

MK Asante-My Victory Feat. Maya Angelou

“My Victory” is from the forthcoming soundtrack to MK Asante’s 2013 award-winning memoir, *Buck*. The music is produced by J.Dilla and it’s from his [Rebirth Of Detroit Instrumentals](#). Maya Angelou’s vocals are lifted from [The Black Candle](#) which is a 2008 documentary about African-American culture and Kwanzaa directed by Asante. *THE BUCK: ORIGINAL BOOK SOUNDTRACK* will be released to the public for free in the Fall.

R.I.P. Maya Angelou

[youtube id="Jq0qo50LSZ0"]

Poet, author, civil rights activist and professor Maya Angelou passed today at her home in North Carolina. Angelou became famous after the 1969 publication of her first autobiography, *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*. She would write a total of 7 memoirs, 3 books of essays and several books of poetry. In the '60's she worked with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as the Northern Coordinator of SCLC and she also helped Malcolm X with his Organization of Afro-American Unity briefly before he was murdered. Angelou, who received several honorary doctorates, taught at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where she held the first lifetime Reynolds Professorship of American Studies. In 1993 she read “On The Pulse Of Morning” which was commissioned President Bill Clinton at his inauguration. Before she became an author with the help of her friend James Baldwin, she was a dancer and nightclub singer. Angelou’s observations on race, America and

humanity were respected by her peers and successive generations. Her high profile friendship with Oprah Winfrey gave her a bit of celebrity and kept in the mainstream most recently with Winfrey's Master Class series. Dr. Angelou was just as cognizant of hip-hop as she was the blues and several rappers and entertainers from the hip-hop generation respected her and flocked to her home in North Carolina. At different points in her long career as a wordsmith she also worked as a film producer, television producer, playwright and film director.

The Floacist Talks Rise Of The Phoenix Mermaid (Interview)



It's been almost a decade since Natalie Stewart last recorded as one-half of Floetry with schoolmate Marsha Ambrosius. Their short but potent run started in their native London, landed in Philly and brought a rare spoken soul bohemianism to Black pop. Floetry joined a line of Black Brits like Slick Rick and Monie Love whose craft blended well enough into American culture to make them sound like native insiders. Stewart's Floetic muse outlived the group and took her personalization of the spoken word form into solo territory that now has three albums to her credit. *Rise Of The Phoenix Mermaid* is a sensually executed feminist humanist expression

of where she is in her life now and her third collaboration with [Chris "Big Dog" Taylor](#). In this interview she discusses the new album, Floetry and her next creative stop.

What is the significance behind the title, Rise Of The Phoenix Mermaid?

The title came to me very much from a meditation just about where I am in my life, what cycle I'm experiencing right now. So the title is about the harmony of the self. I have the Phoenix representing the fire being and the mermaid representing the water being and that would be the left brain and the right brain, the body and the soul. The two aspects of myself and being in harmony and when the water rises that's the kind of quantum physics connectivity between all aspects so it's very much about a cipher and a cycle of time. It's this era, it's the Rise of The Phoenix Mermaid.

When we usually think of the Phoenix we usually think of rising from the ashes, but you threw some water in it, so how does that define the concept of the album?

Well you'd be right when you say when we think of the Phoenix we think of ashes, it's the being that goes through that part of the fire and comes out on the other end that fire is the purification of self. How that concept relates in this journey I come to find myself as a solo recording artist something I was never trying to be. From a point of poetry the poetic structure and the percussive structure and what happens when you bring those together. It had areas of experiences and challenges and things of the ego so that's how it all comes together to do with the journey that has been manifested and the more ancient aspect of self. It is about the rising of the flame but that flame is from the ocean like a volcano surrounded by water. The harmony of the two elements you can take of fire and water and what happens when you find harmony between these elements what being is manifested.

In the song “Grandma” you talk about how your grandmother combined her Jamaican heritage with her love of the Queen, could you tell me more about that?

How African people came to know themselves as Jamaican people and after Jamaica’s indigenous people were displaced by Europeans and first The Spanish and then the English who circle around the country and therefore there’s quite a connection between the African diaspora that the Jamaican people have made in their connection to the British monarchy, which was actually the sovereign nation of Jamaica and the African people and the common Jamaicans also. That’s where that connection comes from my grandmother’s generation they may have come over in the Windrush era after the war to come and be a part of this commonwealth in England at one point which, seemed to be running a large part of the planet but that’s my grandmother’s connection in being aligned with the queen. And I think there’s also aside from that the inspiration a female can take from seeing a queen or a princess or an astronaut or whoever.



Why did you choose the feminist spelling of “Womyn”?

Thank you for that question. I wasn’t really looking to describe woman as she relates to the male articulation of what a woman is or the patriarchal understanding of what woman is. It’s that total celebration of the matriarch. All the way from the divine female representation. The reason I chose to spell woman that way is because I was really looking to explore woman aside from the patriarchal understanding.

You’ve talked about the problems that Black artists face in the American music industry, would you say that British industry is similar at all?

There are major differences between the UK and the U.S. The first being numbers. I was signed by the American music

industry that Floetry was able to be a part of. I haven't only had negative experiences in the American music industry, I think it's just a part of what comes to people when they are in these particular environments. The UK is different again because of numbers. The music in England it wasn't something I was put off of but I was more on the stage with my performance with poetry. With that being said Soul II Soul, Sade, Omar there's many people I could call who have made such an impact and such a connection to artists that follow up from the U.S. in the neo-soul movement Erykah Badu, D'Angelo, Maxwell, who paid quite large homage to those artists who came from the UK. The numbers that we make up here in terms if you like the Black community is challenging because then you have the African-American population so right now it becomes very difficult to be signed. We have the Jay-Z's and the Beyonces and that stream being pushed through so it makes it very difficult for Black British emcees to create a world for themselves. But back in France, where France has a stipulation that a certain percentage of the music played on the radio must be of French origin, it makes it more set for the people to create movements that can keep them going. All of the things connect in certain types of ways.

[youtube id="Up7ZYzV0PTk"]

Why do you think Floetry was and is still so popular?

I think that because music is older than the music industry and art is much more poignant and powerful than just the idea of just doing it.

I know you have been very open and clear about reuniting Floetry and have attempted to do so in the past, is that something that gotten closer to reality?

I've tried to do that three times, most recently in January of this year. When Marsha released her first piece of art it was called *Neo Soul Is Dead*. Marsha doesn't want to do

Floetry she wants to do something else which is what sheâ€™s doing now. I think time and hindsight has helped me to really understand that because there are a few songs that Marshaâ€™s done now that they just wouldnâ€™t fit into the Floetry ethos at all. Different vibrations, so as far as a Floetry reunion, I think the best part is I have no interest in performing Floetry songs without Marsha or find a replacement. Iâ€™m very happy with what we created and happy with how we performed it. Iâ€™m at peace not a day goes by where I donâ€™t see online and hear somebody make a comment reminiscing about Floetry. But as I said Marshaâ€™s first project is called *Neo Soul Is Dead* I donâ€™t think she has any interest in Neo soul or Floetry.

How long have you been away from the stage, Iâ€™m trying to imagine what your stage show for this album will be like?

Good question. Iâ€™m a performance artist so being away from the stage is quite different. But itâ€™s something Iâ€™ve come to understand now by taking this time Iâ€™m really looking forward to performing this catalog at this point. Iâ€™m all for the live aspect, the jam. One of the seasonal questions with me and Floetry was How many things? We just did a track something with a track you canâ€™t do this with a track. We did the Soul Train Awards once and they were like â€œMime withâ€¦ â€œMime?â€¦ â€œHow am I supposed to mime this song?" *laughs* So it will be with a live band.

I noticed for this album you don't have any featured artists. Who might you want to create with in the future?

I love collaborations, this is actually the first time in my life in my whole recording career where I feel is a collaboration between myself and Chris â€œBig Dogâ€¦ Davis because we created this entire project together in two weeks. I deliver melodic verse I deliver different styles and there wasnâ€™t anywhere I could hear features. But there are plenty

or artists I would love to work with. I am a huge fan of Gregory Porter I would love to create something with him. Omar, Fiona Apple it would be a very long list if I got into it.

What's next?

The next thing I am getting into is my literature. So that's the first calling I ever had. I have a novel or two in me and that will probably be my next journey. I need to get back to the stage as well. It's been quite a journey engulfed in music and I'm just kind of growing as a person. And I think now being the performance artist that I am it's really about embracing everything mixed media, paint, poetry etc.

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XL Recordings Is Releasing A New Gil Scott-Heron Album

[youtube id="HiEST26-bcc"]

XL Recordings is releasing a new album of unheard songs from Gil Scott-Heron that were recorded in 2008 during the *I'm New Here* sessions. The recordings are stripped down versions of some of past material, including this version of "Alien (Hold On Your Dreams)." XL chose to make the announcement today on what would have been Gil Scott-Heron's 65th birthday. *Nothing New* will be released exclusively in 12" vinyl on the April 19th Record Store Day.