



SANANDA MAITREYA PANDORA'S PLAYHOUSE

TREEHOUSE PUBLISHING



COMPLETING THE EIGHT-ALBUM ARC THAT BEGAN WHEN HE CHANGED IDENTITY, THE "POST-MILLENNIUM ROCK" OF SANANDA MAITREYA IS A BOLD REMINDER OF HIS TALENTS

The absolute standout on The Avalanches' excellent collaborative album *We Will Always Love You* last year saw Sananda Maitreya glide beatifically with a Vashti Bunyan sample on the twinklingly beautiful *Reflecting Light*. For anyone who'd wondered what such a soul-pop talent had been up to since he fled being Terence Trent D'Arby, it served notice that Maitreya still possesses one hell of a voice.

On the quiet, Maitreya has actually been continuing to sing like a superhero: *Pandora's PlayHouse* is his eighth studio album since gaining his new name on 2005's *Angels & Vampires Volume 1*.

Each album has at least 20 songs; *Pandora's PlayHouse* boasts 28 and the preceding *Prometheus & Pandora* from 2017 is a triple album, which Maitreya knowingly joked lasted "just the right time to cook a Thanksgiving turkey".

Maitreya calls his current music "Post-Millennium Rock". Whatever the label, it's essentially in the same golden vein as *Wishing Well* and *If You Let Me Stay* – someone badly needs to compile a Best Of from these eight albums to plot an introductory path for fans who've lost their way since the *Introducing The Hardline...* days.

That would be doubly relevant now, as *Pandora's PlayHouse*

completes the album arc begun with *Angels & Vampires Volume 1*. The intricacies of the eight-album storyline would involve endless footnotes, a knowledge of folklore and heavily detailed allegories. Suffice to say, *Pandora's PlayHouse* tells a lot of



Maitreya's story from the 80s. Crucially, it's also largely exactly the album that casual fans hope Sananda Maitreya would be making in 2021.

At 28 tracks, there's a fair bit of excess that's easy to excise, or rearrange into your own deluxe edition bonus tracks at the end of the essential songs: the alternative versions and instrumentals get in the way.

Once they're gone, you're reminded what a playful, chameleonic, chimeric talent Sananda Maitreya is. *Reflecting Light* is here, too, and it's not even the best track. That honour goes to the electrifying *One Horse Town*, Maitreya's love of The Rolling Stones colliding with his controlled soul holler.

Or maybe it's the simply told excoriating protest song *In America*. No, wait, perhaps it's Yuki Suzuki's escapist pop or the operatic funk of *Don't Leave Me Here!* The MGMT-style *Pie*, seemingly the most autobiographical meditation on Maitreya's fame, is an absolute banger, too. The point is, wherever you think the man who sang *Sign Your Name* went to, he's right here waiting. Time to get reacquainted. **John Earls**