

Eyes of the other

Written by Toki Wright (Twitter: @mrwrighttc)



Talking music and identity with breakthrough singer/songwriter K. Raydio

"As a kid I was constantly trying to fit in."

"I yearned to find a sense of commonality. I was never really meant to fit in," said K. Raydio from across the dark brown wooden table at Icehouse restaurant in south Minneapolis.

She leaned forward intently, switching back and forth between polite laughter and seriousness. Her distinct voice stood out in the room filled with wavering noise. The singer/songwriter spoke in a raspy yet pleasant tone and delivered each line of conversation naturally while sounding like well-practiced poetry. K. Raydio is different in a good way and makes that apparent on her recently released collaborative album "LucidDreamingSkylines" with experimental producer Psymun.

Much of K. Raydio's "other" identity comes from her diverse upbringing.

"I was born in Evanston (Ill.), which is right outside of Chicago," explained K. Raydio. "My parents are both in health care and I was transferred up here (Minneapolis) when I was in elementary school. My dad is from inner city Memphis and my mom is from rural Illinois. So I grew up the product of an interracial marriage. Me and my brother grew up identifying as biracial."

Moving from Illinois to Minnesota was a complex change for her and her family.

"Growing up in Chicago I wasn't really exposed to interracial relationships," said the singer/songwriter. "We were multi-racial kids. Moving up to the Twin Cities was our first time being exposed to other interracial families and other multi-racial kids and ethnic groups."

K. Raydio said it was "culture shock" when she moved from her lower middle class neighborhood to a more affluent neighborhood in south Minneapolis. Listening to "LucidDreamingSkylines" you get a sense of this otherness. Over organic yet futuristic production, K. Raydio spills her soul into each song on the 14-track album. A follow-up to her debut "Significant Other EP," the album made waves being premiered on the widely popular

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Okayplayer.com website that helped to catapult the careers of D'angelo, Talib Kweli, Erykah Badu and The Roots. The album is in that same Soulquarians (a neosoul and alternative hip-hop musical collective) vein while maintaining a uniqueness of its own. In addition, K.Raydio credits a trip to see Badu perform in Chicago as a heavy influence on her pushing forward with her career. It was just after the death of another one of her heroes.

"Lena Horne had just passed away and (Badu) was singing, 'If You Believe In Yourself' from the movie 'The Wiz.' I felt like I needed a sign to pursue music and that was it," said K.Raydio.

There is something about K.Raydio's music that crosses boundaries. "I can have a 15-year-old boy and a 60-year-old woman say they like the same song," said the artist.

K.Raydio's openness melts into each beat giving a new definition of soul that a handful of Twin Cities based acts have been experimenting with recently. Producer Psymun looks at the production of the album as, "a soundtrack to reaching your dreams." On tracks such as "Perhaps" K.Raydio fearlessly sings lyrics that can be felt by anyone. "Skinny little light skinned girl/seen as no threat/though knives can still cut/passive aggressive girl/she's a doormat/21 is a time bomb."

K.Raydio proves that being part the "other" is not something to look down upon but celebrate for it's ability to open eyes to new ideas. As we closed our interview K.Raydio said, "I would rather people question my identity than to think they have me figured out."



You can catch K.Raydio in concert Friday, April 18 at Triple Rock Social Club, 629 Cedar Ave S., in Minneapolis. Tickets are on sale on www.Ticketfly.com. You can also listen to and purchase "LucidDreamingSkylines" online at kraydioandpsymun.bandcamp.com