

Mp3 Rachel Efron - Say Goodbye



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The debut album of San Francisco pianist/singer Rachel Efron has a pop sensibility of its own design. It's jazz/folk tinged pop--with impressionistic piano, enduring vocals, poetic lyricism, a groove-based rhythm section, lush horns and strings. 11 MP3 Songs POP: Piano, POP: Folky Pop Details: Every album is a snapshot of something, a freeze-frame moment in a person or a band's evolution. For Rachel Efron, her debut album, *Say Goodbye*, offers the world a peek at an artist and young woman growing into herself. It's an album of one woman's observations of love, of a lover, of displacement, of the emotional journeys she's embarked upon in her head and heart, and the actual, physical journeys she's taken, moving from Maine to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to her current home, San Francisco. "It's about intimacy, the way we conceal and reveal ourselves to each other-and the different seasons of our relationships and our lives," the 26-year-old singer/songwriter/pianist says. "But it is also about reconciling the past and present. It's about the journeys we make between our presents and our pasts throughout life, and the wisdom, frustration, and humor we glean from each visit." Her observations are strewn across an elegant collection of rock-based, piano-led pop songs, music rooted in her love for everyone from Paul Simon and Leonard Cohen to Fiona Apple and Tori Amos, and relying equally on the classical and jazz piano training she enjoyed at Harvard University and the Berklee College of Music, respectively. "It's not folk music. For a while I called it that. And it's not jazz, but it has a lot of jazz elements. I've realized recently that it's best defined as pop, and I've tried to become comfortable with that," Efron says with a laugh. "But it borrows from other genres-for example it has the attention to lyrics of folk music, the interest in chord voicings of jazz, and the rhythms of rock and latin-which separates it from most pop music." Bookended by "What I Know" and "Solstice," a pair of early songs inspired by life in her home state, Maine, *Say Goodbye* tracks moods from reflective to passionate to playful across its sonic, lyrical, and rhythmic landscapes. It's

produced by Jon Evans, studio and stage bassist for Tori Amos, and features Evans on bass and guitar and Scott Amendola (Charlie Hunter, Madeleine Peyroux, T.J. Kirk) on drums. The disc also features the haunting accordion work of Julie Wolf (Ani DiFranco, Dar Williams, Erin McKeown), and is dusted with Evan's fine arrangements for brass and strings. For Efron, much of *Say Goodbye* is about the process of opening herself up-"the excitement and the fear of that." In "Sentimental Love," with a dirge-like piano groove and understated but provocative vocals, she tells the story of waking in the bed of a lover, having dreamt of someone else. In "An Afterthought" an easy, percussive groove and delicate, impressionistic piano lines have her reconnecting with a former love, falling in love with him again as a friend. "Fast as I Can" juxtaposes impossibly calm music with an urgent lyric-about turning to reconnect with yourself after having compromised too much to be with someone. "Underneath the Moon" is a playful, almost kitschy, take on falling in love, replete with layered background vocals and hooky horn lines. In "Close Your Eyes," written the day the US declared war on Iraq, an anthem chorus, driving percussion, and a counterpoint of strings dramatizes the theme of deception on both the individual and global scale. "It took me years to get to the point where I was ready to put this stuff down and release it into the world," she says, "and it's a huge relief to finally release it." The road to the release of *Say Goodbye* began, for the most part, at Harvard University, where Efron studied music alongside her major in Social Anthropology. The daughter of a social worker and high school teacher on the southern coast of Maine-in Cape Elizabeth-Efron studied classical theory at Harvard, and jazz piano at the nearby Berklee College of Music. Growing up she took piano lessons, and in high school she fell in love with the likes of Cohen, Apple, Simon and Joni Mitchell. "Yet it didn't even occur to me to write a song until my senior year of college," she laughs. "I always wrote poetry-I had this love affair with words-and I was always playing piano. When I first started writing songs, it was a project in the intersection of those two things, words and melodies, all the possibilities that came with that." Efron delved into the songbooks of Tom Waits, Thelonious Monk, Oscar Petersen, Beth Orton and Aimee Mann, started gigging on campus, and even recorded a demo in the basement of a Harvard dorm. She moved to San Francisco shortly after graduation, eager for change and new surroundings conducive to a budding music career. Now in her fourth year in the Bay Area, Efron accompanies all manner of rock and jazz acts, all the while honing her repertoire, sound, and style. When working with Evans and Amendola, she emphasized spontaneity and creativity. "I wanted the songs to come through, I didn't want to overproduce them. Jon and Scott were a

powerful and creative rhythm section. I'm proud that we avoided forcing any of my songs into stylistic boxes. We managed to key into the essence of each of the songs and from there come up with the best arrangements." "For me, writing songs has always been a very solitary enterprise," she continues, "and it's always brought me a lot of gratification. But now it's more than that, because I'm playing with other people. It's so completely exciting to work on a song, and have that solitary experience, but then open it up for collaboration and learn from other people about the music I'm writing." In the end, opening herself up lyrically and musically allowed more of her original sentiment to shine through, filling the songs with more of her own essence. Some pretty good sources wouldn't disagree: "My friends seem to think this album is totally, completely me." And it is, at least for now

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