

H.C. McEntire

ENO AXIS

Hands for the Harvest

Footman's Coat

High Rise

River's Jaw

One Eye Open

Final Bow

True Meridian

Sunday Morning

Time, On Fire

Houses of the Holy

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“Early rise, start the fire, till the rows, pass the tithes.” So starts **H.C. McEntire**’s sophomore release, *Eno Axis*. It’s a set of directions delivered with assurance and authority, reaching the listener without pretension almost as a sermon or spell. McEntire has always had one foot planted in the traditional country gospel roots of her upbringing while boldly wrestling with its complications, creating an Americana sound of her own. But that has never rung as true as it does now on the transcendent psalms of *Eno Axis*.

Unlike McEntire’s solo debut, *LIONHEART*, which was recorded in sporadic bouts and fits while she was touring, *Eno Axis* is firmly rooted in place. After two years working all over the world as a backup singer in Angel Olsen’s band, McEntire came home to a hundred-year-old farmhouse tucked away in the woods of Durham, North Carolina, right on the Eno River. Here, McEntire was able to refocus. Like the blue-collar Appalachian kin she descended from, her days were scheduled by the clockwork of the Earth’s rotation: splitting wood, stacking it, weeding and watering the garden, walking the dog past the bridge and back—and every evening on the front porch, watching dusk fall. *Eno Axis* emerges from this time as the strongest work McEntire has shared yet.

“To all the winds—hold high the hymnal, gather blessings by the fistful,” McEntire sings in her celebration of the Eno on “River’s Jaw.” McEntire doesn’t write lyrics; she writes poetry. Growing up in the tiny rural community of Green Creek, outside Tryon, North Carolina, she knows how to tell a story. And just as Loretta Lynn sang about watching her mama’s fingers bleed on the washboard in “Coal Miner’s Daughter,” McEntire, too, takes the listener by the hand and pulls them into her own



experience. On “One Eye Open” McEntire revisits her childhood Sunday school room and reckons with Christian fundamentalism. On “Footman’s Coat,” she ruminates on time, biological clocks, and the path of possibilities left in her past.

Tracked and mixed at the Fidelitorium with a full backing band, many of the songs on *Eno Axis* feature scratch first takes of McEntire’s lead vocals, initially meant to be thrown out and redone. This rawness creates an immediacy, her self-assured, instinct-driven, and mesmerizing delivery complementing *Eno Axis*’ lush acoustics and warm tones. After a dreamy atmospheric interlude, “Time, On Fire” builds and retracts with a driving pop drum beat, exploring movement like the ebb and flow of a river, culminating in a soaring guitar solo. And just as a river’s current sometimes takes us somewhere unexpected, into new territory where we never knew we could go, *Eno Axis* closes with one of the album’s most revelatory experiences—a new, glossier cover of “Houses of the Holy” by Led Zeppelin. Under McEntire’s empowering reconstruction of this rock ‘n’ roll classic, the masculine, driving signature guitar vanishes, and instead we’re left with one of the inimitable queer voices of our time bashfully asking, “Can I take you to the movies?”

With *Eno Axis*, H.C. McEntire establishes herself as a force to be reckoned with in the greater American musical landscape. These songs transcend country and gospel, folk and rock—they’re poems directed straight to the listener, simple psalms on how the sun falls, how the train passes, how love grows and bends. McEntire inspires us to find the stillness within our own lives—a remarkable clear-ringing declaration for our uncertain times.