



AKHILA & THE ALCHEMISTS

Press Release: *Woe Begone*

Think a mostly curious, occasionally world-weary, voyager navigating life in the anthropocene, and you have *Woe Begone*, a full-length indie rock album by **Akhila & the Alchemists**. Two and half years in the making, and released on September 27, 2021, the record is both 21st-century lament and paean, ranging in mood from dystopic melancholy and despair to childlike wonder at the natural world and the power of the imagination.

A first foray into album creation for 47-year-old singer-songwriter **Akhila Ramnarayan**, not to mention the fulfilment of a childhood dream, *Woe Begone* ripples throughout with musical, literary, artistic, philosophical, and mythic resonances that span cultures and centuries. It was brought to life with the help of five distinctive musical collaborators -- singer-guitarist-composer-producer **Vedanth Bharadwaj**; drummer, multi-instrumentalist, and producer **Doug Carraway**; mridangam player, multi-percussionist, and composer-producer **Praveen Sparsh**; violinist-composer **Shreya Devnath**; and bassist-composer-producer **Paul Jacob**.

All band members are dear friends of lead vocalist Akhila from different stages of her life journey that led her from Chennai, India, to Columbus, OH, USA, for 15 years, and then back again to Chennai. As a collective, they have not met in person during the making of the album, whose first song was written in December 2018. The artists each recorded in their own studios in Chennai, Bangalore, and Columbus, welcoming, even relishing, the process of remote, first-time collaboration and all its attendant challenges. The result is an audacious experiment in crossing geographic, cultural, and musical borders.

The songs on *Woe Begone* pulsate with universal and contemporary themes: mortality, loneliness, climate change, surveillance capitalism, pandemic life, the ravages of



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colonialism, post-apocalyptic futures, heartbreak, laughter, love, strength, survival, and the possibility of reconnection with the natural world. They are driven by an indie-throwback approach in style and production, organically combining 90s alt rock, 80s new wave, classic, and Carnatic (south Indian classical) elements.

Every note in *Woe Begone* brims with affirmation, effortlessly bridging the distance between the performers during production. Playful, pensive, and poignant by turns, the album gives us a new language of hope, a chance to explore the expansive beauty that fills the world when we find new ways of communicating and connecting, of crafting an artistic process that provides solace and healing in dark times, of embracing joy and pain as individual and community.

Each song on the album is accompanied by art from Bangalore-based designer and illustrator **Saloni Sinha**, whose surrealist and whimsical sketches provide the perfect complement to the music.

Performance Credits

Vocals: **Akhila Ramnarayan**

Guitars: **Vedanth Bharadwaj**

Drums, guitars, keys: **Doug Carraway**

Bass: **Paul Jacob**

Violin: **Shreya Devnath**

Percussion: **Praveen Sparsh**

Think Miyazaki - additional vocals: Vedanth Bharadwaj

The Owl and the Pussy Cat - vocal duet: Vedanth Bharadwaj and Akhila Ramnarayan

Apocalypstick - classical guitar: Praveen Sparsh



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Apocalypstick - voices in Tamil coda: Shreya Devnath, Praveen Sparsh, Akhila Ramnarayan

Think Miyazaki, The Owl and the Pussy Cat, Apocalypstick - bass: Doug Carraway

Songwriting Credits

Lyrics: Akhila Ramnarayan

Songwriting and arrangement: Akhila & the Alchemists

Woe Begone was mixed by **Doug Carraway** in Columbus, OH, and mastered by **Brian Lucey** ([Magic Garden Mastering](#)) in Los Angeles, CA.

Woe Begone album art: **Saloni Sinha**



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Press Release: Think Miyazaki

Description

Think Miyazaki is the first single by Akhila & the Alchemists, and is inspired by illustrator Saloni Sinha's artwork titled "Lockdown Jar." The chorus signifies the possibility of flowering our inner worlds even while limited to the confines of our homes or when burdened by life's uncertainties. The chorus also pays playful homage to famed anime filmmaker **Hayao Miyazaki**, as well as two legendary Japanese artists, painter **Katsushika Hokusai** and poet **Matsuo Basho**, with a nod to American poet **Sylvia Plath** and British art rockers **Blur**'s first single, *She's So High* (1990). Akhila wrote the alternating rap verses around two decades before the chorus, during her Ohio days in the aftermath of 9/11. The verses — in the vein of magical realism — were previously set to melody, but are now repurposed as spoken word/rap. The lyrics create a sense of surreal urgency, tension, and despair that contrast sharply with the happy-go-lucky, free spirited, and optimistic chorus. True to its name, *Think Miyazaki* is an eclectic medley comprising several instruments and musical genres. It has elements of pop, indie, and alternative rock that are perfectly complemented by the Carnatic violin and folk-percussive elements, besides the drums, electric guitar, and acoustic guitalele, seamlessly blending eastern and western musical styles.

The song features **Akhila Ramnarayan** on vocals; **Doug Carraway** on drums, electric guitar, keys, and bass; **Vedanth Bharadwaj** on guitalele and backing vocals; **Shreya Devnath** on the violin; and **Praveen Sparsh** on multi-percussion. Some raucous Chennai crows, a nocturnal street dog, and a friendly London blackbird (courtesy Akhila's brother Abhinav) complete the musical ensemble.

Think Miyazaki's single version was mixed by **Doug Carraway** in Columbus, OH, and mastered by **Brian Lucey** ([Magic Garden Mastering](#)) in Los Angeles, CA.



Lyrics: Think Miyazaki

*She be really wacky, think Miyazaki
Hokusai just won't do, Basho tickles too few
butterflies surround her, no bell jar but an arbour
fear not trusty feline, poised to make a beeline
she's so high on life, higher than a kite, drifting in plain sight*

Anger welling deep inside
nails bitten to the quick
peonies that bloom and bubble
cloy and cling and kick
questions delicately posed,
curiously daunting
deliciously haunting

*She be really wacky, think Miyazaki
Hokusai just won't do, Basho tickles too few
butterflies surround her, no bell jar but an arbour
fear not trusty feline, poised to make a beeline
she's so high on life, higher than a kite, drifting in plain sight*

Infidels in cheap hotels
drowning in their drink
tolling bells and gaming hells
bordellos painted pink
this is where we see ourselves
celebrate the seasons,
the work of fickle elves

*She be really wacky, think Miyazaki
Hokusai just won't do, Basho tickles too few
butterflies surround her, no bell jar but an arbour
fear not trusty feline, poised to make a beeline
she's so high on life, higher than a kite, drifting out of sight*

Moons have whiskers, tongues, and tails
serpents hiss and kiss,
they fly and flounder, faint and flail
don't tell me nothing's amiss
I saw your eyes glisten and fill
hope warring with hate
I'm in that moment still

She's so high on life, higher than a kite, drifting out of sight...



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Single Cover Art





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Testimonials

“Beware the enchantment of the instrumentation performed by the Alchemists. If Akhila's voice isn't enough to break your heart, coupling that voice with the Alchemists' textures and soundscapes surely will.”

- Will Falk; poet, essayist, activist.

“Beautiful is the only word I have for this track. It's a layered song with its heart steeped in pop. The experimentation is beautiful with the major melodies spinning a web and complementing the Carnatic violin, which sounds like a rock guitar playing in reverse. The mix and mastering are splendid.”

- Bonnie Chakraborty; vocalist, folk musician, playback singer.

“There's something enchanting yet mysterious in every movement on Think Miyazaki. It pulls the listener in several directions, while impressing upon this kind of airy chorus, which stays with you well after the diverse song has ended.”

- Anurag Tagat; journalist, music critic.

“Think Miyazaki grabbed my attention and got me hooked right from the first note. The music has a wonderful quality that perfectly mirrors the alternating darkness and hope the lyrics portray. There is also an earthy, grounded feel to the song, bolstered by strong, emotive vocals and instrumentation by all the artists.”

- Nisha Rajagopalan; Carnatic vocalist.

About Akhila & the Alchemists

Band social Links: [instagram](#), [facebook](#), [twitter](#), [soundcloud](#), [bandcamp](#), [spotify](#), [apple music](#)

Akhila Ramnarayan

Akhila Ramnarayan is a writer, scholar, theatre actor, and singer-songwriter based in Chennai, India. She trained reluctantly from the age of 3 in Carnatic vocals with her mother and a whole slew of distinguished gurus who gave up in despair as she found ingenious ways to dodge lessons. Akhila went on to study, research, and teach literature in Columbus, Ohio, where she sang in five different indie bands over 15 years, before she came back home to work in the performing arts and academia.



[Link to Instagram, Twitter](#)

Vedanth Bharadwaj

Vedanth Bharadwaj is a singer-guitarist-composer-producer based in Chennai who also plays the banjo and ukulele. He has formal training in Carnatic, Hindustani, and western classical music and specialises in bhakti and sufi traditions. He has composed music for films (*Aruvi*, *His Father's Voice*) and advertisements and serves as the joint director of the Chennai Children's Choir, an initiative by the nonprofit NalandaWay Foundation which connects children in India's poorest districts with the arts.

[Link to Instagram, website](#)

Doug Carraway

Doug Carraway is a musician and video/audio producer based in Columbus, Ohio, with a history of marching band, classical, rock, and jazz. Primarily a rock drummer with a playful yet powerful style, he also knows his way around guitars and bass. For 16 years, Doug played the drums for veteran Columbus art rockers Nude, performing and touring with the band. He is now exploring freelance audio/video projects and the world of mixing and producing music.

[Link to Instagram](#)

Shreya Devnath

Shreya is a Chennai-based Carnatic violinist and vocalist who trained under maestro Lalgudi Jayaraman and is acclaimed for her creative renditions of traditional ragas. Primarily a soloist, she also performs as an accompanist and in **A Carnatic Quartet**, and has recorded and performed music for film and dance. She is a music teacher with a flair for writing and design who, along with percussionist Praveen Sparsh, curates musical outreach programs.

[Link to Instagram](#)

Praveen Sparsh

Praveen is a mridangam exponent, multi-instrumentalist, and music producer who is a disciple of Guruvayur Dorai. He specialises in playing the mridangam, both solo, and as a classical accompanist. A member of **A Carnatic Quartet** and **Sparsh Quartet**, Praveen experiments with different genres, scoring theatrical productions and advertisements, and collaborating with other indie artists. Praveen also curates musical



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outreach programs along with violinist Shreya Devnath. He released his first solo mridangam EP, *Unreserved*, in 2019.

[Link to Instagram](#), [website](#)

Paul Jacob

Paul is a bass guitarist, vocalist, and producer whose interests span alternative, folk, and indigenous music. Originally a member of the legendary Chennai-based rock band Nemesis Avenue, he is the founder of Bodhi Muzzik, a recording studio and music label, a member of noted folk-rock ensembles, and a mentor to young artists. Paul also composes for films and works on music with social themes in collaboration with indigenous and folk artists and agencies.

About the Visual Artist

Saloni Sinha

Saloni is an illustrator and senior experience designer at Frog Design. Her roots lie in visual styling, conceptual thinking, and experimentation, and her work often features surrealist dreamscapes and alternate realities. She also creates album covers, gig posters, and music on the side.

[Link to Instagram](#), [website](#)