

# CATCH THIS TIGRESS

Riding high on their album's success, Grace Potter & The Nocturnals show wide range of sound

NANTUCKET NECTARS  
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GRACE POTTER & THE  
NOCTURNALS

**e** Thursday, Aug. 11, 8 p.m. Special guest Kingsley Flood opens at 7. Tracie Potochnik performs at 6 on the Courtyard Stage. Gates open 5:30.

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BY BRE EATON

Unboxed, unpredictable, unapologetically sassy = Grace Potter & The Nocturnals. The 28-year-old frontwoman's fierce, raspy belt backed by the wail of dueling guitar riffs has graced the stage of two Newport Folk Festivals, but their headlining gig Thursday at the Newport Yachting Center's Sunset Music Festival will be what Potter called, in a recent phone interview, the quintet's

"moment in the sun" in Newport.

One of many shining moments, in fact, since last June when Hollywood Records released the Vermont-based band's eponymous album. It debuted on Billboard's Top 200 at No. 19, landed No. 3 on Billboard's Rock Album chart, and reached No. 1 on iTunes Rock Album chart. Though the record is their third release with the major label, the decision to make it self-titled seems to be a symbolic statement — they've finally found themselves.

"We've been together for a really long time," said Potter, "but we had never made a record that really felt as sassy and sexual as we really are as people. ... It's lighthearted and heavy all at once, and I think that's something that we had a hard time capturing on record, and I think that we did it."

What they captured is a genre-bending mix of retro-glam rock flavored with blues, roots and soul. This range of sound is showcased by the contrasting personalities of the first and last song. Their feisty hit "Paris (Ooh La La)" starts the album out with a grunt, foreshadowing the raw nature of the music to come.



**Mixing it up.** Grace Potter & The Nocturnals' third album is 'lighthearted and heavy all at once.' Left to right are Benny Yurco, Catherine Popper, Matt Burr, Grace Potter and Scott Tournet. PHOTO BY ADRIEN BROOM

Whereas, she says, "'Things I Never Needed,' the closing track, is such a self-effacing, heart-on-your-sleeve moment and really a reckoning, such the opposite of the lyrical and musical capacity of a song like 'Paris (Ooh La La).' That was intentional. I really wanted to show that stretch and that switch of what we do because we really are that crazy. We are that schizophrenic."

Rather than remaining landlocked in a single genre, Potter and her bandmates express a range of sound that reflects their varied moods, whims and life experiences.

"I don't like it when I hear a musician that is clearly just doing the same thing over and over again because I don't think that's what people do,"

Potter said. "Everything that happens to you changes the way you live your life and hopefully improves the way you live your life, so in the same way, I would hope that our music could evolve the way that we evolve as people."

Just as they have evolved since their fledgling college band beginnings in 2002, when the only time they could find a place to practice was after 2 a.m. — late-night dedication that inspired the group's name, the Nocturnals. In 2009, the original trio — frontwoman organist Potter, co-founder and drummer Matt Burr, and lead guitarist Scott Tournet — were joined by bassist Catherine Popper and rhythm guitarist Benny Yurco, creating their current configuration.

Despite the musical range the album offers, Potter's lungs remain the binding force of the Nocturnals' sound. Her sultry voice seems to saunter into the room like a tigress, pulling everyone to the edge of their seats, waiting for her to roar. And she does. She lets you have it, then just as quickly shrieks or descends to a chilling whisper. The spellbinding performer has been compared to such legendary female rockers as Janice Joplin, Joan Jett and Tina Turner. Such comparisons she takes as compliments or knocks against her unique musicality, depending on her mood. Nonetheless, Potter recognizes how these women changed the music industry.

"It took all that work that

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GRACE POTTER

they did to pave the way for what I'm doing now. So I don't discount that," Potter said. "But I also feel very strongly that female or male, you have to just be a good musician and you have to write good songs and forget about the novelty of a vagina, you know what I mean? Just because I've got tits and legs doesn't mean that I haven't worked just as hard as any dude to get there."

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