



**Critically Acclaimed Singer Veronica Swift
Tackles Domestic Abuse, Racism and Other Social Issues
on Poignant Mack Avenue Records Album, [This Bitter Earth](#)**

**Full Album Available Everywhere March 19;
First Two Singles, "This Bitter Earth"
and "Prisoner of Love," [Out Now](#)**

Veronica Swift flips the script on [This Bitter Earth](#), the captivating follow-up to her 2019 **Mack Avenue Records** debut, *Confessions*. Whereas *Confessions* played out like pages from her personal diary, on the new album, the 27-year-old singer and master song interpreter looks outward while addressing social ills that plague the world today.

This Bitter Earth, available **March 19** via **Mack Avenue Records**, takes on the song-cycle characteristics of such classic LPs as Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On*, Kate Bush's *Hounds of Love*, and Mary J. Blige's *My Life*. For her album, Swift tackles sexism ["How Lovely to Be a Woman"], domestic abuse ["He Hit Me (And It Felt Like a Kiss)"], racism/ xenophobia ["You've Got to Be Carefully Taught"] and the dangers of fake news ["The Sports Page"].

Accompanied by a team of kindred spirits that includes pianist **Emmet Cohen**, guitarist **Armand Hirsch** and flutist **Aaron Johnson**, bassist **Yasushi Nakamura**, and drummer **Bryan Carter**, Swift curates material that covers multiple genres, including jazz, American musicals, vintage R&B and contemporary rock.

"I've been waiting to do this album for years," Swift says before explaining that she usually conceives her albums far in advance. She recorded much of the material in 2019, before the coronavirus pandemic forced the world into a near total standstill. But the time allowed her to live with songs at different parts of her life. Eventually, she recognized the connective tissue between them. The big challenge, however, was crafting a cohesive narrative.

"I want this album to have two separate approaches," she explains. "I wanted to start with women's place in society now and how it's changing. During the second half, I wanted to address other ailments in the world, whether it's racism or fake news. But I don't take any political stances. I'm very clear with my audience that as an artist I address certain issues as an outsider looking in."

The album opens with Swift's soul-stirring rendition of Dinah Washington's 1960 signature song, "This Bitter Earth." Buoyed by **Steven Feifke**'s string arrangement, Swift infuses the melancholy dirge with a newfound sense of innocence lost. "I've always wanted to introduce more orchestral atmosphere to my music because that's such an important part to my artistic upbringing," says Swift, alluding to her formative years singing jazz before she'd reached her 20s. "I knew I wanted to start with 'This Bitter Earth' because it introduces in a general way all the subject matters on the album."

Swift then delves into a dramatic yet sardonic makeover of "How Lovely to Be a Woman," a Charles Strouse and Lee Adams tune from the 1960 musical, *Bye Bye Birdie*. "As I'm coming into the world, having more of a feeling of who I am and being more confident in that, I realize now how this song had a lot more ambiguity and cynicism involved," Swift says. "I tried to make an arrangement that maintained the childlike feel I had while listening to it but still insert some of that sarcasm in it. The song also allows me to present more of my humorous side."

"You've Got to Be Carefully Taught" also comes from a musical – 1949's *South Pacific*. The envelope-pushing, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II-penned song illustrates how racism and xenophobia are learned behaviors, often projected onto children during their early development. "I was always perplexed at how such a

deep and dark subject matter in *South Pacific* was sung so upbeat,” Swift recalls. “I think it was written intentionally to not sit well with the audience. I wanted to come up with an arrangement that’s very antsy and mad. So, I put a little bit of that rock beat on the chorus and sing angrily. To me, it sounds like what the song was meant to be.”

Swift counters the pessimism seething underneath “You’ve Got to Be Carefully Taught” with the optimism gleaming through “Getting to Know You,” her transfixing reading of a song from the 1951 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *The King and I*. “The perfect song to follow a tune about racism is one of acceptance and openness,” she argues. “So many people fear what they do not understand or know. The best way to end unnecessary judgement and dismissiveness is to educate each other constantly. This song gets more swinging and looser as the choruses develop a parallel to someone getting more comfortable as they expose themselves to new things and people.”

The album then arrives at one of its palate cleansers – a marvelous performance of George and Ira Gershwin’s “The Man I Love.” “This is one of the more personal narratives on the album,” Swift says. “It’s one of the only songs Emmet and I did that just grooved and sat in a New Orleans-influenced pocket. It sort of connects all these rearranged, through-composed pieces.”

Swift continues with a winning makeover of “You’re the Dangerous Type,” a song written by her dear friend Bob Dorough. For the purpose of the album, Swift sings from the perspective of a woman who’s willingly falling in love with a philandering man. “The song form in terms of the bars and everything is very unorthodox. I always appreciated how Bob could write these uneven bar numbers and second and third endings that make the song not sound like it was super analytical. It sounds so natural. He sang like he was speaking to you.”

The album’s theme grows darker with Swift’s spine-tingling interpretation of Robert and Richard Sherman’s “Trust in Me” from the 1967 Disney film, *The Jungle Book*. In the animated film, the song was performed by the python that hypnotized and eventually tried to devour Mowgli, the film’s young protagonist. “Even before I knew what date rape was, I always knew as a kid, watching the snake hypnotize the boy and try to eat him, while making him feel comfortable, was horribly wrong,” Swift says. “When I listened to the song again, it instantly made me think of people who’ve experienced date rape.”

Themes of abuse continue with Swift’s cover of the Crystals’ 1962 provocative R&B tune “He Hit Me (And It Felt Like a Kiss).” “This song just makes your stomach curdle,” Swift says. “It’s uncomfortable to sing; it’s uncomfortable to listen. But the original version by the Crystals is so the opposite; it’s so indicative of the 1960s victim woman who stays with the man who physically assaults her. I’ve never heard a version of this song that had gone the other way in terms of making it a somber piece. I wanted to give listeners another option in listening to this song. So, I stripped away all the other instruments and chord progressions and just made it me and guitar. I arranged it to sound almost singer-songwriterly.”

While staying with the theme of domestic abuse, Swift returns to show tunes with her entrancing take on “As Long as He Needs Me,” a Lionel Bart tune from the 1960 musical, *Oliver!* “This song speaks to all who have been in abusive relationships but love the person so much that they see the abuse as a form of affection. And that person starts feeling indebted to their abuser,” Swift explains.

The album then gives voice to those abused in romantic relationships with Swift’s spirited version of Sammy Cahn and Jimmy Van Heusen’s “Everybody Has the Right to Be Wrong.” Although deftly deployed in the album’s bruising themes, Swift sees it as another palate cleanser. “We have to validate their feelings,” she explains.

Swift’s heartfelt reading of “Prisoner of Love,” a classic Russ Columbo, Clarence Gaskill, and Leo Robin-penned tune, caps off the album’s theme of stormy romantic relationships. “This is the all-time low of the female character in this album,” Swift explains. “She’s gone through emotional and physical abuse and has continued to stick by her man. But now she recognizes the chains that bind her to him, and she acknowledges the unhealthiness of her ways. The first step in finding respect of one’s self is admitting the problem is prevalent.”

The album switches gears with Swift’s cunning version of Dave Frishberg’s socially conscious song “The Sports Page.” She uses the song’s topical lyrics to invoke the prevalence of fake news during President Trump’s administration. “It is amazing how a song written in the late 1960s is still relevant, and its brilliance is that it doesn’t target a specific demographic,” Swift says.

This Bitter Earth closes on a high note with Swift's makeover of The Dresden Dolls' 2006 art-rock anthem, "Sing." "It's about cyclical energy," Swift says. "The song contains multiple social and political subjects. It also did what I was trying to do, which is taking no political opinion. I always felt like singing was praying. I chose to end the album with this song in hopes that we all can feel for each other, whether we disagree on some issues or not."

Now with ***This Bitter Earth***, her second Mack Avenue Records album, Swift's ascendance as a 21st century jazz torchbearer continues.

About Veronica Swift

Still relatively early in her professional career, Swift has already developed an impressive repertoire. Raised in Charlottesville, Virginia by her parents – pianist Hod O'Brien and singer Stephanie Nakasian – she recorded her first album, *Veronica's House of Jazz*, when she was only nine years old. In addition to performing with her parents, Swift sang and played trumpet with Dave Adams' The Young Razzcals Jazz Project, which afforded her the opportunity to perform at the Telluride Jazz Festival.

After releasing her sophomore album, *It's Great to Be Alive*, when she was only 11 years old, Swift continued performing at major venues such as Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola at Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City. After high school, she attended the University of Miami, where she earned her bachelor's degree in 2016.

Before college graduation, Swift competed in the 2015 Thelonious Monk International Vocal Competition, in which she placed second. Two years later, she moved to New York City to further her career and has since performed and/or toured with a host of jazz luminaries, including trumpeters Wynton Marsalis and Chris Botti, and pianists Benny Green, Michael Feinstein and Emmet Cohen.

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