

## Mp3 Tracy Spuehler - Six Three One



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Her bare-bones pop style sounds like one part Aimee Mann, one part Elliott Smith with a dash of Liz Phair. 12 MP3 Songs POP: Folky Pop, POP: Quirky Details: The song "Where Do We Go?" is placed in a new Nissan Altima commercial, so keep your eyes and ears open! Tracks played on world-renown radio station KCRW: "Where Do We Go?," "Sunflower," "Hummingbird" and "631" The album "six three one" charted in the top 50 at KCRW and made the CMJ top 200! ALBUM REVIEW in LA's New Times, by Michael Berick Flowing through singer-songwriter Tracy Spuehler's impressive debut disc are elements of Juliana Hatfield's little-girl lilt, Aimee Mann's confessional pop and Liz Phair's indie-rock feistiness. But this native Angeleno puts so much of herself into her songs that her music winds up charmingly fresh and all her own. Kicking off Six Three One, the irresistibly catchy "Where Do We Go?" is all bouncy beat and boppy "ba ba ba's," but underneath is a sense of questioning that foreshadows the life examinations present throughout this disc. Spuehler demonstrates a real ability for turning personal events into engaging tunes -- in "Little Red Car," for example, she offers a loving tribute to her stolen Toyota. And the title track stands as probably the best rock ode to a house since Grant Hart's "2541." But where that tune honored a punk rock bunkhouse, "631" mixes childhood nostalgia with an air of joyous celebration ("That's where we made lemonade/Back when I was in first grade") to chronicle the packing up of her family home. The album's centerpiece song, "Hummingbird," similarly employs down-to-earth imagery but for a more serious topic, with Spuehler poignantly using the incident of a hummingbird distracting a mourner during a funeral service to express the love and loss that the song's narrator feels for the deceased person. Producer Liam Davis, from Chicago's Frisbie, adds thoughtful touches of horns, strings and other studio texturing that well suit Spuehler's seemingly simple yet quite substantive songs. A delightfully endearing album, Six Three One proves that Spuehler is more than just another "girl with a

guitar." MORE REVIEWS The Village Voice sweet, sensitive songs...replete with references to lemonade, sunflowers, and a little red car that takes us so very far St. Paul Pioneer Press Tracy Spuehler had an epiphany. Over the course of three years in the late '90s, her band broke up, she split up with her longtime boyfriend, she moved from her adopted home of Minneapolis back to her hometown of Los Angeles, where she cared for her mother, who died of ovarian cancer in 1998. At the end of it all, she wrote the songs that make up what critics are calling one of the most beautiful debuts of 2001. The only question remaining for the 30-year-old songwriter as she hits the road for her first solo tour that brings her to Minneapolis tonight: What next? If that sounds too much like a synopsis for a "VH1 Behind the Music" segment, it's no mistake: Spuehler was associate producer for many of the infamous "Behind the Music" bits, including those devoted to Motley Crue, Ozzy Osbourne, the Black Crowes and Metallica. As such, she is fully aware of the irony that comes with the double life of being a gifted songwriter in her own right, as well as part of pop culture's biggest punch line. "It was really fun, but it's really strange for me because I don't ever watch TV," she says from her apartment in Los Angeles. "I haven't since high school. Now and then, I'll watch something with friends, but I don't even have a TV right now. I don't do 'Behind the Music' anymore, but it was fun to be part of this thing that everybody parodies." Much like her solo debut, "Six Three One," Spuehler's story of artistic growth is far more interesting than most of the soap operas she has produced. Spuehler was a founding member of Pimentos for Gus, the local pop-folk band that, after a seven-year run, called it quits in 1996. Her former bandmates include Justin Roberts and Mike Merz, who have both gone on to successful careers as solo artists. "It doesn't surprise me at all, because Justin and Mike were doing that back with Pimentos," she says. "We're all finding our niches. We're all going strong. And I honestly would never ever have expected that I would have been doing this." Part of what got her to this point, she says, is the fact that she and Roberts went their separate ways in 1997 after an eight-year love affair. "It was amazing, but it was my first love, him too, and after eight years, I was 26, and it was the kind of thing that would either have to move forward into serious life commitment or not," she says. "And I just couldn't make that commitment. I knew myself too well. I wanted to live on my own." A Los Angeles native, Spuehler ultimately found Minneapolis "too small" and returned to her roots (the title song of "Six Three One" refers to the address of the house where she grew up). She spent much of the next two years putting her musical life on hold as she cared for her mother. After her mother's death, Spuehler, who comes from a family of classically trained musicians and who received a degree in

religious studies from Kenyon College in Ohio, started writing songs. "I wrote some songs when I was in Minneapolis, but they were never anything I wanted to play because I didn't think I had anything to say," she says. "When I moved back here, it just kind of started happening. The melodies and lyrics would pop into my head, and so many things were happening - every possible transition, from having lost this long relationship, moving from my base of friends and support system in Minneapolis, and my mom. "So all of a sudden, I had a lot to write about. It was definitely my form of therapy. And it was also very surprising that I was even writing songs. The only person I'd play them for was Justin, who was really encouraging, and then they just started pouring out." Those songs include "Where Do We Go?" "Hummingbird," "Sunflower" and "Round and Round," all of which trace Spuehler's journey of the heart and the losses-gains that come with spiritual and artistic growth. The uncommon depth of the songs caught the ear of producer Liam Davis, a member of Chicago indie-rock heroes Frisbee and head of the Chicago-based independent label Hear Diagonally, which released "Six Three One" in July. Since then, it has garnered rave reviews from such outlets as amazonand the College Music Journal, and steady airplay on such influential independent radio stations as Los Angeles' KCRW-FM. All of which would never have happened had Spuehler not come to a crossroads in her life and taken the leap. "I've thought about that: If I hadn't gone through all these changes and gone on my own, would I have done all that I've done and explored everything I've explored?" she says. "I love my mom so much, and it was hard to see her decline physically, but at the same time, it wasn't a negative experience. It was peaceful, in a way. I got to know her so much better." The same could be said about Spuehler, by anyone fortunate enough to stumble upon the open book of an open heart that is "Six Three One."

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