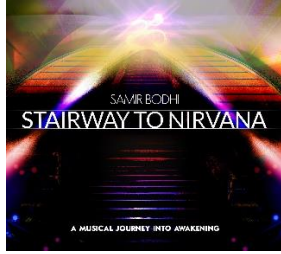


Samir Bodhi

## Stairway to Nirvana



This my first encounter with composer **Samir (Chatterjee) Bodhi's** music. His debut release **Stairway to Nirvana**, which chronicles the search for enlightenment, is five long tracks of genre crossing music. The album has a lot going for it. The music is an intricate balancing act between Eastern and Western motifs using ethnic instruments and it features a plethora of worldwide accompanying musicians. The composer, Samir Bodhi, late of India, is a world famous guitar and keyboard player and his hats are many. Creator, producer, musician, scientist, and scholar. **Stairway to Nirvana** is Bodhi's concept that he hopes will bring some peace to a troubled world. I think he's on the right track.

**Tranquility** opens the album with a smooth, flowing song of keyboard, flute, guitar, and gentle percussion. The cadence and the melody combine to whisk you away from the troubles of your world and into a place of peace. All of the tracks on this album are intricate and transporting.

Using the universal utterance of **OM**, Samir's second cut embodies the Pranava or Sacred Syllable and honors the music with voice and flute and a tanpura drone, an instrument like a guitar from India. The music is like a heartbeat, slow, steady and strong. The vocal is by Pandit Suvodeep Mukherjee and his voice is mesmerizing and heartfelt. I felt the tune itself had a little bit of Alan Parsons in there and I liked it for that.

I would not have expected jazz on an album of eastern influences and prayers, but here it is. The tune **Harmony** rides on a groove of bass, fluid guitar, piano, and hand claps for percussion. It works very well and you get lost in the track. Like a surfer on top of a wave, it pulls and pushes you at the same time to honor the sea. The music carries you along and give you the impetus for your daydreams.

**Peace** is a gentle ballad with a great vocal by **Madhumita Chatterjee** and it is one of my favorite cuts. Madhumita's impassioned voice is an entreaty for the world to embrace peace and the plea could not come at a better time. It is almost like a prayer. The guitar on this one carries the message like electricity is conducted through a wire, powerful and resilient. Excellent fret work.

The destination to the Light is finally realized with the final cut, **Nirvana**. After all, it is about a journey. Sarangi (an Indian short necked fiddle) and guitar blend harmoniously in this blissful ending. Popping percussion and tabla set the pace of this musical passage through a life time. Even though it was the longest track on the album at over seven minutes, for me it could have gone on longer. I could not help be be caught in this hypnotic, emotionally driven song.

Some of Bodhi's music reminds me of the production numbers made famous by Ricky Kej, but Bodhi's work has its own unique signature. **Stairway to Nirvana** is what I might call progressive

rock meets Indian style World music, and Bodhi, through his deftly produced and ethnically rich compositions, has discovered the right combinations to achieve his goal; that of an album of peace and innate tranquility. Bodhi may achieve in the music world what he has achieved in the academic world. - R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews

