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BORN TO BE WILD

Grace Potter is filling her own boots

By David Freeland

"I'm not a city girl," Grace Potter attests from her home in Waitsfield, Vt., a hamlet of less than 2,000 souls. "Of course, I have dreams of big city success, but I don't think I will ever live in the city. I just don't think that it's in my blood to be able to be around that many people at all times."

Not that the 23-year-old Potter is anti-social—far from it. Like the music on her excellent CD, *Nothing But the Water* she's brash and personable, a shower of ball-kicking energy.

"I think that a lot of the edge comes from being in a band [the Nocturnals] with a bunch of guys. I never thought I'd be in this kind of rock band, that we'd be smashing our guitars, going to these extreme measures. It just makes you feel alive."

"Treat Me Right" is raw, sinuous funk—all backbeat and organ—while "Toothbrush and My Table" leavens heartbreak with a dash of comedy: "Give me back my hammer, give me back my nail/Give me back my jeans and my J.J. Cale." Potter's tough, gritty voice has drawn comparisons with Bonnie Raitt and Janis Joplin, and while she appreciates the compliment, she's clearly got her own boots to fill.

"I like to say that there's a difference between being influenced by somebody and being inspired by somebody. I think I'm inspired by those people, but I would rarely pick up one of their records and dig through it and see what part of it sounds like me. That's just a little too narcissistic for me."

Still, she knows the pressure to live up to predetermined standards can be especially acute for female performers.

"It's weird how women, once they get into the entertainment industry, are clamoring to find their category. I want to throw that out the window; I want to forget about it."

For the moment, though, Potter holds the attention of music executives searching desperately for the next Norah Jones. Is stardom on the way? With youthful chutzpah, she begs indifference.

"I knew from the moment I was born that I already was a star. I was one of those kinds of kids—total attitude. I was dressing myself from the age of one and a half, in tutus and jeans and moon boots everywhere I went. I don't think there was ever a moment where I've thought I have crossed the threshold into being a star, and I hope I never do



Credit: Taylor Crothers • L-R: Bryan Dondero, Matthew Burr, Grace Potter, Scott Tourmet

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find a day where I'm realizing that. It's so important to just be you. And when you're born a star, you don't have to worry about that!"

Potter emphasizes this with a hearty laugh.

"OK, but I want you to know that my opinion of myself has changed since I was one and a half. I do have a little more modesty, I hope!"

September 13. Bowery Ballroom,

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