

DAYBREAK



< **Early Streisand recording to be released**
 A series of 1962 performances by Barbra Streisand at a Manhattan nightclub before she became a superstar have been remastered and will be released on Nov. 4.

THE STARTER

Five questions with Daphne Parker Powell

By RICK KOSTER
 Day Arts Writer

"I'M STILL A NEW LONDON GIRL." Laughing, Daphne Parker Powell confirms her affection for and, indeed, ongoing status as a citizen of the Whaling City. There's been a bit of confusion about that in the last year or so. For the record, Parker Powell — known for years in these parts as the stylistically adventurous and reliably melodic songwriter Daphne Lee Parker — still owns a home in New London and splits her time between here and New Orleans.

"Being away in New Orleans has been incredibly helpful and creatively refreshing," Parker Powell says. "I'm building new relationships and memories, and I needed that after a few painful years. But it's nice to go back and forth between to very creative but different cities."

Parker Powell is on the phone from Ohio, six dates into a tour behind her latest album, "The Starter Wife," and is excited about a homecoming/album release concert Friday in Westerly's Knickerbocker Music Center.

"The Starter Wife" is an album she conceptualized after the dissolution of a longtime marriage, and is a fascinating, ruminative and melancholic concept album that served as a cathartic exercise as well as a musical one.

Though grounded in folk and sophisticated pop styles, the arrangements, production (by Derek Lundy) and instrumentation on "The Starter Wife" summon an almost chamber music aura. But despite a consistent melodic prettiness and a thoughtful reliance on mid-tempo or balladic forms as a structural delivery system, it's important to pay close attention to the lyrics.

Parker Powell's poetic muse reveals a panoply of oft-conflicting, artfully expressed feelings that zig-zag from sorrow, regret, weariness, rage and abandonment to hope and a sort of laughin'-to-keep-from-cryin' sense of self-scrutiny.

A press release for "The Starter Wife" describes the album as "cinema verité in song, boldly exploring the disposability of forever-after," and Parker Powell also says she regards the project as a "swan dive into the maelstrom of divorce, emerging weary, wiser and ready to take herself a whole lot less seriously."

The original plan was to enter the studio and record the "Starter Wife" songs live. The pandemic thwarted that idea and, rather than wait through the uncertainty of the predicament, Parker Powell and Lundy decided to record the songs and musical contributions separately and remotely. They called on a core band of frequent Parker Powell friends/collaborators including drummer/acoustic guitarist Justin Craig, bassist/guitarist Andrew Sovine, guitarist Thor Jensen and violinist Kieran Ledwidge.

Ledwidge, in particular, was integral to the project. An Australian touring musician, Ledwidge met Parker Powell in 2013, and the pair have become kindred spirits sharing, as she describes it, "a deeply personal, professional and musical bond." Ledwidge's violin technique and fluid lines lend a European feel to the material and, Parker Powell says, "Kieran was there for every moment of this, whether just killing his parts or to pick me up off the floor when I needed it. It's very nurturing to have someone that emotionally close to the whole

SEE PARKER POWELL PAGE F5



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The cast of 42nd Street. Photo by Diane Sobolewski.