Sarah Jarosz - World On The Ground (2020)

1 Eve 3:26 2 Pay It No Mind 3:16 3 Hometown 3:00 4 Johnny 3:59 5 Orange And Blue 3:37 6 I'll Be Gone 3:25 7 Maggie 3:29 8 What Do I Do 3:23 9 Empty Square 3:20 10 Little Satchel 4:25   Cello – Dave Eggar Drums – Shawn Pelton (tracks: 6,8) Harmony Vocals – Catherine Russell (tracks: 6), Curtis King (tracks: 6), Dennis Collins (4) (tracks: 6) Viola – Chris Cardona Violin – Katie Kresek, Katie Thomas Vocals, Guitar, Mandolin, Bouzouki – Sarah Jarosz

Conservatorium-trained musicians should always be approached with caution. Sure they have an A-grade level of music theory and playing expertise but sometimes that can come at the expense of heart and soul and the requisite rawness that so often makes folk and country music so compelling. On her fifth solo album, Sarah Jarosz's folk and bluegrass songs do sometime drift into that territory – middle-of-the-road strumming and plucking beneath earnest poetry, but when she gets the balance right the results are wholly rewarding.

Across the album she sings of small towns and the conflicting desires to stay versus the pull of the big city and new opportunities. 'Hometown' and 'What Do I Do' convey that effectively over plaintiff and wistful picking while 'Pay It No Mind' takes some nice melodic flights of fancy, not dissimilar to Bobbie Gentry in style. 'Johnny' takes melodic influence from Alice In Chains and filters it through Juliana Hatfield and Liz Phair making it a satisfying outlier.

At times too slick and polished, World On The Ground is still a strong addition to Jarosz's discography and often a masterclass in restrained virtuosity without losing sight of the song.
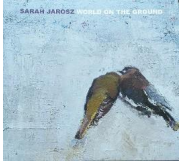---Chris Familton, posttowire.com

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