

## ONCE AGAIN THE NIGHT

... provided us with the access to the heart.

A new collection of tracks are slowly evolving ...

It was inevitable that during significant periods of one's search, the stillness of night provided openings into another world. Precious moments brought about through solitude or meetings with remarkable night people, those who'd hang on to the female 12 hours of the quotidian cycle. Worshippers of The Black Goddess, prostitutes, thieves, and musicians, night workers – if She allows it.

If you were born around midnight, during the Hour of the Rat, the night theme is a life-long one.

Klaus Wiese was one of those night owls who would ring the doorbell at ten in the evening and get us talking till dawn. The utter hilarity of life the topic: human endeavour. The rare poetic moments that sufis and God-mad mystics bequeathed us. Them who dwelled in the nocturnal darkness – and were healed by it. The Mehdi Hassan ghazal and Vilayat's precious tendrils prevailed during those nights. Cups of strong Assam. No book knowledge, please – authentic experience only.

“Who is this person – not what music does he make?”

When, after most topics had been covered yet again, I would open a window, the lone blackbird sang Ghulam Ali's song, Klaus said, “We should have recorded him.” We both of us intuitively knew that in order to venture beyond the visible, one must use the night time for study and contemplation.

Ten years previously, winter into spring of 1970, Cat Stevens – or just Steve, as he was called by us – yet another night rat; this one born in the Year of the Rat, would have his recording sessions at night, too. Invited along to contribute a bit of background choir, bit of

tambourine shaking, at Olympic Studios in Barnes, one enjoyed the pop star's company. And at the break of dawn, when loading guitars into the Mercedes, the world was still, "Not a soul in sight", rolling gently towards Central London. Meanwhile in India, Vilayat Khan would be doing music, too, till the early hours; and at sunrise put his sitar on his bed, and find sleep on the floor – a gesture of respect for his music. And ten years before that, Howlin Wolf's "Smokestack Lightnin'" with Hubert Sumlin's epic riff, lit up the gloom of one's teenage years. So you see ...

Despite recording contracts with renowned recording companies, it was soon apparent that I wasn't cut out for pop; why, because the moment of timelessness was always momentary and expressions usually shallow. The songs I'd written now had Abi Ofarim's name on it, for a mere thousand Deutschmarks. But the thousand was good for a winter of music season in Bombay, to study the night ragas, Darbari, Jog, Malkauns, Jhinjhoti. Interesting, how most of the great masters of Indian music were Muslims, who during a nightly Sangit Samelan praised the Great Black Hindu Goddess in song – Bhairavi Raga – till dawn.

Towards the end of the Eighties I sent an early version of TIEFE NACHT DER SEELE to Stephen Hill in San Francisco (Doc Space of Hearts of Space Radio fame). Something, some sort of night vibe, must have triggered his interest. He flew over to work with me, and he had a night theme in his luggage – and his mind. Stephen, consequential in helping me to find my artistic voice, his diligent and affectionate work and intuition made MAHOGANY NIGHTS into a bestselling album.

And now, as the monstrous techno bass drum ubiquitously desecrates the nocturnal stillness and my work of the night, which is one of neglect and the deliberate pause, it comes to me yet again, that light that first appeared on the horizon, oh so long ago. It gets its worth from the darkness of night, and the rusty sitar string.

Make no mistake, the tracks on this album aren't composed; they are given me by the night spirits. Function follows form here, and form follows the mood, at night when you don't do things, but instead things happen to you. They do not come about through planning and implementation, not by action or intellect, but through a fool's dream, stemming from the age of devotion. And no, they aren't in reference to Debussy's, or Mozart's, not Chopin's nocturnes, but to Art Blakey's "Moanin" and Edward Hopper's "Nighthawks". Or as the 16th century Spanish Christian mystic John of the Cross said: "Secretly, in magical darkness, where no one recognized me, where I saw nothing of anything, and which sent nothing to me as the light that burned in my heart."

Most grateful to Owen Gent for letting me use one of his stunning night pictures for the album.

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