

KINGFISHER BIOGRAPHY

The music on Kingfisher's first national album, *Vesica Piscis*, comes from "the place between" — between dreaming and waking, life and death, heaven and earth, darkness and light, male and female. Inspired and influenced by history, mythology, a trip to England, a passion for the environment, and, most of all, his own dreams, Kingfisher has created a recording that mixes instrumental pieces and vocal compositions into an interlocking whole, much like the Vesica Piscis symbol itself.



The Vesica Piscis, shown on the album cover, is simply two linked circles with the outer edge of each reaching to the midway point of the other. The almond-shaped center of the symbol is called a *mandorla* (Latin for "almond", a primeval fertility symbol.) Prevalent for thousands of years in art and architecture, the Vesica Piscis has been symbolic of many things, including a chalice (the Holy Grail); a fish (fertility symbol and icon of the early Christians); the ascension bridge or path between heaven and earth; and the birth passage of the Goddess, surrounded by the crescents of the waxing and waning moon. In Kingfisher's work, the symbol also pertains to trance and dream states, and is an icon of sacred androgyny.



The music on *Vesica Piscis* includes elements of jazz, pop, and new age, but the sound finds a cohesiveness all its own. Kingfisher sings lead vocals and plays keyboards, synth bass, and quartz bowls. On various tunes he is joined by top Los Angeles session musicians, including cellist Martin Tillman, electronic woodwind player Steve Tavaglione, percussionist Steve Forman, drummer Mauricio Lewak, bassist David Sutton, guitarist Tony B, and harpist Gayle Levant. Kingfisher produced the album with engineer and sound designer Greg Townley, a veteran of film and television music, as well as longtime friend and colleague.

Many of the songs on the album were inspired by Kingfisher's lucid dreams: "Sister Falling," "At Night I Fly to Heaven (sometimes France)," "Kelly's Dream in the Rain," "Jesus in the Garden of Bees," "A Forest of Apples," and "Bird Dreams." Two of the tunes are elegies to friends and loved ones lost to AIDS: "Cave," and "Turtle Diary" (which was inspired by the Harold Pinter screenplay of the same name.) "Harvest Fires" is about how hard it is to let go of the last of a relationship, even when it's destroying you; "Always Coming Home" captures the endless universal longing for home, and finding it in love.

In addition to stimulating and affecting his music, Kingfisher's dreams have led him down other paths as well, the latest being NADIS, a website (www.nadis.net) where travelers can go and chronicle their dreams online, and cross-reference their dream imagery with other dreamers planet-wide. A unique sort of search engine allows visitors to title and save groups of related dreams (called "dreamstreams") for other browsers to explore. "The word NADIS — The Numinous Archives/ Dream Interactive System — and the concept for it came themselves from a lucid dream," explains Kingfisher. "Imagine you have a dream about dalmatians and trombones. You log the dream on NADIS, and discover a dozen other people have had similar dreams. So you save that group of dreams as a dreamstream, and call it 'Dogs and Trombones.' Then someone else logs on, reads your dreamstream, goes to bed and continues dreaming where 'Dogs and Trombones' leaves off! What happens when we start sharing dreamscapes on a worldwide basis, when we root up archetypal images and bring them into a waking-world forum? I can barely wait to find out." NADIS is part of the larger Vesica Piscis Labyrinth (www.kingfish.net), a site that, in addition to lyrics, poetry, and music clips, contains dozens of album-related dream diaries, journal entries, and essays.

Kingfisher's journey began in Sacramento, California, where he was born and raised. His earliest years were spent listening to "a strange mélange of music, from Frank Sinatra and Jo Stafford to Benny Goodman and Kay Starr." Kingfisher's first album of his own was *Meet the Beatles*, and soon he was on to a whole new mix: Janis, Hendrix, Gershwin, The Supremes, and later Yes, Carole King, and Joni Mitchell (whom he follows ardently to this day.) Kingfisher started writing poetry at age 10. He began playing piano and writing music at 11, when his family moved to the suburbs and bought an old player piano. Two years later he got an organ. When he was 15, he had the opportunity to go into a studio and record some of his songs, "an event that changed my life." He took a few years of piano and organ lessons, and studied classical theory in school. After high school he landed his first professional gig playing piano for a female impersonator, touring clubs from San Francisco to Los Angeles. In his early twenties, Kingfisher played in a succession of rock bands, and began working with synthesizers.

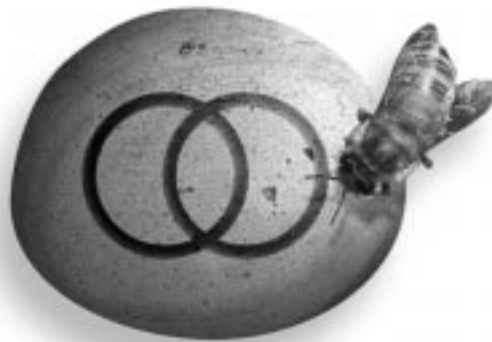
Kingfisher spent ten years in Los Angeles during the Seventies and Eighties. While there, he studied at the prestigious Dick Grove School of Music, which included a year studying piano, followed by a year of composing and arranging, primarily for big bands. This led to a half-dozen years of active session work that included engineering, producing, and playing keyboards on records, jingles, obscure film scores, and publishing company demos. Meanwhile he continued to write his own music, and after moving back to Northern California recorded his first album, *Floating Upstream*, which was released regionally and sold at his concerts. In the early Nineties he began working in multimedia with the San Jose-based EXO Productions, composing for the theatrical pieces *Both Hands*, *Kelly's Dream in the Rain*, and *Unity Gain*, a popular production based on *Floating Upstream* that included several musicians and movement artists floating behind a sixty-foot wide projection surface.

Kingfisher has delved deeply into various mythologies, philosophies, and personal insight works — specifically Buddhism, dream work, meditation, energized breathwork, Gurdjieff, esoteric Christianity, Gnosticism, Celtic folklore, eco-feminism, queer spirituality, deep ecology, gender studies, and paganism. On religion and his own practice, Kingfisher says: "The problem I have with most organized religion is not only the dogma, but the elitism that theirs is somehow uniquely sanctioned, that the world will not be saved until all are converted. That always leads to people being disenfranchised,

if not massacred. My own practice now is a kind of Dharma Gaia Buddhism: working toward mindfulness, non-attachment, and loving kindness, but leaving behind the obsession with transcendence, and focusing instead on honoring the earth and the body.

“The Vesica Piscis symbol became a touchstone for me in creating this recording. It’s that ‘place between’ thing — it operates on so many levels, especially now. There’s a real sense of transition happening everywhere I look, a massive falling away, a seeming imperative to sink or swim; we’re obviously between epochs as a species, and our dreams are hooked into that somehow. My own internal landscape has always been a no-man’s land — strange, buzzing, androgynous, green, and utterly isolated from my outer life. For me this project has been a kind of coming out, from a hidden and timid place within into a volatile outside world. And of course I’m in between when I write poetry and music, when I play and sing.

“I don’t expect to have a dream and write a song about it. Usually the song is in fragments, and the dream rather pulls them together, almost as if the music was a kind of premonition. Dreams or music, I’m not sure which happens first. It doesn’t matter. I listen to my dreams because they occur. Working with dreams is a marvelous technique for getting out of your own way. The dreams themselves see to that. And you never know where they’ll lead you.”



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