

= Kala ( album ) =

Kala is the second studio album by English @-@ Sri Lankan recording artist M.I.A. , released on 8 August 2007 by XL Recordings . The album features musical styles including dance music and makes extensive use of South Asian music such as that of the urumee , a drum used in gaana music native to Tamil Nadu , India . It was mainly written and produced by M.I.A. and Switch , and features contributions from Timbaland , Diplo , Afrikan Boy and The Wilcannia Mob .

M.I.A. named the album after her mother , in contrast to her first album Arular , which was named after her father , and stated that her mother 's struggles in life are a major theme of the recording . She began recording the album in early 2006 and worked on the tracks in various locations around the world , including India , Jamaica , Australia , Liberia and Trinidad . Planned sessions in the United States failed to occur , after M.I.A. was refused a long @-@ term work visa to enter the country .

Kala was ranked as one of the best albums of the year by several publications . It reached number eighteen on the Billboard 200 chart and topped the magazine 's Top Electronic Albums chart . In the United Kingdom it reached number thirty @-@ nine on the UK Albums Chart . Kala spawned the singles " Bird Flu " , " Boyz " , " Jimmy " and " Paper Planes " . As of 2013 the album had sold over 500 @,@ 000 copies in the US .

= = Composition and recording = =

M.I.A. ( Mathangi " Maya " Arulpragasam ) had released her debut album Arular in 2005 , which achieved critical acclaim and sold 130 @,@ 000 copies . Plans for a second album were first revealed when she spoke later that year of her intention to work with American producer Timbaland . At one point it was anticipated that he would produce the bulk of the album . However , she was unable to gain a long @-@ term work visa to enter the US , reportedly due to her family 's connections with guerrillas in Sri Lanka . This led to conflicts between the two artists ' schedules and meant that Timbaland 's involvement was restricted to a poorly received guest verse on the track " Come Around " . M.I.A. instead opted to record the album at a variety of locations around the world , beginning by travelling to India following the last date of her Arular Tour in Japan in February 2006 .

She initially travelled to India to meet A. R. Rahman , but found it hard to communicate her ideas to him and the planned musical collaboration did not take place . Rahman did , however , provide M.I.A. with a number of contacts and allow her to use his studio , where 22 members of drumming group The Tapes were recorded for Kala . Producer Switch , who had initially travelled to India purely to engineer the planned sessions , ultimately became involved in the composition of several tracks for the album . A visit to Angola to work with DJ Zobia was cancelled after Zobia was involved in a car accident , but M.I.A. was able to record in Trinidad , Liberia , Jamaica and Australia . She and Switch relied heavily on Logic Pro , a digital audio workstation produced by Apple , and were able to capture vocals and background sounds outside the traditional studio environment , using a microphone and a Macbook Pro . The album features guest vocals from Afrikan Boy , The Wilcannia Mob , and Timbaland , and further collaborations with Switch , Blaqstarr , Organics and Diplo . She likened the process of recording the album to " making a big old marble cake with lots of different countries and influences . Then you slice it up and call each slice a song " .

= = Music and lyrics = =

Kala is named after M.I.A. ' s mother , in contrast to her previous album , Arular , which was named after her father . She contends that Arular was a " masculine " album , but that Kala " is about my mum and her struggle ? how do you work , feed your children , nurture them and give them the power of information ? " She further summed the album up as " shapes , colours , Africa , street , power , bitch , nu world , and brave . " According to Dominic Horner of The Independent , the album 's music may not be appropriately described exclusively as either dance or world music , but it is a mixture of the two . Music critic Robert Christgau characterised its music as an " eclectic world @-@

underclass dance amalgam ", and Jonathan Brown of the Irish Independent cited Kala as a proper introduction to " world fusion ", a genre that " blends sounds from across the globe which wouldn't ? and some say shouldn't ? be put together . " By contrast , NPR 's Oliver Wang argued that , rather than a " so @-@ called world music fusion " attempt , Kala is " agitated , propulsive pop " informed by international sounds . Music journalist Jody Rosen called it " an agitprop dance record " that reappropriates hip hop in an international setting with beatbox riddims , " playground " rhymes , unconventional samples , and gunshot sounds .

The tracks " Boyz " and " Bird Flu " use urumee drums , a signature instrument of Gaana , a Tamil genre of music , with which M.I.A. was familiar from her time spent living in Sri Lanka . She later worked on these tracks in Trinidad , where she absorbed influences from the country 's love of soca music . The lyrics of " Boyz " deal with the artist 's time in Jamaica , and reference Jamaican dance moves . The song " Hussel " began as an image in M.I.A. ' s head of refugees being smuggled in boats , which she expressed musically by imagining how " if they banged that beat on the side of a boat , what would it sound like ? That 's why it 's all echo @-@ y and submarine @-@ y " . The sounds on the intro were recorded from Keralan [ sic ] fishermen chanting as they pull their fishing boats into the water . " World Town " used instrumentation from the temple music she recalled waking up to as a child in Sri Lanka . After playing the track to children in Liberia , she expressed a desire to record a video for the song there . M.I.A. ' s " flat , unaffected vocals and delivery of lyrics " on some songs drew comparisons to British post @-@ punk bands such as Delta 5 and The Slits . She says it " was just what was happening to me naturally ... I wanted it to be difficult and raw and not get into it so much " .

Afrikan Boy , an exponent of grime , a UK @-@ based genre of urban music , provided vocals on the song " Hussel " . M.I.A. opted to work with him because she felt that he seemed comfortable with his identity as a " real immigrant " and because his background was different to that of most MCs in the genre . She had originally planned to include " Mango Pickle Down River " ? her remix of The Wilcannia Mob 's song " Down River " ? on a mix @-@ tape , but chose to include it on the album because she felt it was rare to hear the " aboriginal voice " in recorded music , and described opening track " Bamboo Banga " as having a " bamboo @-@ stick beat , house @-@ y feel " . The song " Jimmy " was included as a tribute to her mother and is M.I.A. ' s version of an old Bollywood film track to which she used to dance at parties as a child . Despite the involvement of Baltimore club musician Blaqstarr , " The Turn " turned out to be the album 's only ballad , and the track has been described as the least like club music . " 20 Dollar " was written about the relative ease of buying AK @-@ 47s in war @-@ torn Liberia . " XR2 " recalls part of the artist 's life growing up with rave music in early 1990s London , while the song " Paper Planes " jokingly plays on M.I.A. ' s problems with visas and certain perceptions of immigrants .

= = Release and artwork = =

In April 2007 Rolling Stone reported that Kala would be released on 26 June of that year . After being delayed for unknown reasons , the album was eventually released by XL Recordings on 8 August 2007 in Japan and on 20 August in the UK , and by Interscope Records on 21 August in the United States . The Japanese edition featured three extra tracks not included on the versions released in other countries . Following the unexpected commercial success of " Paper Planes " , Kala was re @-@ issued in the United Kingdom in October 2008 . A 4 November 2008 US re @-@ release was announced , but as of late 2009 the album had not been re @-@ issued in the United States .

The album 's packaging includes photographs taken by M.I.A. and others in Liberia and Jamaica . The cover artwork to Kala , designed by Steve Loveridge , features neon fractal patterns and repeated slogans , including " Fight On ! Fight On ! Fight On ! " , which surrounds her image on the front cover . The cover was considered garish , prompting The Village Voice to comment " Maybe one day [ she 'll ] make an album cover that it doesn 't hurt to look at " . Additional graphics for the album were provided by English fashion designer Carri Mundane ( also known as Cassette Playa ) and Steve Loveridge . The album 's artwork was inspired by African art , " from dictator fashion to

old stickers on the back of cars , " which M.I.A hoped , like her artwork extended " Okley Run " clothing range , would capture " a 3 @-@ D sense , the shapes , the prints , the sound , film , technology , politics , economics " of a certain time .

= = Promotion = =

M.I.A. began her promotion of the new album with a live appearance at Radio 1 's Big Weekend in Preston in May 2007 , where she performed six songs from Kala . In July she began the full KALA Tour with dates in the United States before going on to play a number of festivals in Europe and America . After dates in Asia , she returned to America for a series of shows in October and November , before ending the year with concerts in the UK . The tour continued during the first half of 2008 under the banner of the People Vs . Money Tour with further dates in North America , although the planned European leg of the tour was eventually cancelled .

The first track from the album to be made available to the public was " Bird Flu " , which was made available as a downloadable promotional single on 13 November 2006 . The first official single to be lifted from the album , " Boyz " , was released on 11 June 2007 . The second single was " Jimmy " , which was released on 1 October 2007 . The EP Paper Planes - Homeland Security Remixes EP , featuring various mixes of " Paper Planes " , was released digitally on 11 February 2008 and physically three weeks later . A new physical single version was released in the UK on 13 October 2008 . Also in October 2008 , How Many Votes Fix Mix EP was released , containing a remix of " Boyz " with Jay @-@ Z and the tracks " Shells " and " Far Far " .

= = Critical reception = =

Kala received widespread acclaim from critics . At Metacritic , which assigns a normalised rating out of 100 to reviews from mainstream publications , the album received an average score of 87 , based on 37 reviews . In the Los Angeles Times , Ann Powers wrote that Kala succeeded at embodying disenfranchised characters in the dissonant Third World with " truly multi @-@ vocal " music whose " every sound signified something different , driving the music 's meaning into some new corner " . Andy Battaglia from The A.V. Club said the music ventured far enough where it served as both a party album and a progressive aural assault , while AllMusic 's Andy Kellman felt that Kala was better for intensifying Arular 's qualities and " mixing cultures with respectful irreverence " . Barry Walters of Spin credited M.I.A. with evoking both the social demands and percussive sounds of the Third World , while finding the album relevant at a time when " more Americans than ever feel like outsiders in their own country " . Writing for MSN Music , Robert Christgau said although the lyrics were " cannier politically " than Arular , the music was more decisive in embodying the imagination and recreation of " an unbowed international underclass that proves how smart it is just by stating its business , which includes taking your money " . He later said that he had " pressed " the editors of Rolling Stone to let him give Kala four @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars in his review for the magazine , wishing he " had the foresight to fight for five " because the album " kept growing on me till I even dug the Timbaland remnant [ ' Come Around ' ] " .

In a less enthusiastic review , Jonathan Keefe from Slant Magazine believed Kala was less successful than Arular because it lacked its predecessor 's immediate hooks and clever pop sensibility . Pitchfork Media critic Mark Pytlik said because most of M.I.A. ' s lyrics gave the impression they were written " in the service of the rhythms " , her allusions sounded more " rewarding " than what she literally wrote . Andy Gill of The Independent found her lyrics unfocused in their arguments on money and social concerns , remarking that the gun references on " World Town " and " Paper Planes " blemished " an otherwise fine album " . In The Guardian , Alexis Petridis wrote that Kala was still a " unique " listen in spite of occasionally tuneless songs . Writing for NME , Alex Miller acknowledged that the record 's music polarised opinion , claiming that some members of the magazine 's staff had " fed several copies [ of the album ] into the shredder claiming aural abuse " , although others went on to praise the album for its innovation and referred to it as M.I.A. ' s masterpiece .

At the end of 2007 , Kala was named one of the year 's best albums in critics ' lists , including rankings at number eight ( Stylus Magazine ) , number seven ( NME ) , number six ( Paste , The A.V. Club and Entertainment Weekly ) , number four ( The Guardian and Drowned in Sound ) , and number three ( Pitchfork Media ) . The album was also listed at number three on The Village Voice 's 35th annual Pazz & Jop poll . Blender and Rolling Stone both named Kala as their number one album of 2007 . " Boyz " was number nine and " Shells " number sixty @-@ seven on the same magazine 's list of the 100 Best Songs of 2007 and 2008 respectively . The album was nominated for the 2007 Shortlist Music Prize . In 2009 NME placed the album at number seventy @-@ two in its list of the 100 greatest records of the decade , and Rolling Stone ranked it as the ninth best album of the same period . Christgau named it the decade 's best album in his ballot for the magazine . In 2012 , Rolling Stone ranked it at number 393 in a revised edition of their " Rolling Stone 's 500 Greatest Albums of All Time " issue .

= = Commercial performance = =

Kala debuted at number eighteen on the US Billboard 200 , selling 29 @,@ 000 copies in its first week . It failed to rise above this position but still significantly outperformed the peak position of 190 attained by M.I.A. ' s previous album . It also topped the Top Electronic Albums chart . The album was certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America ( RIAA ) on 5 March 2010 , and by September 2013 , it had sold 559 @,@ 000 copies in the United States .

The album debuted at number thirty @-@ nine on the UK Albums Chart , and again did not rise above this position , although as in the US this represented an improvement on the chart performance of Arular , which had peaked at number ninety @-@ eight . The album was certified silver by the British Phonographic Industry ( BPI ) on 30 January 2009 , denoting sales in excess of 60 @,@ 000 copies within the United Kingdom . In Canada , Kala was certified gold by the Canadian Recording Industry Association ( CRIA ) . The album also reached the top forty in a number of other countries , including Belgium , Finland , Ireland , Japan , Norway and Sweden .

= = Track listing = =

#### Notes

^ a signifies an additional producer

" Bamboo Banga " incorporates elements of " Roadrunner " written by Jonathan Richman and " Kaattukkuyilu " , written and performed by Ilaiyaraaja from the film Thalapathi .

" Bird Flu " incorporates elements of " Thirvizha Na Vantha " written and performed by R. P. Patnaik from the film Jayam .

" Jimmy " incorporates elements of " Jimmy Jimmy Jimmy Aaja " written by Bappi Lahiri from the film Disco Dancer .

" Mango Pickle Down River " is remixed from the original recording " Down River " by The Wilcannia Mob .

" 20 Dollar " incorporates elements of " Where Is My Mind ? " by the Pixies .

" World Town " incorporates elements of " Hands Up , Thumbs Down " written by Blaqstarr .

" Paper Planes " incorporates elements of " Straight to Hell " by The Clash .

= = Personnel = =

Credits adapted from the liner notes of the expanded edition of Kala .

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =

= = Release history = =