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## MUSIC REVIEW: AMANDA SHIRES EXPLORES THE MEANING OF HOME

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Amanda Shires, "My Piece of Land" (BMG)

Amanda Shires has a fine sense of humor, which may be why a single measure at the start of "My Piece of Land" is propelled by handclaps. They seem odd and out of place, but funny.

Soon enough we're on to the main attraction, which is Shires' voice - a distinctive, delicate alto with an uncanny quaver that punctuates the end of a phrase. Her approach is bend but don't break, like a good NFL defense.

It's the voice of a performer fully invested in her material, and the 10 songs on "My Piece of Land" warrant such commitment. She wrote them all, with help on two from her husband, fellow singer-songwriter Jason Isbell.

The material explores the many definitions of home, and also love, lust and loss. There's not an ounce of

flab in the 34-minute set, and varied musical approaches make it seem even shorter. Some tunes are slow and quiet, with Shires' ukulele playing a prominent role, but her humor shows with a Broadway-esque rat-a-tat delivery on "Nursery Rhyme," and Mr. Shires delivers a crank-the-volume solo on "My Love (The Storm)." "When You're Gone" is radio-ready pop rock, and Shires turns up the Texas twang as she reflects on her youth on "Mineral Wells."

By the end Shires has found a new home, giving the album a happy ending. That's when clapping seems most appropriate.