

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK: [Follow](#) Be the first of your friends to follow Seattle Yoga News.



Interview with Kirtan Singer: Dave Stringer

Yoga Interviews by Othmane Rahmouni - Oct 9, 2015

Kirtan singer, [Dave Stringer](#), just released his 9th album named "The Satellite Sky" today. He is also kicking off a 30 city international tour during which he will be performing music from the album he released earlier this year, "Elixir", as well as his new album. Dave Stringer will be in Seattle on Oct 10, 2015 for a [Kirtan performance at East West Bookshop](#) starting at 7pm.

We took this opportunity to conduct an interview with the artist and learn more about him and his new album. Here is what he had to say:

SYN: What inspired your new album "The Satellite Sky"?

Dave Stringer:

I'm an unusual Kirtan artist, in that I've always been somewhat uncomfortable with being called a devotional singer. I'm really an ecstatic agnostic who is married to a PhD candidate in philosophy! What appeals to me about Yoga is that it values experience over belief, and emphasizes questions more than answers.

For the last fifteen years, I've had the privilege of being able to travel the world leading Kirtan, and I've become well known as a singer who can use Sanskrit mantras to move a crowd toward an experience of the transcendental. But few people have known that I also write songs in English, and that I had been doing that for many years before I became involved in with the Kirtan movement.

The poetry of the songs on the Satellite Sky reflects my process of inquiry, not only into the source of my wonders and joys, but also into the nature my quandaries and illusions and doubts. Eastern philosophy and Western science have never been antagonists. I find a rich vocabulary in connecting the metaphors of both, and I am using them to explore and express the paradoxes of my heart, mind and spirit.

I started some of these songs in India, but then I would get stuck and put them down for a while until I had the courage to pick them up and stare into myself again. I finished some of them during a summer on a lake in northern Michigan, staring at the stars. Most of the words started as a kind of babble of sounds, an inchoate language of the heart, without a specific meaning. But it felt like some sounds belonged in certain places, and those sounds would stick. Eventually a few words would arise for me out of the sounds. When there were enough of them, I would start to grasp what the song was about. Then I would have to go deeper to unravel the mystery, writing many drafts to refine it and focus the ideas.

I've always felt that Indian ragas, traditional Irish music and Bluegrass have an affinity for one another — the melodies in all these styles are modal. So the sound of this album is an exploration of that sensibility. The Satellite Sky is flavored by both tablas and twang, so I suppose you could call it Country and Eastern music. I'm a world citizen and can switch between speaking different languages in a single conversation. Similarly, combining trumpet and tamboura, or pedal steel and harmonium, just feels natural to me.

SYN: What makes this new album different from your other Kirtan albums?

Dave Stringer: It's not a Kirtan album. It's entirely in English, and there are no mantras. Alongside the call-and-response Kirtan tradition, in which people sing Sanskrit mantras in order to experience a transcendence of their limited sense of self, and a connection with something greater, there has always been a Bhajan tradition. Bhajans are poetic and philosophical songs, almost always written in the vernacular, the language of the people, and they are not call-and-response. So if listeners need a frame of reference, these songs can be listened to as American Bhajans. Or country songs written while reading Siddhartha, the Bhagavad Gita and the Dancing Wu Li Masters.

SYN: What are you most excited about in this new 30 city international tour?

Dave Stringer: I'm excited about engaging with the audience in a whole new manner, and stripping the sound down to something much more intimate. I've had some really large Kirtan ensembles over the years, and it's been a joy to work with so many great musicians and feel music on the level of big heart and mind. But singing a really personal song with minimal accompaniment is much more of an experience of getting naked. It's simultaneously terrifying and thrilling.

Thirty cities might seem like a lot, but it's just the beginning of the tour. I'm only playing a few dates this year in the USA — most of the 2015 tour is in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. I'll play many more dates in 2016 in Europe, Asia and the USA. After so many years of touring, this has actually become a normal way of living for me. I have friendships now in cities all over the world that go back a decade or longer. I added a new book of pages to my passport two years ago, and I just had to get a new one because it was already filled up. And with every tour, there are always a few new places I've never been before, in both the inner and outer worlds.

SYN: What is your favorite thing about being a Kirtan singer?

Dave Stringer: In all the years of my travels, I've experienced the kindness of many strangers, and they have given me great faith and experience in the essential goodness and generosity of humanity. Kirtan creates amazing connection and community, and it's really great to be able to feel that so frequently. When I sing, there is always a point where my mind just stops, and my heart opens wide. I feel intensely aware, present and alive. There's a sense of unity, timelessness and well-being that extend beyond anything that can ever be measured.

SYN: If you had not pursued a career as a Kirtan singer, what line of work do you think you would be in today?

Dave Stringer: Before I was a professional musician, I was a film editor in Hollywood. I suppose I could have continued with that. A lot of the clichés about the shallowness and cravenness of the movie business are true, but I also worked on some very interesting projects and met some extremely educated, informed, progressive and spiritually seeking people. Besides being a movie copilot, Los Angeles is also an epicenter of the Yoga movement. In the film industry, you are fundamentally working with the world as illusion. And as an ambitious free-lancer dealing with frequent rejection, you end up staring into the void a lot, and have to try to find some deeper meaning. An editing job is what took me to an ashram in India in the first place, and that's how I first encountered Kirtan. But if I had to pick another profession, I'd study architecture, or become a chef.

SYN: Anything else you'd like to share with the Seattle yoga community?

Dave Stringer: Some of my most favorite kirtans of all time have happened at Samadhi Yoga on Capitol Hill and Shakti Vinyasa in Ballard. I love singing with the Seattle crowd, and I'm looking forward to Saturday night!

[Photo credit: Michael Longstaff]

Add a comment...

Facebook Comments Plugin

TAGS: [DAVE STRINGER](#) [EAST WEST BOOKSHOP](#) [KIRTAN SEATTLE](#)

[TWITTER](#)
[FACEBOOK](#)
[GOOGLE+](#)
[PINTEREST](#)

PREVIOUS ARTICLE

Video interview with Tibetan monk: Tulku Lobsang

Othmane Rahmouni
 Othmane Rahmouni is a technology entrepreneur and a yoga enthusiast. He is the founder of [Yoga Panda](#) (a yoga class finder mobile App) and the cofounder and managing partner of [Seattle Yoga News](#).

[Twitter](#)

RELATED UPCOMING EVENTS

Dave Stringer kirtan concert in Seattle

The Free Seattle Yoga Class Finder App.

Available on the App Store

www.YogaPanda.co

GET SOCIAL

Seattle Yoga News
 2,051 likes
 SEATTLE YOGA NEWS
[Like Page](#) [Share](#)
 4 friends like this



Shop Now **amazon**

Amazon Gift Card - Email
 By Amazon
 \$100.00
 ★★★★★ (91652)

Amongst The Flames: A Contemporary Christian Ro...
 By T.K. Chapin
 \$2.99
 ★★★★★ (53)