

"Telesma's sound and look is not of this plane of existence."

— *Washingtonian Magazine*

TELESMA



taste the color of sound

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TELESMA



PSYCHEDELIC TRIBAL MODERN WORLD DANCE MUSIC

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bio

“I feel a great affinity with the band Telesma in a similar kind of interest in the shamanic self-discovery and a sense of an underlying universal wisdom. That’s a rare combination in a rock and techno band.”

— Alex Grey,
Visionary artist

In July 2011, Telesma, competing with over 2,400 entrants, won the **Grand Prize** offered by Reverbnation for a set at **Camp Bisco X**, the 10th annual music festival in NY with more than 28,000 attendees.

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The Telesma experience is an ecstatic trans-cultural phenomenon with a highly infectious and danceable beat. Exploding on the Baltimore music scene in 2002, it soon developed a loyal local fan base and then shook the underground festival scene from coast to coast.

Telesma’s live show blurs the line between performer and audience, attracting the most creative VJs, dancers, visual artists and body artists to its shows. Every Telesma show is a vortex of creativity; a celebration of body, mind and spirit.

The didgeridoo and manDrum too. Telesma’s vast arsenal of musical finery includes instruments as divergent as the didgeridoo, kubing (bamboo mouth harp from the Philippines), to electronic and tribal drums and the manDrum, one of the inventions of Telesma’s guitarist, as well as bass, keyboards, drum kit and the human voice.

Hard to describe. Dancing is mandatory. Telesma’s sound has been sometimes described as “psychedelic tribal modern world dance music, “ with diverse sounds ranging from intense polyrhythmic rock to the trance-like pulses of modern electronic dance/groove music.

“Dead Can Dance... with Teeth” – Telesma has been compared to Dead Can Dance, Pink Floyd, Tabla Beat Science, Amon Tobin, King Crimson, Ravi Shankar, Krishna Das, Afro-Celt Soundssystem, Bob Marley, Sun Ra Arkestra, Thievery Corporation, Tool, Mickey Hart’s Planet Drum, and Peter Gabriel, to name a few.

Telesma Offerings. Telesma introduced the first **“Visionary Gathering”** to Baltimore with the internationally recognized artist **Alex Grey** in 2008. Captured live in 5.1 Surround Sound, the band released the DVD of the event as well as the live CD, *Hearing Visions: Live* to great acclaim. More collaborative projects with Alex Grey at his Chapel of Sacred Mirrors (CoSM) ensued, as well as performances with visionary artist **Adam Scott Miller**. Their studio album, O(h)M, also received critical acclaim upon its release in 2007 on the independent label sTRANGELY cOMPELLING mUSIC. Over the years, the group has also co-produced several celestial events coinciding with the solstice and equinox celebrations. **Telesma has performed with artists such as Shpongole, Beats Antique, EOTO, Tipper, ArcheDream For Human-Kind, Delhi2Dublin, Woodland, Bernie Worrell, See-I (featuring members of Thievery Corporation), Faun, Elliot Lip, Jim Donovan (Rusted Root), The Gypsy Nomads, HuDost and many other artists from around the world.**

ACTION IN INACTION IN 2012! Telesma released its highly anticipated new album, *“Action/in/Inaction”* in May 2012, with art by the visionary artist Adam Scott Miller, who will also be producing the art for the live show.

Coast to coast. Not to be missed, Telesma has been in demand from coast to coast at such venues/festivals as Camp Bisco, Levitt Pavilion SteelStacks, Artscape, Rootwire, Starwood, FaerieWorlds, PEX Summerfest, Spoutwood Fairie Festival, EvolveFest, FaeireCon, Raw Spirit Gathering, Culturefest, Karmafest, Maryland Faerie Festival, Alex Grey’s Chapel of Sacred Mirrors (CoSM), Free Spirit Gathering, Primal Arts Festival, the Baltimore PowWow, Phanphest, SoWeBo Festival, Nelsons Ledges Quarry Park, 98Rock’s Summer Concert Series, and many great venues including Sonar, 8×10 Club, Rock & Roll Hotel, Quixotes True Blue (CO), Ukiah Brewery (CA), Recher Theatre, Metro Gallery, The Senator Theatre, Center Stage, The Creative Alliance at the Patterson, Public Assembly (NY), and The Whiskey to name a few.

We are Telesma: Ian Hesford (didgeridoo, kubing, dumbek, percussion) and Jason Sage (keyboards, vocals, percussion, programmer), Joanne Juskus (vocals, percussion, karatalas), Chris Mandra (guitar, analog guitar synth, the manDrum, and vocals), Bryan Jones “Jonesy” (6 string MIDI & upright basses, theremin, percussion), and Rob Houck (drum kit, percussion, electronic drums) to complete the lineup.



recordings

“To experience Telesma live is to become part of the show. More than just music, it’s a swirling, whirling, twirling event... it’s extremely hard not to become involved in the swaying, hypnotic rhythms that pour forth from the stage.”

— Michael Macey of the *Chesapeake Music Guide*.



Action in Inaction

Telesma’s third album released in 2012 with art by visionary artist Adam Scott Miller



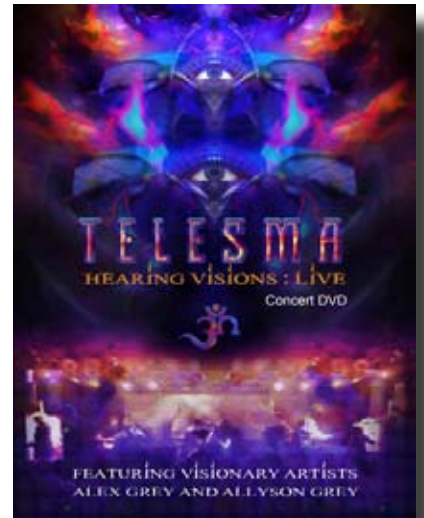
O(h)M

Telesma’s first album, released in 2007 with fan favorites, such as “Egyptian Sun”, “Amor Fati”, “Immanence” and more



Hearing Visions: Live Concert CD

Telesma’s live CD of their first collaborative effort with artist Alex Grey.



Telesma’s Concert DVD: Hearing Visions: Live

Recorded in 5.1 Surround Sound at Sonar in Baltimore, this DVD captures Telesma’s first live collaboration with acclaimed visionary artist Alex Grey — the first in a series of “Visionary Gatherings”. Included on the DVD is an interview with Telesma and Alex and Allyson Grey recorded at the Chapel of Sacred Mirrors (CoSM) in New York.

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links

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Telesma’s website:

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Telesma’s YouTube videos:

Telesma’s promotional video

Video by Scott Tipton

<http://youtu.be/km0qKEKZnwQ>

“Amor Fati”

From Telesma’s *Hearing Visions: Live* DVD

<http://youtu.be/OFVtFhIF-K8>

“Penumbra”

With the Indra Lazul Bellydancers

<http://youtu.be/7AjRFFvx7wc>

“Egyptian Sun”

From the Winter Solstice Concert with artist Alex Grey

<http://youtu.be/CU3rYig7rwU>

Trailer for Adam Scott Miller’s upcoming film

Music by Telesma / almost 30,000 hits

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ggSLUdF3o0U

Telesma’s CDBaby and FilmBaby pages:

www.cdbaby.com/Artist/Telesma

<http://www.filmbaby.com/films/4943>



IUV

“Some people might say Telesma plays ‘world music,’ and they’re technically from ‘Baltimore,’ but **their sound and look is not of this plane of existence.**

They use instruments such as the didgeridoo and the kubing combined with your standard guitar and keys to “bridge the gap between primal and futuristic.” Also one of their members looks like the lizard man, so there’s that. It’s pretty trippy.”

— *Washingtonian Magazine*

“If music is a drug then the DEA should label the band Telesma as a Schedule 1 Controlled Substance... **a musically-induced psychedelic experience.**”

— **Andy Bienstock, Program Director, WYPR Radio, Baltimore**

“**Very cool.**”

— **Michael Jaworek, The Birchmere**

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“**I feel a great affinity with the band Telesma,** a similar interest in shamanic self-discovery and an underlying sense of universal wisdom – a rare combination in a rock and techno band.”

— **Alex Grey, CoSM, Visionary Artist**

“Telesma’s new album [*Action in Inaction*] is **a consciousness-altering experience** in its own right.”

— **Aaron Henkin, The Signal WYPR Radio, Baltimore**

“I have heard a lot of music that calls itself ‘world’ or ‘world-fusion’ or ‘east meets west’ and some of it is good, some of it is lame. Telesma may get dropped into that world-fusion category, but they have that extra something that most of the others are missing. They don’t just drop a sitar on top of a synthesizer. **They create something completely unique out of the merging of different musical elements that they have a strong connection to.**

There is quirky creativity that still manages to kick some serious ass.

There is deep soul and spirit. There is a strong understanding of the power of rhythms of different cultures. It is the remarkable organic merging of all those things that make the experience of hearing Telesma so amazing.”

— **Ben Sherman, recording artist**

“**Aggressive and danceable are rarely interchangeable musical descriptions, but Telesma pulls this off with ease.**

Female fronted with tribal drumming and Tool style licks. This will be a truly unique and awesome Rootwire experience.”

— **Papadosio**

“Telesma is a fiercely independent ensemble of exceptional musicians who challenge the conventions of modern performance by creating an auditory and visual experience that is both mesmerizing and immersive.”

— **Justin Allen, What Weekly**

“The music itself is ephemeral, changing and growing like a living thing, feeding into and being fed by the audiences Telesma plays to. **The effect is a fullness of sound, both tribal and worldly, trance-like and beautiful.** There is a playfulness to their sound as well that questions the rules and roles of instrumentation.”

— **Marian George, Faerie Magazine**

“*Hearing Visions: Live* is a tour de force, showcasing perfectly the magic that their performance is all about. The flow...is an effortless and organic progression from one breathtaking work of art to another. Their live improvisation speaks wonders about both the eloquence and expertise of each individual artist, as well as the complementary way that they work together to form the whole of Telesma. **Words such as “captivating,” “très magnifique,” and “absolutely rockin’” so readily come to mind.**”

— **Jess Snow, SEN Magazine**

“Such a great variety of color and sound patterns in this film!...masterful editing on this (far from ordinary) concert film! It is kalidoscopic and a work of art in itself! But the best part is, it was not overdone! I was infused with hometown pride as I watched the combined creativity of Telesma’s music and performance artists alongside the genius of Alex and Allyson Grey, **It’s an experience that elevates awareness, going beyond the personal self and toward the building of One People, One Planet.** It is sound, plus color, feeding the soul and the body in the rhythmic balance of life.”

— **Dr. Bob Hieronimus, 21st Century Radio**

“A serious, talented young band that can **create fresh, innovative music merging of stone age and cyber age technology with timeless spectacle** – you just don’t see so many of those!”

— **Megan Hamilton, Program Director, Creative Alliance at the Patterson**

what weekly

REVIEW

If an advanced civilization somewhere out in the cosmos is responsible for colonizing life on Earth and the Mayans were right about December 21st, 2012, I wouldn't be surprised to hear Telesma's new album, *Action in Inaction* booming from within the mothership when they descend to reclaim our planet on the winter solstice this year.

The breadth of influences on this album, the textures—the confounding, contrasting, and effortlessly blended elements—the pioneering spirit throughout, herald a watershed moment for Telesma. They have officially transcended. *Action* is unlike any recordings that preceded it. It is their masterpiece.

First, it is impossible to talk about this album without first talking about Telesma. While a lot of other bands think that they do their own thing, Telesma really does. If there is one discernible influence here, it might be Tool on track four, “Beautiful Desire” when drummer Rob Houck makes a case for being as good as Danny Carey. However, most influences on this album go broader than bands or genres. *Action in Inaction* is an exploration of entire cultures. A striking example is Ian Hesford's voice on “White Lotus” as he throat sings the heart of the Lotus Sutra. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

While tracks like “Here and Now” and the title track “Action in Inaction” are built upon what could be considered modern rock frameworks, the scales, changes and elements used are anything but predictable. Other cuts like “Shavananda” and “Groovinda” fuse elements of eastern and tribal music with western components to form something completely unique. Throughout the album, the tribal instrumentation and throat singing of Ian Hesford, and the electronic elements conjured by Jason Sage, create an otherworldly landscape punctuated by big, resounding, layered harmonies from the entire band.

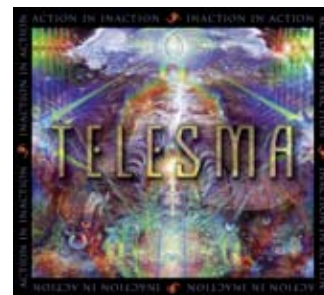
Overall, the execution and production are flawless.

Each member of the band gives a standout performance. These guys are some of the best musicians in the region, and they all bring a wealth of experience to the table.

Joanne Juskus is a noted singer-songwriter in her own right, with a voice not unlike an angel's. I've said, on more than one occasion, that Bryan Jones is the best bass player living in Maryland. Chris Mandra is a mad scientist devising all manner of digitally manipulated percussion and vocals. As a guitar player, he remains remarkably inventive and distinct, but not overpowering (a struggle for some guitar players). Jason Sage masterfully infuses the music with atmosphere through a variety of creative textures and elements, and also contributes significantly to the percussion.

Ian Hesford, besides having the uncanny ability to rise from the dead, is the most unique musician I know. His insatiable curiosity for tribal music has driven him to amass an unmatched musical skill set. More than that, the release of this album marked Ian Hesford's literal resurrection. Last month, Ian's heart stopped on stage at Ram's Head Live. Later that night he was brought back to life. And if that doesn't pique your curiosity, I don't know what will.

— Justin Allen



“The pioneering spirit throughout [the new album], heralds a watershed moment for Telesma. They have officially transcended. *Action* is unlike any recordings that preceded it. It is their masterpiece.”

—Justin Allen, *What Weekly*,
Baltimore

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What do Didgeridoo, Dumbeks, Kubings and Karatalas have in common?

July 28th, 2011 posted by Debbie Snyder

(Reprinted from Lehigh Valley Insight)

Telesma at SteelStacks

Well the bands name is Telesma, and what an amazing band it is! You must check out the free concerts series in Lehigh Valley from May through September at The Levitt Pavilion SteelStacks as soon as possible. This is an outdoor venue, but because of the heat wave we were experiencing last week the performance was moved inside to Musikfest Café.



We did some checking online to find out about the band, and at first we were a little hesitant. Their music was described as “psychedelic tribal rock”. We love music, so we figured why not see what this band has to offer. From the moment Telesma took the stage, we were captivated. The lead singer’s hauntingly beautiful voice, the unusual instruments, and, oh I forgot, the belly dancers all made for a riveting show. The music was psychedelic and tribal for sure with a rock edge ... rhythmic, Pink Floyd’esque, with an Aboriginal flair. The music was compelling, to say the least.

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To answer the question from above ...

A Didgeridoo is a wind instrument developed by Indigenous Australians of northern Australia at least 1,500 years ago.

A Dumbek a goblet drum

A Kubing is a Philippine jaw harp

Karatalas are percussion instruments played by striking two discs attached by a tether together, often used within the traditions of Hinduism.

Oh I forgot to mention the belly dancers had a few tricks up their sleeves, including dancing with swords on their heads! So check out the Steelstacks website and make plans to enjoy some amazing entertainment!



Ben's Guitar Wisdom Review of Telesma's *Action in Inaction*

By Ben Sherman, www.bensguitarwisdom.blogspot.com

When trying to describe Telesma, you quickly find yourself coming up with so many different qualities that one can scarcely imagine all of them applying to the same group. Yet after hearing them you have to concede that yes, they are indeed a tribal-techno-psychedelic-trans-cultural rock band. And their new album *Action In Inaction* perfectly captures the magic of a band whose music is spiritually uplifting, emotionally moving, intellectually stimulating, infectious rhythmic and hard rocking - all at once.

Telesma has been pursuing and developing this multi-layered, multi-dimensional approach together since 2002, with core members Ian Hesford and Jason Sage eventually joined by Chris Mandra, Joanne Juskus, Bryan Jones and a stable of amazing drummers. When I first saw them in 2009 they had already done a lot of shows, produced a CD (O[h]m) and a live DVD (Hearing Visions) and had collaborated with legendary visionary artist Alex Grey. Their performance was full of fiery intensity and self-assurance as they effortlessly crafted their magical musical fusion. I wrote about it in a blog post back then; you can [click here](#) to read it; for Crystal's first impressions, [click here](#).

I have seen them several times since then, and my appreciation for what they do has only grown deeper. When I heard the new CD I was delighted to find that everything I have come to know and love about this band and their music is clearly in evidence. The production is outstanding, and the performances are brilliant. But they have gone further, creating a superb album of music that makes a profound musical statement.

The album begins with a Hindu mantra, beautifully sung by Joanne. With the sounds of breathing, ringing bowls and natural elements like wind, fire and water in the background, the effect is to calm and clear the mind, and to consecrate the "space" of the album - a declaration of sacred intention. It affirms from the outset a strong spiritual basis for their work. Their lyrics show an affinity for the wisdom of Eastern religious traditions such as Hinduism and Buddhism, but the band itself is not propagating a religious point of view, nor do they all even share one. They call on Eastern traditions because they most closely align with what Telesma is trying to convey - the struggle, interplay and balance between

the material world and the spiritual. Their music expresses a quest for transcendence, and at the same time an embrace of all that it means to be human.

This interplay is perfectly exemplified when, as Joanne is still intoning the last syllable of the chant, Jonesy tears into the high-energy funky bass line that opens track 2, "Shivananda." The band kicks in a moment later and we are treated to the full Telesma experience in one gulp - driving rhythms that demand your physical involvement, huge choruses of wordless vocals sung in beautiful harmonies that stir your emotions, and guitar playing by Chris that veers effortlessly from peppy modal melodies to blazing guitar solos that soar and wail. Eventually Joanne returns with the words of the chant, but now the melody is re-cast to fit the groove. This is Telesma, reaching for the spiritual while reveling in the physical, and inviting their audience to join with them in the experience. As they pursue this in song after song, you realize that something truly new is being created; a genuine paradigm shift is taking place.

The songs on the album always have layers of sounds, layers of musical themes, and layers of meaning, all coming together to make a powerful statement. A perfect example of this is "Ascension," in which every aspect of the composition, arrangement and performance completely supports the feeling of yearning to ascend beyond the transitory nature of earthly experience. But the band is not afraid to explore the shadow side of the human soul, as in songs like "Chain," in which the lyrics call us to confront the darker aspects of our selves. Chris uses a fretless guitar here to perfectly convey the sense of peering into the darkness.

Telesma has a distinct musical objective. As expressed by Ian in an interview, the idea is "bringing the primordial and futuristic together, and coming full circle with the sounds of our collective human tribal past." We hear that very clearly on "Groovinda," in which the instrumentation ranges from Ian using a humble mouth harp called a kubing, to Chris playing something called a mandrum, an electronic musical interface that...well, you just have to see it. [Click here](#) for a demo and watch the genius at work.

Chris plays guitar with a huge amount of energy, passion and a powerful sense of melody, and he is not afraid to create some chaos while employing modern technology in the most creative ways. Expect to see him supplementing his sound with guitar synth, fretless guitar, E-bow and a variety of effects pedals. On the other hand you may see him simply singing directly into his guitar's pickups and running that through a looping pedal. Either way it is Chris who sets the tone and drives the songs through their many moods, and carries them to incredible heights of intensity.

On the other hand, Ian is dedicated to exploring ancient traditions from many cultures, and letting them fuse with modern methods of music-making. During a typical show you will see him throat singing, playing didgeridoo, kuling, and percussion such as the African djun-djun and the middle-eastern dumbek. [Click here](#) to watch an amazing performance of Ian playing two didgeridoos and a dumbek all at once, on a street corner in Baltimore. To watch a time-lapse video of Ian getting his body painted, [click here](#). This is a ritual for Ian at every show, and further evokes his desire to connect with "the primal part of the human spirit."

Throughout the album, every musician's presence is felt, but all contribute to the whole, whether it's the vulnerability and transcendent beauty that co-exist in Joanne's singing, Jonesy's virtuoso bass skills, Brandon Wildman and Rob Houck's hugely powerful drumming, or the multi-talented Jason, who may be seen playing percussion, singing, and creating eerie sound-scapes with synthesizer or theremin. Every member is a top notch musician, but all have directed their musical talents to fulfilling the band's mission.

This is even more evident live, where you can witness this vastly diverse bunch of characters coming together and creating something utterly unique, infectious, powerful, meaningful and yes, fun! The impact of their live show cannot be emphasized enough. To fully "get" Telesma, you have to experience the powerful energy that is shared between the band and the audience when the band performs. When you make that connection, you are not just rocking out and dancing, but flying with the band through a landscape of imagination and spirit.



CHESAPEAKE MUSIC GUIDE MAGAZINE

DEC. 2006 INTERVIEW

Telesma: Aural Stimulation at Its Finest

By Michael Macey

When I first witnessed Telesma approximately two years ago, I was so taken with the presentation that I wrote, "To experience Telesma live is to become part of the show. More than just music, it's a swirling, whirling, twirling event... it's extremely hard not to become involved in the swinging, hypnotic rhythms that pour forth from the stage." What I witnessed that night was a conglomeration of sound and vision, structured and unstructured, that seemed to draw people into its rhythmic spell. On December 15 you'll have a chance to experience Telesma yourself, when they bring their show to The Whiskey 1803 (upstairs at B. F. Biggins) for a musical experience that promises to be the event of the holiday season.

I recently hung out with four of the six members of the band to talk about the December 15 gig and the release of their new CD, due out in early 2007. Joining me are the original duo and founding members Ian Hesford (didgeridoo, kuding, dumbek, percussion) and Jason Sage (keyboards, percussion, programmer, lyrics), who formed the band in 2002, using electronic samples as their base. Also in on the chat are Chris Mandra (guitar, analog guitar synth, manDrum, and vocals), and Brian Jones, a.k.a. "Jonesy" (six string MIDI and upright basses, theremin, percussion). Also in the band are Joanne Juskus (vocals,

percussion, and karatalas) and Dan Marcellus (drums, percussion).

Jonesy states "everybody labels music, but we're really a true fusion band. We don't sound like any certain thing, so it's very hard to put any label on it." Mandra chimes in and pretty much sums it up when he says "we are the aggregate of our interests and experiences. We are a psychedelic, electro-acoustic, world dance music band", which makes sense when you look at what everybody brings to the table. The 40,000-year-old didgeridoo, bamboo mouth harp, the electronics, the percussion, and the voices all combine to create an eclectic soundscape that's as varied as the personalities in the band. Throw in the influences of funk, techno, jazz, trance, as Middle Eastern, African and hard rock, and you have a melting pot of sound that is nothing short of mesmerizing.

Telesma strives to make their live shows as electrifying as possible. They employ belly dancers and visual projections, which helps draw the audience into the experience. The band is always looking for new ways to present their sounds and sights; Mandra tells me "we would like to get better at making the shows a continuous experience, like a themed experience. One of the shows we did was called "continuum", because we were trying to make it like this continuous wash of music, so there was never an actual break. We're looking for exciting ways to make it more than just playing in a bar".

That philosophy carries over to their recorded music as well. The as-yet-untitled new album is due in early spring, and promises to be as engaging as their live shows. They are mixing the album in 5.1 surround with what promises to be an aggressive mix. "I think when it's done you'll have the experience of being in the middle of the band" is how Mandra puts it. I listened to a stereo copy of the record and it has the potential for some imaginative surround effects. Musically, it's a journey that can only be described as diverse. From the ethereal to the avant-garde, Telesma takes the unconventional and melds it with the familiar to create a listening experience that's exciting, original and unpredictable. Jonesy told me "We'll stumble onto things with our (current) instrumentation. All our instruments form to make a palate. It's a spatial situation, where it's more about the sound, sonic textures and pulse." With that attitude intact, Telesma takes Annapolis by musical storm on December 15 in what promises to be one of the best shows of the year. Special guests Victory Party will be opening the show, which starts at 9 p.m. Come out and be part of the Telesma experience and support local music at the same time.

For much more information on the band and to hear samples of their music go to myspace.com/telesma

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World Beat Is Not Enough by Robbie Whelan Baltimore's Telesma digs into the elusive vibes of indigenous music

Reprinted from the *Baltimore City Paper*

Before a Dec. 17 show at Fletcher's, the seven members of Baltimore's Telesma gathered together in the fragrantly smoky dressing room and held hands for a few minutes in a pre-concert ritual. Humming a meditative "Om" with eyes closed, they balanced themselves and internalized a few harmonies. Guitarist Chris Mandra insists that this pre-concert "toning" always makes for better shows, and sometimes even their sound man, Adam Halliday, joins in.

Each member of Telesma has a personality suited to this New Age ethos. Multi-instrumentalist Jason Sage came to Baltimore from New Orleans, where he spent a few years playing drums for Haitian voodoo fertility rituals. Percussionist Moziah Saleem, who has backup jobs for Neil Young, Leon Russell, and Victor Wooten on his résumé, spent a year and a half in Jamaica in the mid-'90s, because he "just wanted to go somewhere where everything was irie." Vocalist Joanne Juskus wears a traditional Indian sari, and the rest of the band is wearing the sorts of facial expressions that come at the end of a really great t'ai chi session. Words like "balance" and "grounded" and "purity" pepper their conversation.

Once onstage, the septet shakes off all the spiritual sedation and rips into a fast jam called "Amor Fati" from its recently self-released live CD-R, *Synesthesia*. Juskus' voice rises to spicy degrees above the rhythm section's harmonies. Band members' faces twist and heads bob as they stir up clattering tribal polyrhythms, rolling bass lines, and furiously built climaxes spiked with spacey synths, samples, and electric guitar. Belly dancers wriggle through the crowd, enticing others to join them.

Telesma's core—Chris Mandra, Ian Hesford, and Jason Sage—first got together more than a year ago at the Def Dumb and Bass Freakout, a monthly gathering of bands that Mandra hosts at the Royal in Federal Hill. Since then, Telesma expanded into a septet, and its sound has grown

more lush and complex. "The whole original idea behind Telesma is this bringing the primordial and futuristic together," Hesford says. "And coming full circle with the sounds of our collective human tribal past."

Hesford says this idea came to him when he was learning how to play didgeridoo in the mid-'90s. The sounds that came from the instrument "reminded me so much of the techno music at the time that I found so exciting," he says. He practiced along with techno records by Sasha and Digweed, Amon Tobin, and Rabbit in the Moon, and he says his instrument's ancient tones fit right in with the futurism of the pulsating trance.

Telesma's goal—the musical fusion of the ancient past with the futuristic present—throws open a whole hatbox of questions. Which ancient past, specifically, is Hesford talking about? And how is it channeled? Moreover, is Telesma just another cheesy hippie band that sprouted from that Outdoors Club drum circle that used to practice on the village green?

At first glance, maybe, but Hesford dispels any such notion with his disarming sincerity. "I believe in the collective unconscious," he says without a trace of disingenuousness. "It's been borne out through genetics that the human species can quite likely be traced back to a single Eve, and there are a lot of striking similarities between indigenous musics. It is also my personal belief that civilization and intelligence in the human species is much older than we think it is."

It is Telesma's belief in and acceptance of this collective-human tribal past that allows the band to so passionately mix Hesford's didgeridoo droning and the twang from his Filipino bamboo mouth harp (called a *kubing*) with furious funk beats from drummer Mike Kirby and Bootsy Collins-style lines from bassist Bryan Jones, all without muddying the colors on their palette. The rhythm section is compounded but not weighed down by rhythms from Saleem's African *dumbek*, from Sage's Pakistani *darbouka*, and occasionally from Hesford's Egyptian *tabla* drums. Over the top all of this, vocalist Juskus keens open-mouthed syllables in Middle Eastern modes, and Sage lays down spacey samples and synth weirdness, intertwined with Mandra's jazzy solos and skipping rhythm chops.

The mess that comes out of Telesma's scatterbrained jamming makes more sense than

it would first appear, in the same way that Peter Gabriel's first forays into world-music fusion made sense. It's based on the idea that indigenous tribal cultures—from Aborigines to Masai tribesmen to Arabian emirs—can be forced into an intelligent dialogue that goes deeper than the fact that such musics can sound good when played together.

Dozens of acts, from David Byrne to Angélique Kidjo to Paul Simon, have treaded the same waters, but what sets Telesma apart is that the dialogue between its members' disparate influences doesn't feel forced. Their approach is based on a feeling, an optimistic hunch, that everyone in the world is somehow connected, and that we can all benefit from that connection. And with Telesma, going with hunches is standard marching orders.

"The motive behind making the music is to keep it pure in the sense that it is written by us and comes from us," Hesford says. "I don't play traditional Aboriginal rhythms in any of our songs, and we haven't co-opted any real traditional Middle Eastern music. We are using the sounds, and perhaps emulating the feel of a certain tradition, but the music comes from our own spirits, so I feel we can really own it."

And Telesma does own it; its music has an irresistible groove. "Telesma is unabashedly a dance band," Mandra says. "The goal of modern civilization is to divorce man from nature, and dance is one of the few civilized means of expression where the animal is acceptable."

As the Fletcher's show progressed, more and more people in the audience loosened up and began to move. Telesma produces a wall of deep, pulsing sound that's hard to tune out and, in fact, sucks you in. As drumbeats ricocheted off one another, Juskus's singing seemed to pause in perfect glassy harmony with the guitar and bass, and the band built a tidal wave of intense equilibrium that recalled its preparation ritual. The harmonies that they chanted in their pre-concert toning were effortlessly manifested onstage, amplified and enriched, mingling with the wild energy of the dancers in the audience.

"[Toning] allows us, in a weird way, to control time and position," Mandra says. "It makes us freer, not as uptight. We perform best when we are expressing ourselves most freely, most purely. No one is trying to be spiritual. They're being spiritual."

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Hearing Visions; A Telesma Experience

A Review of Hearing Visions: Live Concert CD

by Jessica Snow

Reprinted from the *SEN Magazine*

With two years since the release of their first studio album O(h)M, diehard Telesma fans have anticipated new material with what has grown to now-hurricane force. Their triba-delic blend of music is absolutely one of a kind, and though the wait has been arduous, deliver they have. Fading in with the rolling drawl of the didgeridoo and an ever-increasing rumble of applause, *Hearing Visions: Live*, is a tour de force, showcasing perfectly the magic that their performance is all about.

Now a regular to the quad of seasonal Baltimore venues, the setting for *Hearing Visions* is the recently passed December 20th Winter Solstice festival with Alex and Allison Grey at local hotspot Sonar. Released on May 1st, and recorded as played, this album is a perfect medley of something old and something new, offering a fresh flow to some O(h)M favorites, granting listeners some awesome improvisations, and blessing us with some brilliant new material to boot. The flow of the album itself is an effortless and organic progression from one breathtaking work of art to another. Individually, each song plays out with the precision and accuracy of a studio album, but together the experience is intensified, becoming an ever-consuming shockwave of awesomeness. The first true song on the album is *Egyptian Sun*, a shake-your-hips number that sets the tone for absorbing the Telesma essence. With a brief shout out by vocal lady Joanne Juskus, they flow strait into the funkier stylings of *Nyatribe*, where your face is absolutely owned by drumbeats and basslines.

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Continuing with the shamanistic feel, *Shivananda* is the first improv off of the album, and it will take you directly back to your tribal roots. There is still that signature psychedelic flare, as always, but the beginning of the song is all about drumbeats and chanting. Nine minutes of strait jamming is something that is very rarely shared with the audience, and to get a glimpse into the workings of the band purely riding their musical wave is a Master Card moment.

Starting with *Ascension*—a rehearsed piece that sounds semi-Toolish (the band, not the douchey guy) to begin with—the latter half of the album comes in a burst of all new, never-before-seen goodness. They flow strait into *Spectacles*, another improv that has a chilled-out, almost summery vibe—ironic, taking into consideration the winter setting of the recording—and is laced up Telesma style with chanting and haunting synth. The guitar that takes over in the middle of the song is a simple reminder of why exactly we are alive.

Liquid Light is an absolutely phenomenal new piece, and as the second tune on the album that clocks in at just over nine minutes, it is an absolute blessing to this day-and-age of three-minute hits. Slower, with that signature high-pitched electric guitar, this is a song to close your eyes and fall into. Joanne's voice again complements the song just right—giving a spiritual quality to the music without detracting from the melodic grace of the instrumentals. Towards the end of the song, the pace picks up with a little bit of funk thrown into the basslines as is seen throughout the disk.

CyberMonkDub is their last improv, and it actually takes a turn away from the Telesma norm. More electronic than most of their other songs, it is an interesting digression from the tribal soundings, and goes to show just how eclectic this band can be. The fact that it is a live improvisation speaks wonders about both the eloquence and expertise of each individual

artist, as well as the complementary way that they work together to form the whole of Telesma. This rolls into *Tycho*—the last all-new release on the album. Vocals in Sanskrit, this jam keeps us suspended in the heat of all of those millions of reasons that Telesma rocks.

Closing the set with upbeat *Amor Fati* was the perfect choice. It leaves the listener positively electric with the energy that was created throughout the performance. It is a far cry from center to say that one will find this album “decent,” when words such as “captivating,” “très magnifique,” and “absolutely rockin’” so readily come to mind. Though a live disk, you can tell right away that both the performance and recording are right on par with their studio counterpart. There aren't any awkward cuts, and everything flows together with finesse—something that, surprisingly, isn't always easily achieved in a live-recorded set. The only apparent outside noise is the cheering and shouting from the crowd between songs, but the music itself is unmarred and flawless. And, really, can you blame the crowd for their enthusiasm? After listening to this album, it is an absolute necessity that you check these guys out live—and now is the perfect time to do it. They play the upcoming Summer Solstice on this 20th of June, which is a three-day orgy of amazing music, art, and festival shenanigans in Harmony, Maryland. A week later they will be playing at the Eastport A Rockin' Festival in Annapolis along with a decent number of other local acts. On the 4th of July, they are gracing the stage at the 40th Annual Smoke-In, at DC's National Mall, which is an event that is absolutely not to be missed. There are no excuses: catching some summer jams with this band is absolutely mandatory.

To grab *Hearing Visions*, proceed to their nearest venue, or check out cdbaby.com/telesma. To take a glimpse into the Telesma world, go to www.telesmaband.com.



Summoning the Vision and the Sound that is Telesma

Reprinted from *Cultural Asylum Magazine*

What happens when you infuse organic techno with rock/world influenced music and a visual show unlike any other? You get the dynamic and incredible group of musicians known as Telesma. Telesma is undefined yet includes many styles of music and visual art. Their 2007 outing entitled O(h)M has turned a lot of people into fans by not sticking with a simplistic formula. The siren like vocals of the beautiful Joanne Juskus lure you in along with her instruments of choice, percussion and karatalas. Ian Hesford plays the didgeridoo, kubing, dumbek, talking drum, percussion, and does the programming. The others play an array of instruments as well, too many to name here. Telesma has also released a DVD entitled Hearing Visions: Live with such visuals and the spectacular visionary art of Alex Grey and Allyson Grey. It was a concert unlike any other, with astounding visuals that in and of itself lure you into not only the sound but the true vision that is Telesma. We were fortunate enough to land an interview with such an incredible band and this is the story.

1. CAM: Thank you for joining us. We love the DVD *Hearing Visions: Live* and the CD *O(h)M*. How did the inception of Telesma come about and who are the key players involved?

Telesma was formed in 2002 by Ian Hesford and Jason Sage, who met at an open mic in Baltimore. After jamming together they met the next day and found they had similar ideas regarding the sort of music they wanted to create. Within a week they had the name and the concept. Before long they were playing out using self-produced backing tracks and playing live instruments over top. "Build it and they will come"... Before long Telesma had become a full band as each new member either came up after a show or when sharing a bill and offered to join. It has been a very organic

process throughout. Most songs and ideas are born from improv jams that were recorded during live shows. We would then take the key themes and write a song around them. The writing process is completely democratic and the result of all the individual member's contributions, making everyone a key player.

2. CAM: Who did the artwork for *O(h)M* and where was it recorded?

All of Telesma's original art has been done by Baltimore psychedelic artist Jeremy Opio - www.jeremyopio.com. *O(h)M* was recorded at Waterford Digital Studios by Frank Marchand and produced by Telesma.

3. CAM: Are you all versed in the instrumentation you do or were you all self taught?

Telesma's sound is truly a mix of organic origin and dedication to the practice and study of our instrumentation. Some members have studied extensively -- guitarist Chris Mandra has advanced degrees from Peabody in composition and electronic music, he's also studied at the Liszt Ferenc Zeneakademia in Budapest, Hungary, and had a fellowship to STEIM in the Netherlands where he developed his own wearable performance interface "the manDrum"; Bryan Jones studied both classical and jazz upright bass for over 20 years. Ian Hesford, while self-taught, has put in countless hours of practice and study in his accomplished and unusual didgeridoo style, plus bamboo mouth harp, Tibetan throat singing and drumming; Jason Sage is self-taught and gained much of his musical knowledge from improvising in the venues, streets and voodoo ceremonies, etc., of New Orleans. Vocalist Joanne Juskus, who is also a voice teacher, studied voice and classical piano for years, and spent a decade living in an ashram where she was introduced to Sanskrit chanting, Indian percussion instruments such as karatalas (hand cymbals) and mrdanga (drum). Drummer Rob Houck was also self-taught and honed his skills by performing in many improvisational based bands over the years.

4. CAM: What does your show consist of?

Telesma's shows have been called "spectacles... where the line between band and audience is blurred" because instead of Telesma being the focus of the performance, they offer an experience that is participatory -- with bellydancers, hula hoopers, painters, performance artists, video artists and the dancing crowd -- all reveling together in celebration that is often called transformative and consciousness-raising. We feel like it's our responsibility to allow people to reconnect with both their animal and transcendent natures. Music is, for us, the closest to a religious experience that many of us get.

5. CAM: How did you come to have Alex Grey and Allyson Grey create their art on the *Hearing Visions: Live* DVD?

We've all admired the Grey's artwork over the years. In fact Alex's work directly inspired Ian to manifest the idea of Telesma. Our paths crossed a few years back when Telesma was invited to perform at Alex's CoSM (Chapel of Sacred Mirrors) in NYC and an instant connection was made between the band and the Greys. From there the concept for the first Winter Solstice Gathering evolved, bringing the community together to celebrate music and art, and bring light into our hearts on the darkest day of the year. We recorded and filmed the event and released the "Hearing Visions: Live" CD in 2009, followed by the DVD in 2010. The DVD also includes a bonus segment of Telesma and the Greys having a conversation about the show and other things. Since then we've done the 2nd Annual Solstice Gathering with Alex and Allyson, and we hope to have more events on the horizon.

6. CAM: Was *O(h)M* a difficult undertaking or quite an easy process?

O(h)M, like anything of value, was both effortless and difficult, but more the former. We believe what we do -- all we can do -- is what moves us, what we think is exciting and engaging. We make music that we find satisfying. We believe if we honestly do what moves us, it will move others as well, because we are all brothers and sisters; we are all people.

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Summoning the Vision and the Sound that is Telesma (cont'd)

Reprinted from *Cultural Asylum Magazine*

7. CAM: What influences do you draw from to create the signature sound that is Telesma?

That's the fun part about being in Telesma. We would say that if you sat all of us around a table and asked us what we are currently listening to, it would all be a very different answer. We draw from everything – world music, metal, jazz, fusion, prog rock, jamband, singer-songwriter material, classic rock, classical – basically you name it. What is interesting is how we all draw from those influences and create the recipe that IS Telesma. I do think the one common ground from all of those genres is that we all understand the spirit of the music and the passion and creativity behind it, which is what we base OUR music on.

8. CAM: Are there any philosophies and/or ideals that you believe in and does it come across in your music?

Telesma has sometimes been labeled “shamanic” or “spiritual” though ironically, I don't think any of us is the least bit interested in or even aware of what each other “believe”! If there is a philosophy or ideal, it's one of the transcendent nature of music, and of what happens when all members come together, bringing in their individual influences.

I think we leave the door open for people to interpret the meanings of our music for themselves. We're not trying to preach or force our personal beliefs on people, but we put it all out there within the music and the listener takes what they want or need from it.

9. CAM: Is there another release in the works?

Definitely. Actually a few interesting things are happening. Our good friend, audio guru/film maker Scott Tipton is working on a documentary about our first west coast tour this past summer - 6500+ miles in a van in 2 weeks. That should come out before the end of the year. Also, we hope to have another CD available by spring 2011 (which, knowing our realities really means summer of 2011;)

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10. CAM: Are there any other projects musically or non-musically that you are working on apart from Telesma?

Does this mean individual projects? I don't think any of us has time and/or energy for much else besides Telesma.

11. CAM: Have you noticed a larger fan base since your inception?

Definitely. We've been at this, as a group, since 2004 when we would just show up and jam together at little clubs in Baltimore. Popularity in Baltimore grew quickly, but now we are seeing an explosion of interest, so that we are being invited to play across the country.

The fan base seems to be getting more diversified as well. We've been able to cross the lines of many different communities, age groups, and backgrounds. We'll perform at a family-friendly festival with children dancing and singing in the crowd, and then go play an intense fire ritual event in the same weekend. It's a blessing to be able to share what we do with so many different people.

12. CAM: Is religion or politics important in the music arena?

For some bands, yes, absolutely, and we feel it is important that there are bands/artists that do. Music is a form of communication and poetry in which people can express their views freely and those issues are very prominent and current in society all across the world. For Telesma it's more about cultural and artistic expression. Many bands have messages they want to communicate, which is what music has been based on since the beginning of time. For Telesma we try to create an experience to step away from those issues for a moment and connect with our inner selves and enjoy all the creativity that people can offer.

13. CAM: How would our readers be able to find out more about Telesma and how to purchase your materials?

Our website – www.telesmaband.com. We also sell our CDs on CD Baby and iTunes, and our DVD on filmbaby.com. We're also online at facebook, myspace, twitter and we have many videos on youtube.com as well.

14. CAM: What are some of the places you have played at and is there one place you really enjoyed above all others?

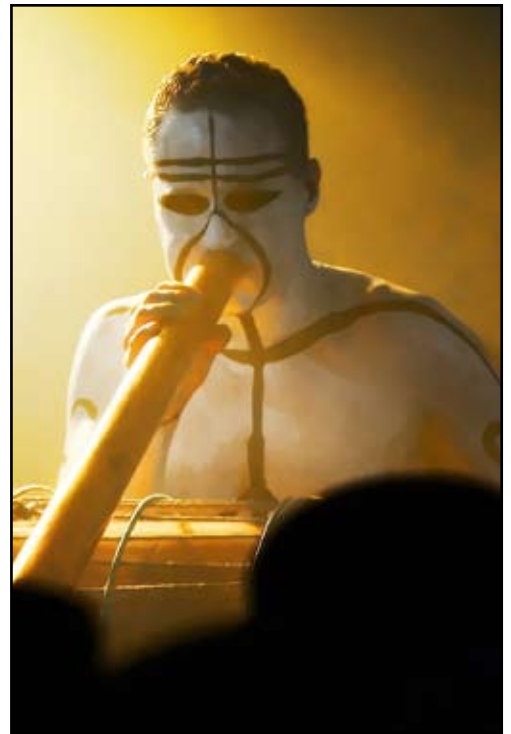
We love the Ramblewood Retreat Center in Darlington, Maryland, where we've played a number of times for different festivals and gatherings. We truly think that it is where the best and most open minded audiences are, people that are really searching for a stimulating experience. We have played wonderful shows at a lot of different places that have also opened OUR minds to new cultures, genres, art forms, music and landscapes as well as bonding with each other beyond the music. Crowds at Spoutwood FairyFest are great. The art shows at Sonar with Alex have been amazing. We played a show up in New Jersey called Evolvefest that encompassed the whole reason that we play – to celebrate in community the evolution we are all a part of.

15. CAM: Any final words you'd like to share with us?

We believe in the evolution of consciousness and freedom. We're truly grateful for the experiences and opportunities that have come our way as we continue to help unite our community through music and art. Every time we perform we're humbled by the support of our fans, and appreciate every moment we share with them.

Thank you Telesma for talking with us about their CD and DVD, which I highly suggest you get. Telesma is an amazing experience and a must to see live. Yet they are somewhat hard to define; think primal, organic, visual, and alluring rolled into one. They are undefined and the instrumentation is trance-inducing, as well as Joanne's magical siren-like vocals. You can't help but dance and move your body while purifying your soul to their brand of cultural music. Telesma defines sub-culture and we here at Culture Asylum support all their endeavors past, present, and future.

TELESMA



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“Spiritual walkers between the worlds,
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