

## Deva Premal & Miten

An interview by Joanie Blaxter

In 1990, Miten (mee-ten), born Andy Desmond in London, was leading the music for evening meditation at Osho's ashram in Pune, India when he invited Deva Premal (day-vah pre-mahl) to join them as a singer. Miten had already established (and given up) a successful musical career traveling with such bands as Fleetwood Mac and Ry Cooder. German-born Premal is a classically trained musician whose love of sacred chanting was imbued early on by being sung to sleep with Sanskrit mantras by her spiritually oriented mother. This musical duo has organically woven together their personal and professional lives so intimately that their blended life has become an ongoing expression of their connection to the divine, their concerts being simply one facet of their love of god.

### How would you describe the focus of your music?

**M:** The music is our spiritual connection and practice. It was born 17 years ago when we first met. We were playing music in the ashram and then when we came back to Europe we carried on playing the music and one day we looked up and there were 1000 people in the audience.... Everybody is looking for some spiritual connection some way, whether it's through a guru or the love of our children or our parents or our loved ones. Love is always the bottom line so that's really what unites us all and brings us together... Recently we've been receiving many, many messages from those of the Christian faith who tell us, I'm listening to your mantras and I'm feeling my connection to Jesus and god, through this music. That's our reason to play, to bring people together.

### Could you describe a little what happens in your workshops?

**M:** They're extensions of the concerts really, just more intimate. Our concerts are full of people singing together the name of god in various forms. When we come together in workshops we have more time to focus on harmonies, so we become like a 100-piece choir where we can really, really make music together and focus more on the beauty of the chants and songs.

**DP:** Yes, and we also use movement and dances for the sacred songs so we combine the body, the singing and the silence in one.

**M:** Yes, it's not dancing in the western idea, but Sufi dancing which is a bit like circle dancing. Sufi dances are amazing because they're meditations in themselves (where) you just get very high doing these circle dances and meeting in the eyes and seeing god in everybody at the same time.

### And the Tantra Mantra Retreat in Dec in Mexico?

**DP:** We do the Tantra Mantra groups only once or twice a year and they are seven days just for couples. They're essentially our way to celebrate the love between two people. We found that it's a really beautiful way for couples to connect, singing together, singing to each other. Our co-leader offers tantric ex-



ercises and meditation. We put all that together into a beautiful flow, being together, being in a couple, being alone, focusing on lovemaking.

**I'm very appreciative that you ask your audience members not to clap because I've always found the sound to be so disruptive.**

**M:** It's an invitation to enjoy the silence that follows because that's the magic. When the music dissolves into silence and the whole place is in that space together, it's a magical moment. That's the nourishment. That's where we really become one with the singing and with that silence. And as you say, the clapping is a knee-jerk reaction. But what happens when we don't put that sound in? Then the magic starts to percolate.

### What was the transition like for you Miten to move from a hard-core rock 'n' roller to this very different space you're in now as a musician?

**M:** Oh, it was easy. Rock 'n' roll is not so very far away. For me rock 'n' roll is an acknowledgement that there is something, we just really don't know where it is. And we're ready to party and we're ready to rock 'n' roll to celebrate it. But since we don't exactly know what it is, we settle for something a little lower in the way of singing "I love you baby!" Or "You don't love me..." You know, that level of love. But we know that there's more. It was just realizing that behind me was the real thing and in front of me was the reflection of the real thing. And rock 'n' roll was singing to the reflection. And when I turned around, I just thought, oh, that's spiritual connection to something much bigger than anything I can put words to.

Deva Premal and Miten with Manose will be giving a concert of mantra singing at 7:30pm on Oct 28 at Seaside Church in Encinitas. Tickets are available at Soulscape Bookstore in Encinitas, 760-753-2345. They are in Los Angeles at Loyola Marymount University on Oct. 6 and at Burton Chase Park Community Room n Oct. 7. On Oct. 11 they appear at the Green Valley Resort in Las Vegas and in Flagstaff on Oct. 17. They have concerts in Phoenix on Oct. 19 and 21. After an appearance in Santa Fe NM Oct. 25, they come to Encinitas. Their Tantra-Mantra workshop is in Mexico Dec. 1-8. For details see events at [www.devapremalusa.com](http://www.devapremalusa.com)