

The multi-award-winning tenor saxophonist, bandleader and composer Nubya Garcia is back with her sophomore album, *Odyssey*, her second release on the Concord Jazz imprint, out in September 2024. The album is produced by Garcia in collaboration with the celebrated producer Kwes. Garcia returns with Joe Armon-Jones (keys), Daniel Casimir (bass), Sam Jones (drums), Jansen Santana (percussion), Sheila Maurice-Grey (trumpet), Rosie Turton (trombone), Chineke! Orchestra (strings), and esperanza spalding, Richie Seivwright and Georgia Anne Muldrow (vocals).

The album follows her 2020 debut album, *Source*, a critically-acclaimed work described by *The New York Times* as “a sweeping set of jazz with Afro-Caribbean influences that funnels a life’s worth of experiences into an hourlong listen.” Calling it a “stunning introduction,” Pitchfork, in its Best New Music review, said Garcia “weaves together so many threads so masterfully that she instantly establishes herself as a foundational voice in the larger, ongoing story of the London jazz scene.”

*Odyssey* is a majestic feat on which Garcia blends orchestral arrangements with R&B, jazz and dub, resulting in a grand, nuanced record that feels airy and celestial without sacrificing the groove. It’s a deeply personal offering about Garcia’s trek to falling back in love with music composition over the past four years. It’s also about the musings on life’s ever-changing, ever-continuing adventure, the twists and turns and realities of living. During her time of reflection, she learned to embrace her creative singularity and not worry about outside perception. As she declares on “Triumphance,” one of several standout tracks on *Odyssey*: “Your journey is yours, full of many twists and turns ... Release expectations from other people, and maybe we can just allow ourselves to be.” Sonically, Garcia exemplifies this by adhering to her artistic impulses. This isn’t *Source Part Two*; it’s her first time orchestrating strings, and she does so masterfully.

It’s also an album of dualities. On “Dawn,” for instance, Garcia and guest vocalist esperanza spalding craft a gorgeous song about the beauty and danger of the sun. For Garcia, it brings newness, the light flickering off the ocean. In her verse, spalding sings about Icarus, the Greek mythological character whose wings melted after flying too close to the sun. “Free until death has its way,” she sings alongside Garcia’s tone-matching saxophone wails. “Long as you’re alive, go on and find you some sun.” The same goes for “The Seer,” *Odyssey*’s lead single. Though the song is about trying to catch a vision of the future, the music — with its ominous piano chords, stampeding drum break and blazing horn — charges forcefully to the unknown.

On purpose, the title track begins quickly, dropping you into a journey in progress. Equally tense and soothing, it builds until the strings come in, making for “a real, ‘Oh, we’re going there’ moment,” Garcia says. It was one of the first songs written for the album, which set the vibe for how the LP sounds. The following track, “Solstice,” was made to sound erratic and chill, with a bassline meant to keep listeners in place as the drums swirl through the left and right channels. “Just super busy, super high energy,” Garcia says of the song’s intent. “I like that effect of bouncing things between your ears to push you a little bit. It invites movement.”

“Set It Free,” featuring vocalist Richie Seivwright, conveys the feeling of letting go. A neo-soul-centered tune, Richie doesn’t apologize for being one-of-one. “No other like me,” she asserts near the top of the song. “I’m sorry I’m not sorry, truth is what I speak,” she sings later. It conveys the sense of being confident and not apologizing for your greatness. From the beat to the lyrics on “We Walk In Gold,” featuring vocalist and producer Georgia Anne Muldrow, Garcia conveys literally walking *with* a purpose and metaphorically walking *in* your purpose. Again, duality. “The melody feels like a lament, but the intentions of the tune are not sorrow,” Garcia says. “Some of the themes are around hope, purpose and dedication, and walking towards warmth, light and support. I love the way Georgia paints pictures. She’s a beautiful storyteller.”

A lush, orchestral arrangement, “Water’s Path” tells the story of how water will always find its way. The strings bubble and the lead line is emotive and free-flowing. “Even if it’s a drip, it’s still moving,” Garcia reflects. “And a huge body of water can do so much. It can rip through anything; it can be smooth and so calm. There’s joy and melancholy within that melody.” The song “Clarity” is about wanting to find transparency during encounters with other people. Garcia communicates this through delicate, unfurling strings meant to uplift your mood.

“In Other Words, Living” is a euphoric reminder to be present in the moment and not get so wrapped up in the nitty-gritty of daily existence. Life has a way of ebbing and flowing, so you might as well engage in the now without worrying about what’s around the corner. The album concludes with “Triumphance,” a mission statement of sorts. “It encapsulates everything,” Garcia says intently. “We are each our own person with many, many differences. And that can be a good thing. Even though we’re told to be quite uniform and wear the same clothes from the same stores. Humans want to belong but not copy each other, to be part of a community. But you are also allowed to have your own purpose and be on your own wave at your own pace.

“It’s a reminder to myself and others that we can go our own speed,” she continues. “I think we should celebrate our differences a bit more. I don’t think we do that enough as a society. Self-belief is one of our greatest powers as creatives.”

In the end, *Odyssey* is an album of gloom and polish, assurance and fear, exhilaration and heartache. You know, *life*, in all its glorious — and mysterious — splendor.

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Garcia is a multi award-winning saxophonist, producer and composer. She has toured extensively internationally, playing venues and festivals across Latin America, Asia, Europe, Australia, and the United States. Garcia’s reputation as a DJ is also burgeoning; she helmed a hit radio residency on NTS, and plays a growing number of live sets across Europe. As a composer, Garcia’s original music has been placed with Apple TV (*Ted Lasso*); OWN Network (*Cherish The Day*); FX TV (*Atlanta*); EPIC GAMES (*Fortnite*); and on multiple podcasts (including the theme tune for Anika Noni Rose’s Clio award-winning podcast *Being Seen*).