



# INDEPENDENT

## Terence Trent D'Arby, Forum, London

### Terry's all gold - even though his name is now Buddhist Jesus II



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*Simon Price*

Your first thought is "Why isn't this man a star?" Then you remember. We're always suspicious of the talented ones in this country. We only trust the workmen.

Terence Trent D'Arby is a name to which you possibly haven't given much thought lately, but 15 years ago, *Introducing The Hardline According To...* was one of those records that everyone had, by law, to own (along with Sade's *Diamond Life* and Paul Young's *No Parlez*).

When he exploded into the otherwise dead year of 1987 with his old school soul stormer "If You Let Me Stay", he sang like a dream hybrid of Smokey, Marvin and Otis, looked like the prettiest man on earth, and came equipped with a life story which was too good to be true. No doubt about it, D'Arby had us all licked.

The trouble was, he knew it. TTD's cocky strut annoyed too many modesty fetishists, and there were queues around the block to see him fail. By the time his third album came out in 1993, his moment had passed. Which is utterly unfair, because *Symphony Or Damn* was magnificent, the equal of any of Prince's better mid-Eighties releases. The truth, however, is probably that D'Arby's records – and lyrics – were becoming far too strange for mainstream tastes, with their weird devotional chants, quotations from Rilke and references to his "Monasteryo".

After his fourth album, the saucily-titled *Vibrator* (it was actually about spirituality, and the idea that vibrations exist within all matter) vanished without trace in 1995, D'Arby and the music business made a mutual, if not amicable divorce. Since then, he's become a father and has changed his name to Sananda Maitreya. One's initial reaction is to assume that he's found religion and done a Cat Stevens/Yusuf Islam.

D'Arby/Maitreya – for now, he's using the two names in tandem – explains that "Terence Trent D'Arby is the

vehicle through which Sananda will let his light shine", and claims that the name came to him in "in a series of dreams". A little research reveals that Sananda is an alternate Buddhist name for Christ, and Maitreya is the Second Coming. After all this time, modesty just doesn't become him.

And why should it? Taking the stage for an under-advertised, under-attended comeback, he's as slappably gorgeous as ever in his tight black top and gold glitter jeans (at the sight of his immaculate dreads and cheekbones, many women, remembering his poster on their teenage walls, visibly melt), and hasn't lost a milligram of his mercurial magic.

Hammering straight into "Dance Little Sister" with his all-Italian band, he dances like a ballerina on amphetamines, fingertips fluttering like butterflies, dropping down into wince-inducing splits. He sounds a little stage-rusty at first with his strangled falsetto, but "Holding On To You" clears the cobwebs. It's a career-spanning set, with "Wishing Well" sounding as sultry as you remembered it, "Do You Love Me Like You Say You Do" and "She Kissed Me" proving that D'Arby can rock (strapping on a cool scarab-shaped guitar with an Egyptian eye carved into it), "Let Her Down Easy" (solo at the piano) reinforcing his multi-instrumental prowess, and "Sign Your Name" and "Delicate" (essentially a re-write of the former) reminding you that D'Arby had mastery of more than the pop tradition, drawing on Arabian, and European classical templates.

Promisingly, the forthcoming *Wildcard!* album, particularly the potential hit single "O Divina", sounds as fresh as the rest. Encoring with an a capella "Moon River" and a very non-a capella "Jumping Jack Flash" (but frustratingly, no "If You Let Me Stay"), you're left believing that we need this man, now 40 but not looking or sounding a day over 25, in the Pop Idol era as much as we did in the SAW-dominated late Eighties. ■