

"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



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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 Donavan (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, Rootwire, Bethlehem Musikfest, Levitt Pavilion SteelStacks, Artscape, 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



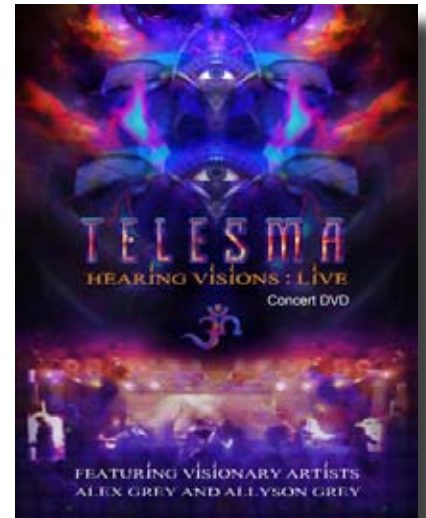
### **O(h)M**

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

## “Like” Telesma on Facebook

## Follow Telesma on Twitter

## Listen to Telesma on SoundCloud

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## Telesma’s website:

[www.telesmaband.com](http://www.telesmaband.com)

## 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](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ggSLUdF3o0U)

## Telesma’s CDBaby and FilmBaby pages:

[www.cdbaby.com/Artist/Telesma](http://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.

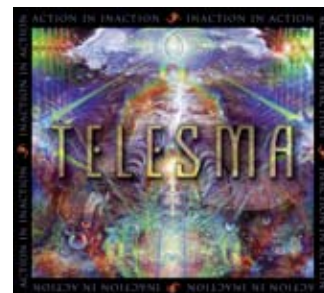
Overall, the execution and production are flawless.

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](http://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](http://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](http://cdbaby.com/telesma). To take a glimpse into the Telesma world, go to [www.telesmaband.com](http://www.telesmaband.com).



## His Heart Stopped but Life Continues for Telesma Musician

Reprinted from August 3, 2012 by Julie Scharper / *The Baltimore Sun*

### Didgeridoo player Ian Hesford discovers ‘a blessing’

Ian Hesford, his face and body painted in bold swirls, stretched his arms out toward his bandmates. The six members of Telesma joined hands and lifted their voices, finding the key for the performance. Then they took their places. Hesford headed toward the stack of barrel-shaped drums and long, wooden didgeridoos and soon a tangle of sounds — ethereal, tribal, melodic — rose from the stage.

Men and women in the audience began to sway, lifting their faces — many, like the performers, adorned with designs resembling ancient letters — to the stage. A Telesma show, band members say, is meant to be a spiritual experience in which fragments of mystic writings, ancient rhythms and futuristic tones weave a sound primal and transcendent.

On that April evening at Rams Head Live, among the pulse of drumbeats, throbbing guitar chords and the lead singer’s lush tones, there came an unexpected sound: a microphone stand clattering to the ground. Beside it lay Hesford. An elemental rhythm had been stilled: Hesford’s heartbeat.

What happened next — the woman dressed as Death who blew life into Hesford’s lungs, the paramedics and doctors who shocked his heart long after they would normally have given up, and the friends who gathered in his hospital room to sing him back to life — is a tale as profound as the lyrics to a Telesma song. Despite the jagged scars on his chest, the weeks of recovery and the enormous medical bills, Hesford says, he is grateful for the experience: He has been resurrected.

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“It hasn’t been an inconvenience. It’s been a blessing,” said Hesford. “I’m the guy that got a second life.”

### Finding music

Hesford, 38, grew up in Odenton, the only child of a single mother, and worked in construction after graduating from Arundel Senior High. In his early 20s, he became drawn to the didgeridoo, a traditional instrument



of Australian aborigines. He taught himself the breathing technique needed to play the instrument, which produces sounds that call to mind a heavenly choir of frogs. Hesford also learned to drum, to sing from his throat and to play a Philippine bamboo mouth harp called the kubing.

Meanwhile, his interest in music began to converge with his spiritual beliefs. He attended New Age festivals and sought others who believed that music could open the mind to transcendental experiences. Hesford and a friend, Jason Sage, founded Telesma in 2004, and called their style “electro-acoustic psychedelic world dance music.” Soon they were touring, hosting “visionary gatherings” and collaborating with well-known psychedelic artist Alex Grey.

“Music touches you in a place behind and below your conscious mind,” said Hesford, in

earnest and passionate tones. The Charles Village resident speaks with a hint of a Baltimore accent. “It is spiritual in the most basic, fundamental sense.”

Hesford’s hands move constantly when he speaks, as if playing an invisible instrument. His body is lean and powerful, his muscles shaped by the rigorous way he plays drums.

Doctors are unsure what caused Hesford’s heart to cease beating that night. He had no history of heart problems and had no drugs in his system, doctors and nurses who treated him say. Doctors hypothesize that a freak infection caused Hesford’s heart to become enlarged, leading to cardiac arrest. Ads by Google

### A heart stops

Dressed in a shimmering sari, her face dotted with Hindu symbols, Telesma’s lead singer Joanne Juskus was three or four minutes into the show’s first song when she saw Hesford sprawled on the stage. The next moments were chaotic. The music stopped. Audience members shouted that Hesford should be given water, that the makeup should be wiped from his body.

Two fans who knew CPR rushed forward. Tom Swiss, a shiatsu therapist in a purple top hat, took charge of pushing on Hesford’s chest. Each time Swiss pressed down, the blood shot out from Hesford’s heart into his arteries. When he paused, blood rushed back in.

Sarah Saccoccio, a Maryland Shock Trauma Center nurse, had arrived at the concert with her face painted like a skull from a Mexican Day of the Dead celebration. Her skin was smeared with white, dark circles rimmed her eyes, and her lips were marked with slashes of black paint. She pressed her mouth to Hesford’s, blowing air into his lungs.

“It was like watching death personified pumping life into Ian,” Juskus said. “It was the most surreal thing I’ve ever seen.”

Soon paramedics arrived. As they worked, audience members held hands and prayed.

## Ian Hesford (continued) Reprinted from *The Baltimore Sun*

Eventually, Hesford was loaded into an ambulance and taken to Mercy Medical Center.

Dr. Joseph Costa, a physician in the intensive care unit, and other medical workers circled around Hesford trying to resuscitate him. For 45 minutes, they tried to coax his heart to beat, shocking it with a defibrillator 18 times. It had now been about 90 minutes since Hesford first collapsed.

“We thought he was a goner,” said Costa. “But there was one resident who said, ‘Let’s keep going. If it were me, I would not want you to stop.’”

### **The team shocked Hesford’s heart one more time. It began to beat.**

Mercy staff members hurried Hesford into a special treatment room in which the body is cooled to prevent brain damage. Cooling the body slows the metabolism, and, in turn, appears to limit the damage.

Meanwhile, band members from Telesma had rushed into the hospital, their faces still streaked with paint.

Juskus said her heart sank when she first saw Hesford — tubes jutting from his body, and he was hooked up to a cluster of machines.

“Once we got there, no one talked. We were in a state of shock,” Juskus said. “It didn’t look good.”

The next morning, things looked even worse: Hesford’s heart stopped again. But doctors managed to get it beating once more.

### **A show of love**

About 15 years ago, Hesford fell off his mountain bike and broke his collarbone. He used the two weeks of medical leave from his job in a warehouse to teach himself to play the didgeridoo.

“The sound was familiar somehow,” said Hesford. “That’s how it is with every instrument I play — it’s always *deja vu*.”

For Hesford, playing music is a sort of meditation. When he and Sage formed Telesma — the name comes from the Greek root of “*talisman*” — they sought to create music that

would elevate listeners to a deeper state of consciousness.

“It doesn’t matter what instrument you’re playing, or from what musical tradition. That’s you expressing the human spirit,” he said.

On the Saturday morning after his collapse, as Hesford lay sedated, musicians gathered in the narrow room to begin a vigil. With the permission of Mercy staffers, they brought instruments. Guitars. Flutes. Harps. Singing bowls.

The musicians leaned close to his sleeping body, playing low tones. Throat singers crowded around his bed. Some played didgeridoos.

“They would let us play right over him so the tones were going into his body,” said Sage.

Mostly, Sage says, people sat in the hospital room, “holding hands and believing.”

But doctors prepared Hesford’s relatives and friends for more bad news. Since his brain had been deprived of normal oxygen levels for so long, it was likely that his personality and intellect would never be the same. He might never be able to speak, let alone sing or play music.

But a week after the collapse, Hesford began to wake. His eyes sought out the faces in his hospital room. “Wow,” he said.

For a couple of days, he said only two things: “Wow” and “I love you.”

Soon Hesford was walking around the ward. He was confused — he thought it was 1995 and Bill Clinton was still in the White House — and had to be frequently reminded that he was in the hospital because his heart had stopped. While he was unconscious, Telesma’s latest album arrived; each time he heard it, he marveled at the songs as if he had never heard them before. But bit by bit, his memory returned.

Sue Brown, Hesford’s night nurse in Mercy’s intensive care unit, was stunned at how quickly and completely he recovered.

“I could see changes in him from the beginning of a shift to the end,” she said. “I’ve been working 25 years in the ICU, and I’ve never seen anyone recover like this. I’m telling everyone: I’ve witnessed a miracle.”

The staffers on the ward, accustomed to witnessing painful, partial recoveries, were heartened by Hesford’s rebound.

“It was such a positive thing for the whole ICU, to have someone like him who was so sick and did so well,” said Costa. “He and his

friends and family had such a positive energy. It was so good for all of us.”

A few weeks after Hesford left the hospital, he returned for a party with the nurses and doctors who had cared for him. He embraced them and spoke, for the first time, with nurses who had watched over him when he was in a coma.

Hesford says he does not remember the events of the week leading up to his collapse or the week immediately afterward. Even the details of his second week are fuzzy. But he recalls clearly the emotional intensity of returning to awareness while surrounded by family and friends.

“As far as I’m concerned, I fell asleep for two weeks and woke up and was showered by love,” he said.

Being a musician can be a lonely life, he says. Grueling practices and frequent tours can make it hard to maintain relationships. But the love he felt while recovering has caused him to shrug off any illusion of loneliness, he says.

“I can never feel lonely again,” he said. “It’s been fundamentally disproven.”

Hesford is not sure how he will pay his staggering medical bills. He does not have health insurance and has little savings. Besides his musical career, he has worked a series of part-time jobs, like waiting tables at Joe Squared pizza in Station North.

Yet Hesford describes his collapse and recovery as “an extreme blessing.”

“It’s one of the best things that ever happened to me,” he said.

His mind and body have recovered fully. Doctors implanted a pacemaker in case Hesford’s heart stops beating again. He has returned to his music with renewed fervor, more firm in the convictions behind his work’s spiritual aspects.

“I wouldn’t take any of it back. What I gained from it was invaluable,” Hesford said. “I didn’t know how much of a community there was. How much love.”

In late July, exactly three months after Hesford collapsed, the members of Telesma played another show at Rams Head Live. Hesford’s body was painted in swirls of paint. Ecstatically, he pounded the drums, danced, blew into the didgeridoo. Two audience members joined the band onstage — Swiss and Saccoccio, who had frantically blown life into Hesford’s body.

The show was called “Resurrection.”

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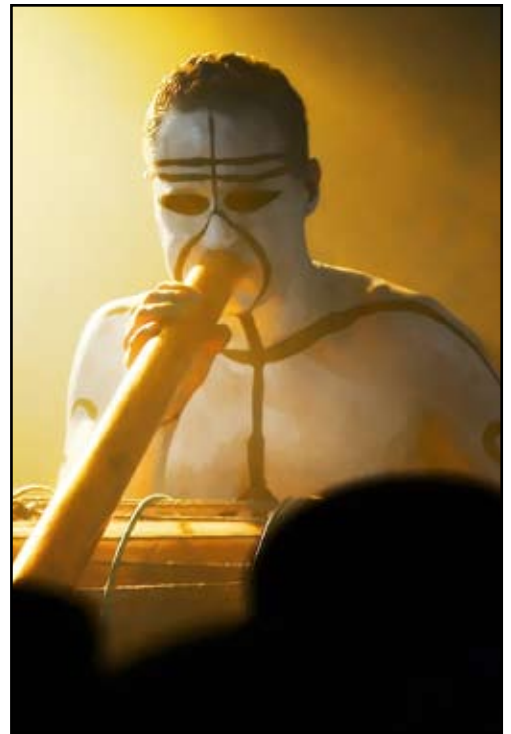
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