



Rosie Thomas **"If Songs Could Be Held"** Sub-Pop Records

In the opening cut, "Since You've Been Around," the narrator admits that her world has literally been turned upside down since there's been a new man in her life. Sick with that dizzy feeling that love brings, decision-making appears to have become a major stumbling block of late - *"I'm winning, I'm losing, I'm afraid of never choosing, This heart of mine was so beaten down, before you came around."* "Pretty Dress," a song co-written by Thomas and album producer Mike Busbee [Liz Phair, Glen Phillips], opens with a piano that's later joined by a backdrop of symphonic strings, arranged by Josh Myers. In terms of subject matter "Pretty Dress" alludes to a teenage rite of passage, *"Put your pretty dress on it's time for you go to the dance, Tie your hair in ribbons and lace and wear pearls around your neck, All the pretty princes will see you – someday, someday."* "Pretty Dress" is one of a number of cuts to which Myers contributes string arrangements. "Loose Ends," not unsurprisingly given the title, reflects upon putting ones life in order by answering unresolved issues.

In order to embrace all of life, yet pinpoint how small and insignificant daily events here on Earth are in the greater scheme of things, Thomas employs the universal reflection "It Don't Matter To The Sun." Subjectively the lyric focuses on a love affair that has run it's course, at least for one the parties. The narrator, however, reflects *"There will be a tomorrow even if you choose to leave, Because it don't matter to the sun, No, It matters to me."* Although "Pretty Dress" is the first single to be culled from this album, when I first listened to **"If Songs Could Be Held"** it was track five, "Guess It May" – a throwaway resigned sounding title - that truly caught my intention. Drums, piano and strings merge on this slow paced number, a prayer that love will last [forever]. "Let It Be Me" was penned almost a half a century ago by two Frenchmen, singer Gilbert Becaud and lyricist Pierre Delanoe. Translated into English by Mann Curtis the song became a #7 Pop hit in 1960 for the Everly Brothers. Bob Dylan, The Indigo Girls, Laura Nyro and many others have covered the tune. Breathy voiced – ala Nick Drake - English bred singer/songwriter Ed Harcourt duets with Thomas on this time-served standard. In "Clear As A Bell" the narrator reflects on a love affair that has run its course – *"I'm sure I'll convince myself to get over you, Maybe it will come, day is done,"* and the lyric to "Say What You Want" which immediately follows charts similar waters.

"Time Goes By" finds the narrator recalling her mother's stories about falling in love, and compares them with feelings she is currently experiencing. Thomas' voice drops to an almost intimate whisper on some cuts, but Rosie delivers "Time Goes By" with surprising power and depth. Have departed this Earthly plane in "Death Came And Got Me" the spirit alludes to a life that has been lived well as one where you have loved and been loved. **"If Songs Could Be Held"** closes with the delightful waltz "Tomorrow," and considering the broken hearted sentiment expressed in some songs on this collection, it's remarkably upbeat as evidenced by *"I would follow you, everywhere you would go to, Tomorrow, forever, always."*

Thomas' third full album finds her ploughing already familiar territory concerning affairs of the heart, but on this occasion her melodic brush strokes appear bolder and more assured – "Tomorrow" smacks of being a future standard. By way of adding intrigue her lyrical snapshots, as before, are cleverly taken from odd angles. As I mentioned earlier, Sub Pop have released "Pretty Dress" as a single, and the disc features two non-album Rosie Thomas compositions.

Folkwax Score 8 out of 10

Arthur Wood.

Kerrville Kronikles 09/05.