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ARTISTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

NORA BROWN BROOKLYN, N.Y.

Archival Informer

At age 17, **Nora Brown** could either be considered a prodigy or simply someone possessing some serious desire and determination. But mostly, she is—to borrow a cliché—a talented young lady with an old soul. She maintains a devotion to traditional music, particularly that of Appalachian origin. A banjo virtuoso and assured singer, she shares an expressive delivery that readily reveals that age-old influence. *Long Time To Be Gone*, her latest album and third to date, offers an adept array of songs that are simultaneously fresh and reverent. “It’s easy to perceive traditional music as stationary,” Brown says. “A lot of the music I play came from people who have long since passed away. Yet they remain present and alive. Traditions aren’t necessarily stationary as long as someone is carrying them on.” Recorded at St. Ann’s Church in Brooklyn Heights, N.Y., and taking full advantage of the sanctuary’s cavernous sound, her latest offering is spare yet engaging, fully conveying the depth of her devotion. “A big part of old time and traditional music is self-expression,” she insists. “The folk process itself ensures that traditional music is always changing and growing.” Naturally, the same could be said of Brown herself, who’s pursued her craft since the age of six. She studied with several musical masters and eventually went on to win numerous competitions, accruing critical acclaim, ascending the bluegrass charts and drawing attention from NPR. “I started playing and performing music so young that I never really made the

decision that many musicians do, to make their passion their career,” she muses. “I think I played my first solo performance when I was 12 and, from then on, I sort of rode the wave. When I was offered opportunities to play music at local venues or festivals I would.” Clearly, that confidence paid off and Brown’s reverence for roots music is apparent. “I’m definitely still growing a lot as a musician, and I think I have already grown a lot since my first record,” Brown reckons. “This is a lifelong journey, but I’ve developed more of my own style since that first record. Sometimes it can be painful to listen to old recordings, but it’s still cool to see where I’ve changed and grown.” norabrownmusic.com

Lee Zimmerman



THE AMERICANS LOS ANGELES

A Conscious Turn Away From Those Purist Origins

“For a while, I think that our music was fairly derivative in an intentional sense,” says **Patrick Ferris**, *The Americans*’ singer, songwriter and guitarist. “All we really cared about for a long time was pre-war music and ‘50s rockabilly, doo-wop and soul.” Now, on their freshly released second LP, *Stand True*, the L.A. trio are embracing double-barreled rock-and-roll as a conscious turn away from those purist origins. The Americans’ early throwback intentions scored them a spot on the 2013 compilation album, *Son of Rogues Gallery: Pirate Ballads, Sea Songs & Chanteys*—alongside heavy hitters such as Tom Waits, Keith Richards and Frank Zappa—as well as a subsequent appearance on *The Late Show with David Letterman*. After issuing three EPs, The Americans finally dropped their debut LP, *I’ll Be Yours*, in 2017, which dotted the Americana and Indie charts in the U.S. and U.K. Ferris and his bandmates—guitarist **Zac Sokolow** and bassist **Jake Faulkner** (as well as a friend keeping the beat, banging a suitcase with a soup spoon)—also gradually fine-tuned their live show, spending their early years playing honky-tonks, rural bars and even a wine cellar in an abandoned Coca-Cola bottling plant. The outfit opened for Ryan Bingham on two national tours, winning over fans like Jack White and T Bone Burnett along the way. Yet, ahead of the sessions for *Stand True*, The Americans faced a major setback—the theft of all their gear, including several prized vintage guitars. They searched pawn shops and distributed flyers, amazingly retrieving their stolen instruments eight months later at a local swap meet. In the interim, they wrote as a group, using borrowed, lesser quality gear. The ensemble also refocused—the minutiae of their purist leanings seemed far less important in the face of simply surviving as a band. And, after settling into LA’s Big Bad Sound studio for five days of recording, The Americans emerged with an independently produced, 11-song set teeming with vignettes of darkened doorways and broken hearts. The new material also displayed an immediately arresting collision of electric guitars, Ferris’ soul-bruised lyrics and the effectively propulsive and proper drumming from Tim Carr. “It’s been healthier to push forward and do our own thing. As far as where we are creatively, it’s just about right, I’m happy to say,” Ferris says. “This album is closer to what we are—a rock band from Los Angeles.” theamericansmusic.com **Larson Sutton**

Sari Thayer (The Americans)