



Rosie Thomas **"When We Were Small"** Sub Pop Records

From the opening lines of the blessedly wistful "2 Dollar Shoes," a song that describes those *things you do* when you are totally in love with someone, Thomas sets the tone for this ten-song collection. "October" and "Farewell" appeared on last year's mini album **"In Between."** The latter song is the second cut on this collection and focuses upon the flip side of the *love* coin - the parting, the sad goodbye - but also, tellingly, the admission of having done something wrong. The focus of the latter song was her parent's divorce. Although it's titled "Wedding Day," track three opens with the melancholy line *"So much for love I guess,"* and with her fare thee well's all said, Thomas [as the narrator] attests that she's *"moving on."* "The Wedding Day" that Rosie celebrates in this *"oh so brave"* song, is the sense of freedom from endless heartache that turning your back on love brings. Thomas expresses the joyous application of that freedom with *"I'm gonna get on the highway with no hesitation," "I'm gonna stop at every truck stop, and make small talk with waiters and truck driving men," "I'm gonna stop at every bar, and flirt with cowboys in front of their girlfriends" and "I'm gonna drive to the ocean, go skinny dippin' blow kisses to Venus and Mars."* Having stated, unequivocally, a few weeks back, that Patty Griffin's "Makin' Pies" was the finest song I'd heard this year, "Wedding Days" just crashed in at the # 2 spot. "Finish Line" comes from the same end of a love affair as "Wedding Day," while the aforementioned, and more positive, "October" includes evocations to *"Write her a love song and play it all day long"* and *"Tell her you miss her when you're close enough to kiss her."* I've lambasted many albums in recent years for being *wall to wall* love songs, and **"When We Were Small"** certainly is that, but what is so refreshing about Thomas' approach is that her words capture *unique* snapshots from the *"positive"* and *"negative"* phases of an affair. Lyrically, she avoids the mundane. What's more, Thomas' fragile delivery only further confirms the *"I've been there, I've observed that"* personal experience of all that she sings of. There's a thumping back beat on "Lorraine," while the acoustic setting, with strings, of "Have You Seen My Love?" make for a mix of tracks that rhythmically and melodically reflect the aforementioned *"positive"* and *"negative."* And finally, here's proof that *"curiosity really did kill the cat"* - intermingled between a few of the songs on this collection are *real [family] life* sound bites taken from recordings that Rosie's father made when she was a youngster. The one that intrigues me the most can be found at the end of "Farewell" where Rosie says *"I'm done."* She's done what? Frankly, this is an album that has been truly well thought out. And, to date, it's also one of this year's finest.

Folkwax Rating 9 out of 10

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