

Just don't hurry – Krishna

MUSIC

Harbant Gill

ACTOR Garry McDonald raves about the music, and it's a hit in yoga and meditation circles for its ability to uplift.

Krishna Das's *Live on Earth (for a limited time only)* comes with a warning about speeding tickets if you listen to it while at the wheel.

From experience, the alert is mandatory.

Now the man himself, raised on Long Island as Jeffrey Kagel by Jewish parents, is coming to Australia for the first time.

KD, as he prefers, has done private sessions with Madonna, sung with Sting and released several albums, but what he loves most is the incessant touring of the past 10 years or so. He averages more than two gigs a week.

"Chanting with normal people is what I like best," he says from his rented rustic cabin in upstate New York, where he parks his car that "keeps breaking down".

"It is basically a meditation technique that involves singing. It's not about religion, although I'd say it's spiritual.

"It's a way of calming the mind and untying certain knots in the heart. It gives you a peace of mind that comes from within.

"And I don't treat it as a performance either. I do it to be with myself. I sing and people

respond... we are helping each other. The chants themselves take you deeper."

KD, who will play the harmonium and sing in the ancient Sanskrit language, will have tabla accompaniment at what could be called a mass singalong.

"The chants are thousands of years old and they help people enter into a deeper relationship with the universe.

"So the chant itself carries an amazing charge."

KD, who has no classical musical training, says he chants because he "can't help it".

As children, he and his younger sister, with a teacher mother and a lawyer father who later became a psychoanalyst, had everything they could want.

But "there was some piece missing" even before his parents split up when he was 16.

"I was frustrated and depressed. Angry," says the 57-year-old who jokes about majoring in "basketball and drugs" at university.

"It wasn't until I learned about yoga and meditation that I really got interested."

He met American spiritual teacher Ram Dass, read a lot and at 23 sold his car, guitar and record collection to travel to India, where he studied under Maharaj-ji Neem Karoli Baba for nearly three years.

He got a new name, which means servant of God and which he took a while to get used to, and the desire to sing.

"I didn't learn to chant as a future method of employment. I just chanted because I loved it. We were not learning chanting or learning devotion. We were just being devoted," he says.

KD spent years doing therapy and seeking the help of various teachers to tackle his depression before he was ready to sing from a healing heart.

"I'm still working on the issues of self-love and self-worth."

Now he arranges his own "weird New York versions of chants" to which he brings his musical influences that range from Ray Charles and Van Morrison to Indian ragas.

"I'm not on a mission. The main reason I chant is that I need to. Nothing helps me more.

"And nothing forces me to sing more intensely and give myself more to the practice than being in front of a thousand people.

"I'm not trying to be Indian and yet I got everything from India. It came out of India in me. The outer form is not important to me. It's the inner."

KRISHNA DAS

Where: Glen Eira Town Hall, February 15
Tickets: \$49. **Bookings:** 13 28 49
Details: www.integralyoga.com.au



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