

PRESS RELEASE

ANAÏS MITCHELL HADESTOWN

For immediate release.

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Anaïs Mitchell takes listeners on a trip to HADESTOWN on her latest album—with a little help from Ani DiFranco, Justin Vernon, Greg Brown, and other special guests
Unique musical journey features orchestral arrangements by Michael Chorney; production by Todd Sickafoose



“Artfully conceived, articulated and produced, *Hadestown* raises Mitchell’s creative bar exponentially; there isn’t anything remotely like it.” —*All Music Guide*

Anaïs Mitchell’s new album *Hadestown* is proof that music still has the power to surprise and delight. For starters, the guest list includes some pretty well-known names, including a certain Little Folksinger and a guy best known as Bon Iver. And it’s an honest-to-god *album*, the kind whose songs tell a story from beginning to end—specifically, the ancient Greek myth of the poet Orpheus and his doomed quest to rescue his wife Eurydice from the underworld. In Mitchell’s hands, the familiar saga is reimagined as unfolding in a version of the U.S. that simultaneously evokes our Depression-era past, the current financial disaster (though it was written before the stock market collapse), and a post-apocalyptic future. It’s a land

where people hide behind walls in a misguided attempt to preserve their “freedom” and protect their riches.

Featuring ambitious orchestral arrangements by Mitchell’s longtime collaborator, **Michael Chorney** (*The Brightness, Hymns for the Exiled*), and lush production by multi-instrumentalist **Todd Sickafoose** (Ani DiFranco, Andrew Bird, Jenny Scheinman), *Hadestown* captures on record the infectious dramatic energy of what began as a live “folk opera” that the Vermont-based singer/songwriter created with Chorney and theatrical director Ben t. Matchstick (Bread & Puppet Theater). After loading the sets and the 22-member cast of Vermont performers into a former circus bus and touring New England during “full-on winter,” it was time to rework a few songs.

Next, Mitchell called upon a few fellow musicians to lend their voices to a recorded version—not a cast album, but a stand-alone, self-contained song cycle. The result is a veritable Who’s Who of modern indie folk/rock: **Justin Vernon** of **Bon Iver** plays Orpheus; **Greg Brown** is Hades, Lord of the Underworld (“king of the kingdom of dirt”); and **Ani DiFranco** plays Hades’ strong-willed, subversive wife, Persephone. Also on hand in smaller roles are the **Haden Triplets** (Petra, Rachel, and Tanya) as the Greek-chorus-like Fates and **Ben Knox Miller** of **The Low Anthem** as the messenger Hermes. Mitchell herself sings the part of Eurydice, the character whose (metaphoric) death propels Orpheus into “Hadestown.”

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“It’s beyond belief, hearing these songs come out the mouths of some of my heroes,” Mitchell says. “It’s especially great because I’ve always thought of myself as a writer first and a singer/performer second. And songs are out there, they’re on the wind, they don’t belong to any of us. I love that about them. I’m so grateful to the singers for telling this story like they did.” Many of the songs were written or rewritten with the specific singers in mind.

“People often ask why I wanted to retell this particular myth,” says Mitchell. “The truth is, the first few songs just came out of nowhere. It wasn’t an academic idea or anything; the songs led to the myth, not the other way around. But once I got going I recognized in the Orpheus character something a lot of artists feel: his heartbreaking optimism. In the underworld, the rules are the rules, you don’t get a dead person back— but Orpheus believes if he can just sing/play/write something beautiful enough, maybe he can do the impossible, move the heart of stone, get through to someone. I’ve felt that feeling....”

The bulk of the recording was done with producer Todd Sickafoose at Brooklyn Recording studio in New York, but the lead vocals were completed all over the United States, from New Orleans to Eau Claire, WI, to Los Angeles.

From its opening notes, *Hadestown* is packed with irresistible melodies and the kind of plainspoken poetry that is a hallmark of Mitchell’s songwriting. It’s a love story set at a time “when the chips are down”— an epic tale on a personal scale, a saga both ancient and new, mythical and all too real.

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