

NEWS RELEASE

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Creative Music Works and KGNU present

Acclaimed saxophonist Rudresh Mahanthappa returns to Colorado

*Award winning saxophonist and composer **Rudresh Mahanthappa** returns to Colorado to lead his newest band **Samdhi** with drummer **Damion Reid**, guitarist **David Gilmore**, and bassist **Rich Brown**.*

Denver - 2011 Downbeat poll winner, 2007 Guggenheim Fellow and former Boulder resident Rudresh Mahanthappa embarks on a new project with a new band and recording based on research from his Guggenheim fellowship.

Rudresh Mahanthappa and Samdhi will perform on Friday, September 30 at 8 p.m. at the Oriental Theater, 4335 West 44th Avenue, Denver. Tickets are \$20.00 for Creative Music Works members and students with valid ID and \$25.00 for general admission.

Highlights of the following news release, supplied by the artist.

- *Samdhi, meaning "twilight" in Sanskrit, blends Jazz, electronic, and Indian music.*
- *The ensemble formed in 2008, following a year-long research period that allowed Mahanthappa to study both musical electronics, as well as Indian Carnatic music.*
- *The Denver show kicks off a CD release tour for this newly-formed band.*
- *Samdhi pays homage to Rudresh's Indian roots, as well as his earliest musical heroes.*

For a few fleeting moments in every 24-hour cycle, as day cedes way to night, a curtain seems to lift on the banal everyday to give those lucky enough to pause and notice it a brief glimpse of the otherworldly. Filmmakers refer to it as "magic hour," those frustratingly fleeting seconds when their cameras can capture that uncanny golden glow.

The Sanskrit word for twilight is "Samdhi," which now serves as the aptly-chosen title for saxophonist/composer Rudresh Mahanthappa's latest ensemble, a fluid melding of jazz, electronic and Indian music. Like twilight's delicate balance of day and night, the album harmonizes brilliant illumination and mysterious shadows.

"Samdhi" also refers to a period between two ages, as one dawns and another passes. Without presuming to know the future, it may not be too much of a stretch to say that Samdhi marks a similar transition in Mahanthappa's creative life. While it draws on elements and experiments from Mahanthappa's earlier work, it also marks his initial forays into rich new avenues to explore – particularly in the use of electronics. The ensemble began life in 2008 as the result of a Guggenheim fellowship, which allowed Mahanthappa to dedicate an entire year to a single project.

"This helped me realize a plan of following a few specific ideas," he says. "I was interested in how I could transfer the Indian music to my saxophone, particularly this special ornamentation which forms the main feature of the melodies of Indian music. Technically this took me to new territories but, at the same time, I also wanted to understand the music functionally and rhythmically."

This is not the first time the Indian-American saxophonist has explored the intersection of the music that most influenced him – jazz - with the music of his cultural heritage. Those experiments have taken many fruitful forms throughout his career, most notably on his critically-lauded 2008 CD *Kinsmen* with his Dakshina ensemble, featuring Carnatic saxophonist Kadri Gopalnath, voted one of the year’s best albums by more than twenty newspapers, magazines and broadcasters (including *The New York Times* and the BBC).

Samdhi is an even deeper exploration of some of the areas first mined for *Kinsmen*, and also grew partly out of a trip Mahathappa took to an immersive Carnatic music festival in Chennai, India.

“I went for two and a half weeks and totally geeked out,” Mahanthappa recalls. “I went into it with a crash course mentality, trying to see as much as I could and then work on it for the years to come. The idea was to integrate all of that into a new piece that wasn’t so blatantly ‘Indian.’ I decided to put it in a whole new context – an electronic context.”

The line-up with which Mahanthappa approached this idea is accordingly versatile and expansive: New Yorker David Gilmore is one of the few guitarists who possesses the technical skills and stylistic scope to master such an endeavor. Damion Reid is one of the best in the league of young American drummers who combine immense power and speed with a lush tonal palette. Toronto bassist Rich Brown – who Mahanthappa considers “one of the best in the world” – no stranger to such multi-cultural hybrids as a member of a Canadian Indo-jazz band.

The least familiar member to jazz audiences is "Anand" Anantha Krishnan on the South Indian mridangam drum. “He is the grandson of Palgat Raghu, one of the greatest South Indian percussionists of all time, and he exhibited this inherited talent very early on. He really grew up in two places – India and the USA – and has worked with all kinds of music. His access to Western as well as Eastern music is the bridge which we are crossing with *Samdhi*,” enthuses Mahanthappa.

While much of Mahanthappa’s catalogue could be considered “fusion” in the dictionary definition of the word, *Samdhi*’s electro-acoustic blend and ventures into funky grooves and psychedelic intensity occasionally evoke the best of the genre that bears that name. “I’m a child of the eighties,” Mahanthappa explains. “The first songs I heard and which inspired me to make music were not by Charlie Parker or John Coltrane, but Grover Washington, Jr., the Brecker Brothers, the Yellowjackets and David Sanborn.”

A respect for these musical roots is evident on *Samdhi*. Mahanthappa is always wary of falling into the trap of being artificially exotic or creating clichéd ethnic jazz in which “East-West groups play in the same room without really playing together,” as he puts it. “I think *Samdhi* has exactly the integrity I wanted it to have and perhaps is also more accessible than a lot of my other music.”

MORE RESOURCES

Rudresh Mahanthappa's website: <http://rudreshm.com/>

Oriental Theater: <http://www.theorientaltheater.com/>

Creative Music Works connects artists to audiences, while working to inspire, educate, and challenge listeners and to cultivate the role of jazz, improvisation, and experimental music in today's culture. Creative Music Works is a Colorado-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. For more information, please visit www.CreativeMusicWorks.org.

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