

Amanda Shires

To the Sunset

SILVER KNIFE/THIRTY TIGERS



Over the course of this decade, **Amanda Shires** has quietly been making some of the best country-folk music out there—her 2016 album *My Piece of Land* was a gorgeous, if underrated, gem that demonstrated captivating warmth in her voice and down-home storytelling. On her fifth solo album, *To the Sunset*, she rounds up an all-star band that includes drummer **Jerry Pentecost**, Gregg Allman keyboardist **Peter Levin**, Nashville producer du jour/bassist **Dave Cobb** and her husband **Jason Isbell** on guitar. And this set of songs is unlike anything she's done before. From the warped, electronic-y opening notes of the first track "Parking Lot Pirouette," it's clear that Shires is looking to ditch that mellow twang that was present before for a woozier, more experimental sound. As a result, the 10 tunes sound bigger and more daring, with much more heft behind her voice. As for the subject matter, *To the*

Sunset continues Shires' tradition of storytelling, with a sharper edge. On the jangly guitar-driven "Break Out the Champagne," she touches on the apocalypse, heeding a call to "get on with the shit show," while on "Take on the Dark," she explores anxiety and personal tumult, coming to the conclusion that "it's OK to fall apart." The closer, "Wasn't I Paying Attention?" climaxes with the narrator's friend setting themselves on fire—a dark, disturbing piece of imagery to leave listeners with.

It's always risky when an artist goes down a new path but, in this instance, it paid off big time for Shires—it's easily her best album to date. *Mike Ayers*