



AMANDA PEARCY

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ONE WAY TO gauge a songwriter is by the company she chooses for her own songs. Do the covers tower above her own? Do they embarrass their neighbors? On her last two albums, Amanda Percy has set the bar high, covering the Rolling Stones' "No Expectations" and Bobbie Gentry's "Ode to Billie Joe," and her own songs prove fully equal to both. Percy is one of a tiny number of writers whose lyrics consistently approach poetry. They stand up on their hind legs; reading them

is almost enough. Story fragments are limned with a few spare strokes, often in original images that illuminate her protagonists' inner lives. Partners are "birds on a wire, too busy singing to fly"; an ex resolves to steel herself against memories of a former love "like a jail priest hears confessions of prison cell crimes." But Percy's words come to life in her music. Whether singing slow-cooked ballads or swamp-country rock shuffles, Percy sounds like she's lived them. Like too many of our state's best songwriters, she seems to have found a more receptive audience in Europe than at home. Texans should hear what they've been missing.