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CD Review: 'This Is Somewhere' by Grace Potter and the Nocturnals

They've become darlings of the jam-band scene through incessant touring, but [Grace Potter and the Nocturnals](#) add up to so much more on their third



album.

“This is Somewhere” (Hollywood) is a tight, focused record that echoes the fierce rootsy songcraft of Neil Young — even the title is a reference to Young’s early stunner “Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere” — on 11 new tunes overflowing with soul.

Potter’s hardly the first to mine that territory: Kathleen Edwards, Tift Merritt and Brandi Carlile all inject roots into their rock. What sets Potter apart is the sheer depth of her songwriting.

There’s a hopeful world-weariness that belies her 24 years, and she plays tough against tender with the rueful air of someone who has seen both, and aches for a little more of the latter.

She hasn’t really — Potter grew up comfortably in Vermont and has been making music since she was a student at St. Lawrence University in upstate New York — but that doesn’t detract a bit from her songs. It just makes her a good storyteller, with a keen eye for details on narratives like “Ah Mary” (“Mary sure has her issues,” Potter cracks in the press notes) and the defiant deathbed confession “Big White Gate.”

Potter sings like she's an open channel to some higher truth, and she and her band play with a second-nature precision honed by countless nights on stage together. The music breathes deeply, with scorching slide guitar tearing through "Here's to the Meantime" and the sound of Potter's Hammond organ swelling majestically on "Ain't No Time," a sweeping song of determination to persevere in the face of hardship.

There's no hardship here, though — just a set of powerful tunes that show a gifted young songwriter coming into her own. Turns out that somewhere is wherever Grace Potter happens to be.

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