

## Kaleida

Kaleida are the transatlantic duo whose darkly mystic soundworld finds glimmers of hope in the disquiet.

Spanning two continents and one ocean, the pair have nurtured a long distance partnership that withstands the shifting patterns of life. They first formed in 2013 when a friend introduced them over email. Christina Wood was then working as an environmental consultant in the Indonesian forest while recording demos in her bedroom each night, and Cicely Goulder had been composing for film productions in London. Despite the miles between them, they found an instant musical chemistry.

The band have long described their music as “feminine”, embracing their perspective as mothers, a female duo navigating a male-dominated music industry, and thirty-plus women who grew up in the hinterland between 1970s feminism and today’s progressive pop culture. Their new album, *In Arms*, invokes that stance more prominently than ever, simultaneously evoking images of cradling children and arming oneself for battle. It’s an appropriate metaphor for where Kaleida are now – returning to music with a fortified self-assuredness, after almost abandoning the project altogether.

Kaleida first came to international renown in 2014, when their single “Think” went viral overnight and featured in the soundtrack for the cult Keanu Reeves film, *John Wick*. After releasing the *Think* EP in 2015, a European tour with Roisin Murphy cemented their acclaim and the first sketches of a debut album began to emerge.

*Tear The Roots* arrived in 2017 and crystallised the pair’s moody pop aesthetic, which merges Wood’s sylph-like, operatic vocals with Goulder’s neo-Noir electronica. Partly inspired by Wood’s work in environmental consultancy, the lyrics alluded to humanity’s relationship with the climate crisis, yet refused to settle into any definitive meaning. As Goulder puts it, for Kaleida, “the songs are mainly an expression of the subconscious.” The record earned the duo their second spot in a film soundtrack, this time for *Atomic Blonde* (starring Charlize Theron) with a tender take on Nena’s 1980s anti-war classic “99 Luftballons”.

After spending time recording and performing together in London, Kaleida were forced to part ways when their German/American frontwoman moved back to the USA. They continued to swap ideas over the internet, even as geography, new motherhood and second jobs demanded their attention. Their second album, *Odyssey*, came out in 2020, which would be their last before the pandemic imposed their longest separation yet. It was one and a half years before they could perform in the same room again, at London’s Chats Palace in 2021.

At the start of 2022, there nearly wasn’t a Kaleida any more. The pressures of parenting, not being able to tour and the pandemic triggered some soul searching, and Wood and Goulder almost called it quits for good. But sometimes you have to look over the edge of the precipice

before drawing back. After some time away, the pair reunited in their virtual studio, and have returned to their musical vision with renewed vigour.

Much has changed since Kaleida's last release. Russia and Ukraine, where two of their largest fan bases are concentrated, are now at war, and the climate crisis has noticeably accelerated. On *In Arms*, this global tension has infiltrated their songwriting, yet still does an uneasy dance with uplifting tones. "Even Pandora's box had hope in it," says Wood.

The figure of Joan of Arc loomed large for the pair while they were writing, inspired as they were by her singular focus on her higher purpose, even in spite of the obstacles that threatened to hold her back. The contrast between light and dark in Pre-Raphaelite art manifests in their bittersweet aesthetic too, most evidently in the album artwork, which saw them renew their partnership with creative director Noa Zarfati. The result is a record that leans into a near transcendent spiritualism, where their minimalist production conceals a raw, celestial power. "Lots of music can have that power. That's why it's so mysterious," says Goulder. "Being an interpreter of the heavens through music is an old theme that runs through humanity." Wood puts it more succinctly: "It's making hope cool."

Another change on *In Arms* is Kaleida's departure from their usual insular way of working. Where before they largely managed the production themselves, this time they invited other musicians in, most notably producer Johan Hugo (Self Esteem, M.I.A, Skepta). "His sound is very big and bright and forward, and I've tended to be a bit more gentle. It's really nice to bring those two things together," says Goulder.

Yet, in spite of all this newness, *In Arms* also invites Kaleida fans to look back and take stock of how far the two have come. One of the album's singles, "Seagull Nun", was the first song that the two ever worked on together, after beginning its life as one of Wood's bedroom demos in Indonesia. 2022 also sees *Think (Anniversary Edition)* mark seven years since their debut EP, with three new remixes of the single by Polaris Prize-winning singer Lido Pimienta, American hip hop producer Boom Bip and abstract electronic music trailblazer Actress.

Even in the short time since "Think" first captivated music fans globally, Kaleida have weathered several storms. What keeps them coming back together is their unique creative alchemy, which crosses back-and-forth in the digital space. "It's a constant dialogue of music and emotion," says Goulder. That connection will hold Kaleida firm, as they prepare to step into their next chapter.

*In Arms* is released on the 22nd of March 2024 by Embassy One