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## AMANDA SHIRES FINDS HOME WITH 'MY PIECE OF LAND'

## FIFTH STUDIO ALBUM AVAILABLE NOW

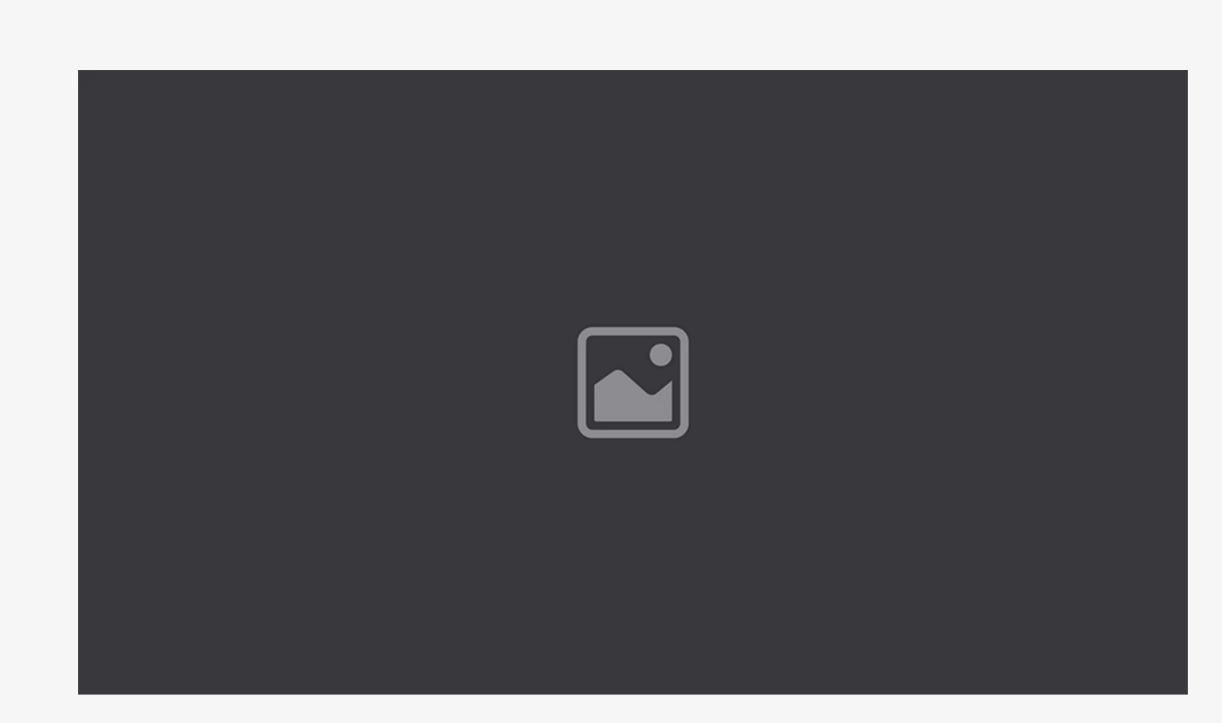
By Lauren Tingle **September 16, 2016** 4:38 PM

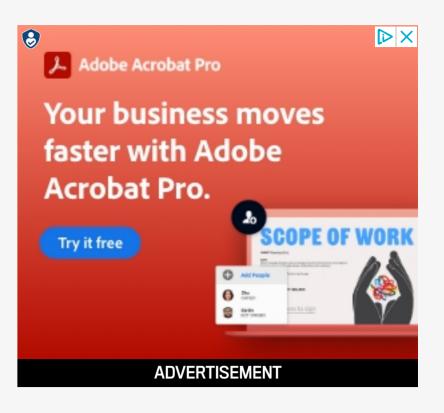


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There is a lot of life lived on Amanda Shires' new album My Piece of Land. And when she wrote most of the collection, a beautiful one was about to begin.

Most of the songs except for "Mineral Wells" and parts of the revealing track "Harmless" were written when she was seven months pregnant with her first child with husband <u>Jason Isbell</u>. At the time, she was unable to travel and spent most of her down time nesting around their Nashville home. She even went so far as to pick all the weeds around the house in the Tennessee summertime heat so their baby girl Mercy would come home to a perfectly manicured lawn. It's a scene that's perfectly captured in the whimsical "Nursery Rhyme."

"Everything was done," she said. "So I started writing the record, and writing for me is a lot of selfreflection, and that compounded the time I had to sit there by myself and think."

At the time, she had the same anxious thoughts most moms-to-be have when they're about to welcome their first born into the world.

"I just started trying to really understand everything surrounding what it means to bring a child into the

world," she said, "and dealing with the hope and the joy of it, and also the terrifying parts of it. 'Am I going to be a good mom?' 'Will our marriage last?' I've seen divorce a lot of times as a child. And I understand that works for some people to just get divorced and start over.

"But I really love my husband and my life. And I want to work real hard to make us stay together. I was just

coming from my place of, 'From where I'm standing on this little piece of land, this is what I'm feeling right

now and what my hopes are in the moment that we're in right now."

with where they are in life from their piece of land.

But it's important to note that My Piece of Land is not a mommy-and-me album. Through channeling new mom anxiety and exploring the concept of home, Shires sings with pure empathy for those coming to grips

And her attention to detail mesmerizes. In "Harmless," she recalls a chance meeting with someone, setting the scene under a streetlight that leaves the listener hanging onto every phrase as she questions emotional infidelity.

She sings, "It could have been harmless/Wanting to see/If I could get a little closer/And walk away breathing/It might've been cheating./Where exactly is the line?/Too early to admit it, I wanted you for mine."

"Sometimes you run into somebody," she said, "and then everything around that person seems so enchanting, like even the way they are standing under a streetlight and the way the light looks off of them. I sort of followed that feeling of infatuation and I just followed the story from exactly as it happened that night. That's how I got to that song."

Mercy even contributed to the album in utero roughly two weeks before making her world debut. "In 'Mineral Wells," Shires says, "if you listen very closely or single out just the ukulele, you can hear her kicking against it. It's very cool."

For our CMT.com interview, we spoke over the phone between Shires' dates on tour with Ryan Adams, who happens to be among her Top 5 favorite songwriters and travels with a pinball machine on the road.

"He loves pinball," she revealed. "It has a road case and everything. It goes everywhere, and he's one of those people that just doesn't compromise when it comes to his art and his music. I really respect that. No matter what he plays the songs the way he wants to play them and changes his set up all the time. And he creates new songs on the spot. It's fascinating."

The rest of her Top 5 tunesmiths in no particular order are Leonard Cohen, Dolly Parton, John Prine and Billy Joe Shaver.

On the road through Dec. 10, Shires will open for Prine at Nashville's historic Ryman Auditorium on Sept. 30 and play Americana Fest on Thursday (Sept. 22) at the Station Inn. My Piece of Land is available now. It is her fifth studio album.

CMT.com: This music is phenomenal. Is this your most personal collection of music to date?

Shires: Maybe so. Music already is so personal to me, and everything I record I feel like it's personal. I think it's more personal in the sense that I don't try to hide anything or change the story so much and just try to stay true to the narrative.

I think my favorite song right now is "My Love (The Storm)."

That's one I'm real proud of. There are two co-writes on the record. One is "My Love (The Storm)" and the other is "Pale Fire." I wrote both with Jason. I'm really proud of those because not just because they were successful co-writes in the way they made the record, but we both got to practice doing that. It's not something we have done a whole lot. It's a deep thing to get into songs and your own feelings, especially with somebody you're already so close to.

How do you bring out the best in each other as artists and as a couple?

I think we bring out the best in each other by encouraging each other to follow the art, follow the muse and don't compromise when it comes to that.

Which song was the hardest one to write?

I would say, "I Know What it's Like." That was difficult to write because it was very personal. They're all personal, but that one is particularly dark. During that small time that I was writing that song, one of my family members was telling me about her problems. And I was telling her, "I know what that's like," and somehow empathized with the situation. To see somebody hurting and to explore something like that in yourself can kind of be difficult.

How does this music remind you of who you are and help you stay grounded? I wrote "Mineral Wells" after I left Texas to move to Nashville to be a songwriter like so many people do. In

that song in particular, I was writing about home -- my inherited sense of home and what my home was as a child -- and brought it around to what my home is now and what it looks like to me. It came full circle.

He's so instinctive. I've never worked with somebody that is so instantly instinctive on what to do with the arrangements. He might hear a riff or something while you're playing and he will stop the song and say, "We've got to add this riff." And then it builds and then, suddenly, you don't even feel like you're recording. You just feel like you're playing music at your house with your friends. He introduced me to my first Burger Up dessert that I think is the most incredible dessert in Nashville. It's a Krispy Kreme bread pudding. Every day we were in the studio, we ate those. It was awesome.

How do you take care of your point of view as a creative person?

What was is like working with producer Dave Cobb for the album?

It's your responsibility to be empathetic enough to pay attention to the world around you. You're not the only person occupying the world. If you look around and try to be connected with your fellow human, you can have better experiences to draw from. Just focusing on yourself is very boring. So I just like to try to not be selfish and think about others. I take care of that just by reading the news and trying to learn from my own stupid mistakes. It's harder to learn from your own mistakes because sometimes you keep doing the same thing over and over.

If we're lucky to be alive in 30 years, who do you think making music now will we still be listening to then?

We'll still be listening to Jason. We'll still be listening to Amanda Shires. We'll still be listening to Kacey Musgraves. I'll still be listening to Ryan Adams. God, wouldn't it be awesome if Leonard Cohen lives for 30 more years?

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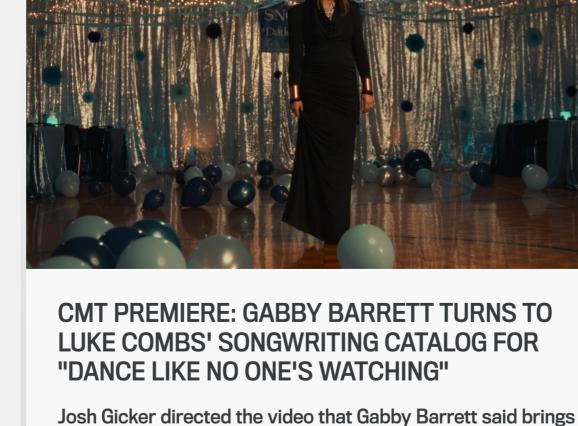
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