

MYLA SMITH // HIDING PLACES

IN early 2013, Myla Smith had barely caught her breath from the release of her acclaimed 2012 EP *Drugs*. She was shooting music videos and releasing singles, but her wheels were already turning on the next record. When she pressed send on an e-mail to Brad Jones (Josh Rouse, Hayes Carll, *Over the Rhine*), she never really expected to hear back. She definitely didn't expect for him to ask for songs, for him to love them, and for the two of them to work together on *Hiding Places*, Myla's most representative, raw album to date.

"I think *Hiding Places* is the most complete expression of who I am as an artist," Myla says. "My challenge as a writer is to force myself to be honest enough to say something that matters to me, in a way that matters to someone else. My challenge as a singer is to convince the listener that I actually mean what I'm saying. I tried really hard to do that on this record, to create something that people could connect with."

Myla credits Jones with pushing her not only to achieve that connection, but also to record what many are already calling the best vocal performance of her career. "It's one of the more personal records I've done," she says. "Brad had said from the beginning that he really wanted people to see my heart in these songs."

As Jones tells it, first he fell for Myla's voice. But then, he heard something in her demos that the landscape doesn't have very much of right now – smart, interesting pop melodies written by women. "And then once I got into it I realized that her lyrics – by the time I really got to know the songs – I thought they were very poetic, but also sort of wise in a very human way," he says. "That was impressive."

It was that human element Jones tried to spotlight on *Hiding Places*. He wanted to create a record that demonstrated not just Myla's talent, but her personality and who she is as an artist – including maybe a few warts.

"We left some burrs on the vocal sound," he says. "We didn't polish off every note. We thought it made the record more immediate and more human. What I tried to do as a producer was bring out not only her musicianship, but her humanity. I wanted her vocal to take center stage."

Hiding Places was recorded at Alex the Great Recording in Nashville. Most of the vocal performances on the album were takes Myla cut live with the band. That band includes multi-instrumentalist and Memphis legend Ross Rice (Jill Sobule, Garrison Starr), Will Kimbrough (Emmylou Harris), Jonathan Trebing (Rascal Flatts), John Deaderick (Patty Griffin), Jason Cheek (Matthew Perryman Jones), Pat Buchanan (Grace Potter, The Band Perry, Dixie Chicks, Jessica Simpson).

Much like its predecessor *Drugs*, the title of *Hiding Places* sort of snuck up on Myla. She and Jones had narrowed a field of about 30 songs in the months leading up to recording, and of the 11 they chose Myla was struck most by "*Hiding Places*," a love song with shades of classic country.

"I thought the phrase 'hiding places' was very evocative on its own," she says. "But when I looked at it again in context with all the other songs, it made even more sense as the album title. I believe that everyone has a deep, deep longing to be seen, as we really are. This record explores some of the places we hide, and is ultimately a call to take courage, come out of the shadows, and chase the life we were meant to live."



1. CAN'T SAY NO
2. LOVE IN BLACK AND WHITE
3. YELLOW PAPER LANTERNS
4. SPARKS
5. LOSE YA
6. HIDING PLACES
7. JUST US
8. HUMAN CONDITION
9. FERRIS WHEEL
10. FACE OF LOVE
11. HAPPY SONG

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