



TRACK BY TRACK

(Re)-Introducing the Hardline According To...Sananda Maitreya

In 1987, a 25-year-old named Terence Trent D'Arby released one of the most electric debuts in modern pop history. Thirty-five years later the artist currently known as Sananda Maitreya celebrates its reissue track by track.

When Sananda Maitreya's debut album was released in 1987 (as Terence Trent D'Arby), it rocketed the 25-year-old New York-born, London-based singer to global fame in a way that few records have done before or since. *Introducing the Hardline According to...* sold a million copies worldwide within three days and spent a total of nine weeks on top of the UK charts. Maitreya was soon compared to Prince—owing to the raw power of his distinctive voice, his performative magnetism, and an auteurship that saw him write and co-produce each of the album's 11 tracks.

Initially discovering his aptitude for music as a two-year-old hearing The Beatles for the first time, he developed a reputation as a child prodigy before succumbing to the pressures of expectation and dropping out of college to pursue a short-lived career in the US Army. While stationed in West Germany, he chanced upon a bass player looking for a new singer; he auditioned and soon became the frontman of the group The Touch, rediscovering his passion for music in the process.

“I would sit in a janitor’s closet in the barracks and sing along to my cassette tape of Rod Stewart’s *Tonight I’m Yours*,” Maitreya tells Apple Music. “I was determined not to leave that closet until I had transformed my voice from a pure choir boy’s into a man’s rasp, like Rod Stewart and Sam Cooke’s. By the time I got the gig with The Touch, I was ready, and I didn’t look back.” By the mid-’80s, following his discharge from the military and a few years playing with The Touch, he was a solo act in search of his international break. In what he calls a “fevered period of writing” over the course of 18 months while living in Frankfurt, Maitreya composed the majority of what would become *Hardline*, including its breakout single, “Wishing Well.”

“I had an unyielding and unshakable faith in my future and my destiny,” he says. “I knew that once I got signed and could make this record, the future would never be the same for me.” Read on for Maitreya’s in-depth thoughts on each track of his seminal album—from Sade’s influence to the special pull of London—now released for the first time in Spatial Audio.

“If You All Get to Heaven”

“I was driving somewhere with my manager, and I had the music for this song in my head, though I hadn’t recorded it yet. We had the windshield wipers on, as it was raining. It took me back to when I was a child, since I used to always make music to the sounds of whatever was around me: the tick-tock of the indicator or harmonizing with the tone of the vacuum cleaner. And because of the counterpoint on the windshield wipers against the rain, the strings for ‘If You All Get to Heaven’ came to me in a flash. I realized that the song needed a missing piece, and now it had arrived.”

“If You Let Me Stay”

“After I left my band The Touch [in 1984], I spent about 18 months waiting for the other shoe to drop that would complete the steps towards my future. During that time, I was just writing songs. I only had a Roland TR-808 and a little Casio keyboard to write on, and you can hear how many of these songs were born from those writing tools. This song especially—that emphatic drumbeat comes from the 808. Yet, when it came time to record, I wanted to do everything live, rather than drum machines and synthesizers, like so much of the music out at the time. I ended up being really pleased at how my sound was bolder and more organic.”

“Wishing Well”

“After I was signed by CBS, I moved into a flat in Kentish Town, in London. My engineer, Phil Legg, and a great friend of mine, the late Sean Oliver, who was around the project like a mentor, put a little demo studio in one of the rooms in the basement. They came by to install the equipment one day, and I went to see them as they were checking it was all working. They had a couple of preset buttons pushed to test the sound, and I heard a drum rhythm and this drone from a DX7 keyboard, and I knew I had to write to it. I said, ‘Meet me back here in 10 minutes,’ and I went into my room, picked up a pen and paper, and wrote this song based on that drone and that drum machine. It was one of the fastest songs to record and one of the most popular since.”

“I’ll Never Turn My Back on You (Father’s Words)”

“One of my favorite TV programs when I was a kid in America was a show called *The Partridge Family*, and its intro theme is in the DNA of this song. The great T.S. Eliot had a quote that I used to my marketing advantage back in the day: ‘Immature poets imitate, mature poets steal.’ What’s interesting about that is I repurposed the tune and nobody heard it. The chorus was also me repurposing ‘Higher Ground’ from the great Stevie Wonder. I must have done it well enough, since when I first met Stevie, he didn’t recognize it either. In a way, this song is a pastiche of two of my favorite pieces of music.”

“Dance Little Sister”

“The Touch was an invaluable experience because it allowed me to develop as a songwriter, alongside the two different writing partners I had in that band, and it also allowed me to immediately translate those songs to the stage to see how they worked live. That spirit of understanding what gets an audience moving was a huge influence on this song—as was James Brown’s music. The track came together very quickly because it was simply a matter of getting the feel right. After we recorded it, I rode through Hyde Park listening to it on my Sony Walkman. I was thrilled at how much energy was within it.

“Seven More Days”

“London was a very exciting place to be during the mid-’80s, when we were recording. There was no doubt in my mind that I was going to make a mark with this album, and it was a feeling that affected all of the musicians involved in the project. There was a lot of hype within the musician’s community of London, and people were really excited to record songs like this on the album. That time permeates this record. I can still feel how important it was to the fabric of it.”

“Let’s Go Forward”

“The cliché is that you have your whole life to make your first album, and then people want the second album in six months. That’s one of the reasons why there’s often a depth and maturity to any first project, since you spend your whole life incubating it. It is coming from experience that is so deep and so intuitive that it gives a special tone and tenor to the project itself. Ideas and aspects of tracks like ‘Let’s Go Forward’ have, therefore, been with me since childhood.”

“Rain”

“I wound up meeting the great Paul Weller in a club in London through a mutual friend, and he’s such a generous person, he ended up promoting a showcase for me at the Shaw Theatre that drove major support towards the album before it came out. It was just me and a piano, and I remember singing ‘Crazy’ by Patsy Cline, ‘Someday We’ll All Be Free’ by Donny Hathaway, and a few others. This track was one of the more upbeat songs that I had played him previously, and it spurred him on to become a great advocate of the album, which I have always been thankful for.”

“Sign Your Name”

“I was watching Live Aid on television when I was still living in Germany, and I was so taken by Sade’s performance of [1986 single] ‘Is It a Crime?’ That night, I had a dream where I met her, and she asked me if I would write her a song—to which I said, ‘Of course, I would love to write a song for you!’ Two days after that, I woke up one morning and this song was instantly on my mind. I ran to the Casio keyboard and my little drum machine and started writing the song that

was pouring out of me. If you listen to it now, you can hear Sade's DNA—it turned out to be the track that stayed on the charts the longest.”

“As Yet Untitled”

“It was the last day of our allocated time in the studio, and I was exhausted. I thought, ‘Wow, I’ve *finally* gotten my first record out of the way, and my co-producer Martyn Ware looked at me and said, ‘I don’t think we have it yet.’ I couldn’t believe it. He thought the album was missing one more thing that was completely different to everything else. He suggested I record something a cappella that focuses on my voice. I went into the canteen with a notepad and 15 minutes later, I had this song finished. While performing it, I realized its uniqueness, and I could understand why it needed to be on the record. We had less than a couple of hours to finish it, so I didn’t have time to second-guess myself. The irony is that of all the hits *Hardline* yielded, this one has been the most re-recorded or remixed. Just a year ago, I worked with the immensely talented Calvin Harris on another version of it.”

“Who’s Loving You”

“I’m a massive fan of Smokey Robinson. He’s one of the greatest writers in the history of the game, and he’s someone I paid a tremendous amount of attention to. I also grew up a massive fan of the Jackson 5, and it was their [1969] version of this Smokey Robinson tune that made me want to do my own cover. It felt right to have this as the only song on the album that I hadn’t written. And it was the perfect way to close it.”