

# Songline

Jason Kahn // voice

Recorded January 12, 2015 in Zürich, Switzerland

Recording, liner notes and LP artwork Jason Kahn.

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This record is dedicated to the memory of Mark Trayle (1955 – 2015)

Editions 004

<http://jasonkahn.net/editions>

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*Songline* was recorded during one evening in the rooms of a former Swisscom telephone relay station in Zürich. I decided to use the main room, which was entirely empty. Its linoleum floors, bare walls and many windows made for a very resonant space. Double glass windows sealed off the world outside but many sounds still emanated from somewhere deep in the bowels of the building.

My vocal work goes back a few years now, appearing here and there on various recordings. *Songline* is my first studio recording devoted solely to voice. Each of the four pieces from this session reflects different thematic and technical areas I've been working in. And all pieces are improvised, without any post-recording editing. What the listener hears on this record is what took place in this room.

This was a challenge to myself, to go through these pieces as if I stood before an audience: no stopping, re-starting. To pull through. Which, in retrospect, was much more difficult than I'd anticipated, as when performing live the energy of the audience and the dynamics of the situation tend to propel me through a performance. There is adrenalin and a certain sense of urgency.

All of which I didn't have going for me on the evening I recorded these pieces. I was alone in front of the microphones. I hit the record button and that was it.

What I love about singing is the sense of peril. I'm not a trained singer and I guess my technique is pretty primitive by conventional standards. A lot of what I do is about pushing myself towards the brink of failure, of crashing. That kind of onward thrust towards the cliff. *Can I do this, will I make it through the performance, do I have the stamina, where is this going to go?* All questions which could conceivably run through my mind during a performance, but which never actually make it to my consciousness. Because if they did, I'd seize up. The show would be over.

But these feelings are there when I sing. And each performance somehow feels fresh, like I'm exploring new ground, reaching for the cracks in my vocal chords, pushing the voice to break. And when it does, to go with this, to welcome it. Sometimes I feel in control and sometimes my limitations determine the direction I can take. But mostly I go where my voice will lead me.

When I perform live I feel acutely tuned into the social space of the situation. Which means for me that space between performer and audience. Of course, every performer is aware of this, whatever instrument they play. As with myself, regardless of sitting behind the drums or playing electronics. But with the voice I feel like an exposed nerve. There is nothing to hide behind, no instrument, nothing between me and the listener.

I perform acoustically, so there is not even the option of using the sound system to take refuge in. I'm just there, in front of you. I'm sitting in a chair and singing. And though I sometimes find it a bit terrifying, putting myself through this, I also feel exhilarated by my vulnerability. This is alive, we are sharing this place in time together. Resonating

the social space with my voice. Standing waves of energy.

I feel influenced by much of my work as an electronic musician. The notion of noise and distortion and sounds pulled to their breaking point. But more than this, I feel inspired by the social fabric all around me: all the anguish and joy and the crazy lunacy and dumbness that life is. Sometimes I just want to scream or wail or howl. There is a certain catharsis to this but I just don't want to empty my soul out, vomiting all my innermost feelings for the audience to wade through.

As ambiguous as this all might sound, I want to convey emotion and a sense of being here, being present and that we're all in this together beyond the length of my set or even this life here, moving on to higher ground.

These recordings are dedicated to Mark Trayle, who passed away this year. He was a great inspiration for me, both as an artist and friend.

