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The Abramson Singers - LAUNCH

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Tamaryn finds inspiration in the unlikely of sources: Werner Herzog and Carl Jung  
The San Fran singer explores music as if it were a movie playing in the collective unconscious

By [Angela Shawn-Chi Lu](#)  
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FADE IN

SCENE: Set in the future in the daytime desert, under a blazing sun.

Three razor sharp guitar notes slice through thick atmosphere. Drowning in distortion and reverb, they are reminiscent of Neil Young's stark score for Jim Jarmusch's hazy 1996 western *Dead Man*. A SORCERESS enters—with long, gorgeous tresses flowing in the wind and gigantic fingernails curling. Her deep, alluring croon reveals a perilous prophecy.

SORCERESS

*The darkness obscures the light...*

*Wait for the water to claim you...*

*You're soon returning...*

*Into the waves*

—

If this be a siren of sorts, an evil enchantress, most men would not only tremble in her wake, but beg for enslavement under her dominion. Certainly, if indie director Jarmusch knew about her—the San Francisco chanteuse Tamaryn, whose debut album *The Waves* (Mexican Summer) just arrived Sept. 14—she would have ended up at this year's All Tomorrow's Parties, which Jarmusch guest-curated.

Several bowls of Mary Jane hallucinogenic, Bukowskian brooding, and My

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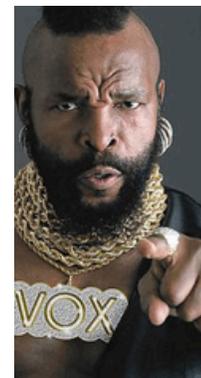


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Bloody Valentine atmospheric, Tamaryn shares the distinctive aesthetic of Jarmusch tunes. Like caustic doom metal trio Boris and velveteen Mazzy Star frontwoman Hope Sandoval, Tamaryn is pure mood music created by stunning, mountainous surges of fuzz, tremolo-bar pitch bend, and reverb—laced with a heavy dose of mystique.

Although, when asked to elucidate her and bandmate Rex John Shelverton's music, Tamaryn instead refers to renowned New German Cinema filmmaker Werner Herzog. They share a vision and a penchant for displaying generous natural imagery of considerable metaphorical weight, she says.

"If you look at a Herzog movie, you could have a four-minute close-up of grass blowing in the wind and it feels intrinsically human. Why does it feel that way? Because, without sounding too San Francisco hippie, I believe in the collective unconscious."

Tamaryn is referring to analytical psychologist and Freud adversary Carl Jung's central tenet of the collective unconscious—or the belief that people inherit at birth a universal comprehension of images and symbols, which pop up in our dreams, art, and stories and are concerned with the fundamental realities of human life.

Born and raised in New Zealand by Jungian psychologists who ran a homeless shelter for street gang members, Tamaryn identifies both her music and Herzog's films as evidence and extensions of Jung's theory.

"I really feel that everything is connected," she says. "When you focus on something that's real in nature—an iconic image like a wave—those images are mirrors and they can represent a lot of human emotions."

For this reason, Tamaryn calls the natural settings of rain forests, deserts, and mountains in Herzog's films such as *Rescue Dawn* and *Grizzly Man*, "emotional landscapes." In her music, those emotional landscapes take the form of open-ended lyrics filled with scenic panoramas.

Song titles alone are indicative of this: "Choirs of Winter," "Dawning," and "Cascades" to name a few. Unlike Herzog's films, though, she terms her approach impressionistic—while lyrics are rife with natural imagery, she also cloaks them in secrecy.

In the new album's opening title track, Tamaryn cautions that something will be returning to the waves (see lyrics above), but nothing much else is revealed. At other times, Shelverton's shoegaze guitar dreamscapes intentionally veil her poetry. Band photos reinforce this mystique as most are shot from afar.

But it wasn't always this way. In the band's earliest days, Tamaryn was influenced primarily by character-based music, such as David Bowie. However, as the Internet social networking revolution took hold of the music industry in the early 2000s, she grew weary of the celebrity-obsessed culture and the "instant gratification of seeing yourself day-to-day in everything you do."

She yearned for the exhilaration she had once experienced of actively seeking out obscure bands at record shops and partaking in a journey of discovery. Her shift to a more shrouded project was part reactionary, part rebellion. Ultimately, she believes the mystique also lends greater authenticity to her music because it allows her to explore the dualities of human emotion.

"I think the best artists in the world leave [their work] open to interpretation," she says. "It's not that it's a cop-out and [the art] doesn't mean anything. There's a lot of symbolism and archetypes in [my lyrics]. As far as music exploring human experiences, [I just feel] you can't simplify your feelings. [They're] multidimensional."

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Tamaryn's [MySpace page](#)

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