

MIZZOU

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[Home](#) » [Summer 2009](#) » [Around the Columns](#) » Roots and blues revival

Around the Columns

Roots and blues revival

Blues, reggae, jazz, African and Romanian folk, gospel and rock: It's a kaleidoscopic cross-section of cultural creativity, and every genre influences the music of Anand Prahlad. The well-traveled English professor's new album *Hover Near* is an extension of those sounds and sensations, but it's also a personal journey.

Prahlad recorded the entire album on his computer, layering instrumental and vocal tracks with recording equipment at home. But that wasn't the original intention. "My first idea was a folk album with just me and the guitar," Prahlad says. "I started playing around with some accompaniment and I liked the results, so I ended up with sometimes nine or 10 tracks on a song."

With firm roots in music — piano as a child in a rural Virginia church and blues guitar as an undergraduate at Virginia Commonwealth University — Prahlad has juggled many styles.

When he arrived at Mizzou in 1990, his work revolved around writing, publishing and teaching poetry, but eventually he focused on his scholarship. Prahlad has written several books, including *African American Proverbs in Context* (University Press of Mississippi, 1996) and *Reggae Wisdom: Proverbs in Jamaican Music* (University Press of Mississippi, 2001) and is editor of *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of African American Folklore* (Greenwood Press, 2006). He is also the author of *Hear My Story and Other Poems* (Berkeley Poets Workshop and Press, 1982).



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Prahlad took a 16-year hiatus from playing music while his studies occupied his time, until one of his students convinced him to resume his relationship with the guitar.

“When I started playing again, I didn’t know if I could still do it,” Prahlad says. “Once I started writing music, there was a flood of songs. It was encouraging.”

The album’s title track, “‘Hover Near’ has to do with the way things are getting in the world,” Prahlad says. “It’s a good idea for people to sink roots and start building community.”

More: www.prahladspace.com

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