

Widowspeak – *All Yours* – September 4, 2015

Widowspeak has grown up in a lot of ways.

The band's third album, *All Yours*, is one that could only come from **Molly Hamilton** and **Robert Earl Thomas**: a honed and elegant interweaving of dream-pop and slowcore rock and roll, easygoing melodies and dusty, snaking guitars. It's also their finest release to date: ten beautiful songs that are refreshingly straightforward yet built from the same well-chosen and deftly-used tools the band has always worked with.

All Yours is ambitious without feeling labored-over, anchored in the strengths of Widowspeak's consistent influences. There are those familiar Morricone-come-Verlaine guitar passages, moody and country-tinged instrumentation, watery tremolo, velvety stacked vocals. You can hear Molly's affection for The Cranberries and The Sundays in the wavering melodies of "**Dead Love**" or "**Girls**," and Rob's adoration of George Harrison and Robbie Robertson in his brilliantly economical guitar playing. The result is an aesthetically diverse and profoundly nostalgic sound; indebted to past eras without feeling dated.

Since they came on the scene five years ago, the band has seen many permanent changes: new lineups, new environments. Instead of bringing additional permanent members into the fold after the departure of its founding drummer, the band was whittled down to a duo, a lineup that has remained constant since 2012. After releasing a second LP, *Almanac*, and *The Swamps* EP (both in 2013), Molly and Rob left Brooklyn for the (quite literally) greener pastures of the Catskills/Hudson Valley region. They found a house they could play music in. They got a dog.

And they took their damn time making *All Yours*. For one, the conceptual process of writing *Almanac* and *The Swamps* had been creatively draining. They focused on other things: Molly went back to school; Rob took a job at a Catskills hotel. They wrote leisurely, from shared voice memos and late night jams in the living room. As a result of writing down what came naturally, without any overarching vision, the lyrics on *All Yours* are largely unadorned, the songs connected only by the forgivingly vague theme of "moving on."

Appropriately, the band chose to work again with **Jarvis Taveniere**, who produced their self-titled debut in 2011. They also enlisted him and drummer **Aaron Neveu** (both of whom play in **Woods**) as the studio rhythm section. The presence of Taveniere and Neveu contributes a groove that wasn't there previously, and there's a few other new things: the swell of strings at critical moments, and for the first time, voices beyond Molly's own. We finally get to hear Rob sing in the earnestly laid-back "**Borrowed World**." Members of psych outfit **Quilt** contribute harmonies and keys throughout the record, most notably in "**My Baby's Gonna Carry On**," and "**Cosmically Aligned**."

Perhaps *All Yours* is so refreshing because it's a return to form. It's a record that feels as effortlessly unplanned as their debut, that serves to capture a moment rather than create one.