



## Emily Haines

*Delving Underneath Your Skin*

Emily Haines's music has a subtle presence that is simultaneously disarming. Even if it involves a piano, breathy, determined vocals and bittersweet words, don't be fooled by the soothing magic quality. It may lull you, but this is really fight music. It's an iceberg drifting across the Arctic like a slow dance—graceful but sharp, powerful and heavy. It's the human expanse without all the posturing or having to prove itself. It moves you in every sense. "The sound of the music dictates the mood for sure; it's more cinematic," Haines admits.

This Metric vocalist's debut record, *Knives Don't Have Your Back*, is the kind of album you hear in the background but, as you slowly notice it, has you asking "Who is this?" The song "Crowd Surf off a Cliff" is a perfect example of Haines's expressive, haunting charm as the song fades to a repeating, heartbreaking "I wake up lonely/I wake up lonely" and the piano notes won't let go—everything just echoes.

"That was my goal and I think it is such a difficult thing to achieve, exactly that. You want it to have a presence but it's not supposed to dominate. It's supposed to be a feeling in the room more than a person in the room," says Haines, who makes her home in Toronto.

The intricacies and attention to detail are clear, without a sense of overproduction or falsity. "There were so many little decisions that ended up yielding the results," Haines says. Without overemphasis, Haines explains the recording of *Knives Don't Have Your Back* came shortly after her father died. "I had a bit of a sense of needing to take stock. I definitely withdrew at that moment. And, as has always been the case for me, the one thing that was there was the piano," she says.

Lucky for us, Haines managed to channel that pain and loss into something positive—an intimate record that we can all relate to, experience and share. **Giselle Zado Wasfie** / photography by Brantley Gutierrez

October 2006



## **EMILY HAINES**

### **Knives Don't Have Your Back**

★★★★

**An ethereal voice sets it free**

(Last Gang) Anyone remotely familiar with Metric or Broken Social Scene knows just how much untapped potential Emily Haines has. As appropriate as she is for the glamorous and grand indie pop of both aforementioned acts, Haines has also shown glimpses of a broken and beautiful solo artist just waiting to tell her story. This, my friends, is that breakout album in spades. While a fairly recent MSTRKRFT remix of the Metric single "Monster Hospital" hinted that Haines may have a bubbly and brazen dance-rock answer to Gwen Stefani on tap, she's instead recoiled into the place from whence she came—as a brokenhearted little girl plopped across a piano bench. Members of Broken Social Scene and Stars help out with horns and Scott Minor of Sparklehorse is credited with "various mysterious noises from Nashville," but *Knives* never strays from Haines's painstaking, personal canvas of debilitating balladry like the absolutely gorgeous "Crowd Surf Off a Cliff." My, oh my, is this a good thing.

**Andrew Parks**