

Music Review: *12 Little Spells* by Esperanza Spalding

On October 19, 2018, Esperanza Spalding's seventh album, *12 Little Spells* was released. On January 26, 2020, it won the Grammy for Best Jazz Vocal Album. On March 12, 2020, *12 Little Spells* was added to the Rio Rancho Public Libraries' collection. On March 13, 2020, the libraries were closed to the public. Browsing is still not available. As a result, the chart-topping, award-winning, universally well-reviewed record by the uniquely talented modern jazz master has yet to be checked out.



Oddly, *12 Little Spells* consists of 16 tracks. The more the better. The opening song, also the album's titular track, begins with a surprising but bright fanfare – complete with fluttering flute - before moving to Spalding's equally bright vocals. The record really starts to take off, however, on "Thang" – an appreciative ode to the motion of walking. This is also when the album's corporal theme begins to set in.

Each song on *12 Little Spells* is subtitled with a part or region of the body. Track #1, "12 Little Spells" is subtitled "Thoracic Spine." "Thang" is given "Hips." The album's eighth song, "Now Know" is affiliated with the "Solar Portal." And so forth. Perhaps Spalding is making a connection between the songs and chakras. If nothing else, she is making it very clear that each song, while existing on its own, is explicitly a segment of a larger entity. And when placed together with the other segments, they create the full body of the album.



This album has received the coveted Parental Advisory sticker, something you don't often see on a jazz album (she says the f-word a few times on "The Longing Deep Down").

12 Little Spells is smooth but has a swagger that should allow it to bust out of any dentist office. Spalding infuses elements of pop music that allow for an easier entry for non-jazz listeners, but

12 Little Spells is a jazz record through and through. It's Grammy Award for Best Jazz Vocal Album is well earned.

You can find *12 Little Spells* in the Rio Rancho Public Libraries' catalog [here](#). Click on the "Request" button at the top of the page to place a hold.

Esperanza Spalding's previous albums can also be found at the Rio Rancho Public Libraries [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). Further, much of her music can be accessed digitally in [Hoopla](#) and [Freegal](#).

If you're interested in the history of jazz and have some time on your hands, check out Ken Burn's documentary series [here](#). Or if you want to learn *How to Listen to Jazz*, check-out Ted Gioia's book [here](#).

And

Enjoy.