

Rapper Naya Ali Is Getting Ready For Godspeed (Interview)



Naya Ali has been building her profile as a rapper in her native Canada over the past couple of years and is starting to reach her momentum. Her mini rasp and blazing delivery gave life to her country's Park Canada 2019 campaign promoting outdoor activities with the widely-streamed song ["Ready To Go."](#) She is having her best year yet with a performance at Canada's Osheaga Festival that was headlined Janelle MonAie and Childish Gambino after opening for Pusha T and Playboy Carti at last year's Mural Festival. Her visual game is the best it's ever been with the release of the conceptual clip for "Get It Right" which is about reaching the next milestone in her life. The fire heard in her voice makes it hard to believe she took a break from rapping before making the decision to fully commit to being an artist. Ali opens up in this interview about how she started writing, Drake's influence on Canadian rap and how he's become an ambassador by default, her career moves this year and the forthcoming *Godspeed* album.Â

How did you start rapping?Â

I started writing poetry when I was in my teens and the more I fell in love with rap and hip hop the more it gave me an itch to give it a shot. And so I did.

Who were you listening to then and now?

I grew up on country and Motown music, but my first introductions to hip hop was through Diddy and the whole Bad Boy era. The first album I bought was Nelly's *Country Grammar*, and I was into Eve, Pac, Lauryn Hill, Dre. Right now, I'm into J.Cole, Drake, Tory Lanez, SchoolBoy Q, Kendrick Lamar, and a lot of Afro-beats and Soca It helps me cleanse my palette.

What is the Canadian rap scene like? Has Drake influenced the scene?Â

Right now, it's has a strong grip on the rap scene in general. There are a lot more opportunities for Canadian artists than 10 years ago. The States are not only a lot more open to the music that comes from here, but I feel like they welcome it as a refreshing addition to the culture. This is definitely due to Drake's influence by exporting Canadian music on a massive scale while opening doors for other artists to access the world scale.

I know you are based in Montreal but were born in Ethiopia, is there anything about your Ethiopian past that influences your music?Â

Well my Ethiopian heritage is beyond my past, it's my present, it's part of who I am for the rest of my life. There isn't a direct sonic influence on my music, but it stays that the different instruments I grew up on, the unique vocal arrangements, etc. are all important factors to who am as an artist today. When I listen to traditional sounds, it gives raises my vibration and calms my spirit, it reduces the

noise so I can focus.

Are there women in rap you look up to?

I always looked up to Lauryn Hill, Eve, Missy.

What does it feel like to have moved quickly from being unsigned to signing with Coyote/Universal and performing on festival stages headlined by Childish Gambino and Janelle Mon ie and opening for Pusha T and Playboi Carti?

It feels like things moved so quickly of course, but the truth is I ve waited all my life to become the woman and artist I need to be in order for the pieces of the puzzle to fall so seamlessly. I ve already envisioned a lot of things that have happened and believed that they already did before their physical manifestation. So, once they manifest, it s just more confirmation from the Universe that I am on the right path.

The video for "Get It Right" just came out, what is the song about and can you elaborate on the video's concept?

The record is a sonic illustration of how I changed my life when I changed my mind. I freed myself when I realized that I was always free. That s the fire that feels amazing. When you truly embrace your authority there s is nothing that is not yours already, you just have to go figure out how to go get it. For the video, I was inspired by the works of Jordan Peele s *Get Out* and Stanley Kubrick s visual composition. The storyline is about being my own savior and breaking free from the sunken place where I felt trapped and limited. Beyond the storyline, I wanted to contribute to the culture and create an innovative piece that would highlight black excellence.

[youtube id="6UkRD4ZVUHU"]

What can you tell me about your album? Is there a title?

The album is called *GODSPEED*, and it's the second phase of my ascent. *Higher Self* the EP, was about unearthing my power and finally realizing its existence. Now, the album is about what where am I going to allow my power to take me. It's going to take me where I already am in my mind. It's all about timing.

When does it come out?

Early 2020.

Keep Up With Naya Ali at her [Official Site](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#)