



“Humanity,” said Dostoevsky, “is a mystery. It must be unravelled.” On his latest album, *My Spirit Sister*, Utah-based Americana artist **Joshua James** attempts to do just that, laying bare a narrative catalogue of his unraveling of the complexities and imperfections inherent in us all. “There is for each of us a constant search for love,” says James. “We look to our families, spouses, and friends for support, but sometimes we must look into the dark that covers the night, searching for acceptance. These songs stem from that.”

Joshua James was born and raised in Lincoln, Nebraska, where he found solace early on in old records. James moved to Utah for university, where he began writing songs while studying nursing. “Leaving your home, your family, and living somewhere without the support of that structure is going to cause you to change,” he says. “I suppose it caused me to expand my view of the world, people, culture, god, the pursuit of a “career,” money and its affect on a man.” These themes and the hard-edged, stark landscapes of these states seep into the compositions on *My Spirit Sister*, which are stunningly beautiful yet somehow perilous and harrowing in execution. James draws on inspiration from the untidy and unseemly parts of ourselves that we tend to hide even from the people closest to us. He may find more questions than he answers, but his ethos of working to be honest about his own weaknesses led to a chillingly engaging record.

The critical reception to James’ previous albums, ranging from Paste Magazine who named him one of the next 25 Artists You Need To Know and NPR who said “James specializes in lyrics that cut right through listeners with their sincerity and honesty,” left him without much to prove moving into his new album. This gave James’ the space to experiment more and to expand his sound. “The progression from the first album to this one is quite sonically and expressively different,” he says. *My Spirit Sister* has a dark mystery to it, reflected both thematically and sonically. Referencing the frailty and weaknesses of humanity, the songs are about “the things that come up in our lives without warning, lovers and relationships.” Where a lesser songwriter might simply explore the pain in this darkness, James makes peace with it, bringing a strong, cold undercurrent of hope and aspiration beneath it.

“I’m in constant flux with “being true” to myself, perhaps we all are, but this record really feels like an honest endeavor to me. I enjoy the connection that can exist when becoming vulnerable and the easiest way for me to do that is through song.” This sense of vulnerability is palpable on *My Spirit Sister*. Here, **Joshua James** proves himself to be a mature songwriter, blending the line between what is fictional and what is confessional like a painter mixing watercolors. He’s been an artist to watch for years now, but with his new album, he’s finally arrived.