



When Kathleen Edwards' debut cd "Failer" was released in 2003, it propelled her to the forefront of Americana with its rootsy instrumentation and her mournful vocals about a relationship gone bad. Her voice drew comparisons to Lucinda Williams and Gillian Welch but Edwards herself has admitted "I would think that any day of the week, I sound more like Tom Petty than any of the female comparisons that I've received." If that's the case, then on her second album "Back To Me", Kathleen has found her Mike Campbell.

The most striking difference between her new album, out in stores on March 1<sup>st</sup>, and "Failer" is the addition of guitarist/producer Colin Cripps, a fellow Canadian recommended to Kathleen when she needed a fill-in guitarist for her most recent tour. Cripps adds a much heavier and fuller guitar sound and when Benmont Tench of Tom Petty's Heartbreakers guest stars on keyboards, you'd be hard pressed to find a more obvious influence. Since recording the album, Cripps and Edwards have become romantically involved which should make for some intense live performances of these songs which continue to focus on the "bad breakup" that inspired the first album.

"Back to Me" opens with "In State" where Edwards threatens to turn in her criminal lover singing "maybe twenty years in state will teach you a lesson" and "I know where the cops hang out...I know when you're going down." So much for the innocent farmgirl persona of the first album. The title cut speaks of the power she holds over her former lover. While Cripps guitar wails loudly she sings "I've got ways to make you come...back to me." Quite an alluring pause between the title of the song and the line before it!

After opening with two rockers she delivers the haunting "Pink Emerson Radio" over minimal instrumentation but with a melody that will stay with you long after hearing it. The lyrics hold a startling surprise ending. As she wistfully lists a number of possessions within her view in the first two verses, separated by an ominous chorus of "there's no time to waste", she reveals in the final verse that her place is on fire and she can only take one thing. Which will it be?

The first three songs hold the same one two three punch of the first three on her debut cd and the rest the songs deal with her starting over after moving away from where all her memories stay. Edwards in fact moved from Ottawa, where she had spent most of her life, to Toronto while recording the album and songs like "Copied Keys" and "Away" deal with the homesickness that results from such a move. The one song that she co-wrote with Cripps "Summerlong" is perhaps the most optimistic of them all...almost. After she sings of her love for someone new she slips back into her dour outlook when she laments "please don't let this be summerlong."

While there's more jangle than twang on her second album, only real purists could fault her for evolving to a more rock oriented sound. Her cynical vocals intertwine beautifully

with the bigger sounding, more compelling back up band. Her way with using familiar phrases such as “I’m your get out of jail free for a year” and “memory is a terrible thing when you use it right” continue to showcase her as a potentially great songwriter. She is, after all, only 25. So while her first album was a nice little slice of Americana, “Back to Me” is a statement that there’s nothing little or innocent about her anymore.