

Sananda Goes Solo!

G. Neri

Sull'industria discografica se ne sono sentite tante, ma nessuno ha il dente avvelenato come questo artista. La sua rabbia è cosmica, ma grazie alle nuove tecnologie ora è felice di fare tutto da solo. Chi è? By Louise Johnson

If you want to hear a biting indictment¹ of the music industry, then you could hardly do better than have a conversation with Sananda Maitreya. If the name doesn't sound entirely familiar, then that's because he has changed it. In a previous life he was known as Terence Trent D'Arby and he sold millions of records in the 1980s and 1990s.

The decision to change his name (in October 2001) came after a series of dreams, but he thinks that the prime reason² was his sense of revulsion at an industry that had tried to "assume control of my identity."

EVIL

Today Sananda Maitreya lives in Milan, where he has a recording studio, and it was there that he met with Speak Up. He told us that he had left "the system" because he was tired of being "bullied and dictated to³. They owned me and they tried to dismantle everything I put together⁴. They saw me as a corporate brand⁵: they ripped away my identity⁶." Yet he doesn't think that it's only the recording industry that has been mistreating him: "I can't remember a time in my life (he was born Terence Trent Howard on March 15th, 1962 - ed) when someone wasn't trying to manipulate me to get something from me."

THE CURRENT CRISIS

Sananda sees the music business as being part of the "corporate system that has been bashing us⁷ for years." He believes that the recent financial meltdown⁸ was inevitable, as these people "have been stealing from us for years." Yet he finds satisfaction in the fact that "the record business used to be one of the world's top six industries. Now it isn't even in the top 25."

Of course Sananda isn't the first artist to turn his back on the labels. Prince famously began calling himself "The Artist Formerly Known as Prince," while Radiohead (like Prince) recently started to distribute their own work online, enjoying the freedom that the digital revolution has allowed⁹.

Maitreya similarly releases his music online. His albums *Angels & Vampires Volume I* (2005) and *Volume II* (2006) are downloadable on MP3. So are his latest albums *Nigor Mortis*¹⁰ - *A Critical Mass* and *Lovers & Fighters*. The latter¹¹ is a live recording of several of his European concerts this summer. Given that he is now free to "do his own thing¹²," we were curious to know why he was so angry about an industry that many artists now live without.

Sananda says that the industry is "part of the octopus that is controlling western consciousness"¹³ and he is particularly irritated that it has lost its "spiritual side," which was represented by groundbreaking¹⁴ artists like the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix, and that it is now dominated by "its corporate side."

ON THE TEAM

For, as is perhaps apparent, Sananda (whose father was a pentecostal minister) has a strong spiritual and religious element and he sees his musical talent as a gift: "I belong to Gabriel's team. I work for heaven's music department. It (his talent - ed) doesn't come from me."

Sananda also sees himself as part of a tradition of musical independence. For, as he reminded Speak Up: "Mozart and Beethoven also had a problem with the system. Bach said 'fuck the system!' and left the system." Clearly, Sananda is not alone.



Glossary

- 1 a biting indictment [in'daɪtmənt] una sferzante accusa.
- 2 the prime reason - la ragione principale.
- 3 of being bullied ['bʊld] and dictated to - di subire prepotenze e di ricevere ordini.
- 4 to dismantle everything I put together - demolire tutto quello che costruivo.
- 5 corporate brand - marchio industriale.
- 6 they ripped away my identity - mi hanno strappato l'identità.
- 7 has been bashing us for years - ci ha aggrediti per anni.
- 8 financial meltdown - crollo finanziario.
- 9 has allowed - ha consentito.
- 10 Nigor Mortis - gioco di parole con Rigor Mortis (Nigor è pronunciato come nigger).
- 11 the latter - quest'ultimo.
- 12 to do his own thing - fare quello che vuole.
- 13 part of the octopus ['ɒktəpəs] ... western consciousness - parte della piovra che controlla le coscienze occidentali.
- 14 groundbreaking - rivoluzionario.

Sananda Maitreya, 46, formerly known as Terence Trent D'Arby. He will appear on Italian television (Rai 2) on Christmas Eve, as part of "Concerto di Natale XVI." If you want to visit his music, visit: www.sanandamaitreya.com