



Ajak Kwai announces new album, single and launch show

Let Me Grow My Wings - single release Mon March 22; album release and launch at The Night Cat on Fri April 23

PLEASE REPLY TO REQUEST YOUR REVIEW/AIRPLAY COPY OF LET ME GROW MY WINGS BY AJAK KWAI

Australia's renowned songwoman of contemporary South Sudanese music, Ajak Kwai will release her fifth studio album, supported by a live album launch at Melbourne's Night Cat on Friday, April 23.

With Ajak's dedication as a passionate activist for refugees in Australia, the album is aptly titled Let Me Grow My Wings, an eclectic collection of twelve self-penned songs which reflect her observations, influences and connections since moving to Australia in the late nineties.

Performed in English, Arabic and Ajak's native language, Dinka, the record sees Ajak honouring the traditions of her homeland, yet defying stereotype in what is best described as "modern South Sudanese rock" (credit to award-winning composer, songwriter and producer Jan Skubiszewski who mixed and performed additional instruments on five songs).

Backed by a pulsing rhythm section, piano and guitars feature throughout, with rhythmic rock gems like the opener, Love Not Bitterness (sung in English, urging people of the world to choose love over hate), Cool (Track 3 - Ajak's message to young people, sung in English and Dinka, telling them they don't need to act the fool to be cool, Life Is A Mystery - sung entirely in Dinka - in which Ajak questions why she ended up in Australia whilst so many of her people lost their lives (the final track on the album), and the album title track (Track 2) - one that Ajak says she feels closest to and is the first single off this album - in which she expresses (also in English and Dinka) her desire for the people in her community to have the same opportunities and be treated equally in Australia.

Then there are emotive ballads such as In Our Hearts (Track 7), featuring the Yogyakarta State University College of Music Choir, with a poignant message (in English and Dinka) that we are all the same, no matter what colour or race and Don't Make The Woman Cry, Ajak's dedication to women, urging suppressors to choose kindness over harm.

Says Ajak, 'My experiences in Australia inform my songs and my music. Music is a universal language – maybe one day we will forget our differences and hold the hands of one another.

'This album is a collection of those hopes and dreams for an integrated future where we are one and can share and be accepted for what my community has to offer.'

Ajak also explains, "It has taken years to complete this album, as I've kept getting distracted with my work as a community promoter and educating people at the Migrant Resource Centre, which takes me to many areas of Melbourne'.

She hopes that by taking time out to concentrate on her own art and completing this album, she will inspire people with her music and lyrics to create a more positive environment for themselves.

Let Me Grow My Wings will be available worldwide on CD and download, on all major online stores from April 23, 2021.

In addition to Ajak's band, the album's impressive credits include Jan Skubiszewski, Nicky Bomba, Simon Lewis, Boris Conley, Chris Basile (prominent on guitar throughout), Kate Madden, Robin Mai and Aaron Wilson (who has also directed her forthcoming music video for the title track). Filmmaker and Ajak's longtime friend, Margot McDonald executive produced the project. The songs were recorded at Nicky Bomba Studios, Jan Skubiszewski's Red Moon Studios, and Simon Lewis' Panorama Studios, where it was also mastered.

In her live shows, Ajak, with her stunning, distinctive vocals fronts a four-piece rock band consisting of lead guitarist Kumar Shome, Matt Erickson on bass and Kofi Kundpe on drums/percussion, occasionally joined by special guest musicians.

As well as being ambassador for the Melbourne International Arts Festival, she has performed at major festivals around Australia and internationally, including Mofo, WOMADelaide, Panama Festival and the Tamar Valley, Port Fairy and Woodford Folk Festivals.

Ajak is also a popular broadcaster in Melbourne, as host of a weekly show on one of the city's much-loved community radio stations, PBS. Airing each Monday between 1300 and 1500 AEST, the show - called Come Together - focuses on music that promotes love and acceptance and on bringing her community into the radio realm.

The single, Let Me Grow My Wings will be released on Monday, March 22, ahead of the album launch on Friday, April 23. Ajak will be joined onstage by her live band plus special guests and supports to be announced. Tickets are \$20+bf or \$25 on the door, available at thenightcat.com.au.

For more information about Ajak Kwai, check: www.ajakkwai.com

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LISTINGS INFO:

Friday, April 23

Ajak Kwai + special guests TBA

The Night Cat, 137-141 Johnston St, Fitzroy

T: 03 9417 0090

Entry: \$20+bf; \$25 on the door

Tickets: thenightcat.com.au

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