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Mara Katria Sings! Q&A With The Enchanting Musician / Filmmaker

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Mara Katria is an internationally acclaimed filmmaker and musician who has directed feature length documentaries, designed video games, and written and recorded award-winning music. She recently received the win here at the Europe Music Video Awards for Best Singing / Vocalist for her powerful new "Cities in Dust" homage to the influential post-punk band Siouxsie and the Banshees. We got to have a conversation with Mara about her diverse artistic path and a very exciting new project she has in the works with some music world heavyweights! Read on to learn all about it.

HELLO, MARA! THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO TALK TO US! WILL YOU PLEASE TELL OUR READERS A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF?

Absolutely! And thanks so much for all you do to bring quality art and artists to audiences! I am a musician and filmmaker with a background in video game design. I was brought up in Upstate New York. I adore ice cream and Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings."

[LISTEN TO MARA'S NEW SONG "CITIES IN DUST" HERE:](#)



HOW DID YOU START YOUR MUSIC CAREER, AND WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO BEGIN SINGING?

Singing was sparked for me when I was in Junior High School and my drama teacher, the wonderful Mr. Glenn Northern, encouraged me to be a part of the school's talent show. I got to perform three pieces: dance, poetry, and music. Being in that show was among the most fulfilling events of my life! With regard to career, my start with composing original music came when I was a videogame designer for the quest expansion MOD for "The Elder Scrolls IV: Et in Arkay Ego." During my work with that outstanding EiA team, I directed the voiceovers, programmed the AI, and also scored the music. True love across the board.



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WHO ARE YOUR BIGGEST MUSICAL INFLUENCES, AND HOW DO THEY MANIFEST IN YOUR OWN MUSIC?

Such a fun question! My earliest influences came from the backgrounds of my magnificent parents. My mother, Myrina, is entirely Finnish, and her creativity and collection of folk art encouraged my appreciation for haunting Nordic sounds and moods. From my poet father, Steve, I was enchanted by the balladry of the Celts. One of my first favorite musicians was/is Loreena McKennitt -- and, it's delightful to mention that her team actually gave their seal of approval for my recent homage to Loreena's timeless song "The Dark Night Of The Soul" -- featuring world-class strings and guitars from Rose Baldino and Brian Buchanan (House of Hamill) and mastering from Clyde Rosencrance (Republic Audio Studio). In adolescence I found a passion for avant-pop and new-wave paragons like Laurie Anderson, Annie Lennox, Ultravox, Peter Gabriel, Kate Bush and the living legends Modern English. And it's definitely a dream come true to say that over the last few years I've had the privilege to work with the very same brilliant band Modern English on my debut LP that is going to be called "Modern MI" ((They have a spectacular new album out right now called "1 2 3 4" by the way!))



WHAT IS YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS WHEN IT COMES TO CREATING NEW SONGS?

Making anything worthwhile requires bravery and honesty. I'm not saying that I'm brave, mind you, but I believe my best work comes from my most courageous, authentic moments. It's so important not to stand in the way of the creation. When I wrote my first single "Midnight Mind" (mastered at Peter Gabriel's Real World Studios, 2020), the music came to me like light from the darkness. It's the stars in the sky. They're always there, but I need to face the fear of the endless abyss until the clouds roll back. And then . . . There it is . . . the shining cosmos.

DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIAL RITUALS OR SOURCES OF INSPIRATION? WHAT BRINGS YOU THE GREATEST JOY AS A SINGER?

That is such a meaningful question. Thank you! I suppose I do have rituals, come to think of it! You want to know something strange? I usually turn the lamps low and plug in my little Christmas tree (which I keep up all year these days). I let it glow in my peripheral vision; squint my eyes so it sparkles; then, in my hands, I hold certain pictures of people I love, some who've passed away. They help me feel more present and remind me of how precious life is. What brings me the most joy with regard to singing and making music is when people tell me that I bring something to mind for them -- like the very pictures I hold when I am recording vocals. When they say that I help them to heal a little bit. When they are so kind as to share that I inspire them to feel a little stronger, to reach out, to feel less alone.

ARE THERE SPECIFIC MOMENTS OR EXPERIENCES THAT YOU REMEMBER THE MOST?

I remember listening to Channel 98.9FM on New Years Eve, 2021. I'd released my single, the aforementioned "Midnight Mind," months earlier and they were counting down their top 100. I'd been told by the superlative radio station manager DJ Brian Silvis that MM made the list. So I thought it would be around number 99 -- and I'd be up for maybe an hour, haha! As it turned out, I listened to a great mix of alt-rock for hour upon hour, until the sun came up on the New Year and I discovered that MM came in at lucky #7! I was sitting on the floor of my studio next to my Modern English and Peter Gabriel posters with happy tears in my eyes. Unreal. And, unforgettable.



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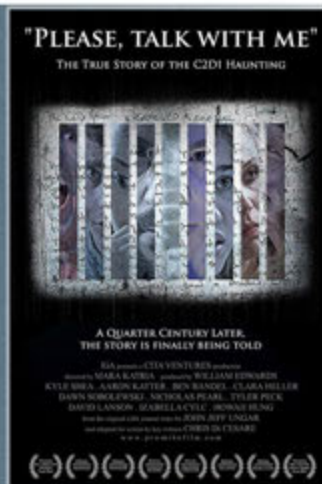


HOW DO YOU NAVIGATE THE CHALLENGES OF THE MUSIC INDUSTRY?

One of today's challenges is preventing the concept of: algorithms, AI, and drag-and-drop easy-bake creation from discouraging artists. I know you at the EMVAs understand what I'm talking about; you endeavor to make real experiences for audiences and creators in a world of automation. It encourages me to see what folks like you do to bring genuine humanity to the surface in the arts!

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR MOST SIGNIFICANT PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT SO FAR?

One of the highest points in my career so far was related to a feature length film I directed entitled "Please Talk With Me." The movie sought to recreate the authentic events now known as the C2D1 Haunting which happened at a Western New York (Geneseo) College in 1985. It was a months long horror for the students who experienced it, and my team and I dedicated years of our lives to faithfully telling the survivors' story. When the picture was completed in the mid 2010s, we decided to premiere the film first at festivals and paranormal conventions. I'll never forget attending the Wilson Horror Film Festival (headed by Joel Pagliaro) and witnessing so many excellent movies. Some of the survivors (J. Jeff Ungar and Chris Di Cesare both seen on Syfy TV) as well as film administrators (William J. Edwards) were there. And we were all so proud of the actors' powerful performances including: Aaron Katter, Nick Pearl, Clara Heller, Dawn Sobolewski, and Kyle Shea to name a few. I did not realize there was going to be an awards ceremony after the final screenings. But, there we were, seated together in the lovely theater when they announced the winner of Best Director. I always knew the passion and quality the team put into PTWM deserved every award, but I never thought of *myself* winning anything specifically. I was completely stunned when they announced my name. I barely managed not to trip as I ascended the stage and thanked WHFF, the survivors, and our cast and crew. I saw those previously mentioned gentlemen beaming back at me. Words can't describe. <3 I have been lucky enough to receive some awards since then, which I treasure, for PTWM and following productions, but that moment is cast in amber in my heart.





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OF COURSE, WE ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE ICONIC BAND MODERN ENGLISH AND THEIR HIT SONG "I MELT WITH YOU." CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR LP "MODERN M" AND WHAT'S COMING NEXT?

My album "Modern M" featuring my friends and heroes Modern English is being mastered this winter for release later in 2024, and I'm putting together a bit of a tour after that. The record has been shared with a few industry colleagues so far who describe it as "music for time travelers." I can't wait for the world to hear it! And as you know, my most recent cover "Cities in Dust" was released just this autumn as a tribute to the trailblazing Siouxsie and the Banshees. I'm humbled by the exceptional Europe Music Video Awards (including Festival Director and Founder, Stefan Lukac, Martina, and the entire EMVA Team) for honoring my singing in "Cities in Dust." I aimed to pour all my genuine emotion into it, it's truly gratifying to receive the award. Thanks for all you do to promote artists and the joy of music. You're making a difference!

AND YOU CAN CONNECT WITH MARA HERE: Link Tree: <https://marakatria.com/links>

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