



## INTERVIEW: Sananda Maitreya Raises Spirits and A Little Hell Along the Way

[Patrick Corcoran](#)



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Having formally bid farewell to his previous guise as [Terence Trent D'Arby](#) in 2001, [Sananda Maitreya](#) has spent the last 15 years living in Milan, Italy, releasing music on his own, direct to his devoted legion of fans. On October 13th, however, Maitreya is set to return to a broader audience with PROMETHEUS & PANDORA. The ambitiously conceived triple-album is destined to further cement his well-earned identity as an artist with a proven penchant for innovation, a brave, bold visionary that continues to challenge and change the game three decades on from his auspicious arrival on the music scene.

In conjunction with the recent unveiling of the project's lead single "[It's Been A Long Time.](#)" I was fortunate enough to connect with the man himself, an exchange that yielded a maelstrom of fascinating responses from an artist who has withered not one iota with middle age. Fiercely intelligent, incredibly self-aware and bursting with playfulness, his answers to my questions reveal a man grounded in his artistry but with an ever-mischievous glint in his eye.

Taking in his thoughts on his groundbreaking first two albums (1987's [Introducing the Hardline According to Terence Trent D'Arby](#) and 1989's [Neither Fish Nor Flesh](#)), the premature demise of his peers and friends, his reputation as an iconoclast within the music industry, and the recording of his urgent, expansive new album, our discussion also includes a hitherto unknown gem about a certain [brotherly duo](#) from Manchester. Indeed, "interesting" seems a grand understatement when

it comes to describing the enigma that is Sananda Maitreya.

***Patrick Corcoran: PROMETHEUS & PANDORA is obviously inspired by ancient mythology—how does the title relate to life in 2017? How does it relate to the content of the album?***

Sananda Maitreya: The ancient myths, now, life today is all the same thing. What was once relevant if true, remains relevant always. Our archetypal stories, our legends are our truth encapsulated. With that in mind, PROMETHEUS & PANDORA might as well be named "Batman & Wonder Woman" who are only relevant because they echo the same archetypal stories our western cultures were raised on.

The content of the album attempts to make transparent the relationship adventures of our protagonists. The songs in one way or another are all about their passion, their thoughts, their sentiments, their fierce rivalry and enduring love for the other. In the reality I access with my free will, 2017 is really just 1702 being repeated. Which in fact was a very good year.

Meanwhile, I am a firm believer that our ancient myths are not legends but our true history as a human race. We are the legends. And we are only one race, the human race, all the rest of our specious designations are tribes. Composed of many tribes we are, and blessed to be so, to share in one another's karmic graces. But by God there are no other races save the human one.

And in truth, were I to see another race other than our human one, I'd probably shoot at it.



**earlier phases of your career. Do you ever crave the intensity of the spotlight that you once had?**

SM: I got what intensity of spotlight I needed. History repeatedly shows what happens to those who crave more than they need. My profile, such as it now exists, has allowed me to completely create a whole new world. The law is the law, and we always pay for taking more

than we need. And let's be clear, fame is a pain in the ass, majorly. I am respected now for the work and not for the fame.

If ever I should have a thought cross my mind that I miss those days, the formula I use is simple. I grab a hammer, grip it firmly and then proceed to bang myself as hard as I can on my big toe, while asking my wife to insult me vigorously, simultaneous to her also throwing stones at me (and not Mick and Keith, nor even Fred and Barney for that matter).

Upon the conclusion of this assault, I am then quickly disenfranchised of being so corrupted in my soul, as to desire another experience of what already killed me in the first place, which if you'll pardon my rather warped logic, just simply doesn't make sense at all to me. It certainly, if nothing else, proves that I wasn't paying attention the first time. Trust me when I tell you that I very narrowly avoided that life. Otherwise a dude doesn't just walk away like that for no reason, even counter-intuitive ones.



**PC: What inspires you these days, 30-plus years into your career? Do you have any time for contemporary music or do you draw**

**PC: At three volumes long, it is clearly an ambitious piece. Why is the time right for such a challenge now? What are your ambitions for it?**

SM: I am counter-intuitive by nature. This makes sense, since being a Piscean, like salmon we simply don't trust an easy swim. So quite naturally, as any reasonable person might surmise, the absolute best thing to do in a "music crisis" when few have much expendable income or the time to indulge it, is to release an epic, ambitious 3-disc project that is about the same running time as it takes to bake a Thanksgiving Turkey. In fact, I am quite certain that listening to it while cooking a turkey may be the best possible use of it.

My ambitions for it, such as they exist is for it to find its way to your heart, marinate and then perhaps slowly begin convincing you that you may in fact be a Thanksgiving Turkey yourself or maybe even far, far more. The conceit I have for it is that it triggers within you memory relating to our collective past and that you too are invited to see yourself as heroic. Because our fathers were.

And because our fathers would have us see ourselves as certainly nothing less than the quite dashing, serious bitches they were. And that living up to ourselves may in fact be our greatest service to the humanity we all share. I promise on my father's grave that I do not come with any attempt at all to lessen but to strengthen as and when I can the badass within us all.

I just want to raise spirits. And a little hell as well, if I can get away with it.

**PC: You've maintained a lower public profile during recent years, at least relative to the**



## *inspiration from artists from earlier eras?*

SM: "Contemporary Artist" is a title that means little to me. For me you got game or you don't.

The calculus dictates that naturally more great artists existed in the past than contemporary ones because there is always more past than there can be present. And we all know that the past has a rather annoying habit of accumulating.

Point is, I do not go to other artists looking for inspiration. For me it is always the same, trusting my own instincts and imagination and going within to retrieve my soul's desire. I've a lifetime's worth of music in me and all the time God allows me to realize it.

I have always been a man driven by ideas and concepts. What others are doing affects me only as a general fan of music, which I have always been. While my artistic pride simply won't allow me to follow any other drummer except the one God gave me to march to. I do believe in God, and I do suffer the conviction that I am being the instrument I was granted by his grace to function as. An idea can be grand or as silly as smoked beans. As long as I am amused by it, I can work with it.



***PC: Here at Albumism we recently featured a 30th anniversary piece about your debut album *Introducing The Hardline According to Terence Trent D'Arby*. How does it feel to reflect upon that time with the luxury of hindsight? When you hear it, are you proud of it?***

SM: Hindsight is not always a luxury. Sometimes it is just a pain in the hindquarters. I am proud of having made it. I promised it to the world and delivered, end of story. I remain even more proud of having survived it. From the very beginning, I've carried the same conviction. But for a brief shining moment in time, I had a real company behind me.

And then, the deluge! Like Prometheus, due to the great consternation of the other ruthless and complaining Gods (and their management), I was kindly kicked the fuck off the mountain. Simple as that. Mount Olympus actually rebelled and asked Zeus' representative human form to bind and chain me. This included not only threatened musical rivals, some with tremendous financial leverage, but also to various branches of the establishment very inclusive of the church.

Seems we were a bit much for too many concerned, nor did we seem to be wasting any time reprogramming demographics and transitional minds. There is a very solid and viable rationale behind me choosing master Prometheus' archetype to express through. I lived this shit.

Then again, very early in my adventures through the rabbit hole, the great grand master Miles Davis predicted two things for me. One, that I would wind up living in the exact same city I have lived in for 15 years: Milan. And two, that the bastards would wind up making me pay for the changes I affected. He understood that Europe would be empathetic to my waveform. And that every American generation has produced those of Arts & Letters who must find solace in foreign lands. Our unique American history shows without prejudice that our society has never been too kind to mavericks, nor hard-headed bitches like me who are blind to any vision save their own.

By the way, as an aspiring "cunning linguist" myself I just love Albumism. Well done! Meanwhile as it pertains to your other question, once I make an album, I never listen to it again. While mastering, it is my final time to enjoy the efforts put forth. And then as soon as that bitch is wrapped, I'm Audi 5 and it is done. I never look back, there are just too many ghosts chasing me. And the future is always far more beguiling to me than what I just stepped away from. Trust that all of our ilk are very clear about the fact that we are all on borrowed time, with an endlessly ticking clock driving us forward and the grace of spirit holding us together.

If anything, the second record, *Neither Fish Nor Flesh*, I am even more proud of as it was this record that was later cited to me by many alternative rock bands as their entry point of inspiration. It arrived at exactly the same time as the first two main alternative rock stations in America and got major love from that crowd. It has played its small role in having influenced Rock & Roll





Hall of Famers. I was informed by colleagues that it was instrumental in aiding a new kind of rock, encouraging those who themselves went on to change the music. It was an audacious record that encouraged other audacious minds. I paid a heavy price for it, but was compensated with the regard and esteem of those who themselves went on to alter the course of rock music.

At least three of my favorite Seattle bands born in the '90s spoke to me concerning its impact. As well as a few English groups and acts. I have been told that it may even have played a role in uniting the two different bands of the young Gallagher brothers to form Oasis. It was also the record that I recall having the most fun making.

But even more moving was being told by some members of the gay community upon moving to Hollywood in the early '90s how grateful they were for the song "Billy Don't Fall." I heard a very humbling story about how one man, in the last year of his life before succumbing to AIDS, found courage and strength in the song. His lover sought me out to tell me.



I have never been a gay man, at least not in this lifetime, but I am quite certain that unless we are all free, we shall all be some pretty hurt bitches. We are like the animals on Noah's Ark arguing about whose shit stinks more, with the boat being the only thing keeping us from certain extinction. If it floats, it is mine as good as yours. And as I wrote a few years ago in my song "Les Paul Man," love is love. It was even slandered as some kind of communist, vegetarian manifesto. I had heard my German-Italian manager's Austrian wife say in German a colloquialism that equates being neither here nor there as being 'Neither Fish Nor Flesh,' and immediately seized upon it as the title for the project a couple of years before commencing it.

The record company and critics slapped me with a furious beat down for that project, but time and music seems to believe I may in fact have served my purpose. Meanwhile

like a slow poke turtle, it still moves appropriate personnel to this day. Breaking new ground is never easy when everyone around you is wearing comfortable Blue Suede loafers.

We cannot always court the big dollars, but following the love one has for being a tool of evolution assures that one will always be able to command the coins of consequence.

In retrospect, all things considered, Neither Fish Nor Flesh was my Kate Bush record. Her impact upon me was immense. And remains.



**PC: On "Mona Lisa's Laughing" you sing about no one needing permission to be themselves. Is this something your younger self needed to hear, and would he have listened? Or is it advice for a future generation?**

SM: Frankly my proceeding with my life as if it was mine was what got me in trouble in the first place. I was clear from the get go that it was all or nothing and that the vision I was given was more than sufficient enough to see me through. We are all now living exactly in the time when quite a few souls are taking their idea of themselves back into their own hands. I believe in liberty and freedom, and that they were promised to us. Yet I also know that it cannot be given, but assumed and earned. Love, liberty and freedom are for me the only things worth dying for, since for me, there can be no life without them.

Living a proscribed life on another's behalf is not life to me, but a living form of death. If we cannot be ourselves, then who are we and what game are we playing? The great American philosopher and poet Tom Petty has already taken pains to remind us all that we do not have to live as refugees.

Whatever your claim to infamy or fame, time to big up



bitches and take back possession of ourselves. Self-realization is a spiritual right, as well as our inheritance. Pursue it with all that your life is worth to you, and let life bless you for being real. Unless we are child molesting assholes, each has as much right as the next to be themselves, and not only fearful caricatures dressed in shadowed tweeds. Meanwhile if we are not protecting our children, we forfeit much of our inheritance, and our future becomes the past, simple as that. We are not asked to be perfect. We are just asked to not be so god awful stupid as to think that we can abuse the children without shortchanging our own evolution.



**PC: Several of your artistic peers have tragically moved on from this mortal coil. What effect has this had upon you on a personal level and on an artistic level?**

SM: Quite truthfully it has moved me greatly. Several were not only my peers, but friends and heroes. Yet again, those of us who serve are quite clear that our service to the hero factory may not be as required a love for the factory as it is for the heroes they produce. And even if some were among those Olympians who went all “Salome” on a bitch and asked for my head on a platter a la John the Baptist, I forgave them because I understood their fears. And I was forearmed with the knowledge that our histories repeat because the archetypes repeat.

I have done this before, it is not my first dance at the ball.

Someone had to be Prometheus for my time, a sacrificial Lamborghini if you will and I was the lucky bitch chosen. Yay me! So although some were guilty of having betrayed me, love is not ours to own nor command. And heroes are some strange bitches truth be told, though it is not their fault, they are just programmed that way. Babylon is never not nervous of the monsters they create for their own consumption, and normal is not an option.

**PC: As an American who has spent a good**

**portion of time in the UK, how do you view the current state of both of these places? Does politics surface at all in the new work and if not, why not?**

SM: It is only an illusion that there can be a separation between politics and life. And will our governments even allow it? I must say though that in my lifetime, I have never seen so much misplaced vanity in government, nor so much lack of faith in the human condition, the same condition programmed into us by our very same governments. If it is not a conundrum, can it make any sense?

Is it not now clear that it ain't what you think it is, but it is what it looks like? Has it not gotten Lewis Carroll enough for ya? Well, we've got more!

Our greater disorientation serves the greater purposes of the State, so as one might come to even expect, we are some very disoriented bitches right now. Seemingly by design. Yet our fathers would scoff at such a weak barrier as politics and the will of others to impose themselves upon our own divine wills. And what we are not willing to die for, we do not deserve. And as we all come to see in each our own lifespans, death can be easy or death can be slow. And death can come many times, you know. Let's be clear, as currently constituted we are fucked. But if one trusts in the unrelenting charge of human evolution, we are just at the verge of moving beyond all of this crap and reinventing ourselves. And the good news is that we've no choice, we either reinvent ourselves or perish. Yes, quite an exciting time to be alive. We clearly deserve much better than we've been served.



**PC: As your children grow older, how do they interact with your work—both your current music and your back catalogue? Are they interested or is it simply “Daddy’s work?”**



SM: Like myself, they've inherited quite a broad sense of music. They are much more acquainted with my new work, which they have always been very supportive of. They actually seem fans of mine which is quite becoming though strange for some odd, ill-defined reason. They are much more impressed however with the fact that I was friends with many of their other idols.

I often overhear them in their room singing my songs. And as expected, their favorite songs of mine are always the ones with the words that their mother wishes them to say the least comfortably. At their current ages of seven and almost five, any tune with the word "ass" in it goes down like gangbusters.

The "back catalogue" such as it exists is being kept from them so as not to engender any possible confusion as to who they are in relation to it. Too many explanations and shit for now.

**PC: A little bird tells us that you may be hitting the road again on tour soon. Why now and not before? How extensive a tour will it be? How different do you imagine it to be undertaking a tour at the age of 55, as opposed to those you did in your younger days?**

SM: That same little bird does he too like Birdy numnums? Sometimes, I get a bit excited. Then afterwards, I lie down and take a nap, whereby thereafter I then awaken from my nap and realize that I may have said silly, unaccountable things. Maybe I'll tour, maybe just do residences, or maybe I will rent a theater and just film a concert. Or maybe I will turn into a fox and fly! If the Good Lord's spirit wants me to roll my rocks down the road I will.

Or I could remain a convincing recluse, a role I have studied quite well and begin incubating the next project, PANDORA'S PLAYHOUSE, which so far is shaping up to be my most groundbreaking project yet, since I have found out that if hubris precedes me, the effort made is greater in its wake. Albeit certainly not as large a project as the current one. That mountain needn't be scaled again for quite some time. If I'm honest, going out again kind of scares me because it is clear that I am among the last of my kind and the people may in fact be ready for me now, if not the establishment.

**PC: Here at Albumism, our passion is (as the name suggests) for the great art form that is the album. Indulge us a little here – what**

**would you list as your five favorite albums of all time?**

SM: Honestly, cool name and all, but I HATE QUESTIONS LIKE THIS! For one, I have so many favorite albums that it would be a great stretch to even include ten. And I am among those for whom the list could change by the day. So I'll choose instead to list at least an easier one for me: the five albums that most impacted my life. Though certainly not my five faves, which is way too complicated. The Beatles' Rubber Soul, Pink Floyd's Wish You Were Here, The Jimi Hendrix Experience's Are You Experienced, Miles Davis' Kind of Blue, and Kate Bush's Hounds of Love.

And because you bitches are so stingy, you've forced me to leave out the Rolling Stones' Beggars Banquet, Sam Cooke's Live at the Harlem Square Club, Rod Stewart's Atlantic Crossing, James Brown's In the Jungle Groove, Bob Dylan's Highway 61 Revisited, and maestra Joni Mitchell's The Hissing of Summer Lawns, as well as the Mahavishnu Orchestra's The Inner Mounting Flame, and Songs in the Key of Life by the great master Stevie Wonder among other hurtful items to leave out that assisted in the formation of the warped sensibility I now have.

You dudes are mean. Call me back when you are more generous with your portions!

Until then pray tell what shall I do with Sly & The Family Stone's There's a Riot Goin' On or Cream's Disraeli Gears? And how do I explain to master Fagen leaving out Steely Dan's Pretzel Logic? I'll figure something out I guess.....

And thank you very much for your interest. It is much appreciated. May your Lords bless & keep you well. ■

Sananda Maitreya's new triple-album 'PROMETHEUS & PANDORA' arrives in stores October 13th  
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