

Brink Liner Notes

When I was nine years old, I taped "Within you, Without you" backwards on my Nana's old reel to reel, cut it into pieces of random length, and spliced it into my own order. Soprano led to tenor, and curiosity to conundrum. In pursuit of some longing, I plotted sonic art installations in public spaces, studied jazz, and created experimental films.

My work as an editor took me to Gurudev Siddha Peeth, an ashram in the Indian state of Maharashtra. They hired me because I appeared in Kumuda's meditation, but the only thing I was seeking was a paycheck in an exotic setting. My previous experience with eastern spiritual traditions was minimal, but the project involved cutting a series of videos about Indian philosophy for people learning to meditate. So I sat and listened, and watched myself turning inward.

Although at first I didn't understand the Sanskrit chants I was immersed in, the experience of chanting was powerful. I had carried a dulcimer and a small accordion with me from Los Angeles to Ganeshpuri. In my spare time, I wrote songs that were informed by the ragas and thekas I was hearing, and my sonic vocabulary expanded to include tablas and harmonium and tamboura.

Since childhood, I have sung in invented languages that evoke a state that words can't really convey. They veil meaning in an intellectual sense, but they articulate my feelings very clearly. My voice is a tool I use to gain freedom from the prison of my mind. In India, I discovered that there is a long tradition of singers like me.

Every new song I write erupts as a melody conveying some babble-scat sargam solfege. Sometimes I make a choice to leave the song there, in a state of pure emotion. Other times, I follow the clues of the sounds until a clear subject emerges in English. In some instances, when I want to emphasize a spiritual quality, I adapt Sanskrit mantras to fit the tunes.

Thanks for listening, for your time and attention in a busy world. I'm grateful for all who have taught me, and for the opportunities I've been given to travel and connect in a space of contemplation and ecstasy.

--- Dave Stringer