

Juno Award Winning Artist Returns with Powerful Album of Protest Songs

KIRAN AHLUWALIA | COMFORT FOOD

Album Release: Apr 5 | Going for Adds: Apr 5 (FCC clean)

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"fascinating, newly revealed music."
-Los Angeles Times

"The global music you must hear"
-NPR Music

Two-time **Juno Award Winner** [Kiran Ahluwalia](#) releases her highly anticipated new album *Comfort Food*. Her first in six years and three years in the making, it is a powerful statement of protest with songs rejecting injustice, graced with songs embracing joy. Making modern Indian songs influenced by blues, rock, jazz and Punjabi folk, the Indian-born artist confronts virulent ethnic nationalism with songs about liberation, love and the common humanity we all share.

Recorded in Toronto at **Canterbury Music Company** and produced by her Pakistani-born husband **Rez Abbasi**, the

album brings together a global cast of musicians that includes Abbasi (guitars), **Louis Simao** (accordion, organ), **Robbie Grunwald** (accordion, organ), **Rich Brown** (bass), **Ravi Nainpally** (tabla), **Davide DiRenzo** (drums), **Mark Duggan** (percussion) and **Joaquin Nunez** (djembe, percussion).

With this dynamic band, Ahluwalia creates anthemic songs that challenge India's current "Hindu first nationalism" and address the societal discrimination of Hindus of so-called lower castes. Her lyrics about disenfranchisement are also reflective of rising ethnic marginalization and political polarization taking place around the world.

"Can we say we are human, if we lack humanity?" Ahluwalia asks in "[Jaane Jahan](#)" a song about the disturbing rise in cultural intolerance in India and the Diaspora. Its lyrics proclaim, "We bleed the same red, we shed the same salty tears."

Similarly, "Tum Dekhoge" is a stirring song of dissent based on a poem by **Hussain Haidry**, written in response to police brutality during a peaceful women's protest in New Delhi's Shaheen Baag against laws by the Indian Hindu supremacist government that marginalize Muslims and bar them from becoming Indian citizens even if their families have lived in India for centuries.

"Our deep entrenchment in tribal identities is depriving us of the ability to talk to people with opposing ideas, and this leaves me with a profound despair," explains Ahluwalia. Her song "[Tera Jugg](#)" and her stunning new video shot in the Mojave desert speaks to this disheartenment.

Not allowing the fog of despair to keep her down, Ahluwalia balances the project with themes of hope and love with the upbeat tracks "[Pancake](#)" and "[Dil](#)" along with "[Ban Koulchi Redux](#)," a powerful duet with Algeria's **Souad Massi**. A shining example of women collaborating across cultures, this song and the whole album is infused with light and hope for a just society – a perfect antidote to the fear and hatred so prevalent around the world right now.

"Writing these songs gave me an emotional release from my own sense of helplessness – in this way, creating this album has been my comfort food."

Kiran Ahluwalia is on tour now, supporting the new album. [View the full calendar here.](#)



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KIRAN AHLUWALIA

(pronounced KIR-un all-oo-WAHL-iya) is a modern exponent of the great vocal styles of India and Pakistan, which she honors intensely yet departs from in masterful, personal ways. With roots in Sufi, Qawalli, Ghazal, and Punjabi folk, she crafts her own contemporary songs that are equal parts reflective and groovy. Creating a “transnational sound as fresh as tomorrow” (*Seattle Times*), the 2-time **Juno Award Winner** embodies the essence of Indian music while embracing influences from Mali and western blues, rock, R&B and jazz. With her 6-piece group of electric guitar, accordion, organ, tabla, bass and drum kit, Ahluwalia creates boundary-breaking songs that invite us to explore the human condition, creating timeless music that looks to the future while still maintaining a vital line to its storied past.



Born in India, raised in Canada and currently dividing her time between New York City and Toronto, Ahluwalia has long been on a path to master the art of singing and composing. “When I was growing up in India, there were concerts that people from all over would crowd into. These concerts featured a repertoire, language and content that was both demanding and beyond the experience of a child. I was, however, entranced by the sound and feel of the music, even from an early age. My father would play tapes of Indian music for me and we would also listen to Bollywood on the radio,” Ahluwalia recalls. “So when a song came on that I wanted to learn, my mother would quickly write down the lyrics for me and I would sing along to learn the melody.”

From the time she was seven, Ahluwalia immersed herself in Indian music. When the family immigrated to Canada she continued her musical training alongside her regular school. After graduating from the University of Toronto, she returned to India where she spent years of intense deep study in music. Back in Canada in the late 90s she followed more mundane pursuits – she got an MBA in Finance and started working as a Trader on Bay Street. And there it might have ended if Ahluwalia had not had recurring visions of being on her deathbed not having lived out her passion. So she left the world of business and threw herself totally into a life devoted to the making of her own music.

Since then she has toured around the world, recorded seven albums, topped the North American & European World Music Charts and won two **Juno Awards**, a **Canadian Folk Music Award** and the UK’s **Songlines Award**. Her songs have featured collaborations with legendary Malian group **Tinariwen**, Celtic fiddler **Natalie MacMaster**, fado masters from Portugal and Algeria’s **Souad Massi** on her new album **Comfort Food**, which features powerful songs protesting Hindu fundamentalism and ethnic nationalism.

Ahluwalia’s own band is directed by virtuoso guitarist **Rez Abbasi**, who consistently ranks among the top ten guitarists in the annual **DownBeat International Critics Poll**. Ahluwalia and Abbasi are a real-life couple – one born in India, the other in Pakistan. Having grown up in the Diaspora they crossed ethnic and religious lines between their two warring motherlands to forge a profound connection in life and music.

In 2018, Ahluwalia was diagnosed with breast cancer. After surviving that and the COVID pandemic that followed, she is happy to be back, releasing new music and performing in front of live audiences. She is currently working on a documentary about her Guru, Vithal Rao, in Hyderabad, India. “He was the last living court musician for the Prince of Hyderabad,” she says. “He lived in the palace for 12 years. He lived an extraordinary life and died an extraordinary death. It’s my passion project to tell the world about him.”

Whether shooting films or making music, Ahluwalia is an artist who reflects what has happened and inspires us to create a world that is beautiful and just for all.

For Kiran Ahluwalia’s full tour schedule and more information, please visit www.kiranmusic.com.



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