

Y'AKOTO

Moody Blues

"Now I have stopped trying to beat the rush to be ahead of my game for the perfect timing.

I'll just stay here,
let go of my fear
of being in control.

(Perfect Timing)

Letting go. Backpedalling. Taking a deep breath,
The easiest things are often the most difficult ones to do.
But in the supposed banality of these things lies the danger of losing oneself on the surface and forgetting them. It's that simple.

Even Y'akoto, an artist known for her level-mindedness, is not immune from this danger. Particularly because the past two years were so exciting, eventful and grand that one can forget the little things on top very quickly. After all, Y'akoto was praised by the music press as giving a new voice to the legacy of such singers as Billie Holiday and Nina Simone and without further ado she launched a new genre called Soul Seeking Music with her combination of folk, pop and singer-songwriter soul with an African touch. Not to forget the countless shows where Y'akoto performed with such established artists as Erykah Badu, Nneka, Asa and Joy Denalane. And her first headline tour of her own that not only included dates in Germany, but also in Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam and Vienna.

Even now, "BabyBlues" is still making an international impact. The album was just released in the USA in February. The track "Diamonds" is featured in the new Steve Pink film "About Last Night" and is included on the international soundtrack. And in Italy, "Without You" is climbing in the national single and airplay charts.

However, despite all of these formative events and wonderful experiences, Y'akoto remains driven by insecurity. She is still searching: for the answers to all of the countless questions about life, for the best song and, not least of all, for herself.

"I have accepted insecurity as part of my life. That's me, I'm insecure, not always, but sometimes, and I express my insecurity in my art."

Therefore Y'akoto has made the best of this and made her insecurity the leitmotif of her new album. And this was a good decision. In the end, her growing insecurity is largely due to the situation that she has become more open, reveals more of herself and questions things more often. Her inconstancy doesn't come from a lack of self-confidence, but from the courage to make herself vulnerable through her music. For instead of writing her pains away from her soul, Y'akoto writes herself into the pain in her soul and tries to take command of the general disorientation of the world by musical means. "I let all kinds of expressions pass right through my system. I don't let it pass through a filter, instead I just take it, there for, I feel a lot without judging. I used to protect myself against that. I even intoxicated myself, smoked some weed, but now I'm interested in the entire experience of 'feeling'".

"Turn my back on all the pressure that makes us blind"

(Now Is The Time)

Y'akoto has grown, not only musically, but also as a person. While her previous album was mainly defined by anger, sadness, defiance and cynicism, the helplessness that accompanies these feelings is transformed on "Moody Blues" to the urge for change. The fear of emotional injuries has given way to genuine care for the needs of her fellow human beings. The thoughtless focus on one's self has made room for a sincere interest in the world's problems. "Through real confrontation with life and people, I feel like I've come a little closer to myself. I could have chosen to be mentally isolated from everyone and everything, or I could have just leaned into life and rely or trust the people around me. I don't want to be totally independent, I want to trust and love even if that makes me more vulnerable. Being more vulnerable makes me stronger."

The artistic examination of her self-doubt and her prejudice in regards to honest affection has resulted in her growing: as an artist and also as a person.

She chose this condition as the theme for the song "In A War", in which one line is "I said, I'm used to be alone/I give a damn, I can handle my own." But also the track "Carry This" deals with the fear of relationships, lack of devotion and the timidity of entering interpersonal commitments. And also with how much energy is inherent in emotional barriers and the serious liaison between two people. "I recorded 'Carry This' in one take. Was like magic, I just stopped thinking. 'Carry This' is my personal anthem."

At the same time Y'akoto dwells not only on herself and the First World problems of her direct environment, but on her second album also take a look beyond. Therefore she also handles subjects that she has been confronted with on her trips to Africa or via conversations with less-privileged people and that touched her heart. "Artistic life in big fancy cities like London or Paris is not that inspiring to me. I like it, but daily life and the struggle of 'non-artistic' people inspires me more."

In the song "Mother And Son", arranged with only a few instruments, the 26-year-old concentrates in a very emotional way on the fact that many sons everywhere in the world have to grow up without their fathers - because they have to earn a living, look for work or go to war. "Off The Boat" on the other hand can be seen as an acoustic metaphor for the every day hustle in everyone's life. And "Down To The River", despite its arrangement in an attractive sound conveying elegy and hope, deals with the serious contemplation of the intention of committing suicide. "Life and its paradox inspires me. I try to concentrate on the contrasts. In the western world most people can live OK. Elsewhere people just struggle for daily bread. We all live in the middle of contrasts. I guess I transform that collective awareness into music. I want to focus on what happens around us and what genuinely moves me."

Thus "Moody Blues" has again been musically accompanied by Kahedi (Max Herre, Samon Kawamura and Roberto di Gioia), Mocky and Haze, as well as the London producer Ben Cullum, a musical equivalent of Y'akoto's creative examination of the duality of life. It's about light and darkness, coming and going. And constancy and change.

And so the 26-year-old grinds all of her fears and hopes between the well-formed lines on her album, chisels a musical monument of consolation and sorrow with the natural urgency of her voice. She underlays the pro and contra in the ways of the world with a multifaceted soundbase of maximised minimalism that unmistakably bears her imprint and that touches people.

" After my concerts people expressed how my music had an impact on them, or that it inspired them to do something they had always wanted to do. I then realised that my music doesn't only belong to me. It belongs to everybody."

"And if you forget my name,
I'll come back and introduce myself again."

(Come And Go)