

Sports & Entertainment

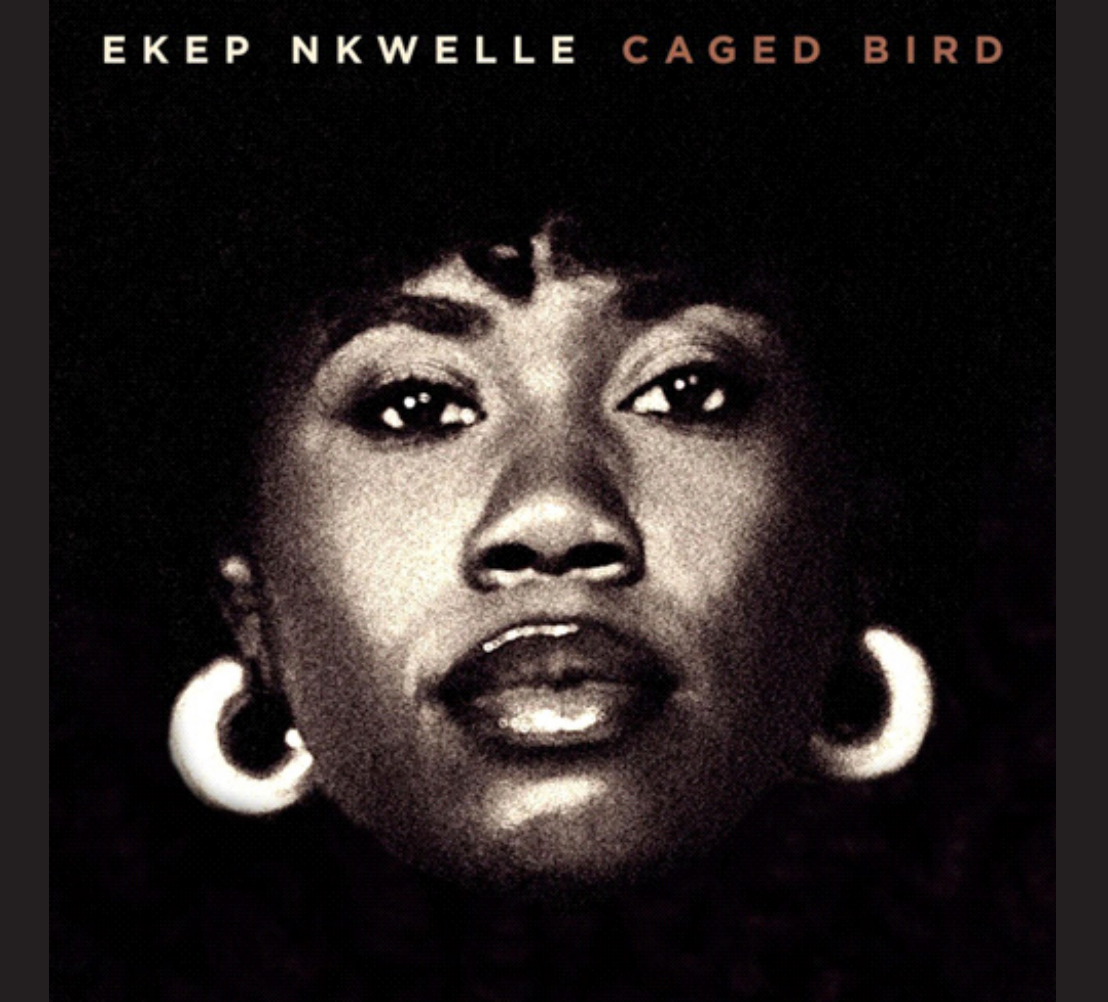
Vocalist Ekep Nkwelle’s releases debut “Caged Bird” inspired by poet Maya Angelou’s “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” and single “Early One Mornin’ ” set for September 25th via Mack Avenue Records

“Nkwelle is poised to become one of the defining artists of her generation.”
-The Sacramento Observer

August 21, 2026 - Rising vocalist **Ekep Nkwelle** announced her long-awaited debut album **Caged Bird**, out September 25th via **Mack Avenue Records**. Inspired by **Maya Angelou's** “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings,” the record details a journey from sorrow to inspiration, representing human suffering and the pursuit of a better future. The announcement comes with the first single “**Early One Mornin.**”

The 27-year-old singer, composer and bandleader has been captivating audiences since she first led worship at age 12, even then honing her ability to transport and inspire. Now with her long-awaited debut album, **Caged Bird**, Nkwelle is showing the world the sound she's been refining on the road with her dy-

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About Ekep Nkwelle: “The 27-year-old singer, composer and bandleader has been captivating audiences since she first led worship at age 12, even then honing her ability to transport and inspire.” (Photo Credit: Ashley Marsh)

Tracy Bonham celebrates 30th Anniversary of “The Burdens of Being Upright” from sports-Ent. 6

Following exuberant recent shows including a sold out four-month residency in Boston earlier this year (in which she was joined by surprise guests **Tanya Donnelly** and **Hugo Burnham of Gang of Four**, shows in New York (supporting **Cracker**), and Milwaukee's iconic Summerfest, Tracy will be playing shows in the Midwest and the Pacific Northwest, before returning to the East Coast, including a slot at the Rhode Island Folk Festival on August 30, East Providence, RI Rhode Island Folk Festival 2026

More Tour Dates...
October 2- Columbus, OH Natalie's Grandview (Music Hall & Kitchen)
November 13 -Boston, MA Sonia (Full Band)
November 14 - New York, NY Drom (Full Band)

As part of the celebration of the album that transformed her from a local artist to an international star with a #1 Modern Rock hit in her massive single "Mother Mother," Tracy is prepping a re-

freshed and re-recorded new version of **The Burdens of Being Upright** to be released later this Fall 2026. While the original album was recorded with the rebellious nature of youth but still rather wide-eyed and innocent to the cutthroat nature of the music business, these new versions have unearthed something she hadn't realized until now. One poignant example is how her second single "The One" transformed from being a very personal song to one that spoke for women at large.

She explains, "The new version of 'The One' has made me realize that I have a responsibility to speak for other people, primarily women, who have been limited, diminished, and victimized. I feel it is important to call out the people who are abusers instead of protecting them as I once did. In the original version, I was expressive with the lyrics while hiding behind its catchy melodic pop chorus. When recording this new version, I was inspired by all the voices of people, especially women, before me who might not have had the chance to speak out."

Hoping to right a past regret, Tracy also points out she wishes "One Hit Wonder" would have been a single. Reflecting on the

irony of the song's title and message, "It was a premonition. I could see the writing on the wall even as I went on my first tours

in 1995. The music business is fickle. It's on to the next thing before you even begin. I saw it

happen to my friends, and I could feel it happening to me as well."

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The Downtown Memphis Commission inaugurates Memphis Jazz Festival from sports page 1

Over time, the goal is to grow the Memphis Jazz Festival into a nationally recognized event that creates new tourism demand for Downtown Memphis—giving visitors another reason to travel to our city while generating increased foot traffic and economic activity for Downtown restaurants, hotels, businesses, and attractions.

tractions.

The full artist lineup, festival locations, schedule, sponsors, and additional details will be announced soon. For now, Memphis—save the date. A new celebration of jazz is coming Downtown.

About Downtown Memphis Commission
The Downtown Memphis Commission (DMC) drives Downtown's role as the economic, cultural, and governmental core of our city and county. The DMC is funded by an assessment on commercial property in the Central Business Improvement District (CBID), which is reinvested into funding incentives and activations designed to support the growth of both Downtown's population and appraised commercial property values.

Through their investment in Downtown development, infrastructure, vibrancy and activation, we are creating a stronger Downtown Memphis—a Downtown for everyone. Learn more on the DMC's State of Downtown Dashboard. | www.downtownmemphis.com

