



MANIKA KAUR – I BOW TO YOU WAHEGURU – PRESS RELEASE

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Gentle Voice, Powerful Spirit: Singer Manika Kaur's Adoring Sikh Prayers Unfold in Lush Globally Inspired Arrangements on I Bow To You Waheguru

Featuring contributions by Talvin Singh

It began with a dream. **Manika Kaur** held a CD in her hand. It bore her name, and it was dedicated to a cause close to her heart: the construction of a Sikh temple.

Kaur was an unlikely recording artist, though a talented, life-long singer. With no formal training but decades of connection to the complex and beautiful traditions of kirtan, Sikh praise music, Kaur never thought of herself as a vocalist or songwriter. Yet as she sat in prayer in her home's prayer room as an adult, she often found melodies and musical ideas coming to her unbidden. Eventually, Kaur found herself urged and encouraged to record. The dream materialized into a debut album, and a temple in her home city of Dubai.

Now, for her second release, ***I Bow To You Waheguru*** (United Sound; **January 20, 2015**), Kaur continues her spiritually rich journey. The album's striking, gentle arrangements incorporate a broad range of global sounds to support Kaur's lilting, pure voice. The album features contributions from **Talvin Singh**, a pioneer in integrating tabla with club-friendly sounds, as well as several notable Western and Indian classical performers (Rakhesh Chaurasia's bansuri/flute, Jyostna Srikanth's sinuous violin).

"When I discovered kirtan as a girl, it was a different feeling from any other music I had known," reflects Kaur. "Kirtan brings a sense of peace. You're singing the most beautiful love letters to God. It's so deep and beautiful."

Kaur's depth of devotion is reflected in her ongoing commitment to use all proceeds from her music to further charitable causes. This album will support S.O.S., a Sikh children's education initiative.

Kaur's musical output is inseparable from her spiritual heritage. All her songs flow from her devout Sikh faith, from the songs and sacred stories her family shared as she was growing up in Australia.

“We’d sit after dinner, and my brothers and sisters and I would sing and play tabla and harmonium. It was very informal,” recalls Kaur. “My parents would tell us stories that would keep us strong and motivated. When we had these jam sessions, it was like CPR for soul.”

These soul-restoring moments, her family’s practice of kirtan, or adoration via music and rhythm, stayed with Kaur. Together with her siblings, she performed at temple functions, but though she loved music of all kinds, she never considered becoming a musician.

Then came the dream, and an unexpected journey. She made home recordings of the melodies and music that came to her in prayer. “The tunes pop into my head in the prayer room,” says Kaur, explaining her process. “I start singing the prayer instead of speaking it.” Thanks to several chance meetings—with *bhangra* heavyweight singer Sukhbir Singh, with her manager and musical instigator Vinod Gadher—Kaur embraced a new approach to these melodies and nurtured them into full, complex arrangements.

Kaur envisions arrangements in detail: a desert springing to life when the drought breaks, a river running past birdsong. Vivid imagery turns to vibrant, complex sound. On *I Bow to You Waheguru*, Kaur’s tender voice floats through dreamy layers of instruments and drones, which contribute an understated emotional and contemplative power to the traditional prayers and tales of teachers. Sweeps of breathtaking violin (“Aukhee Gauree”), dynamic flute (“Gur Ram Das Rakho Sarnaee,” a song dedicated to the fourth Sikh guru) and shimmering *swarmandal* (Indian zither; “I Bow To You”) add grit and texture to the lulling washes of sound.

Yet even when Talvin Singh’s tabla or Bernhard Schimpelsberger’s percussion kick in, the meditative steadiness holds. Kaur never strays from her source, from her powerful base in Sikhism and its welcoming, egalitarian devotion to God. “I have to trust what’s inside myself. I have to trust the voice that is guiding me. The universe is giving it,” she notes. “I had to be true to my voice, to find the best way I could express love for God.”

Making of “I Bow to You Waheguru” video link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XtcX8gj57pc&feature=youtu.be>

www.manikamusic.com