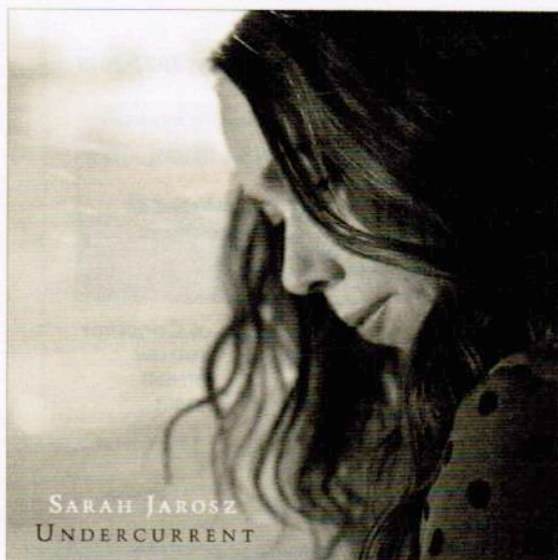


ACOUSTIC GUITAR

SEPTEMBER 2016

PLAYLIST



Sarah Jarosz

Undercurrent

Sugar Hill

The 25-year-old artist embraces the haunted ambivalence of adulthood

As description and mission statement, *Undercurrent*, the title of Sarah Jarosz's fourth studio album, is particularly apt. In her smoky alto, she continues to sing of romance and loss, but now her elliptical, expressionistic narratives are underpinned with steely resolve. Layered, textured tunes, some sparsely arranged with little more than solo acoustic guitar, retain the flavor of roots music, yet slip the moorings of genre entirely. Perhaps most telling, Jarosz's long-standing virtuosity on banjo and octave mandolin remains, but takes a back seat to a newfound focus on fluid acoustic guitars (played by Jarosz, Jedd Hughes and Guster's Luke Reynolds). Sundappled, dueling acoustics and Jarosz's slipknot vocal phrasing shimmer through waves of reverb on the jazz-inflected "Green Lights." It's an obvious sign that *Undercurrent* charts a new course for the singer-songwriter, and instrumentalist, but it's not the only one.

Jarosz's voice adopts a coquettish swagger on "Coming Undone," a sassy co-write and duet with Parker Millsap that's spiked with grimy electric guitar. On the minor-scale "House of Mercy," her unyielding, daggers-dipped-in-venom vocal rolls through snaking acoustics that segue into a coruscating slow burn, while chugging cello and a harmonic Brit-pop-tinged bridge rub shoulders with hardscrabble folk on "Take Me Back."

In "Jacqueline," Jarosz reflects on the Central Park reservoir she frequents for inspiration, and its namesake, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. Guitars coil like eddies as she ruminates on the act of creation, and its by-product solitude. Here, with no wasted gestures and deceptive nonchalance, the 25-year-old artist embraces the haunted ambivalence of adulthood.

—Pat Moran