



Katie Toupin has spent the last three years undergoing a virtual metamorphosis, emerging from the relative security of, “safety in numbers,” as co-founder and one-of-four members of the popular indie folk band, Houndmouth and co-writer on the Triple A #1, “Sedona,” to spread her own wings as a solo writer/artist known simply as, Katie Toupin. Her solo debut album, “Magnetic Moves,” released on June 14th reveals a more personal and undeniably vulnerable side..

Magnetic Moves takes its title from its spellbinding opening track, a song that’s quietly defiant in its bending of reality. “It’s about being bold and being brave, and using your magnetism to create the world you want to live in,” says the L.A.-based singer/songwriter. “The whole album came from a place of wanting to be completely direct, in a way I never felt I could before. I think it’s important to let yourself show your heart like that.”

In the spirit of self-reliance, Toupin took the reins in producing Magnetic Moves, her first full-length since leaving acclaimed alt-country band Houndmouth in 2016. Although she’d originally cut several songs with other producers, an impromptu recording session during a stop in Austin on her 2018 house tour inspired her to strike out on her own. “Every time I’d tried working with other people, it never turned out in a way that felt right to me,” she says. “And then when I finally tried producing by myself, it felt so easy—I realized I knew exactly what I wanted everything to sound like; I just needed the confidence to actually do it.”

Mixed by Steve Christensen (a Grammy Award-winner known for his work with Steve Earle), Magnetic Moves came to life in two marathon sessions at The Finishing School in Austin. With multi-instrumentalist Scott Davis and percussionist Josh Blue accompanying Toupin, the album unfolds in a dreamy pastiche of soul and pop and brightly jangly ’70s rock, a sound that’s lavishly detailed but fantastically fluid. And in her unfussy yet radiant vocal performance, Toupin channels both self-possession and raw vulnerability, fully inhabiting each state of being.

Throughout Magnetic Moves, Toupin speaks to the power in embracing messy feelings like regret and obsession and, in the case of the wildly anthemic “Run

to You,” falling for someone who’s all wrong for your heart. On “Real Love,” the sigh of Davis’s slide guitar amps up the torchy intensity of Toupin’s vocals, its lyrics capturing the hurt that sometimes follows loving without reserve. “In relationships it can be difficult to know whether to give up or try harder,” she says. “I think most people give up a little too quickly these days, so I wanted to write about allowing yourself to have that passion.” And on “The Hills Are Calling,” Magnetic Moves slips into delicate psychedelia as Toupin contemplates a rarely examined aspect of romantic infidelity. “It’s so easy to be unempathetic toward the person who’s fallen in love with someone else, we forget that there’s a lot of pain on that side of the equation too,” she notes.

As the first track that Toupin self-produced for Magnetic Moves, “The Hills Are Calling” also reveals the playful creativity behind her sonic approach. “That one came together in a very piece-by-piece way,” says Toupin, pointing to the picked-cello part performed by Portland-based musician Alexis Mahler as the song’s initial driving force. “We kept piling on all these different pieces—the kick drum and tambourine and cymbal swells and snaps—and filling up the space very intricately. It’s not how you’d usually do things in the studio, but it all felt so natural.”

As Magnetic Moves endlessly warps genres and shifts tones, Toupin taps into the soulful musicality she first discovered as a teenager in Southern Indiana. “Throughout high school I was sort of troubled and dealt with some health problems, and I ended up graduating early and going to college for about a nanosecond,” she says. But at age 18, Toupin felt suddenly compelled to make music—a prospect wholly encouraged by her father, an accomplished blues guitarist. “I went to my dad one day and said, ‘Can you just teach me music instead of me going to school?’ And right away he said, ‘Absolutely,’” she remembers. Along with taking opera-singing lessons, Toupin learned to play guitar from her father and immersed herself in a self-directed study of songcraft. “I started dissecting what other artists and artists were actually doing in their phrasing and in their melodies, and learning all the tricks of songwriting,” says Toupin, naming Bob Dylan, Patsy Cline, Gillian Welch, and The Rolling Stones among her early inspirations.

After two years of refining her skills, Toupin began writing songs of her own, drawing from her experience as a longtime poet and steadily developing the disciplined practice she follows today. “For a while now I’ve had a routine of waking up in the morning and writing like it’s my job until the afternoon,” she says. “Sometimes good things happen and sometimes not, but you just do it anyway. And it always feels like the best things happen when I can get out of the way and just put whatever comes through me down on paper, without ever thinking about it too much.”

In the making of Magnetic Moves, Toupin let her intuition guide her to everything from the harmony-heavy gospel of “Lost Sometimes” to the Beatles-esque psych-pop of “In Your Dreams” (with both tracks featuring the showstopping vocals of Austin-based soul singers Lauren Marie and Angela Miller). As Toupin

explains, the album's imaginative sonic palette has much to do with the unprecedented freedom she felt her entire time in the studio. "Making this record with people I didn't already know was an incredibly liberating factor," she points out. "When people have preconceived notions of who you are and what you do, it can really hold you back. But with this album I was able step way outside my comfort zone—I felt confident to do things I would've normally been afraid of."

For Toupin, eliminating those expectations ultimately elevated her to a new and far more fulfilling level of self-expression—an element she hopes might leave an indelible impact on the listener. "I'm such a romantic, and I'd never felt like I could really own that the way I did on this record," she says. "In the past there was an agreement as to what you could say in a song and what you couldn't say, what was cool and what wasn't cool. When people hear this album, I hope they come away with a really strong feeling of love, whether it's romantic or some other form. I want everyone to feel okay just wearing their heart on their sleeve."