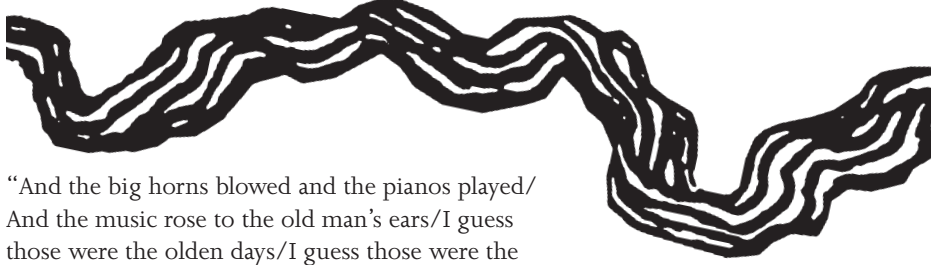


anaïs mitchell

biography



“And the big horns blowed and the pianos played/
And the music rose to the old man’s ears/I guess
those were the olden days/I guess those were the
golden years,” sings Anais Mitchell on her new record

The Brightness. This earnest nostalgia trip says a lot about the kind of art that this Vermont native has been creating since entering the underground folk scene in 2002. At a time when the music industry is playing the role of the slickest of defense attorneys, using flash and dazzle campaigns to distract us from the fact that their clients are terrible, Mitchell is an artist who grew up on a sheep farm. She makes small-sounding, big-thinking folk albums that play like a front-porch serenade. If she feels in a bit of a time warp, you can’t blame her.

Listening to this 25-year-old singer/songwriter perform her meticulously written songs, fervently singing them in a distinctive, almost childlike voice, you’d think it was her life mission to rouse the hearts and minds of her listeners with an acoustic guitar. But Mitchell wasn’t always committed to the idea. “I used to tell people I wanted to be a journalist. There is a lonely egotism and self-composure to journalists. Not unlike artists, they’re always traveling, always writing, loving their loneliness, feeling somehow that they have their finger on the pulse—worshipping the truth and trying to render it legible.”

Despite her journalistic leanings, Mitchell started writing songs at age 17 and eventually started performing them live during her school days, which were punctuated by a remarkable amount of traveling. In a short period of time, Anais made several trips to the Middle East, and also spent time in Europe and Latin America, studying languages and world politics. This stunning, troubadour-like experience seeped into her music, and she became adept at fusing her passion for literature and journalism in her lyrics.

With a clutch of quiet, ambitious songs in her arsenal, Mitchell recorded her now out-of-print debut, **The Song They Sang When Rome Fell** (2002), in a single afternoon in Austin, Texas. It was in Texas that Anais discovered the Kerrville Folk Festival, which honored her with the prestigious New Folk Award in 2003. Soon thereafter, with the help of Michael Chorney and Chicago-based Waterbug Records, Anais released her second album, **Hymns For The Exiled**, in 2004. The stirring collection of guitar and voice cemented Mitchell’s status as a folksinger to watch, and the record eventually reached the ears of Ani DiFranco, a songwriter whose fusion of personal and political themes was a formative influence on a teenaged Mitchell. After seeing a few of Anais’ captivating concerts, DiFranco signed the artist to her label, Righteous Babe Records.

“If you knew what Ani DiFranco meant to me as a young woman and a young songwriter...well, I was simultaneously elated and in total disbelief,” Mitchell told a Vermont reporter after joining the RBRrrmy. “It seemed too good to be true.”

The same can be said about Mitchell’s Righteous Babe debut, which hits stores February 13, 2007. During the recording process, Anais lived above the studio, which was built into an old Vermont gristmill. She could wake up, shake the sleep out of her eyes and record tracks in her pajamas, resulting in a decidedly intimate listening experience. Spilling over with worldly metaphors, intense emotions and unshakeable reverence to the art of song, **The Brightness** shimmers with creative spark.

And by no means is Anais Mitchell sitting on her laurels. She’s staging a folk-opera based on the myth of Hades and Eurydice, and will be embarking on a winter tour to do what she does best: pluck chords and tell stories.

