

# Jessica Risker

## *I See You Among The Stars*

### ABOUT THIS RECORD

Psychedelic folk is starting to become sorely missed. The sub-genre has never not been a staple in the diets of most record collectors. It proves its timelessness with each passing year, defying the laws that chain most other styles to their respective eras. As everything else ages, psych-folk darts in and out of decades, covered in the residue of each, but not necessarily beholden to the tropes of any single one, appearing new and welcome each time. On *I See You Among the Stars*, Chicago sound-weaver Jessica Risker is nudging the category back into plain view, setting a proper place for it at the table in 2018 and beyond.

Comprised of eight aural vignettes, the album is a wood-grained, amber-hued world respectfully orbiting influences like Nick Drake, Sibylle Baier, and the softest moments of Broadcast. Paisley fabrics fade beneath an uncovered window, while dust and smoke billow gently through the sunbeams that never fully reach the dark half of the room. *I See You Among the Stars* achieves what the best music in the genre does: pictures with tangible depth, color, and detail painted with only a few well-chosen pigments.

The title track "I See You Among The Stars" trots the album in with bouncing acoustic guitar, lulling the listener into perceived safety before curious chord changes and synthetic chimes remind us we're entering the land of the slightly askew. This tell-tale lysergic, ominous wonder deepens as the album progresses into tracks like "Anyway When I Look In Your Eyes", a song that parallels the somber honesty and intelligent songcraft of Elliott Smith who borrowed equally from Risker's beloved pool of influences. "Zero Summer Mind" gleams off the cobwebs like moonlight, plodding down a darkened hallway with mellowed affliction. Like so many moments on *I See You Among the Stars* there is a perfect thread of quiet despair that renders the playfulness of its surroundings subversive and slightly wicked, making the whole affair psychedelic in the actual sense of the word. Sure, the colors may be brighter, but the shadows are also longer and darker.

It's apt that Risker, a musician and sound designer since her teens, embodies the dichotomous foundation that makes acid-folk so timelessly intriguing. "I tend to approach music from two different angles" she says of her process. "The first is just songwriting—melody, chord changes, lyrics—those basic elements. The second angle is more an exploration of sounds, with the idea that there are no constraints. It's very much myself playing with recording. The idea is to create one big flow." Tellingly, Risker released a mod tapestry of electric noise and rhythm titled *Big Forever* in 2016 before following her more delicate inclinations into what would become *I See You...* No matter where her music ventures, curiosity and experimentalism are clearly with her at all times.

It is also interesting to note that Jessica Risker is a former social worker and currently practices as a licensed counselor. If the throughline of all psychedelic music is that it casts an inward eye on the subconscious-- and the symbols and emotions therein-- then certainly a mental health care professional is equipped to convey what can be glimpsed in that space.

As such, *I See You Among the Stars* is an exemplar of spaced out psych-folk that seeks to convey the intimacy and introspection of a woman going about her simple matters at home, while creating an atmosphere to provide melancholy accompaniment to these very tasks. But the final result is something much more: a polyhedral, exploratory, and mystifying peer into a detailed pop-up storybook that reflects the mind and heart of its luminous creator.



### TRACK LIST

01 I See You Among The Stars	3:36
02 Cut My Hair	4:13
03 Anyway When I Look In Your Eyes	3:23
04 Zero Summer Mind	3:42
05 Shallow Seas	3:52
06 Reassign Me	3:36
07 A Cooling Sun	3:47
08 Help Me Help Me	3:53

### QUOTES

"The extraordinary loving magic of Chicago's DIY culture has produced another masterpiece of emotional clarity and songcraft. I've been awed watching Jessica shape these songs into perfect concise visions in basement show after coffeshop show. It's exciting for everyone else to finally get to see into her introspective world."

- Rob Sevier, co-founder of Numero Group

"...heartbreaking & lovely..."

- NPR

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