

Reviews

Robyn Ludwick, on her

2008 Hill-Country dipped, "Too Much Desire," sings her pretty little Texas heart out. Some part Mary Gauthier, some part Sugarland, some part country Dylan, all parts love and lust and desire, Ludwick brings it strong and true with her sophomore effort.

So in all seriousness, if you are the kind of person that likes to catch a rising star, catch Ludwick's now. Her music is powerful and outside the mold of Nashville and outside the Country-Rock community of Tift Merritt, Kid Rock and Sheryl Crow. But my friend, Ludwick's "Too Much Desire," lies square within the roundhouse of Texas Hill Country-bordering-on-dark-Austin-poetry-goodness and my friend, that's good for you and I. Ludwick, my friend, is the real deal. "If Daddy's little girl's got too much Desire," well that's a good thing for you and me 'cuz we gets to listen to Ludwick's smoldering fire on "Too Much Desire." Chalk this one up as smokin'.

-Amazon

Robyn Ludwick is one to watch. Not only for her Texas good looks and country girl twang charm, but because she's seriously gifted. On her debut album, "For So Long," Ludwick's charm is her earthy Americana voice in its twang warble

reminiscent of Sugarland's female lead or maybe even another fellow Texan, Janis Joplin.

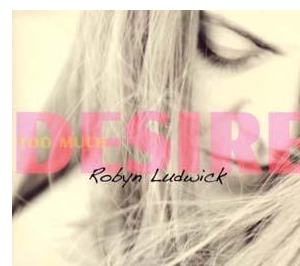
She has this Mary Gauthier type authenticity to blue collar gothic lyrics and the dirt, blood, and bones of hardscrabble Southern life. Rumor has it that Tex Country singer Kelly Willis, is none other than Ludwick's sister-in-law being married to her brother Bruce Robison. Well, there's some pedigree since the Texas hill country all-stars practically lined up to play and sing on Ludwick's first album. Did I mention this Texas girl is going places in this here world?

Some stand-out tracks are the opener, "What Do I Know About Love?," track 4, "Stranger," and the wonderfully darkly delicious track 10, "Harper's Ferry Blues." Let me wax on about Ludwick. "What Do I Know About Love," finds Robyn questioning the fairy tale wedding and marital bliss dream, "We got married in June it was a fairy tale wedding / and it seemed like the right thing to do / where are we going and where have you been she said / it's been so long since we had time together / and he don't look at her like you look at me." What a nice opening salvo as the minimalist guitar strumming and plodding drum beat subtly supplement Ludwick's under-toned country hick warble. It's good but it gets better.

"Stranger," brings Ludwick right into her roundhouse and her voice becomes stronger. There's the country Goth banjo pickin' along in the background as the perfect accompaniment to Ludwick's songwriting and dark voice. With "Harper's Ferry Blues," the album reaches its peak. This is what earns Ludwick a 5-star rating on this review. "All we are are victims of the lives that we live / Here we are just waiting for our ships to come in / and in the end we are equal to the love that we give / and the river comes and wash our sins away." Heck yeah, Sister Robyn. That's what I'm talking about, Hill Country gospel with the fiddle playing Western dance hall swing.

Watch this girl and better yet listen to her music. It rings of hard-earned authenticity...the best of Americana and better yet the best of Texas.

-Mark my words



Robyn Ludwick

***Too Much Desire* (Freedom)**

Robyn Ludwick did two things that will forever imprint

her career: She chose not to use her illustrious maiden name, Robison, and she waited until she was good and ready to seriously pursue music. On this, her second album, she describes her songwriting as "Southern poetry with dirt floors and electric guitars," and that's spot-on, though she might consider substituting "Texas" for "Southern." When she sings, "I like my whiskey, and I like my men," on "Desire," she does so with a salty confidence that would sound less believable coming from a younger woman. Ludwick is looking 30 in the eye with a toddler on her hip, a transitional stage that makes it easy for her music to cut to the bone ("72 Texas," "Julia Odessa"). *Too Much Desire* benefits from brothers Bruce and Charlie, as well as husband John Ludwick, but the album's charm and substance are pure Robyn.

-Margaret Moser, Austin Chronicle

The best work Robyn has ever recorded. Not as country as past records, but beautifully Americana that fits Robyn's voice nicely. Robyn's Brothers Bruce and Charlie Robison as well as Eliza Gilkyson add harmonies. All the songs were written by Robyn and the quality of each of them sets her mark on the map of great Americana songwriting. *Too Much Desire* is truly an enjoyable Americana record of great songs by a great songwriter, Very nice indeed.

-American Music Times

For So Long (2005) Singer-songwriter Robyn Ludwick can be heard playing her own music in and around Texas from her May 2005 debut release *For So Long* (produced by critically acclaimed singer-songwriter/multi-instrumentalist Danny Barnes), which is capturing the attention of critics as well as several established record labels. An earthy blend of folk and intense ballads, Ludwick offers no small amount of passion in her writing or on-stage



performances.

"I'm just now admitting on stage that 'I am a Robison'... well, it was real important to me that I do this on my own, for better or worse." Robyn's older brothers Bruce and Charlie Robison have cut their own distinct paths as songwriters and performers and Robyn is a force of her own, staking out her own territory on the musical horizon

Growing up in Bandera, Texas with her two brothers and sister Mimi, some of Robyn's earliest memories were those falling asleep across folding chairs in the dancehalls where her grandparents danced to live music every weekend. Or

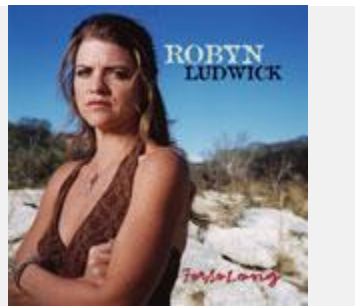
running barefoot through Bandera's Purple Cow and Flying L, where her mother tended bar as "Whiskey River" and "Rolling with the Flow" played for the millionth time on the jukebox. "Where I come from, music was always there...my father told me that they set up my crib at Floores Country Store so that they could see Johnny Rodriguez play."

Teaching herself play the guitar at age 15, Robyn's influences were far beyond her years (Jackson Browne, Van Morrison, Emmylou Harris) listening to albums already 20 years old. In lieu of Friday night football games and high school proms, she was slipping off to Austin every weekend to hear live music at The Black Cat Lounge and Continental Club. Inevitably, Robyn moved to Austin immediately after high school and soon met bassist John Ludwick, her now-husband of 10 years.

Early on, Robyn studied under an Austin guitarist for a time and began writing. In order to conquer her stage fright and learn to share her mostly-autobiographical songs, Robyn attended weekly open mics at venues that showcased singer-songwriters such as The Cactus Café in Austin. "I was forced to write new material every week and learned to bare my soul to strangers." Soon after, Robyn began playing regular happy hour gigs and provided back-up vocals for an LA singer/songwriter for a time. She began landing opening gigs at legendary songwriting venues on the strength of her performances and homemade

demo of original songs. Robyn gleams with pride when asked about her musical family, "I really love to get on stage and sing with my brothers and husband, there is no other feeling like it in the world." Robyn sang on Brother Bruce's 1998 Sony release *Wrapped* and you can hear her providing harmony vocals for three songs on Brother Charlie's 2004 Dualtone release *Good Times*.

-This is Texas Music



Now and then, a young artist arrives with such confidence that you wonder where he or she has been hiding. In **Robyn Ludwick's** case, it was in Bandera, where she learned to play, then in the anonymity of Austin's open-mike scene, where she cut her teeth. Admittedly, she had a leg up over her peers from what she'd absorbed from her older brothers, Bruce and Charlie Robison. But Ludwick's **For So Long** (self-released; available at robynudwick.com) sounds like neither of her siblings' work. She slips into a comfortable, evocative country warble. And she's an even better writer; despite the clumsy opener, songs like the title track, "El Dorado," "I Am," and "Virginia" leave you with haunting reverberations. "I would love to

live my life a long time ago," Ludwick sings, and she does seem inhabited by an old soul. Fortunately, she's very much with us now.

- JEFF McCORD, TEXAS MONTHLY

Three years previously,

Texas songwriter Robyn Ludwick's debut album, *For So Long*, appeared like a stunning blast of central Texas summer heat from the hill country outside Austin. It stands as one of those shocks to the system that makes a listener sit up, take notice, and get slain by. It is sophisticated but uncompromising; it's as sensual as the moisture from a lover's lips on a hot humid night, and as raw as a fresh tattoo. It can't hurt that her brothers are Bruce and Charlie Robison, her sister-in-law is Kelly Willis, and her husband is bassist John Ludwick. But the songs are all hers. *Too Much Desire* mirrors its title perfectly: its songs are full of the extremes in human emotion and behavior, reflecting the thoughts that occur to us while keeping the night watch restlessly awaiting the dawn. Ludwick's songs are rooted in Texas country music, folk, and even country gospel and rock. Her voice is full and rich, a deep contralto that is as Southern and rugged as the terrain she comes from; it goes deep like Lucinda Williams or Rosanne Cash, yet is as lonesome, rich, and expressive as Stevie Nicks at her best. Husband John and brother-in-

law Mike Hardwick (who play bass and guitar, respectively) produced the set, with Eddie Cantu on drums and guitarist Andrew Nafziger completing the band. There are one-offs by friends and more family. Michael Ramos, Warren Hood, Willis, Eliza Gilkyson, Thomas Robison Ludwick, her brothers, and Eleanor Whitmore also appear. Ludwick is among the most searing, confessional songwriters out there, and the bravery in her approach to delivering these revelatory lyrics-as-exposed-secrets is made possible by the group that backs her. Very few songwriters, male or female, can pull off a lyric as naked as "...I know it ain't cool/How you play with my heart/But it hurts so good when you tear it apart/You're gonna make it alright tonight..." on "Alright," the album opener. It gets more intimate from here, but vulnerability -- expressed with acoustic and electric guitars, mandolins, a fiddle here and there, and some backing vocal support -- shouldn't be translated as weakness. Despite the whining steel and unplugged six-string in true Texas waltz style, one can hear the truth of Bessie Smith's "Empty Bed Blues" in "'72 Texas," when Ludwick sings: "Now I'm lookin' for love/But it ain't lookin' good/You see the boys that I like/They don't treat me no damn good...." Ludwick's characters are women who've been deeply disappointed by

love, life, and empty promises, but refuse to surrender. No matter how beaten, her protagonists always roll the dice again. They have no way out -- as expressed in the amazing song of the same title -- but don't care, because the horizon is empty and what's available is right now. "Boulevard," a rocker, is a "bad girl's anthem of desire laid bare -- it knows the cost and is more than willing to pay it. Yet this is only the beginning of this magical record. Ludwick is a poet and storyteller ("Sweet Marie") whose art pours truth from a broken-necked bottle; it's there in spades. Her aesthetic strength comes from, to paraphrase W.B. Yeats, "the rag and bone shop of the heart." Too Much Desire is strong yet beautiful stuff. It aches and staggers, struts, crumbles in tears, then rises to do it all again throughout. It's as elegant and graceful as a straight razor; it takes no prisoners, makes no apologies.

-All music guide

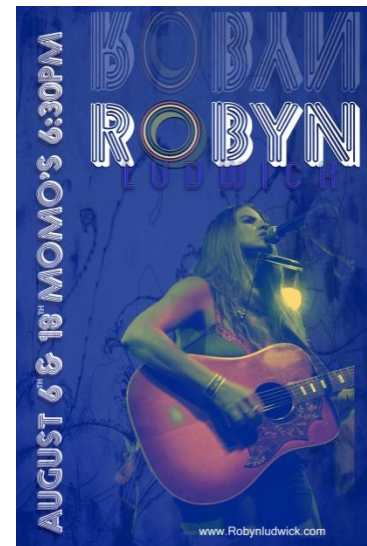
Robyn Ludwick's self-

released debut, *For So Long*, is a bracing record. She has a voice that's pure Texas twang and that emotes far beyond her years. Produced by former Bad Livers banjo boss Danny Barnes and hosting players like husband John Ludwick, Brother Bruce Robison, Kelly Willis, Champ Hood, Jon Dee Graham, and Chip Dolan, the album finds

Ludwick in good company. But the test of a songwriter's mettle is in her material, and it's here that Ludwick shines. Her tunes are sharp, drenched in hardscrabble Southwestern country and Austin poetry. Her words are beautifully impure, covered in blood, bone, and marrow. There's the slow, determined "What Do I Know," with its ringing mandolins and high-strung acoustic and slippery electric guitars wrapping around that big earthy voice of hers. When she sings "She's never seen somebody look at her/Like you look at me/But what do I know about love?/It's all that I am...." you believe her experientially. In "El Dorado," acoustic guitars, a shuffling drum kit, and acoustic guitars usher in a waltz that opens with the words "It's four in the morning and I am in love/With every Saturday night/And I just can't seem to stay sober/Long enough to put up a fight." The effect is electric. The tune is a broken love song that says goodbye to both lover and town, a place where memories are created for the sake of pain alone. The dissonant "Live My Life" is an eerie and arresting closer, standing as a testament to thwarted desire and transcending it in the present. Accompanied by a lone acoustic guitar in the head, the throaty lonesome sound of resignation drips from Ludwick's mouth: "I would love to live my life a long time ago/When I was just a

child/I would love to live my life a long time ago/When alone felt free/Not just alone." The tune slips off, out of the realm of sound into the ether of silence and the heart of the listener; anyone with blood instead of sawdust in the veins will sit for a few moments to drink in the extraordinary gift that *For So Long* is. Tender and tough, Ludwick is an original.

-itunes



**For more, check out:
Robynludwick.com**

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