

Dave Stringer – “All my memories were held in my muscles.”

Around 1988 I was working as a film editor in Hollywood and playing in a punk band and a series of other bands. I was also developing really bad back problems and chronic fatigue and depression. A friend of my suggested that I go to some yoga classes, so I went to the [Center for Yoga](#) on Larchmont in Los Angeles. I started taking yoga classes with [Anna Forest](#) which was really, really intense.

I started with Anna and that was the first asana practice that I got involved in. I loved the fierceness of it. I found it very intimidating, but also really incredibly compelling. She was the first person who communicated to me that my body was like a tape recorder. It was remembering everything. All my memories were held in my muscles.

Yoga could be a process of witnessing that and playing it back, like a methodology of releasing all of that. Do you ever do utkatasana and you are really pissed off? The question is why? What’s coming up for you, you know? I was able to start to witness that. She also gave me this idea that I could use the softness of my breath to overcome mental and physical obstacles. She said I should look at the things that I found really painful and witness what came up from my body.

I found a way I could look at things without being deeply involved in them. I found a place with regard to the pain where I could witness it without being consumed by it. Those were really powerful tools to apply to my life in general. That was an amazing first place to get involved in [Hatha Yoga](#).

I had an earlier brief encounter, not with asana, when I first moved to Los Angeles in 1981. I came to LA because I had an internship at Columbia Pictures. I wrote an essay for some summer internship, and they liked it, so the next thing I was out here working at Columbia. During that time I was kind of a studio rat for the summer. I subsequently ended up moving here to pursue work in the film industry.

I was invited to go to Santa Monica to meet this guy [Swami Muktananda](#) who was giving [Darshan](#) in a tent. So I went in to meet him, and at the time it is important to note that I was sporting a blue mohawk. So I walked into this group of hippies and spiritual seekers

and all of this kind of stuff with a blue mohawk. I forget how I got there, but when I got there I was like, this is so wrong.



I had one moment of locking eyes with the guy and then I literally fled the place.

I remember I went home, scored some coke, and that was the last I time I had anything to do with anyone who asked me go meet some spiritual teacher. I didn't want to have anything to do with it. I showed up to practice yoga simply because I had a bad back.

In 1990 some events shifted. I had been editing films and a friend of mine who had been involved with the [Siddha Yoga](#) organization in India knew a woman named Kamuda. She had been in the ashram in [Ganeshpuri](#) and had learned to edit video there. As it happens often in spiritual scenes, you are there, you are all comfortable, your mind is all set up, and then one day they say, "You are done, goodbye." She apparently went up for darshan with [Gurumayi](#) and Gurumayi said, "Okay thank you and it is time for you to go."

After ten years of her life in the ashram she finds herself booted and she had to figure out what to do. She had a skill as an editor, so she went to Los Angeles, we had a mutual friend, and the mutual friend connected us. She was looking for a job and I knew of one. I just turned her onto it and didn't think anything more of it. Three months later I get a phone call from Kamuda saying, "Hey do you remember me? Thank you for the favor, that was really sweet." "Do you know who Gurumayi is?" In my head I was like, "Please don't ask me to meet another Guru because I am so not interested."

She said, "Listen, it's a job. Now that I am in LA they need somebody to come and edit some videos for them that have to do with introducing eastern philosophical topics to

beginners. They thought that maybe they should hire somebody who was a beginner, who was also an expert editor."

And then she said, "I sat down to meditate and it became very clear that you are the person who is supposed to go. You just need to go work for them, you don't need to sign up for anything, just you know, go to India for three or four months and they will pay you. You get to listen to different spiritual teachers talk, and you know, digest it."

I was like, okay, "How much does it pay?" The money sucked, so I turned it down. Then everything that I had been working on started to fall apart. Suddenly I was without any job at all, and I was broke.

"Oh my God, what am I going to do?"



I thought about that crazy Guru job in India and I called them up. They said they really needed me a month ago, but I could still have the job, but that I needed to leave in a week. The next thing you know I was on a plane to India.

I arrived in this ashram and had a series of experiences that were really life changing. I practiced hatha yoga every day and became involved with meditation and also with [kirtan](#). I spent the first four months there just listening to different Indian teachers speak about eastern philosophy and my entire job was to digest it into little fifteen minute segments.

These segments had to be appropriate for introducing eastern philosophy to people who were new to yoga. That is actually how this whole yoga thing got started for me. Despite all of my resistances I still ended up involved in yoga. And they paid me to learn about eastern philosophy. It was amazing.

Yoga shifted the lens through which I saw everything that came. This was all through Gurumayi and Siddha Yoga. The thing is, the reason why I mentioned this whole Muktananda thing is, he had passed. He took [Mahasamadhi](#) in 1982 I believe, so I never laid eyes on him again aside from that initial encounter in Santa Monica. The Guru I met was his successor. When I got there it was like, "Oh my God, it just feels like this loop of how all of this happened." The thing is I'm naturally kind of a skeptic. I had a series of experiences there where I really overcame my resistance.

Gurumayi stopped giving Darshan years ago. She's still around but I don't know, my feeling is that ashrams and things like this are like school; there is a certain point where you have move on and get a life.

In the late 1990's after I'd come back from India, Maty Ezraty was founding a yoga school that was pretty much like the blueprint for a lot of what came after. That school was [YogaWorks](#). I won't say she invented the modern yoga school, but she contributed pretty mightily to the concept of how it would be. In the late 1990's, I want to say 1997, she invited me to start leading kirtan a few times a month at YogaWorks on Main Street in Santa Monica.

The people who were teaching there at the time included [Seane Corn](#), [Shiva Rhea](#), [Bryan Kest](#), [Saul David Raye](#) and others. I started playing for their yoga workshops, which were still really a new thing back then. I remember meeting Saul for the first time. I was leading a kirtan and he came up to me afterwards and he said, "You are my new best friend." I was like, "Your name is? Who are you?"



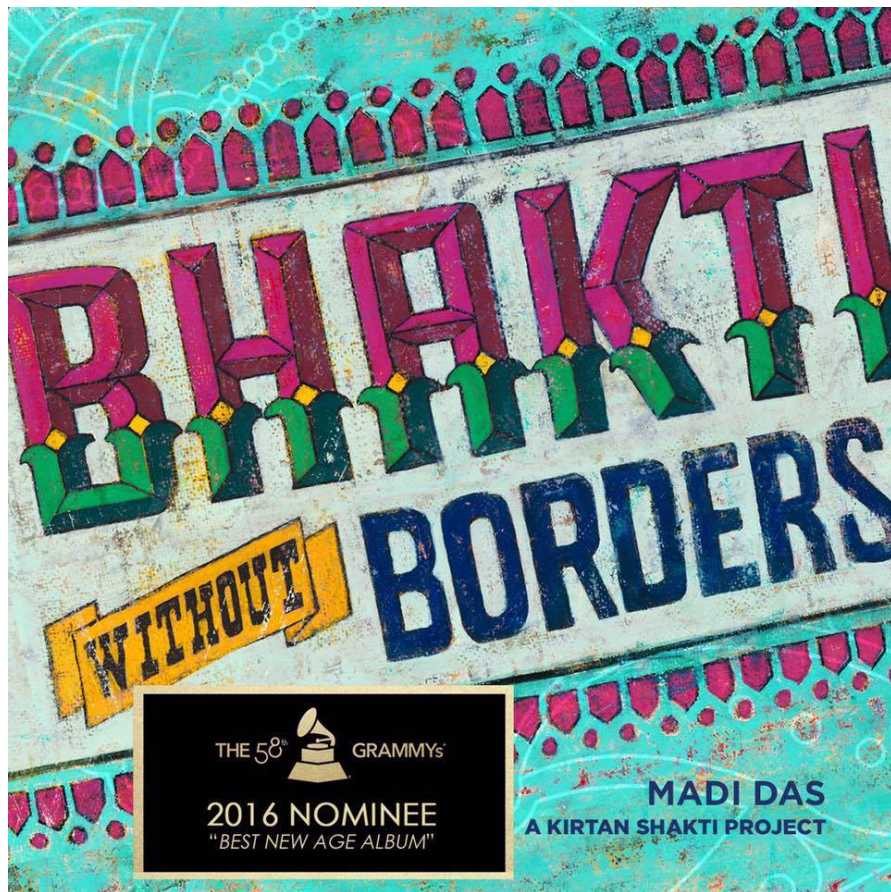
But he did kind of turn out to be my new best friend. He had been a recording engineer before he was a yoga teacher, and subsequently Saul ended up producing my [first two kirtan records](#). The whole tour thing started with Saul and Seane, who were a couple at the time. They would take me around and I would play for their yoga workshops. Somehow in this process we kind of invented the kirtan tour, and even the whole “play music for yoga workshops” thing.

I think this was kind of simultaneously happening in the collective consciousness in a few places. In LA in the late 1990’s, YogaWorks on Main Street was a real cradle of a lot of yoga teachers and innovation and what modern yoga could be and how it was presented.

To be continued...

2st part of the Dave Stringer interview series with Jack Greene in Los Angeles, CA.

Dave Stringer was nominated in the New Age category for the 58th Grammy’s for producing Madi Das’s album [Bhakti Without Borders](#) by Kirtan Shakti Project



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Dave's most recent album releases from 2015 are [Elixir](#) and [The Satellite Sky](#)

Upcoming concerts:

September 7th 2016 Bhakti Fest Joshua Tree, CA

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