

The Rise of Downtempo

Dub Sutra
DUB SUTRA

WHILE WELL SUITED for yoga and moving meditation, the 10 downtempo dub tracks on Dub Sutra's debut offering make for a rich, transportive headphone listening experience unto itself. Joined by various guest musicians, the Oceanside, California, husband-and-wife duo Chris and Charlotte Proud use Sanskrit mantras, exotically harmonized chants, and instruments like tabla, piano, synth, and electronic drums to create an unmistakably authentic sacred space.

The simmering "Tempura Breaks" exemplifies *The Rise of Downtempo's* delicate

balance of gentleness and vibrancy. A hypnotic hammered dulcimer melody and sampled Buddhist monk chants set a meditative tone, while electronic glitches, break beats, and skittering 32nd-note high-hat patterns convey vitality and motion.

The dreamlike "Song on the Wind" might be the most moving piece. With its exquisite overlapping vocal lines and Dead Can Dance-ish glossolalia, it comes off as a love song to existence itself: "I feel the sun on my face. I hear a song on the wind. I walk in the light of the grace. I see the beauty within."

—DAMON ORION



Sounds of Silence

VOCALIST AZAM ALI ON CREATIVITY AND MYSTICISM

At the same time that Azam Ali's music reflects her Iranian heritage, it exudes an otherworldly essence that is not specific to any single culture. Ali's ethereal voice can be heard on albums by the world-music group Vas and the acoustic-electronic trio Niyaz. Her fourth solo album, *Lamentation of Swans: A Journey Towards Silence* was released earlier this year.



I'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT SPIRITUALITY SHOULD BE LIKE YOUR SEXUALITY: IT SHOULD BE AS PRIVATE AS WHAT YOU DO IN YOUR BEDROOM.

Tell me about your creative process.

When you create, whether you're a painter, a writer, or a musician, it's kind of the same thing: You start on a blank canvas, and you end up in that same place where you feel like you have arrived at the very thing you're trying to express. You're coming at it from different directions—adding the percussion, adding the voice, adding the instruments. There's this moment of complete chaos, where you have no idea how it's all going to work together, and then somehow it finds its way, takes on its own life, and suddenly something is revealed. I would say that's the closest thing to a feeling of perfection.

What are your spiritual beliefs and practices?

I've always believed that spirituality should be like your sexuality: it should be as private as what you do in your bedroom. At the end of the day, it's

a personal journey. The reason why mysticism is so important for me is because it's universal. It's really about the human journey, the soul's journey. I think the moment you say you believe in one thing, you immediately create a barrier around yourself, and it immediately begins to separate you from others. My entire life's work, to this moment, has been and will always be about, "What is it that I can create that is going to be able to transcend those barriers?"

Your son Iman's name translates to "faith." Can you explain the significance of faith in your life?

It's an ongoing struggle for me, spiritually. There are days I have faith; there are days I don't. But I feel without it, we would be so lost. Sometimes I joke and say, "I think we named our son Iman because I have to say his name a thousand times a day, so that I can be reminded of that!" —DO