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Kate Walsh is proof that the youth of today aren't necessarily acting like the brats on *Skins*, rioting at house parties whilst pillaged to their eyeballs - nope, they could just as easily be getting their hearts broken instead. This Brighton-based 24-year-old has undoubtedly experienced her pie's slice of romantic angst, teenage or otherwise, and she ain't afraid to sing about it. Enter *Tim's House*, sweetly named after her co-producer, in whose abode they recorded the album. Her debut proper, after releasing a compromised first attempt on a non-independent label, showcases her talents over a compact ten tracks. These songs range from emotionally vulnerable acoustic-based affairs to... well, erm, emotionally vulnerable acoustic-based affairs.

This lack of variation actually works in Walsh's favour, the slight running time and sharp focus meaning the album certainly has a market out there. In fact, iTunes fans have already pounced upon the singer, translating Walsh's hard work into online success already. It's hard not to envisage a crossover into the mainstream public conscious when you listen to a song like *Your Song*. First off, you can breathe a hefty sigh of relief; she isn't covering Elton. Secondly, wow. I may be displaying my soft spot for a lo-fi sensitive ballad, even one that features lyrics as girly as 'I make whirlpools and watch him sparkle', but heck! This song is so pretty, it will make you smile or cry or both at the same time. It's not what you would term revolutionary; Walsh croons over her delicate guitar strums about a boy - what's new, right? Well, by injecting an intensity that doesn't feel too forced, Walsh's stunning vocals make it a triumph for the quiet revolution.

The following nine tracks strive to better this opening track and, although they don't match it for sheer likeability, some of them do come close. A gorgeous backing of strings adds a sense of grandeur to *Betty* while *Fireworks* effectively paints the picture of a lonely gal without a beau on *Bonfire Night*. Although her hometown of Burnham-On-Crouch in Essex provides lyrical material for *Talk of the Town* and *Goldfish*, the majority of the lyrics deal with the ending of relationships. For example, *Don't Break My Heart's* title certainly isn't misleading; I challenge anyone to sit through this heart-rending lament, with lyrics as lovesick as 'Don't come around being happy/Don't you be crying without me', that describes a jilted ex meeting up with her once-boyfriend. It all veers on cliché but Walsh's voice, evoking Kim Richey and Kathryn Williams among other contemporary female balladeers, roots it in a place of emotional truth. The sparse and warm production, plaintive guitars and gentle brushes of snare drums occasionally being usurped by a harmonica or accordion, doesn't interfere with Walsh's vocal spell and almost makes one wish Walsh had delivered the album completely a capella.

In critical terms, however, the album isn't a fully-fledged success. The songs themselves are, without exception, precious. Put them in a row, though, and one might wish for an unexpected U-turn that never comes. Maybe it's just my eclectic leanings, as I assume many of you reading this will be happy enough with the ten songs on offer, but it would be nice to hear that voice fronting something a bit more jazzy or full-bodied. You might think I've contradicted myself here, at once complimenting and criticizing Walsh's one-track sound, and perhaps I have. My sole worry is that Walsh is in danger of being pigeonholed as a creator of 'break-up' music and soundtracking a dozen overwrought TV series - *The O.C.* may be gone (thankfully) but *Grey's Anatomy* is waiting in the shadows to use and abuse her music. Maybe that day will come, maybe it won't; for now, though, all those dumped souls who are too sensible to turn emo can rely on *Tim's House* to guide them to the light at the end of the tunnel.

-Luke McNaney