

MANTRA AMERICANA LINER NOTES

In the latter part of 2019, Madi Das and Dave Stringer first met to create a blueprint for a follow up to their first Grammy-nominated collaboration, Bhakti Without Borders. The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020 utterly scuttled their plans for the regular in-person writing and recording sessions, but the obstacles that the crisis presented also spurred new avenues of creativity.

Zoom became the means by which ideas were presented and exchanged. Instead of recording all the musicians live, together in one room, everyone had to be recorded remotely.

There's a special magic when musicians interact live and in the moment, but the circumstances of the pandemic made that impossible. To recreate the live feeling, performances were frequently left a little bit rough and not heavily edited. Voices were left mostly untuned, to recall the sound of harmony vocals in the 60's and 70's before auto-tune was developed.

The basic tracks for Bhakti Without Borders were recorded over two weekends. The tracks for Mantra Americana took two years to record, but listening to the two albums back to back, the same vibe is undeniably present.

The album features Sanskrit chants accented with Appalachian twang, and Hindu prayers soulfully infused with Gospel. Traditional Indian rhythms played on instruments like tablas and harmoniums combine seamlessly with lush, ecstatic vocal harmonies, lap steel, banjo, electric dulcimer and harmonica, instruments not typically used in mantra music.

It's a style that truly reflects the diversity of ethnic and spiritual influences in America, a unique subgenre that can only be described as Country & Eastern.

Mantra Americana was nominated for a Grammy as best New Age, Ambient or Chant album in 2022.