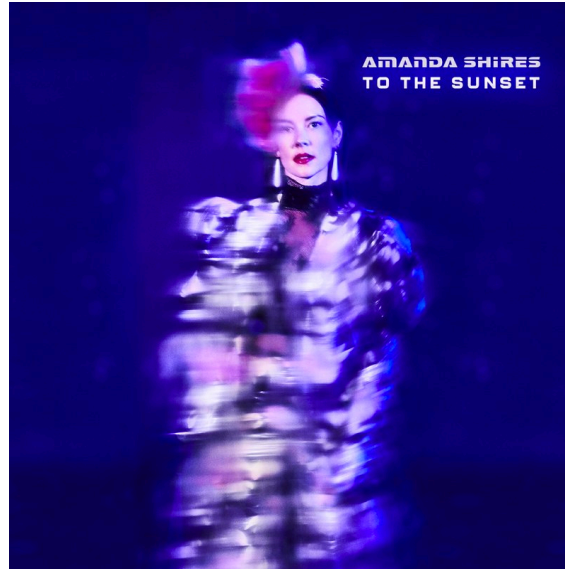


## Review: 'To the Sunset' is Amanda Shires' best album yet

By STEVEN WINE

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Amanda Shires, "To the Sunset" (Silver Knife/Thirty Tigers)

The start of Amanda Shires' new album sounds like a spin of the dial on an old radio struggling to find a station amid the static. Will it be country music? Pop? Rock? Or maybe something from outer space, which inspired the lyrics to the first song.

Shires is way out there, an unclassifiable original, which is what makes "To the Sunset" a pleasure. Nashville superstar producer Dave Cobb was clearly on board with the idea of creating something different, and he helped Shires come up with a 10-song set that's her best work yet.

It starts with her quirky, quavery alto, which is processed and multi-tracked to excellent effect. A fine supporting cast includes her husband, Jason Isbell, who plays guitar riffs not heard on his own records and sounds as though he's having a blast.

Ditto Shires, who plays the uke, whistles and lets out a gleeful "Wooo!" at the start of the rocker "Eve's Daughter." She should be happy after writing a batch of terrific, slightly twisted tunes filled with happy hooks and memorable melodies.

Armed with a newly earned MFA in creative writing, Shires serves up quotable couplets about champagne, clothes envy and music versus sports. These songs would sound good on any radio, old or new.