

## Mp3 Nadine Zahr - Underneath The Everyday



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Rootsy, intimate, soulful, acoustic rock. 11 MP3 Songs POP: Folk Pop, FOLK: Folk Pop Details: I have a thing about vulnerability. I think people are too fearful of becoming emotional these days. Since I choose to be vulnerable in my songs, I want to create a safe place for others to feel vulnerable, too. -- Nadine Zahr 10/05 If ever there was a contemporary singer-songwriter that defied all expectations of the genre, its Nadine Zahr. Splashing her aural canvas with vibrant indie-pop tints, earthy roots-rock hues, and bluesy gospel-soul textures, Zahr rather heroically lays waste to the stereotype of the droopy, demurring neo-folkie. Indeed, the singer performs with such an all-consuming intensity, concertgoers would swear she feared death was the tax for delivering a routine show. When Im done playing my live show, I want to be exhausted, the singer says. I want to feel like Ive gotten rid of some things like Ive given some stuff up. Considering her batten-down-the-hatches attitude, its no wonder why critics have hailed her as one of the West Coasts worthiest up-and-coming talents. Now, with the release of her independently produced debut album, the Palestinian-American singer makes her auspicious entrance onto the world stage. Released under the auspices of Zahrs own Chirality Records and produced by alt-rock stalwart Dave Trumfio (Wilco, My Morning Jacket, Billy Bragg), Underneath the Everyday features 11 original compositions that showcase the singers expressive four-octave voice, while distilling her myriad influences into a beguiling musical self-portrait. Or, as the singer herself says with typical hip-shooting humor: Its sort of this pop-acoustic-soul-rock thing. Though spot-on accurate, Zahrs tongue-in-cheek description still doesnt quite capture the embrative charms of her music. After all, this is the singer whose engaging live shows have left some of the most jaded critics employing adjectives like powerful and soul-driven. In a particularly gushy profile, an alternative Southern California weekly noted: You dont hear background conversation when Zahr is performing audiences are invariably spellbound. The revered

West Coast publication, Music Connection, was similarly effusive. Nadine Zahr is a Dave Matthews-like guitar talent, the magazine recently wrote, and this woman can flat-out sing. With its yin-yang mixture of folk, pop, rock and soul, *Underneath the Everyday* will surely leave listeners singing their own hosannas. From the epiphanic opening strains of *Where I Never Was*, to the confessional sentiments of *Sunset*, and the impressionistic lyricism of *Horses and Fish*, the album is as masterful a reconciliation of softness and strength as you're likely to hear. Inspired by an ill-fated relationship and its accompanying revelations, *Underneath the Everyday* reveals itself -- and its creator -- like some slow-flowering prairie blossom. Its literally a picture of what my life was like for the last year, Zahr explains, recalling the long distance romance detailed on the album. I had one foot in Los Angeles, and the other in Seattle... During that period of research and discovery, the record just kind of happened. For the first time ever, I was working in a professional studio, Zahr continues. Because I'm so used to writing and performing alone, I was constantly asking myself who am I in all of this? Is this what I really want? Every time a new instrument would be put on the record, I would question it. Thankfully, fans old and new are the richer for Zahr's obsessions. As its title suggests, *Underneath the Everyday* burrows below the surface in its insistent determination to get at the truth. Though the funky *Less Than 24 Hours* finds Zahr recounting a real-life tryst, listeners will relate to the songs' descriptions of all-consuming passion (where can we hide?, cause i don't want the world to find us tonight / cause i got less than 24 hours before i go my way and you go yours). On tracks like *Where I Never Was* and *Catch*, Zahr struggles to reconcile feelings of romantic devotion and soul-stifling doubt. Intelligence became books-read rather than life-lived, she sings on the acerbic kiss-off ballad, *Around You*. Mere seconds later, Zahr courageously owns up to her own demons. To wit: I'm not my best when around you. As her life story attests, the independent spirit that animates Nadine Zahr's music is no affectation. Raised in the suburbs of New York City, she took up guitar when she was 12, composing her first tune after a single lesson. Her aspirations in the arts, however, weren't met with enthusiasm from her mother, who raised Nadine and her two sisters. It was a cultural as well as a protective reaction from my mother. In 1948, Nadine's parents fled with family from their native Palestine to Lebanon, seeking refuge from the conflict with Israel. Her mother was only 40 days old at the time, and her father, a mere toddler. Having married with one child and another on the way, the family would be uprooted again in 1975 due to the civil war in Lebanon. With the struggles her parents faced abroad with poverty and discrimination, her mother saw no other choice than to settle in the U.S. for her children to

flourish. In her eyes, however, flourishing meant academically, not artistically. She didnt see it as a secure career, Zahr says, but my argument was what is a secure career nowadays? More determined than ever, Zahr sought out opportunities for herself. Mere weeks after her formal guitar education began, it abruptly ended when she joined the childrens chorus in Broadways Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. The die was cast. From that point forward, Zahr would hotly pursue her performing aspirations, even over the well-meaning concerns of her own mother. Enrolling at Washington, DCs Catholic University in 1998, Zahr was studying musical theater when she heard the siren-like beckonings of her true calling. To Zahrs surprise, a basement demo found its way around campus. The rave reviews set the foundation for the following year, when she embarked to Los Angeles to stake her claim as a recording artist. And though shes basically a self-taught guitarist and vocalist, she gives credit where it is due. My music theater training taught me the importance of rapport, she says. Having that relationship on-stage with your audience thats everything. To insure that her artistic visions remained uncompromised, Zahr founded Chirality Records in 2005 with the release of a limited edition EP that has sold in excess of 1,000 copies solely at shows and online (chirality is a Greek term that roughly translates into by hand). Now, with the release of Underneath the Everyday, Zahr continues to follow her distinct inner-voice. Asked what the album personally represents, the singer reveals the same spiritedness that buoys her music. Im just proud, she says with a smile. I think this record is a hi-rez snapshot of where I was, and who I am becoming. The point is that its just the first of many snapshots.

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