

AMANDA PEARCY

An Offering

SELF-RELEASED



If you're wondering whether to give Amanda Percy's music a chance, start by imagining a voice that sounds right at home inside Bobbie Gentry's "Ode to Billie Joe," the

only cover here, and a songwriter whose subjects mirror the dark, unspoken mysteries of Gentry's hit. But that sells Percy short. On *An Offering*, she puts flesh on the familiar bones of Southern gothic — secrets, suspicion, lust, last-ditch faith, illicit comforts, the longing for home and love — and makes them sound like lived experience, only described by a sharp observer with a store of original images. Percy calls mobile homes "sugar cubes on a stretch of beach highway" that sit melting on a "black top tongue," and in the same song compares her young lover's kisses to a pawn shop gun. In the title track, she keeps her love for an absent and untrustworthy partner tucked away, like "cathedral candles lit for the poor." She suggests both the distancing and the rationalization of someone contemplating a seemingly harmless affair — "ain't no way no one's someone is gonna get hurt" — and, afterward, the self-protectiveness of the wife at home washing dishes, pretending not to see the lipstick on his shirt while she dries her hands on her skirt. But it's not all darkness and duplicity. In "Mellow Joy," she celebrates lust with humor, offering to "be your girl, you be my boy / Make me under your employ" before flipping gender roles in the last verse. And though she presents herself as a prodigal returning home in "Pallet on the Floor," she isn't the model prodigal, penitent and head bowed. Over a rocking beat with a gospel organ, she treats her homecoming like a joyful reunion and adds a note of defiance, as if she's determined not only to not repeat her mistakes but to put her family's house in order. The music ranges from moody ballads to swamp-country blues and roadhouse rock. Tough, sweet and hard to shake, *An Offering* contains some of the best songwriting you're liable to hear this year. — MADISON SEARLE