

UNDER THE RADAR



The Solution To Music Pollution

Summer 2007

**WHAT
IS FREE**
TO A GOOD HOME?

EMILY HAINES
A THE WANT JOURNALIST

Emily Haines & The Soft Skeleton: *What Is Free to a Good Home?* EP (Last Gang)

More melancholic offerings from the Metric frontwoman

litter an EP of *Knives Don't Have Your Back* leftovers, which is welcome, given the singer's penchant for penning beautiful somber melodies. Haines does bring a few new wrinkles to the fold—more horns and jazzy drums on the first two songs—but it's a lot of the same, musically speaking: "Telethon" plays like a variation on what "Winning" did slightly better, and "Bottom of the World" could be the sister to "Reading in Bed."

Choice lyrics prove the album's essentialness. On "Telethon," she could be relating her life's complications—a lover who doesn't understand her ("When she says nothing is enough, don't try to fix it"), not having a home to call her own, and feeling full of stupid questions, perhaps lamenting an adulthood—or the idea of it—she feels may never come. When Haines likens herself to a soldier, she calls on familiar military imagery, but seems positively depressed at her own accuracy. It's tough to listen to, despite the pretty music, and it brings to mind a question Haines asked her audience at a performance earlier this year: Can we all just be happy? You would hope so, but what would happen if Haines fixed her life? No doubt it's a frightening proposition for someone whose art depends so much on being in a troubled state. Perhaps that's why she chose the title. (Side note: if you managed to catch Haines' live show last year, you may find your listening experience augmented by images of Guy Maddin films in your head—a bonus feature not noted on the EP's packaging.)

(www.emilyhaines.com)

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By Gary Knight