

Kindred The Family Soul Are A Couple Of Friends (Interview)



Aja Graydon and Fatin Dantzler's work as Kindred The Family Soul is a constant work in progress and has given them the status of being the only contemporary husband and wife R&B partnership. Their mixture of vintage soul methods, Old School hip-hop and lyrics that span family, everyday struggles, and the vulnerability that comes from publicly sharing their commitment to love has made their music favored among those who like grown-up soul. [A Couple Of Friends](#) is their fifth studio album and the title is a testament to one of the most critical aspects of their relationship. The Philadelphia natives spoke to Kickmag about the album, their family and the growing importance of community work in their life.

I saw the video for "Everybody's Hustling" and you're talking about the 99 percent and wearing hip-hop gear, why the look and topic?

Fatin: The message is more about right now hip-hop and mainstream music basically glorifies money and having money. Everybody's looking like they're rich and they're getting it and the 99 percent of people who look at the music and listening to the music feel a little left out because that's not necessarily what their lifestyle mirrors. So that's why we thought it was important to discuss that everyday hustle and celebrate that. To show that hope and that their struggle has value. There are people living that life that don't hear about themselves.

[youtube id="UpdKrknL1i8"]

What is the concept behind *A Couple Of Friends*?

Aja: The concept behind *A Couple Of Friends* is just realizing weâ€™ve been through ups and downs travelling and working together and really it just boils down to the fact that we are friends. We are two friends walking the earth together but also our relationship with our fans has really kind of mirrored the kind of relationship you would have with your couple friends. The friends you invite over to your house for cocktails or you might go out to dinner or a movie or a double-date with or you might bounce your relationship issues off of. My husband and I describe another aspect of it that I think is really really important this is our fifth recorded album now weâ€™ve built a friendship with the people we make music with and that we made this album with a couple of friends. The same people that weâ€™ve been making records with all along and so thatâ€™s a blessing and a musical marriage thatâ€™s come full circle.

What can you tell me about the 22 minute film you are developing to go with the album?

Fatin: Jamal Hill is the director of the film. It goes with the songs more or less. Itâ€™s always been important to us to have visuals to the music. Our music has a very visual feel to it, to begin with, in order to bring that to life a lot of times you have to let people see it. Weâ€™ve been trying to do something similar to this since the beginning of our careers with *Surrender To Love* and we were never really able to bring that to light. A couple of young and up and coming actors are a part of it like Ronnie Graham and Chill Moody, who is a rapper thatâ€™s also on the record called â€œHere We Go.â€ Heâ€™s a rapper from the city of Philly and heâ€™s really really good. The music community here is very small and interrelated and very supportive of one another. Jamal Hill has a film coming out later this year called *Brotherly Love* starring Keke Palmer and Romeo and a couple of other young actors so he lent his talents to the project. Itâ€™s really

nice, itâ€™s really special itâ€™s not an action thriller or anything.

Aja: We donâ€™t walk away from any exploding cars!

Have you considered a relationship/family book?

Fatin: Weâ€™ve been asked that question I donâ€™t know if it would be a relationship/family book. I think we have something to share as authors in some ways.

Aja: We would have to find the right way to do that. The way that feels authentic to us because I think we donâ€™t want to advise other people on what to do in their relationship. I think for us, weâ€™ve always had to find our own way. And I think that sometimes that thereâ€™s a perception of other peopleâ€™s relationships that will actually screw your relationship up. We donâ€™t want to become that element that puts all this pressure on some other couple to live up to some image that we probably wouldnâ€™t be held up to. We try so hard to be transparent in our music so that we donâ€™t do that to couples because we want them to succeed. As soon as we find a way to do it in a way that feels authentic and fair then weâ€™ll do it.



So Iâ€™m guessing â€œMomma Said Clean Upâ€ is something from the kids?

Aja: My husband and I are on the social networks and I was taping my kids one day and they were just making up songs about doing chores. I put it on Instagram and it got like a bunch of hits and people were like going crazy. So I gave my husband the audio and he took it to the studio and Vidal Davis he said just for fun, why donâ€™t we put a beat on it so my husband says no man Iâ€™m not gonna do it Iâ€™m going to have my son do it." So our producer Vidal got the vocals and put

that together and we just thought it was so funny.

Fatin: It was like the torch was passed for a few seconds, but itâ€™s also like you asked if â€œOne Day Soonâ€ was about the kids those two songs are together I guess that whole hip-hop generation young approach. Itâ€™s also our way of saying that what our children like is important to us too. Itâ€™s a part of in some ways what we do and thereâ€™s an element there of remaining fresh and relevant to their generation. Which is no different from other musicians because as time progresses all of those things you have to stay current. You have to stay true to yourself in your lane, but you also have to remember to be inclusive of whatâ€™s happening to some degree. That was our way of using them to infuse that into where we are.

You have a guest appearance from Valerie Simpson on the song, â€œA Couple Of Friendsâ€ how did the collaboration happen?

Aja: Weâ€™ve been blessed throughout our career and in the early part of our career we were introduced to Ashford & Simpson. And that kind of developed a relationship that turned into a friendship with the two of them. And on our last album, *Love Has No Recession*, we wanted to do a song with them both, but at the time we werenâ€™t able to pull it together and that was always a bit of a bummer that after all these years we werenâ€™t able to do a record together. We did the vocals on â€œA Couple Of Friendsâ€ and my husband was like, â€œWe really need to get Valerie on this record.â€ And she really is a beautiful piano player so that being the main ingredient of the track we thought it would be a good addition to have her on the record. It came together quite well it was beautiful, but not in her words not a memorial type thing, but more like a good thing and loving. She just kind of wraps her emotion around it. It came together nice and organically.

Did you write â€œOne Day Soonâ€ for your children?

Aja: I think it didnâ€™t start out like that I know for sure

that I approached my verse in that way because I felt like my husband's verse was more of a call to all young people. When I heard his verse I said you know I will go specific. I think with our children being older now our oldest child just turned 15. In just a few years he'll be going off to college and it's kind of helping him to understand who he is as he grows into a man. What he needs to know going off into the world has to support his esteem and for him to know that the world is so much bigger than the four walls we raised him in. And I think that conversation is missing with a lot of our young people. I always told my son that I love him and that he's great, but I never told him specifically in a mature way. I wrote a very detailed letter to him about all of the traits and characteristics about him that I feel are amazing. And I realized that that conversation we had is missing with young people. What is special about them? We live in a world where people are special but no one knows what's so special about me so they feel left out of the conversation.



You talked about how "Momma Said Clean Up" was about connecting with the hip-hop of the younger generation with your family but "Here we go" is a more mature hip-hop song, what is the story behind the song?

Aja: I love the story behind this song because this song originally had a totally different beat and the hook, "here we go" was written to that beat and my husband was like, "You know what that reminds me of?" He was like "Here we go here we here we go" (Run DMC) and he loves classic hip-hop. So we went back and re-tooled the track to include that inspiration from him and I love the outcome. I think it's fantastic and way better than what we started with. I think it speaks stylistically to who we are in our hearts so much that we love hip-hop music we grew-up on it. It was the music of our youth and our young adulthood and we still listen to it. And for us to be able to incorporate it made it very much like

Kindred but clearly hip-hop.

Fatin: All the way down to the guest appearance from Chill Moody again, an up and coming emcee from the city of Philadelphia. He's an emcee who, unlike his peers, his content and the things he writes about and his positivity it fits in and blends with the Kindred sound. He's different in the world of hip-hop as we're different in the world of soul.



Philadelphia is legendary for its soul and hip-hop roots, what are some things about your hometown that have influenced you?

Fatin: Mainly the music growing up heavily on The Sound Of Philadelphia from Gamble and Huff. Now I've gotten to know a lot of the musicians and artists who made that music. And the fabric of their songs being a part of my life and them specifically being a part of my life. Also, their stories and musicians who have gone on to great successes in the past 20 years here in the city. From going to school with Boyz II Men, Amel Larrieux, Christian McBride seeing all those different artists. The Eves, The Roots and the Patti LaBelle's and the Teddy Pendergrasses the Vivian Greens and Musiq Soulchilds, Jaquars and Beanie Sigels, Freeway and these people we're all kind of right here bumping elbows with one another in the same places. Jill Scotts and Jazzy Jeffs and Fresh Princes they all are interwoven deep into the thread and you feel like a special part of a tapestry making your music and making your contribution. Making sure that you are taking it seriously to have a deep appreciation and putting your best foot forward.

What's next for Kindred?

Aja: I had a really good time putting together the live show around this new album. We're super-excited about the work. We're constantly making music, but spreading our wings into

community service an important project for the both of us. And trying our best to raise beautiful young women beautiful young men who we can send out into the world and take our legacy even further.

Kindred The Family Soul is on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#)