines. It is further on THE ONLY EXISTING ONE!

I am coming to Hawaii! In march 2006, 11th/12th - one week before Rakkasah - I am having a workshop on Hawaii, sponsored by Willow Chang. I have some time open before I head to Rakkasah. Anyone interested in sponsoring me???

O. Note* Said asked if I thought America would embrace him and opportunity - I answered - "Can anyone stop an advancing Whirlwind"?



www.jomdance.com
For More Info - See Said's Ad on Page 55

Cover Dancer Biography * Said El Amir

Last year in March, I had the distinct pleasure (along with everyone else who was at Rakkasah) of seeing this incredibly talented man. Dancer, entertainer and one of the nicest men you would ever want to meet. I was immediately drawn and instantly in "adore".

Prior to the festival and the weeklong, Shukriya throws a party at the El Morocco restaurant. Said el Amir was walking about the restaurant, in bright turquoise and lime green lycra dance pants with a tweed dinner jacket. Hmmmmmm, I assumed based on those "pants" he was a dancer, but had no idea what we were about to witness. "Dynomite"! Fabulous performance! The next day in classes I had the opportunity of speaking with him and I am so delighted to have gotten to know him over the week. Said instantly engages you with a direct look (and he has devastating blue eyes), a devilishly handsome smile and his German accented english. He is immediately charming. Throughout the entire weeklong of workshops and the festival, he remained the light I looked for. He has such an upbeat, happy personality that you can't help but be "drawn" to him - he is magnetic. This personality; "charisma" as they call it is part of what makes him the fabulous entertainer he is. AND, can this man dance!



in the Cologne area he moved his self and his possessions as a confessing Northern German into a new home in Bavaria. This explains, why he can look back at the age of 36 years on already 18 years international dance experience. For over 8 years Said el Amir lives now in the metropolitan city with heart called Munich.

If the youth years were fulfilled with trying out, researches and fun alive, then the career/development meanwhile of the 30 year old guy changed enormously. Things such as contents and grandeur in the dance, discipline in training, clear teaching concepts, clean dance techniques, advancement of the dance became important. Considerably involved in it was again Yasmin al Ghazali, who had sketched in the meantime the ESTODA® education. In addition, his dance training in jazz, Moderndance and classical ballet, which Said began in his early 30s, contributed considerably to it. Always observing the development of the modern music - both eastern and western - and always being interested in refining on the middle eastern dance to lend it to the status it should be entitled with, Said developed the new ethno cultural dance style jomdance® - jazzorientalmoderndance, which will help the middle eastern dance to reach the place, which it should take today in modern Europe.

Said el Amir is a warm-hearted, charismatic, disciplined professional dancer with strong, clear and systematic dance technique (basis ESTODA® and IWANSON). He is today more than ever a world-wide in demand dance pedagogue, choreographer and a coach for numerous well-known dancers and groups. With all own requirement in terms of the professionalism Said never loses the view for the feasible. Endowed with a great deal of empathy Said always manages to challenge and bring out the best of all his students.

Said el Amir is also well-known for his ability to convey not only dance techniques, a feeling for music, and zest of life, but also personality and self-confidence. He deals with all levels from beginners to professionals and his courses are adjusted to the ability of the present participants.

Said el Amir
- once you have seen
him, you will *never*
forget him!

NADIRA



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jomdance-academy

Said El Amir

Born on the 6th of January in 1969 (do you celebrate this date like we do in some regions of Germany?), Capricorn is his star sign and Cancer his ascendant. He's got the Moon in the sign of Lion in the third house - for all those who are interested in astrology.

Grown up in a family which paid a lot of attention on music, art, culture and creativity, Said developed fast its own character. Only 16 years old Said began singing training. If he wouldn't have had the fatal meeting with Yasmin al Ghazali in 1987, today the Opera world would be enriched with a "completely untalented" Buffo singer. Thank God she could beware us and instead of this he got tremendously inspired for the dance world. This world has ever since taken his heart- and breathtaking attention.

Only 19 years old, Said el Amir started his world career and left straight the state capital of Schleswig-Holstein/Northern Germany. After one scarcely intermediate stay of about 10 years