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TAG: KATAYOUN GOUDARZI

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Otherworldly, Eclectic, Rumi-Inspired Indian Grooves from Saffron

Saffron's new album *Dawning* is a glimmering, imaginative blend of classical south Indian ragas, jazz and western classical music. At its most rhythmically complex, it recalls [Sameer Gupta's Namaskar](#) or some of [Vijay Iyer's](#) work, although it's more hypnotic than it is lively. It's also largely improvised, [Shujaat Khan's](#) sitar sometimes nocturnally resonant, sometimes insistently intense against [Kevin Hays'](#) moody, often plaintive piano and Rolling Stones saxophonist [Tim Ries'](#) terse, agile lines. Overhead, rapt and meticulous, [Katayoun Goudarzi](#) recites Rumi poems in the original Persian.

The practically 21-minute opening track comes together slowly in the style of a classic raga, Reis' soprano sax adding the occasional bubbly cadenza or edgy Middle Eastern motif, Hays evoking Erik Satie, the band shifting between still, misterioso ambience and galloping intensity as a tabla rhythm picks up the pace. The second track, *The Inquisitor* evokes Pat Metheny (or Iyer in a rare carefree mood) as it develops a dancing, springlike theme, Reis building a bittersweet Pharaoh Sanders-ish *Waiting on a Friend* ambience

Yours is a comparatively brief tone poem of sorts that contrasts Hays' bright sunshower piano with low drones. They follow with another epic, *Tease*, Reis' goodnaturedly animated soprano sax bounding over hard-hitting sitar and januty blues piano, Hays wryly vamping out on the Beatles' *Blackbird* at one point. But the two real stunners here are the next couple of tracks, which are vastly darker. Hays evokes noir piano legend [Ran Blake](#) in the anxious, creepily chromatic first one, *Overcome*, Reis' bass clarinet adding a smoky swirl as Khan plays menacing major-on-minor lines. *Trembling*, true to its title, is even more anxious with its rapidfire tabla intro, the band exchanging variations on its apprehensively rustling melody. The album winds up with a brief flute number that sounds like an Indian Baul minstrel dance. The band doesn't seem to have a web presence of their own, but you can check out the album at [Palmetto Records'](#) site: it's also up at most of the usual places you'd expect to find stuff like this.

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