



Karine Polwart **"Scribbled In Chalk"** Shoeshine Records

The narrator in the plaintive opening cut "Hole In The Heart" is intent on being personally abusive, and launches the attack in verse one with *"I made everything come undone, I made everything fall apart, I quit running to the finishing line, And I went back to the start."* Currently in a confused state, there's a later reference to observing *"the world move in slow motion,"* while the closing verse includes the allusion *"For too long I was trying to talk, Over the sound of rushing blood, Where truth is a story scribbled in chalk."* And chalk, in the long run, as we well know, is non-permanent. "I'm Gonna Do It All" which follows, like the opening cut, finds the sounds of Polwart and band supported by strings. Co-written by Karine and her younger brother [and band member], Steven, the possibility of fulfilling long held dream is the theme that pervades the song lyric.

"Daisy" is a caution to tread warily as you make your way in the world evidenced by *"there are people in this world who don't think like you do,"* while, in the bridge Karine adds *"and some don't think at all."* The portrait of a mysterious stranger, possibly a hitchhiker, in a foreign land pervades "Maybe There's A Road" – *"The signs are in a language I don't understand,"* while the quasi-Biblical "Holy Moses" was one of the new songs featured in Polwart's set when she toured the U.K. last fall. The ballad "Don't Know Why" marks the reappearance of supporting strings, as Polwart subjectively, and dreamily, focuses on the passage of time. On the aforementioned U.K. tour Karine introduced "Takes Its Own Time" as a song about her father's philosophy concerning life, whether it related to his skill as a gardener – *"You ceased to mow the lawn ten years ago,"* or to some of his other spare time activities. "I've Seen It All" catalogues the dark side of this life, particularly man's inhumanity to his fellow man.

Employing the refrain *"Baloo baleerie"* from the traditional Shetland song "The Bressay Lullaby," Polwart has reversed the words for her own composition "Baleerie Baloo." Karine's lyric recalls the life of Jane Haining [b. 1897, d. 1944], a Scottish mill worker who under the auspices of the Church of Scotland became a missionary and journeyed to Hungary during the 1930's to work in a Budapest orphanage. Refusing to return home following the Nazi occupation, and protective of the Jewish children she cared for, Haining was arrested on a charge of espionage and became one of the few non-Jews to perish at Auschwitz. In 1997 the state of Israel recognised Haining as one of the "Righteous Among The Nations." In the lyric to "Baleerie Baloo" Polwart references the gold stars that Haining had to sew on to the clothes of Jewish children in her charge. Supported once again by strings, ambient electronic sounds and her band, lyrically "Terminal Star" which immediately follows, takes the form of a memorial to Haining's work and to her ultimate sacrifice. With the closing track, "Follow The Heron," Polwart takes a backward glance at her days with Malinky. Karine's song previously appeared on the band's sophomore album **"3 Ravens"** [2002].

Polwart's voice appears strangely restrained throughout this collection, and having listened to **"Scribbled In Chalk"** on a number of occasions, nothing here possesses the instant appeal or impact that "The Sun's Comin' Over The Hill" had on first hearing. That said **"Scribbled In Chalk"** as a body of work, is a worthy successor to **"Faultlines."** Produced by her drummer husband Mattie Foulds, Karine is supported on **"Scribbled In Chalk"** by her road band consisting of brother Steven [guitar, vocals], Kevin McGuire [bass, vocals], Inge Thomson [accordion, melodica, triangle, vocals] and, of course, Mattie. Check out Sarah Roberts' artwork throughout the liner booklet, particularly the cover picture – complete with the "We Ain't Bullshit" graffiti scrawled on a wall, and a skyward bound heron. Icons! We must have icons.....

Folkwax Score 8 out of 10

Arthur Wood.

Kerrville Kronikles 03/06.