



A socially conscious musical citizen of the world, Reza Khan has a long-established history of blazing fresh trails, pushing limits and finding unique ways to redefine what is possible in contemporary jazz. Working with some of the genre's most revered sidemen, the Bangladesh born and raised, NYC-based composer/guitarist has, since his 2009 debut *Painted Diaries*, taken a freewheeling approach to creating his dynamic, infectious yet unpredictable fusion of pop, jazz, soul and world music influences. Having scored his first Billboard Top Ten single with "Drop of Faith" from his critically acclaimed fifth album *Next Train Home*, the most logical approach moving ahead would have been a slick, in the pocket urban/smooth jazz session. Instead, helping us navigate our way through the darkness, anxiety and steep challenges of the past year, Khan graces us with an empowering way forward along a fascinating, twist and turn filled ***Imaginary Road***.

As the guitarist takes us from the kaleidoscopic rays of sunshine infusing "Waiting for the Sky" to an ultimately hopeful journey of limitless landscapes on the closing title track, he follows in his long tradition of creating a multi-faceted theme driven musical narrative. "Perhaps it's counter-intuitive, but while working on song sketches in different styles after releasing *Next Train Home*, my first thought was, how do I make this CD very personal and less commercial," says Khan, whose previous albums include *A Simple Plan* (2011), *The Dreamwalker* (2013) and *Wind Dance* (2016). "On a sociopolitical scale," he says, "there were many things going on during the writing that made me as an immigrant ask myself what I believe of America, what it has been and what it will be. I started thinking about survival. Can we survive the pandemic and these toxic politics? As I like to say, it's becoming unbelievable to believe what you believe in."

"All my previous albums evolved from concepts that were tied to specific themes," he adds. "I never just put together a batch of single songs. I grew up loving the kinds of concept albums Pink Floyd and The Alan Parsons Project created and have always wanted my works to follow that kind of journey. Otherwise, what's the meaning? I reflect on the deeper questions I have had lately on songs like 'Waiting for the Sky,' where the image of the sky is the hopeful light of certainty after a period of darkness, and 'I See Stars,' where if I can view them clearly, I will know where I am."

While Khan's name is the one atop ***Imaginary Road*** and he is credited as writer/producer, the ten-track set is once again a largely collaborative effort featuring his longtime collaborative core band – bassist Mark Egan, pianist Matt King, rhythm and classical guitarist Sergio Pereira, drummer Maurizio Zottarelli – and guest artists David Mann (all wind instruments), Acoustic Alchemy's Miles Gilderdale (electric lead guitar) and Philippe Saisse (synth, Moog, Melodion, mallets). Khan writes in his eloquent liner notes that he had been traveling to and performing in Spain frequently over the past few years, pre-pandemic. During his last trip to Valencia, he and his band performed at the Matisse Club, a place where jazz and salsa music mingle freely. Inspired by the energy of those gigs, the five-piece ensemble hit the studio one weekend to cut the seven scratch tracks that laid the foundation for what evolved, over the course of the next six months, into ***Imaginary Road***.

"The result as you hear this new record, you will feel that live energy, syncopation and 'feel good' vibe well preserved and represented throughout," Khan writes. "There are moments where I was naturally drawn between Indian and Spanish styles which make the project even more interesting. The record is about our journey on the ***Imaginary Road*** where love, lust, desire triangulate in evolutionary way and open doors in an unimaginable surprise filled with both happy and sad aspects of life. As I am taking this ***Imaginary Road***, embarking on a journey, life is still quite exploratory and full of experiments. The title track goes out to the imaginary journey of the next generation!"



ON STAGE

Over the past five years, Reza Khan has built a loyal east coast fan base and performed (and sold-out!) NYC hotspots like The Blue Note, BB Kings, Iridium, Drom, Zinc Bar and City Winery. He has also expanded his international presence via gigs with his band in Spain and Europe. While releasing his steady stream of ensemble albums, he has attracted the attention of numerous contemporary jazz heavy hitters eager to help him craft his live performances as well as develop his studio recordings.



Reza Khan
CONTEMPORARY JAZZ



NOTABLE LIVE PERFORMANCES

- The Blue Note – New York, NY
- Blue Note Jazz Festival – New York, NY (sold out show)
- BB KING'S – New York, NY (sold out CD release party - CD *Dreamwalker*)
- Iridium Jazz Club – New York, NY (sold out CD release party - CD *Wind Dance*)
- DROM Brazilian Jazz Festival – New York, NY
- City Winery – New York, NY (sold-out show on the main stage)
- Highline Ball Room – New York, NY (opened for Blondie)
- NAMM - Austin, TX (Music Festival)
- Waldorf Astoria, New York, NY (Fund Raising Event for ASPCA)
- Central Park Summer Stage, New York, NY
- Rock and Roll Hall of Fame— Cleveland, OH (w/ Joe Walsh, 38 Special)
- Venetian Casino - Las Vegas, NV (Corporate Event)
- Embarcadero Center - San Diego, CA (opened for Mel Torme)
- JW Marriott – Dubai, UAE (Dubai Jazz Festival)
- Radisson Blue – Kuwait City, Kuwait (Corporate Event)
- United Nations – New York, NY (Earth Day Celebrations)
- Zinc Bar – New York, NY (Sold out shows)

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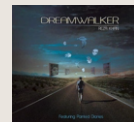
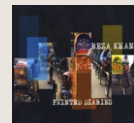
MUSIC

Growing up, one of Reza's most influential musical idols was Pat Metheny — and he achieved a lifelong dream when bassist Mark Egan — a founding member of the legendary Pat Metheny Group — became an integral part of his own studio recording and live performances. Like Metheny, Khan's music — best defined as globally conscious contemporary jazz — is adventurous in its fusion of jazz and global rhythms, vibes and aesthetics, yet always includes bright, infectious melodies and intoxicating grooves that make at least several songs on each album ideal for smooth jazz airplay. Three tracks that stand out as combining high end envelope pushing and irresistible radio friendliness are "Waiting for the Sky," "Broken River" and "***Imaginary Road***."

Driven by a Khan's buoyant acoustic guitar melody, Matt King's soulful piano harmonies and an inviting, mid-tempo percussive groove that becomes funkier and more boisterous as it jams along, "Waiting for the Sky" is the ultimate expression of optimism despite the darkness, a yearning for breakthrough despite the weariness of a long hard journey. Its production values are reminiscent of classic Rippingtons tunes, with David Mann's dreamy flute touches and whimsical sax, energetic brass section excitement and a fiery, emphatic electric guitar solo by Miles Gilderdale that more than fulfills Khan's request, "Can you be the Doobie Brothers?" In his liner notes, Khan describes "Waiting for the Sky" with this engaging imagery that truly sparks the imagination: "The sun is hidden, yet its warmth envelops your heart and you start running, feeling joyful and carefree, anxious to see the magnificent light."

A tune that flows effortlessly from a lush ballad vibe to snappy soul with a sensual light funk feeling of sway and seduction, "Broken River" spotlights Khan's tender and heartfelt melodic acoustic flow, but throws a crackling curve into the mix mid-stream (pun intended!) with Gilderdale's crying and crackling electric guitar cool. This artful balance of energies is caressed throughout most of the piece by subtle sound scaping and atmospheres — yet the track ultimately evolves into a fiery fusion of that atmosphere and a jazz funk dynamic highlighted by Matt King's dancing jazz piano. Tracking the river's unpredictable flow and ultimate offer of optimism downstream, he writes, "The river has stopped its tumultuous flow towards the ocean. The silence is comforting, peaceful and images of tranquility are a welcome break. Yet your heart is too young to accept this artificial stillness, and you are instantly longing to see again singling waters, rich with life and future promises."

Khan poetically and philosophically describes the lilting yet sparkling, uber-melodic, easy grooving light funk title track "***Imaginary Road***" as "a journey open to limitless imaginary landscapes to shape our future from the canvas we leave behind." Contemplating those bold words, we can embrace his graceful rhythmic acoustic guitar as it weaves over Philippe Saisse's subtle old school synth whimsy.



Reflecting not only the momentum of Khan's career and musical evolution but our own resolve as we break through to more expansive emotional and spiritual horizons, the road takes a dynamic turn into a true drive time jam, elevated by King's wild piano magic, richly detailed sound scaping, David Mann's unbridled sax and even a swelling choir of wordless vocals in the outro.

The deep cuts of ***Imaginary Road*** are sonically rich treasures equal to the obvious radio tracks, highlighted by the gripping and jubilant, punchy urban intensity of "Neo-Funk" (which features another monster Gilderdale solo, Saisse's whimsical old schoolin' and another burst of crazy fun from King's piano) and three tracks that incorporate Khan's prominent Indian music influences: "Somewhere East," "Seven Mile Road" and "Midnight Runner."

The subtly exotic "Somewhere East" expresses Khan's sense of wishful thinking that we can overcome all spiritual battles by escaping to better skies that lie Eastward. "I envision it as a heavenly and magical place, and wonder why can't we get there immediately?" he muses. The moody, contemplative and at times lyrical and symphonic "Seven Mile Road" was inspired by an actual mountain road in the Canary Islands towards the volcano named La Tieda. "After a struggle the first few miles," he says, "you emerge from a rain forest and from the summit see the clouds and lightning storms below you. When you are in the sun looking down at all that, you can't help but feel a beautiful sense of hope." Another of ***Imaginary Road's*** many highlights is "Midnight Runner," who's balmy topicality, rhapsodic French music influences and touches of whimsical romance help calm any previous sleepless moments full of ever swinging emotions, sweet memories and worries. Khan says, "You start running, forgetting about yesterday, unsure of what tomorrow will bring to your young eyes. It's about the desire to find a way to take all those elements and do something impactful with them."





THE EARLY YEARS

Born into a musical family in what is now Bangladesh, Reza Khan and his brothers received a firm grounding in Indian classical music from their father, an instrumentalist, composer and poet. While he was trained in Indian percussion from the time he was eight or nine, Khan's musical world changed forever when his brother brought home a bootleg copy of Frampton Comes Alive. Khan's introduction to American pop/rock – including Eagles, Grand Funk and America – led him to put aside his training on tabla, sitar and sarod, and embrace the guitar as his primary instrument. Later influences include Pat Metheny (who "made me want to make myself better and better musically"), The Rippingtons, Acoustic Alchemy and the musical genres of Brazil (bossa nova, samba, Tropicalia). Khan formed his first band, Yours Sincerely, in the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka. The group's lone album, Members Only, sold an incredible half a million copies, but Khan soon set his musical pursuits aside to develop his burgeoning career in international relations.

A graduate of Queens College with a degree in computer science, Khan's calling as a humanitarian has led him everywhere from Asia (where his introduction to poverty and human rights abuses inspired him to work for the UN) to Angola, where he was a member of a peacekeeping force in that war torn country. In the late 90s, he lived in South Africa, where he performed and composed music and also married and started a family.

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REVIEW

"Asked about his musical influences growing up, Reza Khan quickly cites the Pat Metheny Group's 1978 self-titled debut album. Many decades later, with six critically acclaimed releases under his belt over the past 12 years, the multi-faceted artist is not only working with that ensemble's members (Mark Egan), but planning to include Danny Gottlieb as well in a future jazz fusion progressive quintet in 2021 called "Moon Tree Quintet", hoping to emerge as likes of the Pat Metheny of his generation. Like Metheny, he has had numerous melodic, smooth jazz friendly radio hits – but his trademark is a bold, globally and socially conscious approach to contemporary jazz that blends amiability and boundary/genre busting invention and wild adventure effortlessly.

His latest album *Imaginary Road* is a triumph on many musical and thematic levels. Like many of his previous albums, he offers a true player's album – an artful fusion of accessibility, groove intensity, old school and modern sensibilities, dynamic references to his cultural roots and fascinating ensemble action under his production guidance by some of the jazz world's most notable musicians. Beyond those givens, he weaves a unique narrative that acknowledges that we haven't all been in great places lately, but with boundless hope and just enough courage, we can take that *Imaginary Road*, experience the power of the sky changing from darkness to light and emerge on the other side, ever-optimistic despite our many battle scars. When listening to an album makes you want to strive harder and be a better person, you know you're dealing with an artist for the ages."

– Jonathan Widran, *The JW Vibe*



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