

# KIMBRA

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## HEARD OF HER?

Maybe you know her independent hit singles *Cameo Lover* and *Settle Down*, which won her 1st place in the Pop Category of International Songwriting Competition; or you're one of the 6,000,000+ total views of her stylish videos on YouTube. The name may ring a bell from any one of her electric live shows: the amazing festivals she has played including *Splendour in the Grass*, *Parklife* and *Homebake*. Or the fact she won the **ARIA AWARD for 2011 BEST FEMALE ARTIST**. Perhaps you recognise Kimbra from her contributing vocals to Miami Horror's 'Look To You', or her collaboration with Gotye on 'Somebody That I Use to Know', No 1 on the Australian Singles Chart for 8 weeks, the longest running Australian No 1 since Savage Garden's 'Truly, Madly, Deeply' in 1997. The alluring duet, one of the most talked about songs of the year, also took out 5 ARIA Awards including Single of the Year and Best Pop Release for 2011. The song also took out the Best Video, Producer of the Year and Engineer of the Year Artisan Awards.

*The point is: if you don't know Kimbra by name, you soon will.*

But the story goes further back. Spending her early years gigging around her native New Zealand, it was only once Kimbra borrowed a small eight-track recorder from her school's musical department that her song writing blossomed in earnest. This new tool opened up a new perspective, leading to a flurry of tracks that featured her signature layered vocals, including the inking that became ***Settle Down***. Discovered by Manager, Mark Richardson at the tender age of 17, who enabled her to relocate to Melbourne to follow her musical path.

Kimbra's debut record ***Vows***, three and-a-half years in the making, charts not only her growth and development musically over this time, but personally as well. Recorded and arranged at home as well as in various studios, it presents her unique worldview on life and love. Even at twenty-one years of age, Kimbra already possesses the maturity and musical sophistication of the mavericks she is so often compared to - from vocal legends Nina Simone and Jeff Buckley, to radicals the likes of Prince, and contemporary artists such as Björk and Janelle Monáe.

Kimbra self-produced ***Vows*** alongside Australian Urban export M-Phazes (Amerie, Pharoahe Monch) and the refined skills of François Tétaz (Bertie Blackman, Gotye); whose focus on imagery taught her to treat the album like a film. If ***Vows*** is a film then, what is it about?

***Vows*** could be seen as an ambitiously eclectic journey of joyful triumph but also darker introspection. A smoky romance one scene, a film noir the next, in a dazzling, colourful display with a multifarious soundtrack to match; travelling its conceptual groove through a diverse mix of styles. Migrating confidently from triumphant neo-pop built on stacked harmonies and joyful hooks, to moodier, reflective moments that showcase her sophisticated vocals. A voice that centres the record as it slinks effortlessly from sly croon to emphatic wailing, layered through the record or left hanging vulnerably, warping and flexing in tone but consistently delivering the greatest character of expression: honesty.

Upon release, ***Vows*** debuted at No. 3 in Kimbra's native New Zealand, and at No. 5 (climbed to No 4) in the Australia album charts. ***Vows*** has been certified Gold in Australia & New Zealand with it also being released on special edition vinyl. Having already dazzled with countless sell-out shows across the country complemented by her band of funky virtuosos, Kimbra is now set to take on the States. Recording with iconic producer Mike Elizondo, whose own eclectic CV mirrors Kimbra's multifaceted influences, they are set to unleash ***Vows*** to the USA in March 2012 through Warner Bros Records; establishing Kimbra both locally and internationally as a significant talent. A fresh, exciting voice in today's music industry.



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## SYNOPSIS

Her lead single, *Settle Down*, still remains the perfect introduction to Kimbra, taking out the top position in the Pop Category of the International Songwriting Competition. A rhythmic assembly of vocal textures, handclaps, jazzy flourishes, funk-indebted textures and a ballooning song structure which frames that voice with an escapist lyric about domesticity.

"I wanna raise a child/won't you raise a child with me?" cleverly questions the idea of "laying your life on this illusive ideal of married life," handily introducing the themes of Vows concerning promises and attachment.

Follow-up single *Cameo Lover* is "a call back to embrace love again" to someone who's become disconnected and retreated into isolation. A colourful anthem to "open up your heart" against a chorus that explodes like confetti while showcasing a Motown-worthy sing-along of brassy energy and punchy vocal loops.

The shimmering *Two Way Street* follows, written after a stroll down Hollywood boulevard, and viewing it as a metaphor for love. The stuttered pianos and downward progression of the verse convey a lovelorn desire before the glittering chorus of starry-eyed keys are placated by a gorgeous string arrangement. Retaining an emotional core as its keen melodic hooks sink deep.

*Old Flame*, written during the same American sojourn, nostalgically rues the question of dousing those old fires that still burn internally. Its slow-burn matched by a lazily patient build of warm synths and unique drum sounds, it's sparse palette inspired by Prince's eighties balladry.

We've all heard the old justification of betrayal, 'I didn't mean it, my intention was good,' but on *Good Intent* Kimbra explores both sides of a broken vow and the destruction it causes an intense theme playfully delivered in teasing lines punctuated by drunk horns, "I know you didn't mean it boy/you meant so well/but the pennies are cascading 'round your wishing well." Framed by jazzy bass, the nimble shuffle of drums and a bluesy guitar solo, the effect is like waking up in a foggy speakeasy after a jagged night out to find the heart on your sleeve missing.

Covers have played an important part in Kimbra's repertoire thus far, so it's fitting that her interpretation of the Nina Simone rarity, *Plain Gold Ring*, should be present. Driven by Kimbra's remarkably smoky croon (performed in one take), building an intense and internal mood from the stripped-back, almost primal, vocal percussion.

A collaboration with M-Phazes, the neon-lit funk of *Call Me* takes his characteristically meaty hip-hop production and elaborates with Kimbra's pure diva acrobatics and an irresistible call-and-response backbone. Its popping bass and flashy horns are a celebration of spontaneity and impulse, representative of the groovy linchpin that is Kimbra's live show.

An affirmation to second chances, *Limbo* is a song about redemption. It acts as a showcase for Kimbra's development as a producer and arranger from her days collating on an eight-track. Indulging in a rich mix of quirky sounds, interesting polyrhythms and vocal tics inspired by Dirty Projectors, tUnE-yArDs and the structural expansion of Japanese producer Cornelius. The result however is distinctly Kimbra, conveying her personal journey as well as her musical maturity.

After a fun little reprise of *Settle Down* reminds the listener where they've come from, we have a haunting duet with local musician Sam Lawrence on *Wandering Limbs*. His delicate vibrato enveloped with Kimbra's own unique timbre in a warm cocoon, in part inspired by another filmic reference, *Man On Wire* [about the French trapeze artist Phillipe Petitwre]. Written after producer Tétaz instructed Kimbra to face her fear of heights and climb the Eureka sky tower, resulting in a spiritual epiphany that led to the inquisitive, elevated lyric: 'Am I caught in the background?/Or am I part of the scene?'

*Withdraw* is the album's Ballad with a capital B, completely heartfelt and delivered with an aching emotional clarity. Chiefly thanks to its intimate vocal performance (recorded at 3am), complemented by choral flourishes, the rousing organ work of Joe Cope (of The Hello Morning) and languid drumming of Stan Bicknell. Capitalising on Kimbra's poignant honesty in a scintillating evocation of holding on to something only to be forced to let it go.

Like all good films, *Vows* ends slightly unresolved, *The Build Up* closes the record with a vulnerable question mark that leaves the listener on edge. Capitalising on a cinematic ambience, it's orchestral punctuation lingers with contradictions in a summary of the paradoxical nature of vows. It's far-flung from the immediacy of *Settle Down*, point A certainly does not lead to point B, proving that Kimbra, like the best progressive artists, refuses to repeat herself.



# KIMBRA

## QUOTES

"Her name is Kimbra She's from New Zealand. And she's effing rad!!!!"

If you like Nina Simone, Florence & The Machine and/or Bjork, then we think you will enjoy Kimbra her music reminds us of all those fierce ladies!"

*Perez Hilton, PerezHilton.com*

"The New Zealand-via-Australia songstress serves up a nice homely lasagne of layered electronics, leapfrogging vocals that can't decide if they want to be jazz or power pop, stately piano flourishes, Boy 8-Bit synth snippets, cascading strings and lyrics about holing up with him indoors and turning all domesticated"

*Tim Chester, Deputy Editor, NME.COM*

"Kimbra Singer-songwriter marches to the beat of a different drum"

*Angela Allan, Rolling Stones (11 Artists to Watch in 2011) May 2011*

"Kimbra, elegantly contrasted in red and black, tilted her head back, rocked on her heels and let her voice soar; enchanting all who were lucky enough to hear it"

*Inpress Magazine, 25 Sep 10 @ Northcote Social Club, Melbourne*

"Kimbra is making pop music that will pull you from your seat and have you listening on a loop"

*Stated Magazine, NYC*

"Kimbra could easily make the leap from underground chanteuse to mainstream pop starlet"

*Dom Alessio, Triple J*

"Sit up, pay attention and write this down, Kimbra - one word, two syllables, three thumbs-up"

*FasterLouder 28 Aug 10 @ Oxford Arts Factory, Sydney*

"A high note. A taut collection of songs that exhibit Kimbra as star-in-waiting"

*Beat Magazine, 21 July 10 @ Toff In Town, Melbourne*

"She was like a current of electricity, striking at every single corner of the room"

*Drum Media, 16 Apr 11 @ Oxford Arts Factory, Sydney*

"Kimbra herself, however, was, is, and absolutely deserves to be the star, here's hoping she is always given the freedom to explore the more eclectic influences that she so clearly relishes"

*Brag Magazine*

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