

# HRISHIKESH HIRWAY

*Rooms I Used to  
Call My Own*



album artwork

Talking with Hrishikesh Hirway is a deeply touching experience because it always seems like you walk away having learned more about yourself than you knew before. This is why his work has been so evocative across mediums and subject matter: there is a deep love in his desire to truly know the person he is opposite. It's this instinct that has led to his almost-accidental path in becoming a darling of the podcasting world, with his innate ability to establish connection with others and draw out moments of deep humanity.

After releasing four albums as The One AM Radio (his previous moniker as a musician, a self-described “too clever” pun invoking both late nights and radio waves), Hirway’s love of and curiosity about making music led him to start Song Exploder. A Cinderella story of an independent podcast with multiple awards and over 65 million downloads, it started as a personal project: an excuse to talk with his fellow musicians and musical heroes about their creative process.

Now, on Hirway’s new EP and first recorded music under his own name, rather than turn the focus back on himself for his own personal work, he’s taking what he’s learned from his podcasting experience—both through Song Exploder and

his other projects, which include Home Cooking, The West Wing Weekly and Partners—and drawing on collaboration. Each song is a conversation of sorts with everyone he’s brought into the project with him.

Whereas The One AM Radio songs were written solo, every song on this new EP is co-written: three songs with old friend and collaborator Jenny Owen Youngs and the three with new friend John Mark Nelson, whom Youngs introduced him to, saying that she thought they’d work well together. From its conception, this project was borne of friendship.

It was Youngs, incidentally, who was the reason Hirway started making music again. After a long period of fearing he’d lost the ability to write songs (his last song as a solo artist was released in 2012), Youngs—a friend he’d made through the podcasting space—invited him to co-write a song with her for her podcast Buffering the Vampire Slayer. Hirway was so struck by the process that he asked her to co-write a song he’d been thinking about. From there this new partnership was born with Hirway leaning into what he’s learned over and over again from interviewing

musicians for Song Exploder: that collaboration is essential to the music-making process (a lesson Hirway says he was sharing with others, but not heeding himself until years into making the podcast).

For Hirway, the process of making this new EP was a means of drawing from something deeply personal to him, and creating a bridge to someone else through these co-writing collaborations and features. The tracks include contributions from Baths, Jay Som, Kimbra, Dntel, and Yo-Yo Ma. The subjects of the EP are all other people: the people he loves. The loss of his mother hovers in the background of songs about his father, or his wife; it’s in the foreground in “Between There and Here,” about a conversation he and his mother had in a dream, a few weeks after she passed away.

This is the intimate power of Hrishikesh’s work: it’s always a conversation. On the EP the result is as rewarding and fulfilling and intimate as talking to him always is.

As for the moniker change, it’s a maturation of sorts, for both himself and for the world. As Hirway has grown as an artist, he’s gotten less

interested in what he calls “cleverness.” The One AM Radio pursued cleverness in its songwriting, production and even its name. But the name was also a mask that hid his Indian name in hopes of forestalling preconceived notions of what the music might sound like; in hopes that he might fit in.

Now he’s making music without the burden to prove he belongs. He’s stripped away these layers of cleverness. He’s writing songs that simply document his life, and his life is the people he cares about. This EP is the result of a more direct, more honest form of making; one that is more personal and intimate. In this latest period of growth, he’s set aside The One AM Radio. He’s now making music as Hrishikesh Hirway.

– *Jonny Sun*

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT  
JOE COHEN, KRISTA WILLIAMS OR CARLA SACKS 212.741.1000 AT SACKS & CO.,  
JOE.COHEN@SACKSCO.COM, KRISTA@SACKSCO.COM OR CARLA@SACKSCO.COM