

Sara Watkins

This month *Essential Listening* asked Vista native Sara Watkins about her current listening recommendations. First a bit of history for those of you new to SDBS and San Diego bluegrass circles: as young teenagers Sara and her guitarist brother Sean, along with mandolinist Chris Thile, joined early on by Chris' dad Scott Thile on bass, performed with their then-local San Diego area band *Nickel Creek* back in the early 1990s, skillfully blending bluegrass and Americana in their repertoire. *Nickel Creek* quickly earned a strong national following for their amazing music.

Mandozine – Nickel Creek on *Statler Brothers Show*, 1997
youtu.be/9Mn_qQGaE5A?si=lhpRz2lo2qq5LvQG

In the past twenty or so years, Sara has gone on to earn a very well deserved reputation for both her excellent fiddle playing and virtuoso singing in bands like her own group *I'm With Her* (along with Sarah Jarosz and Aoife O'Donovan) and on recent *Nickel Creek* revival tours, along with performing with a wide range of the finest acoustic musicians. She and her brother Sean have their own band, *The Watkins Family Hour*, performing original music and arrangements, and hosting a performance series in L.A. that features a wide array of the best contemporary musicians, including Jackson Browne and Fiona Apple.

Toy Heart/Marry Me/Jerusalem – *I'm With Her*, live
youtu.be/qbEfK-LsMSc?si=P6HHb_4p_a4tFF8c

Destination – *Nickel Creek*, live in 2023
youtu.be/HTMWMhGBhSE?si=3CPmiPE-cNquuEZx

Just Another Reason – *The Watkins Family Hour*
youtu.be/3Eas6126znA?si=z2Ck60-ZSrLxID6x

The Cure – The Watkins Family Hour - The Cavern Sessions
youtu.be/mueQfGTxLhQ?si=AtMXKHrw-9_LhIGG

Essential Listening: “What new songs or bands have you been listening to recently?”

Sara Watkins: “A few weeks ago I was walking on a trail while on tour in the north east, and my *I’m With Her* bandmate Sarah Jarosz texted me to take a listen to *Free Treasure*. I have loved following Adrienne’s songwriting through her band *Big Thief* as well as solo releases, and this new song is just beautiful. Something about Adrienne’s songwriting tends to make the natural world become more vividly alive and reveals the dullness in so much of the clutter I invite into my life.”

free treasure – Adrienne Lenker

www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIU5YMp-l2A

Sara Watkins: “And I have another listening recommendation. You must listen to all of Aoife O’Donovan’s album *All My Friends* which she wrote inspired by the Suffrage movement in the early 1900s which lead to the passing of the 19th amendment giving women the right to vote in America.

I have a lot to say about why I love this record such as how she wove horns, choirs and orchestration around her songs in a supportive way while pointing to the singular struggle of her narrative voice, as well as the song writing itself.”

All My Friends – Aoife O’Donovan

youtu.be/2hYVSSv4nIE?si=3hvCUBLUUD5F-GC1

Nickel Creek has a new record, *Celebrants*, (their fifth major album) that came out in 2023 and you should also check out.

Here's a link to a performance video of a song from the recording.

Meadow – Nickel Creek, *Celebrants* album 2023

theblackberrymagazine.com/videos/the-blackberry-sessions-nickel-creek

And enjoy more of Sara Watkins music and videos on her website: sarawatkins.com