



St. Vincent is throwing it back.

MUSIC

# Annie Clark's 70s Show

St. Vincent's latest album, the 70s-themed *Daddy's Home*, is releasing in a wave of bad P.R. It's so good you'll listen anyway

BY DAVID YAFFE

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**W**hy did St. Vincent make an album that sounds like the 70s?

Because *that is the correct way to make an album*. It feels strange to say this about the decade of *Taxi Driver*, *Son of Sam*, and *FORD TO CITY: DROP DEAD*, but greatness emerges from the strangest places.

The 2020s are a rough time, too, and *Daddy's Home* could be the album people look back on when they wonder how we survived the pandemic—*I went to the store I was feeling kinda hungry / but I didn't have the money and the shelves were all empty*—and whatever horrors await.

Who was this Annie Clark, who called herself St. Vincent? What was she doing on *Saturday Night Live* singing an homage to Joni Mitchell and Nina Simone and Marilyn Monroe, before anyone could go to a concert, and

before her album was available to be streamed—is that the word?—or legally stolen?

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Annie Clark has larceny in her blood. This is not a dig or a reveal, but an accurate description of the album's title track. Daddy was found guilty of "white-collar nonsense" (her words), a pump-and-dump stock that put him on the inside while his daughter was becoming a phenom, the face of Tiffany, a guitar goddess, a siren, the real thing, a better musical artist than we deserve. Even the Grammy seemed beneath her. (She's won two so far.)

Clark took a caesura on interviews after she decided she did not want to give the green light to an article by Emma Madden, a British journalist on her side, just because she did not like a legit question from Madden about the penal system in America. A freelancer lost a piece, and St. Vincent's name was totally trending on Twitter. Strike one for Fleet Street!

## The Getaway Car

Throughout *Daddy's Home*, we feel we are getting away with something—no jail time for us, not yet anyway.

In "The Laughing Man," an anesthetized Annie purrs, "Like the heroines of Cassavetes / I'm underneath the influence daily." If this is true, she might be in trouble. All those Gena Rowlands characters, especially the heroine of *A Woman Under the Influence*, are falling apart—stunningly, but still.

If people are making songs in the future, and they are able to separate wheat from chaff, Annie Clark will be in another generation's pantheon, though I don't like the way this is going, and I don't want to think about it.

I do like the way Clark is going, though. I'm an extremely non-practicing Jew making a prayer to St. Vincent, worshipping at the 70s shrine in the back seat of my daddy's big gas-guzzling boat of a bright-red Cadillac, taking in the sounds of the Carter era and thinking the carousel would go on forever. Maybe it's still going on.

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I turned seven in 1980, and while I found newer music to love, I never got over the rich bass and soft drums. *Aja*, *Innervisions*, *The Hissing of Summer Lawns* are albums St. Vincent and I will never get over. The chromatic harmonies, the Minimoog, the endless parade of studio virtuosity. *Daddy's Home* has sustained me through many listens, too, and keeps luring me back.

## Annie Clark has larceny in her blood.

Mr. Clark went to prison, Annie sprung him after time served, got a song out of it, and did not want to write *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. She wrote what the hell she wanted to write:

*All good puritans they'll pray about reform*

*You swore you had paid your dues then put a payday into your uniform*

*We're all born innocent but some good saints get screwed*

*Hell where can you run when the outlaw's inside you*

In interviews she did not spike, she said she did not judge her father and was not a fan of cancel culture. Show me someone who has lived a

blameless life, she said. (Don't show me. I've met them.) We go to *Daddy's Home* to hear the sounds of a decade of corruption and crime and danger that go down so damn good.

"The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons," wrote Dostoyevsky. Judge, please, judge away. But not on this album. Should Paul McCartney, based on *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, be an expert on the military? These songs will speak for themselves as long as they can survive whatever repressions await. If there's a future, *Daddy's Home* will be part of it.

On "The Laughing Man," Clark plays a game of chicken. "If life's a joke then I'm dying laughing," she quips. Maybe it is, Annie, but please stick around. We need you.

*Daddy's Home, by St. Vincent, is out now*

*David Yaffe is a professor of humanities at Syracuse University. He is the author, most recently, of [Reckless Daughter: A Portrait of Joni Mitchell](#)*

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