****

**MICHAEL KIWANUKA ANNOUNCES NEW ALBUM, “*SMALL CHANGES*”**

**RELEASED 15TH NOVEMBER VIA POLYDOR RECORDS**

**+ SHARES NEW TRACKS, *LOWDOWN (PART I)* AND *LOWDOWN (PART II)*** [**STREAMING NOW**](http://michaelkiwanuka.lnk.to/lowdown)

A person sitting in front of a wooden wall

Description automatically generated **Credit: Marco Grey**

Michael Kiwanuka is pleased to share details of his new album, “*Small Changes*”.

Released on 15th November via Polydor Records, “*Small Changes*” is the eagerly anticipated follow-up to Michael’s eponymous third LP, the Mercury Prize winning, and Grammy Award, nominated “*KIWANUKA*” back in 2019.

“*Small Changes*” was produced alongside Danger Mouse and Inflo, the same studio team behind the globally acclaimed “*KIWANUKA*” and its equally as acclaimed predecessor, “*Love & Hate*”. The new record was recorded between London and Los Angeles.

To coincide with its announcement, Michael shares *Lowdown (part i)* and *Lowdown (part ii)* – listen [**here**](http://michaelkiwanuka.lnk.to/lowdown). They follow Michael’s returning single, [*Floating Parade*](https://michaelkiwanuka.lnk.to/FloatingParadeVid) back in July. The core trio made up of Kiwanuka and his trusty co-producers expanded into a wish-list ensemble that featured legendary bassist Pino Palladino (D’Angelo, John Mayer, Beyoncé) and Jimmy Jam of the iconic Jam and Lewis songwriting and production duo (Janet Jackson, Prince, SOS Band).

[**WATCH ‘LOWDOWN PTS. I & II’ VISUALISER HERE**](http://michaelkiwanuka.lnk.to/Lowdownvisualiser)

Whilst *Lowdown (part i)* is a low-slung, bass-heavy, guitar-soul number, *Lowdown (part ii)* reverberates on that atmospheric, string-soaked psychedelia and extended guitar soloing that Michael’s become almost synonymous with across his past two records.

A very welcome return for one of Britain’s most talented of songwriters, most recognisable of vocalists, and most virtuosic of guitarists.

Michael heads to the US later this month on a joint, rotational headline tour alongside Brittany Howard, pulling up in Philadelphia on 29th September and touring together through to 19th October in Paso Robles, California. A full list of dates is listed below. Michael’s UK and European touring will be announced imminently, following his return to festival stages throughout the Summer including a sublime sunset slot on Glastonbury’s Pyramid Stage and as headliner at the Wilderness Festival.

**Pre-order “*Small Changes*”** [**HERE**](https://michaelkiwanuka.lnk.to/smallchanges)

***Small Changes* Tracklisting:**

Floating Parade

Small Changes

One And Only

Rebel Soul

Lowdown (part i)

Lowdown (part ii)

Follow your Dreams

Live For Your Love

Stay By My Side

The Rest Of Me

Four Long Years

**Michael Kiwanuka Live:**

25th September – Queen Elizabeth Hall, Toronto (headline date)

26th September – Mtelus, Montreal (headline date)

28th September – All Things Go Festival, Columbia

29th September – The Met, Philadelphia (w/ Brittany Howard)

30th September – Roadrunner, Boston (w/ Brittany Howard)

2nd October – The Capitol Theatre, Port Chester (w/ Brittany Howard)

3rd October – Summerstage In Central Park, New York (w/ Brittany Howard)

6th October – Palace Theatre, Saint Paul (w/ Brittany Howard)

8th October – The Mission Ballroom, Denver (w/ Brittany Howard)

10th October – Idaho Botanical Garden: Outlaw Field, Boise (w/ Brittany Howard)

11th October – Edgefield Concerts, Troutdale (w/ Brittany Howard)

12th October – Queen Elizabeth Theatre, Vancouver (w/ Brittany Howard)

14th October – Britt Festival Pavilion, Jacksonville (w/ Brittany Howard)

15th October – Paramount Theatre, Seattle (w/ Brittany Howard)

17th October – The Greek Theatre, Berkeley (w/ Brittany Howard)

18th October – Greek Theatre, Los Angeles (w/ Brittany Howard)

19th October – Vina Robles Amphitheatre, Paso Robles (w/ Brittany Howard)

***The Making Of Small Changes…***

*A child looking at another child

Description automatically generated*

***Small Changes* Artwork by Yout**

Five years after the Grammy and Brit-nominated, Mercury Prize-winning “*KIWANKUKA*”, Michael Kiwanuka re-emerges with an album that reaffirms his status as one of the defining singer-songwriters of his generation. “*Small Changes*” sees the British singer-songwriter reconvening with co-producers Brian “Danger Mouse” Burton (Gorillaz, Black Keys, Gnarls Barkley) and Inflo (Sault, Adele, Cleo Sol), in the process, extending a creative purple batch that began with 2016’s acclaimed UK number one album “*Love & Hate*”.

One would be forgiven for thinking that the prospect of succeeding a record which garnered across-the-board superlatives around the world might place an onerous weight on the shoulders of its creator. But to listen to Kiwanuka talk about the manner in which his latest songs came together is to realise that this is a man perpetually set to ‘receive’. The changes that have taken place in his life – the arrival of two children and a move out of his native London – might have presented a distraction for some musicians. By contrast, when the subject comes up, Kiwanuka gives an imperturbable smile and tells the story of an artist friend who told him, “the thing about children is that they give you wings. I didn’t know what he meant, but now I totally know.”

In the case of Kiwanuka’s fourth album, that change becomes apparent from the outset, with the album’s first single and opening number. With slo-mo strings and synths billowing diaphanously out from a frictionlessly funky bassline, Floating Parade resulted from Kiwanuka’s desire to write “a simple song of escape, both for myself and for anyone else who needs to use it.” The title refers to the moment he saw “a crowd of people moving together in the street, just lost in celebration. And at times of anxiety, I thought that’s exactly where you need to get to. A floating parade which releases you from whatever oppressive place you find yourself in life.”

In fact, much of what follows seems to take place in blissful defiance of gravity. Convening with Burton and Inflo, first at RAK Studios in London, then Los Angeles and finally at Burton’s Connecticut studio in the spring of 2024, the sessions saw Kiwanuka quickly defer to Inflo’s belief that your first impulse is usually the best one. “In some ways,” he elaborates, “I’m the very opposite of that, because I usually need to get to a point where I can believe in myself first, and that takes some time. Inflo’s maxim is that the moment you start second-guessing yourself, that’s when you down tools and take a break from it.”

An early beneficiary of that approach was the album’s exquisitely yearning title track Small Changes. Working alongside obsessive record collectors like Burton and Inflo means that often, inspiration jumps out from the grooves of another record. A conversation about Gene Clark, prompted Burton to dig out the The Byrds co-founder’s seminal 1974 solo album ‘No Other’. “Everything about it blew me away,” recalls Kiwanuka, “The emotion, the melodies, the arrangements. And though you wouldn’t spot the connection by listening to my song, the process of taking inspiration from other artists is all about jumping-off points, ways to blindside your own creativity.”

With Inflo jumping on the Fender Rhodes, the song’s careworn intimacies assumed a patina of shimmering soul introspection. Driving conversations between Burton and Kiwanuka about the direction of this song and the album’s penultimate number The Rest Of Me was the desire to “make an album that transcends any notion of what is or isn’t cool.” In other words, “we didn’t allow ourselves to get too hung up on worries about being cheesy. We were trying to shoot for something that might have made it onto a Bill Withers album or a Sadé album.” Indeed, the latter name is a case in point on The Rest Of Me, Kiwanuka remembers afternoons as a child in his aunt’s car, “where Diamond Life was rarely out of the tape machine.”

Drinking from the same fountain of sun-dappled succour is Follow Your Dreams – another song which sees Kiwanuka mining his most pernicious inner voices of self-doubt and alchemising them into sentiments that are truly universal. “Brian and I would sit down for a long time talking about the myth that, as an artist, you’re a hostage to random moments of inspiration. Actually, the more you read about your favourite songwriters – from Damon Albarn to Joni Mitchell – the more you realise what they have in common is that they would roll up their sleeves and put in a shift. Hard work is a huge part of what made their music great. So, if necessary, you wake up in the middle of the night and you work until it’s the best it can possibly be, knowing that’s what your heroes also did. It’s empowering to realise that.”

Be that as it may, there’s no underestimating part that that serendipity also has to play in that process. Almost any great album will have highlights that owe their existence to a flash of kismet. Recording at RAK, Kiwanuka and Inflo sighted the 1950s Fender Strat that belonged to the studio’s late owner Mickie Most, prompting Inflo to seek out an identical model. “In his book Marr’s Guitars,” Johnny Marr talks about this amazing thing that happens when you pick up a guitar for the first time, and it’s almost like there’s a song in there waiting for the right person to release it.” Plugging said guitar in, Kiwanuka found himself “trying to play something not dissimilar to what John Frusciante did on [Red Hot Chili Peppers’] Under The Bridge.” But once again, the song became what it needed to become – in this case, One And Only – perhaps the album’s most tender moment of emotional disclosure: “really just a promise to sort out my own crap so that I can be the best husband I can be to my wife.”

Unconditional love also sits at the centre of two more songs. The first of those, Stay By My Side, expresses sentiments that Kiwanuka wouldn’t have been in a position to fully voice on previous records. Over a soft, somniferous tumble of drums and a celestial synergy of strings and angelic backing vocals – think of Charles Stepney’s deathless late 60s arrangements for Rotary Connection and Ramsey Lewis – Kiwanuka sings, “Rolling tides in the storms, there’s nothing that I would leave you for” – in that moment sounding like a man thirsty to jettison the playground of creativity and the freedoms that come with it in order to find his true self in the family that completes him.

The love addressed in Live For Your Love could be the divine or earthly kind. As someone who grew up going to church, Kiwanuka explains that “it never really leaves you – this ideal of a love that encompasses everything. You’re constantly trying to reconcile yourself to the fact that you’re human and you will hurt people you love, and they will hurt you. So it’s just a note to self. A reminder to strive and show them the mercy that you would like to be shown.”

Not for the first time, the lugubrious languor of Kiwanuka’s vocals immediately sets the emotional temperature, resulting in some of the most arresting music to bear his imprimatur. Faint echoes of Air and Sebastien Tellier seem to extend over Inflo’s autumnal piano motif on Rebel Soul – although when asked to elaborate, Kiwanuka also remembers channeling his love of Beth Gibbons’ vocals with and beyond Portishead. Both here and on Lowdown (part I), the core trio made up of Kiwanuka and his trusty co-producers expanded into a wish-list ensemble that featured legendary bassist Pino Palladino (D’Angelo, John Mayer, Beyoncé) and Jimmy Jam of the iconic Jam and Lewis songwriting and production duo (Janet Jackson, Prince, SOS Band).

For Kiwanuka, these US sessions seemed to draw a line in the sand, a marker of the distance travelled since the first tentative recordings back in 2010 that resulted in his debut album Home Again. “The amazing thing is just how natural it felt. Because first and foremost, Jimmy Jam and Inflo are friends, so Jimmy was in town and it was just as simple as Inflo saying, “Do you want to stop by and play some Hammond on this?” Awestruck as Kiwanuka was, that didn’t stop him from teasing out some of the finest performances on the album from his storied guests. For Lowdown (part I), we hear Kiwanuka leaning into his love of 70s Afro-rock classics by the likes of Amanaz from Zambia and teenage Nigerian prodigies Ofege. “If you listen to Amanaz, it’s almost like a 70s African take on The Velvet Underground, and that energy once again tells you what the song needs to be – in this case as sort of throwback to that time in your life when you’re essentially a slacker in retreat from the world’s expectations.”

The bottom line though, is the same as it’s always been. The pursuit of something that transcends its time; something that sounds not so much like it was written but plucked from the deepest recesses of your own memory. Some songs just land that way and you’re left scratching your head, wondering how exactly it happened. In the case of the album’s closing song, Kiwanuka remembers evenings in Connecticut listening to long-time favourites Mazzy Star and experimenting in the same 6/8 rhythm that inspired Fade Into You. Then, just like the final thoughts of the day that merge into the first dreams of the night, something took flight in that liminal space. Before he knew it, the plaintive deep soul lullaby of Four Long Years came into focus. A song of separation that feels so raw, you can’t help but wonder where it came from. And, for his part, the man who wrote it is none the wiser.

Far from being a problem, herein lies the very reason you’ll never find Michael Kiwanuka too far from the guitar that, over the years, he’s come to look upon as “a sort of emotional external hard drive.” At the age of 15, it’s what made him want to climb inside Wish You Were Here, Ain’t No Sunshine and My Sweet Lord – sacred musical scriptures that illuminated the path to his adult self. Between then and now, everything and nothing has changed: “I’m still looking for the next song that will make me feel that way.” If Michael Kiwanuka, a bonafide festival headliner, parks his modesty for a moment and allows himself to hear what we’re hearing when the needle lands on the run-in groove of “*Small Changes*”, then he’ll surely find what he’s looking for.

“*Small Changes*” is released on 15th November 2024 via Polydor Records

[www.michaelkiwanuka.com](http://www.michaelkiwanuka.com)

**For more info contact** [**warren@chuffmedia.com**](mailto:warren@chuffmedia.com)