



MUSIC ●●●●●

SONICS ●●●●●

Debashish Bhattacharya: *The Sound of the Soul*. Abstract Logix.

Preceded in the rarefied realm of Hindustani slide guitar by his guru, Brij Bhushan Kabra (1937–2018), and the Grammy-winning Vishwa Mohan Bhatt, Debashish Bhattacharya has set a new standard—for himself and Indian classical-crossover styles—with *The Sound of the Soul*. Released on the label founded by jazz-fusion guitarist John McLaughlin, who recruited Bhattacharya into his Remember Shakti band, this is a collection of four dazzling and absorbing pieces that range from eight to 39 minutes in duration, dedicated to the centenary of the late sarod master and global popularizer of Indian music Ustad Ali Akbar Khan (1922–2009). The 60-year-old native of Kolkata plays a 24-string, hollow-neck chaturangui, a lap steel guitar of his own design, with its six main melody strings flanked by two rhythm strings and 14 resonating strings. The setup allows him to elasticize notes with his slide and create sitar- and sarod-like drones and echoes. Accompanied by tabla player Swapan Chaudhuri on three tracks, including the epic meditation “To His Lotus Feet,” and on the opening track by Akhilesh Gundecha on the two-headed pakhawaj hand drum, Bhattacharya puts his dazzling technical facility in the service of feeling and mood, although there are plenty of jaw-dropping improvised passages throughout. **Derk Richardson**

Further Listening: Various: *Slide Crazy!*