

Amaral - Gato Negro, Dragón Rojo (2008)

Written by bluelover

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01 Kamikaze 02 Tarde de domingo rara 03 La barrera del sonido 04 Las chicas de mi barrio 05 Esta noche 06 Las puertas del infierno 07 Biarritz 08 Gato negro 09 Rock & roll 10 Perdoname 11 Alerta 12 El blues de la generacion perdida 13 De carne y hueso 14 Dragon rojo 15 Es solo una cancion 16 El artista del alambre 17 Deprisa 18 Doce palabras 19 Concorde

Juan Aguirre - Dobro, Guitar (Acoustic), Guitar (Electric), Keyboards
Eva Amaral - Guitar (Acoustic), Guitar (Electric), Keyboards, Vocals
Tony Beard - Drums, Percussion
Peter Buck - Guitarra Concheros
Charlie Casey - Guitar, Synthesizer
Melvin Duffy - Pedal Steel, Weissenborn
Andy Gangadeen - Drums, Percussion
Henry Hirsch - Organ (Hammond), Piano
Cameron Jenkins - Keyboards, Mezcla
Pino Palladino - Bass

Over a short period of the time, pop/folk duo Amaral has become one of Spain's most successful acts. Their last two albums, 2002's *Estrella de Mar* and 2005's *Pájaros en la Cabeza* were perfect examples of their melancholic, catchy, and radio-friendly sound. Both CDs became the year's biggest sellers in their native country, and also attracted a sizeable international following, particularly in Latin America and parts of Europe. Sitting pretty at the top, Amaral released the double album *Gato Negro/Dragón Rojo* in 2008. Predictably, the album entered the Spanish charts at number one on the strength of the typically strong single "Kamikaze." Still, after fans and critics managed to listen a few times to these two records in their entirety, it was not long before voices of dissent begun to foment. For starters, almost everyone agrees that *Gato Negro/Dragón Rojo* suffers from one of the most common syndromes of pop music, that of "overconfident popular band releases double album that really should have been trimmed to a single one, with the leftovers confined to a rarities disc." Indeed, while Amaral have insofar managed to play down their main weaknesses (repetition of both music and subject matter, predictable lyrics) by focusing in putting together a succinct set of well-crafted pop tunes, when the formula is expanded, it ostensibly backfires. Sure, there are a few good songs here and there, especially at the beginning of the album, but as the music drags, the lyrical shortcomings appear more pronounced, pulling most of *Gato Negro/Dragón Rojo* into blandness. It soon becomes hard to tell the songs apart, as they are all delivered in the same style, with Juan Aguirre's R.E.M. style guitar arpeggios over a driving beat (actually, Peter Buck himself guests on "Doce Palabras") and singer Eva Amaral talking about their neighborhood friends and

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memories from a better, innocent past, in a warm but rather flat voice. In Gato Negro/Dragón Rojo they sound typically pleasing in parts, but they're worryingly innocuous as a whole. But then again, that may go a long way in explaining their appeal to radio programmers. Perhaps it is time for Amaral to become more adventurous, or at least not to overstretch themselves, so as to make the most of their considerable pop sensibilities. ---Mariano Prunes, Rovi

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