

AYO

Gravity At Last

There are lives that are lived like fairytales. With the release of her debut album *Joyful* in 2006, Ayo revealed she has a pretty unique destiny. Born from a Gypsy mother who passed on a passion for travelling and meeting people, and a Nigerian father who raised her, and from whom she inherited her love for music, it was inevitable Ayo would one day become an artist. At 19, she moved to London in her quest for the same, but it was only when she moved on to Paris that Ayo realised her dream and signed to her label, Polydor France.

With her captivating, magnetic voice, she has since stolen the hearts of her audience, initiated by the success of her debut smash single, 'Down On My Knees', that saw *Joyful* rise to the top of the album chart. Close to 500,000 copies of the album were sold in France alone (over 750,000 worldwide) and the album spent more than 30 weeks in the Top 20.

Ayo's live career took off with her playing to thousands nationwide, including an unprecedented 5-night sell-out run at the legendary Olympia in Paris, one of which went on to be released as a DVD, 'Live at Olympia,' which was soon certified a Platinum release. She has been nominated for 'Best Female Act of the Year' at the Victoires de la Musique Awards in 2007 and she also received a nod for best video 'Down On My Knees.'

From this foundation, Ayo took her cool, seductive style outside France, releasing *Joyful* in over 40 markets worldwide, securing further honours including GOLD Awards in Greece, Italy and Switzerland and DOUBLE PLATINUM in Poland, matching the extraordinary French success for a debut album.

By early 2008, her insatiable appetite for travel found Ayo dropping her bags in The Bahamas. She locked herself away in the fabled Compass Point Studios, owned by Chris Blackwell, founder of the equally-renowned, Island Records.

Working alongside the ghosts of past recording sessions by such greats as Bob Marley and The Rolling Stones, Ayo developed her songs the old-fashioned way using vintage analog equipment. After working with Norah Jones, Jay Newland returned to co-produce with Ayo after their successful collaboration on *Joyful*. With further collaborations from Lucky Peterson on keyboards, and former Bob Dylan collaborator Larry Campbell on guitar, 13 songs were finalised as the album, 'Gravity At Last.'

This second collection of songs continues the quality shown by its predecessor, with the hushed but powerful voice recorded with desire to

capture the moment. 'I didn't have any specific reason for changing anything,' Ayo explains, 'Music remains my best therapy, and honesty is my flag.'

However, 'Gravity At Last' is more complex than it would appear. Rather than following the current obsession with "Reggae Folk", Ayo opted for a more luxurious and orchestrated album. 'This album is more rhythm-based, even if the voice and the guitar are kept at the forefront,' explains the singer. From the African heat of '*I Am Not Afraid*,' the aching blues of '*Maybe*', the intense ballad '*Better Days*', and to the gospel-style of '*Thank You*', Ayo has widely-broadened her range of influences.

Though musically diverse, love remains the main lyrical-theme on the album. This subject offered Ayo the chance to write double meanings into many of her songs, with the singer excelling in detailing personal and intimate topics. 'Many people will recognize themselves in my lyrics, because they have already had the same experience,' describes Ayo. However, many of the subjects remain very personal, 'A song such as '*Lonely*' could easily be considered a love song, but it's a song written on tour about my Dad, when I didn't have any news from him for months.'

This level of thought is also apparent when Ayo explains her meaning behind the album title, 'Gravity At Last.' 'The Gravity I'm referring to is musical, as my sound is heavier now. But this also relates to the maturity of a girl who became a woman by becoming a mother. My social role has evolved as I'm now not only my parents' child, but a parent with a child, a head of a family. Many things have changed in my life these last two years; now I'm more mature, more adult, and am able to understand things I didn't get before. Becoming a mum changed my perspectives.'

Family and home are the one of the cores of this new album, with Ayo only too aware that such a life is no fairytale. All the episodes, the gigs, success, and happy or unhappy emotions that she has been part of or experienced over the past two years, have deeply moved the singer and been channelled into her most recent work.

Her first single, 'Slow Slow (Run, Run)', was originally named 'Run Run,' and helps to demonstrate how she is adapting to the speed at which her level of fame is rising. Ayo explains this sentiment, 'The title of this album also refers to a feeling of relief. 'At Last' indicates that I'm happy to be untroubled today, that I feel stronger and more confident now that I have left my past behind.'

For us, the good news is that the future is hers.