



The Iceman strummeth

Motivational speaker Wim Hof, known to his legion of fans for his ability to withstand bone-chilling temperatures, is releasing an album of music, *Freedom Into the Depths*, writes

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nying books, television shows and merchandise ("Get high on your own supply" reads a WHM hoodie) has been given further kudos by its creator's freaky, often record-breaking feats. Hof has run a half-marathon barefoot in the Arctic, and climbed Mount Kilimanjaro (twice) and Mount Everest (well, he got halfway) in hiking boots and a pair of shorts.

He came close to death while attempting to set a new under-ice swimming record of 50m in frozen waters off Finland: "My corneas froze. I lost my direction. By the time a diver grabbed my ankle and took me back to the 50m hole, I was out of my body. I felt peace. I was not afraid to die. But I am afraid not to live."

This shamanic vibe is woven through *Freedom Into the Depths*, an album Hof has co-created with his musical collaborator, Xinjiang-raised, UK-based producer, multi-instrumentalist and guitarist Tahir Burhan, who sits next to Hof during our allocated interview, occasionally getting a word in.

The two men first met in London in 2019, when Hof was hosting a sold-out WHM Experience at the cavernous Camden Roundhouse, and Burhan – then an asthmatic, burnt-out wannabe rock star working in the film industry – went backstage with two guitars in tow.

"We started jamming and I got goosebumps," says Burhan, now a picture of shiny-haired health.

"Wim is a genius of the soul. We share quiet moments, a love of poets like Rumi. I see his huge heart, his belief in humanity and the soul.

"When he sings, I can play. He's the inspiration and I'm the translator bringing what's in his core, and everyone's core, to life."

Can you hear the melody?" Wim Hof, the Iceman, has come in from the cold and is releasing an album of music. *Freedom Into the Depths*, it's called, and members of a small, diverse audience in a basement screening room at a posh hotel in Soho, London, are the first people in the world to have a listen. The music – a mix of folksy anthems, Sanskrit-inspired chants, and rock and global influences including flamenco guitar – has just finished playing over a montage of images including a swirling cosmos, a giant AI human eye and shots of Hof sitting in ice, swimming under sheet ice and leading a conga line of happy shirtless backpackers through the snow.

When the lights come up Hof is standing before us in shorts, shoes with no socks and an orange T-shirt screen-printed with a painting of a charging blue bull elephant. The melody of which he is speaking is a metaphor, an invitation to tap into our deepest potential, where lies our liberation.

"Until you hear the melody, you have to keep listening," says the bearded Dutchman, 66, who has seven children, 3.5 million Instagram followers and an alleged 90 million practitioners who follow him daily. Who, when not touring the world extolling the benefits of the Wim Hof Method, divides his time between Amsterdam and Queensland's Noosa hinterland with his Australian-born second wife, Erin, whom he met on a mountainside at one of his own retreats in Poland.

"Listen with your whole heart and you become the master of your mind. You find the key to your soul."

He puffs out his chest. "You think this in an overstatement?" he booms in his big raspy voice, which is surprisingly rich and mellifluous when he's singing. "Then challenge me!"

We blink. No one here, not the boxing promoters or wellness influencers, not the young Manchester magician who wants to dazzle Hof with his trick of turning fire into ice, or the silver fox expereussionist from Pink Floyd and IOCC (Hof's celebrity fans also include Oprah Winfrey, Tom Cruise, Coldplay and the entire New Zealand All Blacks team), wants to square up to this charismatic wild man with the comb-over, weatherbitten nose and manic zeal for what a cold cure can do.

There is certainly no disputing Hof's ability to withstand bone-chilling temperatures by adjusting his body's thermostat, battling inflammation and fending off all sorts of mental and physiological ills in the process.

The way he tells it, "No one listened until we proved it through science," says Hof, who in 2014 was injected with a dead strain of *e-coli* by researchers at Radboud University Medical Centre in The Netherlands, keen to test Hof's claim that he could shake off flu through concentrated focus and deep breathing. Others in the experiment experienced nausea, chronic aches, vomiting. Hof had the briefest of headaches.

"They said I was superhuman, a freak of nature," he bellows. "I told them, 'Anyone can do it. Give me a group of people and I will train them in the freezing mountains for four days and get them back to their strong inner nature!' And I did! Now I get 80-year-olds coming on my weekends, and after an afternoon and 10 minutes in an ice bath they feel relaxed and powerful."

A glare. "The ice takes away ego. You're not thinking, just doing. That is our true energy at work."

The efficacy of the Wim Hof Method, with its three pillars (deep breathing, cold exposure, a focused mindset) and accompa-



Dutch motivational speaker and extreme athlete Wim Hof, aka the Iceman, left and above; far left and below, Hof with his musical collaborator Tahir Burhan, who says: 'We started jamming and I got goosebumps'



Hof – who has been emitting a low hum while Burhan talks – flashes a grin. "Aw, thanks, brother," he says.

Music was Hof's first love. As a teenager he was into the Beatles, the Stones, Led Zeppelin. He busked on the streets of Amsterdam, singing self-penned songs such as the rollicking Crazy Like a Monkey and Freedom ("Together we are searching, this time for sure, finding freedom"), the album's energetic first single, which he and (mainly) Burhan have transformed into a 10-minute sonic pilgrimage buoyed by guitars, synth samples and traditional instruments including Indian bansuri flute, Persian hammered dulcimer and West African djembe drum.

"Native music is the real music and often used to put people

into a trance," says Hof, a yoga and meditation buff who, like the Beatles, was inspired by the Maharishi and followed the hippie trail in India.

"We [in the West] are no longer part of it. Our colonial imperialistic mind took over and we stole their cultures, their lands, replaced it with what? Entertainment! Five hours of TV a day!

"So, we are waking the soul itself with music that carries a message and has the tools. We're like the troubadours of the Middle Ages bringing the news. This is a revolution!"

He waves his arms about; later, for the hell of it, he does the splits.

The news, in part, is that Big Pharma, even the profit-driven

universities, won't acknowledge the Wim Hof Method precisely because it is simple, powerful and free.

It's expected that followers of the Iceman, this guru-not-guru ("India sees me as the biggest guru nowadays but I say, 'F.k that! Find the guru within!'), will rush to buy *Freedom Into the Depths* when it's released in January. (*Freedom* the single is out now.)

Fans who have attended Hof's workshops already know of his penchant for a cheery, guitar-led song and are familiar with the singing voice he keeps supple, he tells me, by carousing in the (cold) shower.

Most followers are aware, too, that a biopic film about Hof (who aged seven fell asleep in the snow, impulsively jumped into an icy canal at 17 and in 1995 turned to cold water therapy after his first wife, Olaya, mother of four of his children, committed suicide) is on hold after allegations of abuse by his former partner, Caroline, the mother of his son Noah, 22.

Hof and his team, including his sons Enamh and Erik, have rejected the claims, which were published in September 2024 in *de Volkskrant*, a Dutch newspaper they took to court for libel and slander. In July the court decided in favour of *de Volkskrant*. (Hof is appealing.) If nothing else, Hof's daily breathwork, like his extreme athletic stunts, has helped him withstand the pressures of those out to get him. A \$US67m lawsuit that blamed him for the wrongful 2022 death of a teenaged girl who died while allegedly practising Hof's breathing method in her pool was thrown out for lack of evidence.

“Native music is the real music ... Our colonial imperialistic mind took over and we stole their cultures, their lands

What of the scientists who reckon the WHM can cause cardiac arrhythmia? Hof rolls his eyes. "What of all the people who come to me from all over the world, when I'm in airports, or walking in the street, that tell me 'You have changed my life. I was in the dark and you got me out of there.' Soon I will be doing my retreat in Australia where I have citizenship and my beautiful wife and our two children."

He whips out his phone, whose ringtone was earlier revealed to be a startling duck's quack quack, and shows me a photo of a cherubic blond-haired toddler. He tells me he loves living in the Queensland bush where, when not reading scientific research papers, he likes to paint and screenprint ("I made this," he says proudly, stretching out his elephant T-shirt) and is teaching himself to play the piano.

"I love it. I play very simple songs. You don't have to follow the conventional route. I had no money when I was young; I bought a cheap guitar and taught myself. I realised that with just one or two strings, you can move the frequencies around you."

Another grin. "You can connect with people's souls."

The Wim Hof Weekend is November 1-2, Wilsons Creek, NSW. Wim Hof is touring Australia in 2026.