

Watch Nova Morph Into The Undead In CTL Video

Watch Afrobeats guru Nova and his love interest transform into vampires in his video for “CTL.” The artist collaborated with designer Damola Rufai on the AI-assisted clip that has him appear as a human in one frame but turn into a contemporary-looking Dracula with the moving of pixels. The premise will remind some of Eddie Murphy’s *Vampire In Brooklyn* which was also about a Black bloodsucker cultivating romance in the city. Nova embraced the technology with Rufai because, as he states in a press release he did not feel as confident in front of the camera after experiencing an injury to his jaw last year. Their work on the video is one of the less controversial uses of AI as the music and film industries are trying to figure out how to best use the technology. “CTL” which stands for Cross That Line blends R&B, hip-hop and Afrobeats into a dreamy ballad. Toya Aru produced the tune that promises to make fans out of the most casual listener.

Nova Collaborates With Fasina For Can’t Complain

Nova and his frequent collaborator Fasina have linked again but this time it’s for his latest single “Can’t Complain.” The duo take turns making romantic promises to their women over producer BeatsByDamie’s dreamy vibes and delicate snare drums. Their words and music together create a feeling of tipsiness and visions of couples dancing under a night sky filled with

stars. Nova states in a press release that “Can’t Complain” was his way of creating music that he and all his friends could listen to when they hang instead of their usual battle over who controls the sounds. On the first listen, the assumption is that their intentions are solely for intimate times but “Can’t Complain” has the dual advantage of offering love and communal energy of a party at the same time.Â The single is another preview on the way to the release of Nova’s album *S.T.A.Y. II* later this year.Â

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Nova Talks New Album, Afrobeats & Home



Nova like so many artists of the past year has used the seclusion brought on by the pandemic to enjoy and delve even deeper into his creative work. His last full-length project, the *S.T.A.Y.* EP was released in 2019. The native Nigerian has been living in Toronto and using his new residence to build upon his Afrobeats sound that melds sonic parts of the diaspora together into song. The genre which uses electronic sounds and acknowledges things like hip-hop is different from the organic horns and unaltered voices of Afrobeat which is credited to Fela Kuti and Tony Allen. As a millennial Nigerian Nova is an artist in the midst of both approaches. This year he is getting ready for the follow-up to *S.T.A.Y.* and today “Precious Diamond” featuring Katasha J is the first

preview into the album. Nova spoke to me about his new music, the growth of the Afrobeats sound, life in Lagos, Fela Kuti and how Toronto has influenced him.

“I think it’s a great time to be an African artist”

Is Precious Diamond about love only? And how did it come together with Katasha J?

It came together through my cousin I was hanging out with him and his housemate and he told me he just met this artist names Katasha. I had never heard of her before. He said it would be great if we could work and connect together and at the time I was in the process of getting my project together so I had a couple of beats I was going through I started working on this template for a song. I had the core idea down but I hadn’t spent much time developing that idea so I connected with Katasha I reached out to her and the day we met we were just vibing I played her some of the stuff I was working on I recorded a rough body for some and as soon as I played her that beat I hadn’t recorded it at all I just had an idea for the chorus it just seemed perfect from her vibe and my vibe as well and it felt like synergy so we started writing the song and we were actually able to finish recording it the same day that we met.

And what would you say the song is actually about?

It’s like that special moment for couples it’s like you have this connection and for me the chorus “I see I can’t help it I want you to myself” that was just kind of saying for me a lot of my music is about the millennial dating experiences right now and conversations I’ve had with friends about what they’re going through and some of us being influenced by lyrics so I kind of felt like we’re at a point where people are scared of connections instead of being vulnerable during the pandemic so the lyrics were about

someone coming out of their shell and being like "I really want this."

You speak on millennials and love during the pandemic what is your overall take on it?

I think it's real interesting because the pandemic has been a really weird time for everyone. I think something that's really important right now is to have connections with people. I find that with the popularity of dating apps now for instance it's kind of a situation where you are talking to so many people at the same time and it almost becomes kind of difficult to cut through that void and to get those genuine connections that we all crave sometimes or maybe we don't crave. So for me it's an interesting dynamic of those people who create connections and the people who have this defense mechanism where they try to protect themselves from vulnerability so for me just explaining all those things from different perspectives and on the album that's what I do. "Precious Diamond" is really leaning more into the vulnerable side I'm letting someone know that I genuinely value them.

I can see that you have Ghanian and American ancestry. You are born in England but raised in Nigeria. You have an international perspective on music who and what have been your creative influences?

I remember being 17 -years old in Nigeria and the criticism I used to get was that my music sounded very national I took that as a compliment because that was letting me know that I don't fit into the sound but I do know how to process that information because a lot of my influences I grew up listening to people like 50 Cent, people like Lil Wayne, Lauryn Hill I also listened to people like Wyclef. My uncle was great at exposing me to music. I was listening to that music really young.

But then I grew up and I really started appreciating people like Drake, The Weeknd and people like Wizkid. I would say my favorite artist right now probably like Burna Boy and J. Cole. J.Cole is incredible. And to me, Burna Boy is just like another level the way he creates music and expresses himself.

How would describe the current Afrobeats movement that has people like Wizkid and Tiwa Savage and do you see your music as a part of that wave?

I think what we've seen happen with the Afrobeats genre over the last five years has kind of been similar to what we saw happen to dancehall music and in the early 2000s with people like Sean Paul and Beenie Man. I think it's a great time to be an African artist, I think it's a beautiful thing but at the same time I find that the Afrobeats genre itself has so many dimensions to it that people previously didn't understand it like in terms of the African artists we're talking about so I feel like there is room for it to be less of a box in terms of it just being Afrobeats because there's definitely elements of R&B, there's definitely elements of hip-hop definitely the fact that people feed into their music even though it's from the Afrocentric perspective I feel like there's room for expansion.

I told you I got feedback about my music sounding international so that was interesting so for me I have a really interesting background and that background has the ability to make music accessible and relatable to different places in the world and I'm in Toronto right now and Toronto is a city that is so diverse. When you are walking down the street there's a strong chance the people walking with you are from different places around the world. So to me, that experience is amazing to be able to groom my sound and make connections with people from different backgrounds and different experiences. I feel like that influences me to want to contribute.

“Fela has had the biggest influence on Nigerian music having inspired a whole generation”

I was going to ask you how Toronto is inspiring your sound because it’s so different from Ghana, Nigeria and America. How long have you been there?

I’ve been here three years and it’s interesting that you ask that question. I feel like me moving to Toronto was a risk but that’s something I’m willing to do I think you can hear the influences in my sound. The first project I released when I got here was the *S.T.A.Y.* album which I released in 2019. I could hear the evolution of my sound hearing how the city influenced my choice of beats and how I speak about certain situations just experiencing my personal life and things I’ve been through and actually informed the way I do music compared to Lagos is where I spent most of my life where I grew up and it’s a very very fast-paced city so everyone is moving at 100 at a very intense pace and there’s really no time to chill. Moving here is an interesting switch up because even though Toronto is a fast-paced city the intensity level is not like Lagos there is time to think regroup and process information. To me that’s been the most interesting thing getting to learn more about myself. I’ve been in new situations that I wasn’t in Nigeria. I really love the city of Toronto I enjoy being here so far and I definitely look forward to connecting with more people in the community here and the music community.

Isn’t there a house and hip hop scene in Lagos?

Yes, there is a huge Afro-house scene there’s also a very good hip-hop scene in Lagos which are super-vibrant you can hear so many sounds and you see sounds go from like bubbling under to crossing over into the mainstream. The club culture in Lagos is huge. In Lagos a night out with friends you’re

definitely not going to one club chances are you are going to four or five different places whatâ€™s interesting about that is you get exposed to a range of music and you can go to a space that is predominately Afro-house you can go somewhere that is more international music.

Were you reared on Fela Kuti growing up?

I really donâ€™t think there is any Lagosian that would not be familiar with his music. Fela has had the biggest influence on Nigerian music having inspired a whole generation. I also think about it like when Fela was younger he actually tried to run for president when my parents were teenagers. To me, thatâ€™s interesting because I try to imagine someone like Wizkid or Burna Boy running for president in my time. It seems far fetched but this is something that happened in their time thatâ€™s how amazing the man was he inspired a generation.

When I was younger his music was always a part of the Lagos lifestyle when youâ€™re at home, when youâ€™re in dinner spaces you hear Felaâ€™s music itâ€™s like itâ€™s essentially the soundtrack to the city which is interesting because he is so very very relevant today. Unfortunately, things Fela was specifically talking about in his music weâ€™re still seeing the government act the same way. The people that he was speaking of in his music are still in power. He is an Afrobeat legend the greatest to ever do it.

So â€œPrecious Diamondâ€ will be on your fourth album. What can you tell me about the album?

Itâ€™s been really interesting working on this project. The pandemic has been a delay for the entire world however it gave me a unique opportunity to zone in on my music and just like focus on that and keep an open mind. I collaborated with producers in Nigeria, producers in England and the states too. So it was a very digital process sending files back and forth and being able to build that connection with people who are

not in the same environment as me. The only person I met in person to record was Katasha. Everyone else I worked with I worked with Bankyondbeatz heâ€™s a producer Iâ€™ve been working with my entire career heâ€™s based in Lagos, Nigeria. I also worked with Toye Aru, I recorded about four or five songs with Toye that are on the album heâ€™s based in the states and he sent me the beats and I was like this is amazing.



I also connected with Otee Beatz heâ€™s based in South Africa heâ€™s also a Nigerian producer so that whole process of being able to connect with people virtually create content together was definitely an interesting process. Some artists that I worked with Katasha on â€œPrecious Diamondâ€ I also worked with Esquire Mst heâ€™s also a Canadian-based artist as well from Nigeria. I also connected with Arenye heâ€™s also a Canadian-based artist as well from Nigeria. They all add interesting elements to the songs because on the first three albums I didnâ€™t actually collaborate with anyone in terms of artists like itâ€™s just my voice on the entire album for me it was an interesting journey just being able to do that being able to take people on a journey. I felt like the artists who worked on the album were a perfect fit.

Will the sound be like â€œPrecious Diamondâ€ which to me sounds more like a hybrid of between R&B and something else?

I think thatâ€™s something consistent with all my music. My diverse background being exposed to different cultures I think itâ€™s a reflection of my personality and who I am. I started off doing music rapping but as I progressed I fell in love with melodies and I continue to explore that but now Iâ€™m kind of with my sound where Iâ€™m able to diffuse my earlier inspirations with my new sound now and create music. A song I worked on with Esquire Mst which is called â€œChardonnay & Marijuanaâ€ we were able to create this hybrid of the bonds

of traditional hip-hop but with an R&B twist and for me that's what I love.

Do you have a title and release date for it yet?

Yes, it's a follow-up to the first *S.T.A.Y.* project and it's called *S.T.A.Y. 2*. Regarding the timeline, I don't have a definite timeline at the moment. Maybe for summer but I will see how things go between now and then but I'm also dropping another song apart from "Precious Diamond" called "Can't Complain" and I collaborated with Fasino on that. Fasino is a Nigerian artist in the UK and I feel like he was able to bring something different to that song. That core Afrobeats element and a fusion with R&B and hip-hop.

Do you feel like the Afrobeats movement growing do you see it being bigger maybe even full-on mainstream?

I feel like this is an amazing time for Afrobeats music not just from the perspective of the Afrobeats artists but international artists as well. Something I'm starting to hear a lot as well is that one song targeted to the Afrobeats market from a range of artists. I'm seeing obviously Beyonce with *The Lion King* album, we've seen Drake explore that sound, French Montana and Swae Lee so we are seeing these collaborations happen more and more often. When it started about 10 years ago with D'banj signing to Kanye West and G.O.O.D. Music that was a really pivotal moment in Afrobeats because I feel that really opened the door for Afrobeats artists. People like Wizkid and Burna Boy are just taking it to the next level and continued to gain momentum for Afrobeats.

Do you think people of the diaspora are connecting through this music but I know that is redundant because we just talked about these collaborations? And do you think the genre seeping into pop culture at this time might bring more attention to Africa?

That's a really important question. What I've noticed more being here in Toronto that people of the diaspora feel more connected to home and they identify more with their culture because the music has a platform and it's not something that is within the diaspora space it has broken out of it. You could meet someone from Europe or even North America who's listening to Wizkid and Burna Boy's music and they are giving you recommendations on what to listen to so that created a sense of community and a sense of pride among the diaspora here and made it easier to be proud of where you're from and your background but also learning about what's going on back home you know because people like Burna Boy are able to articulate the situation in the context of being an African so well and he did that amazingly on the *African Giant* album so I feel like Afrobeats has definitely played a huge role in making people identify with that and I think that things like that led to us seeing a movie like Black Panther being made I think music played an important role in that we can see how entertainment gives people that sense of pride and sense of connection.

I just did want to add one little thing I forget to mention that apart from the mainstream there is an entire subculture of people creating music in Nigeria who are pushing boundaries back and it's unfair to confine to Afrobeats and they are really making innovative music in that space.Â Â

Can you name some of those artists?

Tay Iwar is amazing he was featured on the Wizkid album Tems is also featured on the Wizkid album as well so those are two people who are incredible. One of my favorites is Santi his music is groundbreaking these are people whose music I enjoy because they are not trying to fit into a box. I'm just happy to see people continue to grow.

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