



THIS IS NOT RETRO

80s MUSIC. ALL GROWN UP.

SANANDA MAITREYA (TERENCE TRENT D'ARBY)



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YOU'RE IN LONDON TODAY, BUT YOU'RE BASED IN MILAN AREN'T YOU?

Yes, I've been there for just over a year, I came back from Los Angeles where I was for a while...

PRESUMABLY YOU COULD HAVE SETTLED ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD, SO WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE ITALY?

I was ready to leave the energy of where I was, I felt that Los Angeles was the least creative place that I've ever lived, and an artist really does need to be in an environment that encourages creative expression, and not just commercial expression...

READING THE SLEEVE NOTES FROM YOUR NEW ALBUM 'WILDCARD' IT SEEMS THAT COMMERCIAL EXPRESSION IS SOMETHING YOU'VE PRETTY FIRMLY TURNED YOUR BACK ON?

Absolutely. I gave them the blood that I was karmically obligated to give, and I learned as much from it as I could during that time. But I did feel that I just had to hold too much back, and the truth about who I am is that in the deepest, deepest part of my heart I just wished to share the joy of expression that I have, in its most authentic and truest form. I'm just not comfortable compromising it and dampening it down just to help them sell more soap.

HOW DIFFICULT WAS IT FOR YOU AS AN ARTIST, TO COMPLETE YOUR CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS... TO GIVE THEM THEIR POUND OF FLESH AS IT WERE?

I would say that it took me through some of the darkest days of my life, but at the same time one has to accept



that a life is there to be lived and although you might not necessarily approve of what you're living, you can keep your eyes open as wide as possible and just live as honestly as possible, try to learn something and just see that even the worst conditions are just preparation. So, as blindingly difficult as it was I can still say that, being on this side of the bridge, I am now grateful that the corporate structure that was oppressing me, gave me an invaluable education and really taught me the necessity of learning as much about it as possible, and about growing up and becoming a man.

WAS THERE EVER A SINGULAR POINT OF RELEASE? A DAY OR A MOMENT WHEN YOU WERE SUDDENLY FREE AGAIN?

Really from 1990 onwards I had been trying to win my freedom from that system - a footnote to rock history is that the case that George Michael took to court had been my case previously. Me and the lawyer that put that case together... Sony basically just got very nervous and came back to me and I settled, because at the end of the day I just wanted to make records. I understood that they weren't going to promote them but all the same it is still better to have a canvas for your work and then people can have it who are willing to look out for it! After stepping out of it George talked to the same lawyer and decided that it all fit for him...



WHILE YOU WERE ACTUALLY GOING THROUGH THOSE DARKEST DAYS WERE YOU ALREADY STARTING TO FORMULATE PLANS AS TO WHAT YOU WERE GOING TO DO NEXT?

Yes... but you know, sometimes an artist can take credit for something that's not so much a thing you formulate as a thing you incubate. You just begin to take on the feeling that something is starting to begin plotting its course, and it can be best that you're not too privy to it because sometimes your mind gets involved and fucks it up. I could sense that there was some kind of other timeline that I was being magnetised towards that did mean that I had to be willing to surrender the one I was on, and that the transition could take place and basically that I could put myself in the position where I could see things from a much clearer perspective. At the end of the day one has to accept who one is, and realise that one man is never really going to flourish being under the direction of another man...

AS AN ARTIST WORKING IN A WORLD THAT IS BASICALLY ABOUT COMMERCE, YOU WERE IN A SITUATION WHERE YOU WERE COMMITTED TO A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF WORK, BUT DID IT MAKE IT EASIER FOR YOU TO SURRENDER TO THAT KNOWING YOU WOULD BE ABLE TO ESCAPE, OR WAS EVERY STEP A STRUGGLE FOR YOU?

To be honest with you, making the music was by far always the most joyous and easiest part of the gig, but I also understood that the reason that most records sound the way they do is that artists don't really have the right opportunity. Most of them feel in their minds that they make records for the people who they know share the same passions as them, but now to have that record released they have to make it for the record executives, and increasingly the record executives have no feel nor love for the music and have just been switched over from the nuts and bolts department of the huge corporation who own the company. Their reactions are then always based on the last set of demographics according to what is selling, and that's just robbed music of the grace and majesty that moves people. That and the fact that the world is basically consumer based because that's what we've been educated to be; from the moment we're children we're put in front of the television, and immediately groomed to be... not free-thinking individuals, but less-thinking consumers, and if that's the way it is then that's the way it is! What

I'm hoping to contribute is just more appreciation for the values that get trampled on in the process of becoming more consumer orientated, and that's the basic principles and values of community. One of the reasons why this war - and this is where even the darkest, blackest cloud has a positive side - can bring about a positive change is that it will give us back just the basic precepts of communal behaviour, because we've lost touch with ourselves and one another and it hurts. That's why most of us - if we're honest - are miserable, and don't really fulfill the happiness, and the thing is that your neighbour can actually contribute to the fulfillment and happiness of your life - that doesn't mean he always has to be over at your house eating your food, but just the feeling that he has some sort of value that is human; sharing the same experience, bleeding the same blood, and pretty much getting beaten up by the same group of people, but that just adds to the fulfillment of our lives and encourages other basic, simple charity acts - I don't mean just giving money, that's just one aspect of charity, but just smiling at someone, asking how they're feeling to day, just simple things like that, fundamental humanity.

DO YOU FEEL THAT THE INTERNET HAS BECOME IMPORTANT IN FOSTERING THAT SENSE OF COMMUNITY? AS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATION IT HAS MADE THE WORLD SO SMALL...

I find the internet has been truly... maybe Pandora's Box in hindsight, but it's a chance to reinstate 'the small voices back into the choir', and that's really important. It has certainly been empowering for me, through the internet I have discovered the real perception of the situation that I was engaged in with Sony Records, and have just found out more of the truth for myself, but to be able to basically directly speak to people who have a feeling for you somehow as a human being is a very gratifying experience, and I feel very grateful for it.

IT IS A PHENOMENAL THING... FOR EXAMPLE IN PREPARING TO TALK TO YOU TODAY I WENT OUT TO FIND THE INTERNET PRESENCE YOU HAVE AND IT'S FANTASTIC TO SEE SO MANY PEOPLE WHO ARE ABLE TO GATHER TOGETHER, IRRESPECTIVE OF WHERE THEY ARE IN THE WORLD, TO BECOME A COMMUNITY...

I believe that the internet, because it can't be stopped will become the new network, so in future if you have



an interesting idea - without going through all the other bullshit - you can have your own window and before you know it you can have two, three, four million people from around the world watching it because they identify with you and what you have to say...

WELL IN A FUNNY SORT OF WAY THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT THIS INTERVIEW IS PART OF, REMEMBER THE EIGHTIES IS JUST ABOUT THE MUSIC THAT I GREW UP LISTENING TO, AND I BECAME AWARE THAT SO MANY OF THE ARTISTS THAT WERE SUCH A HUGE PART OF MY LIFE ARE STILL MAKING GREAT MUSIC BUT THE MUSIC INDUSTRY DOESN'T REALLY ALLOW THEM A VOICE...

That's right, and the assumption is so wrong and they just keep chasing the same fifteen-year old kids, and getting upset that these fifteen year old kids are destabilising two years later. The irony of the situation is that there are so many people of our generation who would love to buy music and it's as simple as providing something that we can relate to, and not just assume that all our music now has to be Dire Straits music because we're older. Just give us some shit that's real and not just some girl-boy band bullshit... which there is a place for in fairness, but when it becomes only about that the music sounds like demographic surveys instead of being inspired by the process of life itself. Obviously they give a law of diminishing returns, but they have already decided that most of the world's population aren't interested in buying records, and because of that it's a self-fulfilling prophecy... so as an artist myself I really appreciate what you're doing, and what other people like you are doing.

WHICH SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD POINT TO ASK YOU ABOUT YOUR NEW RECORD!

Well, it's called Terence Trent D'Arby's Wildcard, and it's nineteen songs, nineteen good songs - it's not about trying to pad out a project, but right now I'm in a zone where I can offer this, and we know that CDs don't need to cost what they cost, but since they do I know that I can offer more value for money. They're just songs fair to my heart...

FUNNILY ENOUGH YOU'VE ALREADY PICKED UP ON SOME OF THE THINGS I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU ABOUT... ONE BEING THAT IT SEEMS LIKE YOU HAVE PUT THE ABSOLUTE MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF MUSIC ON THIS CD

AS IS TECHNOLOGICALLY POSSIBLE, AND THAT IN ANY SORT OF CORPORATE WORLD THIS WOULD BE TWO ALBUMS...

Absolutely, but it certainly wasn't intended to be two albums - our consciousness are still formed by the fact that we have grown up with albums but with CDs as a format as long as it's on one CD it's just a CD and I definitely wanted to take advantage of that. I'm in a real blossom right now creatively, and it's just about giving as much as I can get away with sharing - especially as the people who are most supportive of what I do have had to wait such a long time, so here's this for them.

ANOTHER THING I WANTED TO SAY THAT YOU ALREADY MENTIONED, WAS THAT THERE ARE NO FILLER TRACKS ON THIS RECORD - IT'S NINETEEN HIGH QUALITY TRACKS...

Well, that's what I've always worked towards. In fact one of my run-ins with the record industry was that they wanted me to do less, and I wanted to do more... it was a case of will you just please stop growing, please stagnate and let US decide who you are...

ANOTHER THING THAT STRUCK ME WAS THE FACT THAT WHEN I GOT THE ALBUM YOU ARE CREDITED AS PRODUCER, WRITER, AND ARRANGER, AND I REALLY THOUGHT - WRONGLY AS IT TURNS OUT - THAT THE ALBUM WAS GOING TO BE SOMETHING VERY SELF-INDULGENT...

What's disheartening sometimes is the fact that we've got so mean in our minds about who we are and what we're capable of doing, that we now make people try to feel bad about having a gift that the creator has given them and which they have a true desire to share. It's a case of 'How dare you write, produce, AND arrange!'... this is just me, I am offering to you who I think I am, and that is the answer to that question. This is who I think I am and I'm just offering it to you.

We've just got so mean-spirited about our potential and who we are; we've just accepted this mindset of keep your head down and have no ambition and just do one thing. We've become a nation of specialists as opposed to what we used to be when every man was a renaissance man and every man took it upon himself to master as many things, because he understood that



not only would it make his life richer and more fulfilled, but that the knowledge might also come in handy some day. I was blessed by my creator with a true desire and a passion to make and express myself by music and to share that. At the end of the day some people find more of something in collaboration, and that doesn't make them any less accomplished, but it's also a kind of therapy, it's everything - a lot of times other people in the studio just get in the way with their opinions of how it's supposed to be and those opinions are usually based on the last idea and those people tend to get in the way...

AM I RIGHT IN THINKING THAT YOU ENJOYED MAKING THIS ALBUM?

It is one of the true, true joys of my existence to be able to do what comes naturally from my heart and to be able to offer it. It's like being a painter and being let into this room where there's all these endless colors and all these endless canvases and it's just 'Wow I get to stay here and work!'

IT CERTAINLY SOUNDS LIKE THERE'S JOY IN THE ALBUM...

Well I'm glad you mentioned that because when people ask me about the album that's the one thing that I try to say; if they listen to it with an open mind then they will actually feel better afterwards. It is uplifting, there is some of that in it, and you can hone your craft as a songwriter but there's always a process that you hope for and that's that something outside of the process will join in with what you're doing and add that additional element that just gives a piece of music an energy, and that's what I want to share. Right now we need that kind of thing from as many artists as we can possibly get it from, and that goes for all art media, whether it's painting, film-making, sculpture, whatever... we need more expression of that which speaks best of us, and not just playing down to people's small-assed attitudes. Also it's fair to say that as a black man people tend to want to keep small expectations of you anyway, and get disappointed that you won't play along. As Nelson Mandela said, it doesn't really serve to play to peoples small ideas, if you really consider yourself a servant in the truest way then you really want to serve the uplifting of minds and hearts and not just play along...

THERE'S A TIMELESSNESS TO YOUR MUSIC I THINK, UNFORTUNATELY I'M NOT FAMILIAR WITH ALL THE STAGES OF YOUR WORK... I KNOW THE FIRST COUPLE OF ALBUMS, AND

NOW THIS ONE, BUT FROM THE BEGINNING YOUR SOUND HAS BEEN DISTINCTIVE, AND LISTENING TO THE OLDER STUFF NOW ALONGSIDE THE NEWER THINGS IT'S KIND OF THE SAME... EVERYTHING HAS THE SAME QUALITY - THERE'S NOT A FASHION ELEMENT, IT DOESN'T BELONG TO ANY ERA, THERE'S A REAL CLASSIC ELEMENT TO IT...

The irony of that is that it's exactly what I had to fight with Sony about with every record; they wanted every record to sound more like what someone else was doing or whatever demographic was going on... on my last record because it didn't sound like a Backstreet Boys record they had a hard time hearing it, but I'm grateful because it gave me an opening to start my own situation and now I couldn't be more grateful if they paid me! At the end of the day Gertha said that anything that aspires to be great art has to have foundation, an understanding of something great that had gone on before it, for me there is a timelessness to The Beatles' music and it's because The Beatles knew what the fuck they were doing, excuse us for being so presumptuous and thinking that those guys didn't know, but when the magic and the spirit is in the music no matter who makes it then it will sound timeless because music comes from outside of them anyway...

YOU MENTIONED THE BEATLES THERE, BUT DO YOU HAVE OTHER ARTISTS THAT INSPIRE YOU AND THAT YOU ASPIRE TO?

Yes, and they've very, very high and I'm tired of being expected to apologise for the fact that they're very high... Bach is my hero, and Beethoven, and Mozart, and John Lennon and Paul MacCartney are definitely there, and Stevie Wonder and the Stones, and Sly Stone, and Led Zepplin and Hendrix and Bob Marley are the prophets...

FUNNILY ENOUGH STEVIE WONDER WAS A NAME I PICKED UP ON LISTENING TO 'WILDCARD', BECAUSE I THINK YOU SHARE VERY SIMILAR VOCAL QUALITIES...

I'm certainly not offended to be compared to Stevie Wonder. Stevie Wonder at one point of my life, along with The Beatles were the ying and yang of my being so it is for sure that he has had a profound effect on not just the way I sing, but he also opened up my mind harmonically to the possibilities. Stevie Wonder is one of those people that a lot of people only got on one level - and that's fine - but no matter how deep your musical appreciation you



can always appreciate he was playing with some holy fire and the same with The Beatles, and that's why you can still listen to 'I Feel Fine' today and just be moved.

IT'S QUITE A POTENT COMBINATION OF INFLUENCES ISN'T IT, STEVIE WONDER AND THE BEATLES?

I would say that if someone said you have to go and live on an island and you can only take the work of two artists then as painful as it would be, if it was focused on what we call pop music, it would just have to be Stevie's catalogue and The Beatles catalogue... and if I could smuggle some more stuff in then I'd throw some Hendrix in and some other great artists, but those guys were in a time when the industry just didn't get caught up in the creatives of the music, and so if you had some potent fire you were playing with then you still had some leeway to throw it out there before anyone figured how to stop that happening, and so for me Steely Dan can still move me as much as anything else because it's just excellent music made by people who not only had a gift for it but who genuinely seemed to delight in the fact that they could get away with it in the first place.

THERE'S A LINE OF QUESTIONING THAT I KIND OF HAVE TO ASK ABOUT - AND I'M SURE THAT EVERYONE MUST BE ASKING YOU ABOUT THIS AND PROBABLY MAKING MORE OF IT THAN NEEDS TO BE MADE, BUT RIGHT NOW I'M TALKING TO SANANDA MAITREYA, SO WHO IS TERENCE TRENT D'ARBY NOW?

Right now I would say that he is a ghost, but a very useful ghost, although that's just describing it from my perspective. He is still something for other people and I have to respect that, and I had to show more humility because I was getting to a point where I wanted to walk away from him faster than others were comfortable with, and it really did teach me something very important to the process, that it is a tool of the process that it's one thing for me to be that, and another thing for people who have some historical reference to a person who meant something to their life. It's made me more humble, and it's made me more appreciative of who I was, because the truth is that I had just completely lost perspective on it and moving away from it now has actually given me some distance to appreciate what his sacrifice was, and it definitely was a sacrifice.

HAVING HAD SOME TIME TO GET THAT

PERSPECTIVE, HOW MUCH DO YOU IDENTIFY WITH HIM NOW?

You know it's funny, I just see a guy who came along for the ride, did his duty, and just walked off into another dimension, and basically now it's a layer peeled away and a truer version is there in its place. It always felt like a mask that I was wearing at the appropriate time that just fell away, and I had kind of soured of it to be honest... thinking about the time when I was born, and every single thing from then, and I think it ran to the end of its role, and there was far more pain than there was joy, and I was so desperate to experience more joy in my life that I would do anything necessary to achieve it. When the opportunity came to just switch my name to something that felt like it had the power to lift me into something else I didn't hesitate... emotionally it was like a rope had been thrown to me.

IT MUST HAVE BEEN ALMOST A DANGEROUS PLACE TO BE - TO BE FEELING THAT YOU'D DO LITERALLY ANYTHING MUST BE PRETTY MUCH THE POINT WHERE SO MANY PEOPLE JUST GO OFF THE RAILS...

But it's also the point where you just completely surrender as well and just let go and trust your process because every man has to come to a crossroads where he acknowledges that there's a little bit more going on than meets the eye and maybe part of reclaiming my power is accepting that I just have to surrender to something that does belong to me. To trust that, and through the process of trusting that to see that it does work. It seems to lift you up in other ways as well... it really is giving me a new lease on life, the whole idea of taking another identity is that you are anticipating a rebirth in your life, a resurrection in your life, so when I found out later what the name means it makes a lot of sense that I would want to tap into something that gave me the opportunity to be uplifted.

WHAT IS IT THAT THE NEW NAME MEANS?

Well it means a lot of things to a lot of different people, which is why the first couple of years I kind of put a block on knowing... some of the things I've heard are 'he who walks in grace', 'love and light', 'life carrier', for some Buddhist sects somewhere it's their name for Christ, and I'm really glad I didn't hear that one straight away!

'CHRIST' COULD BE QUITE A NAME TO LIVE UP TO!



But having said that I know a lot of people called Christopher and Christine, and Christof, and it does seem to be a part of history to name ourselves after our gods as if doing so would give us a special life or faith or something...

***THEY'RE ALL VERY OPTIMISTIC NAMES
THOUGH AREN'T THEY? THEY'RE ALL VERY
POSITIVE...***

Definitely. Definite positive associations and that's what I like because I guess the negative weight of my past had just caught up with me - and I wasn't just going to tamper with a name that had meant so much to so many people unless it really felt like life or death to me... you just don't frivolously do those things!

WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU?

Well, this record so far is getting wonderful responses and I'm very heartened by that - I've been rejuvenated by this change of life, and especially by the reception in Britain, because you British can be such hard cold bastards...

WE CAN!

...but at the same time that does mean that when you accept something it just means so much more because you guys are hard customers, and when you're feeling a level of acceptance you haven't felt for a while from them it turns you on in a way that you can't get anywhere else, and I'm feeling that from you guys again. Now things seem to have come full circle and I'm out of the British jail now and I really appreciate that and I just want to say thanks to everybody... one can play a game and deny the truth, but the truth is that when the British give you the thumbs up it's a turn on like no other high in the world.

***WELL, WELCOME BACK! AND GIVEN THAT
YOU'RE BACK WITH US AGAIN WILL YOU BE
TOURING HERE AT ALL?***

Absolutely I'll be touring, but for that you'll have to check the website because it's being put together now...

***AND JUST TO FINISH, THE MILLION DOLLAR
QUESTION... AFTER EVERYTHING YOU'VE
GONE THROUGH ARE YOU HAPPY NOW?***

You know what, I'm tapping into a level of happiness now

that I just didn't have before, but most importantly my life is more rounded, I just seem to be in a place where I accept myself more as I am - what we're really looking for from ourselves is that one hundred per cent approval, and I'm starting to give myself that again, and I've noticed that the magic seems to be coming back in a way... ■