

# INDIE ALBUM OF THE WEEK

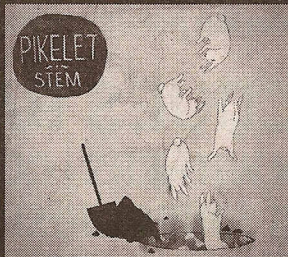
## PIKELET

*Stem*  
Love & Mercy



Much has been made of the fact that Pikelet, aka Evelyn Morris, was the drummer in Baseball. Why? Because her second LP *Stem* is such a delicately-crafted, kaleidoscopic affair that it's hard to imagine the chick who used to slaughter the skins in a hardcore band could possibly dream it up.

'Toby Light' opens with a merry-go-round melody so timelessly naïve it could be background music for a children's talking



book. Little'uns would giggle at the words too - 'wake/sleep/eat/excrete' - but parents, don't be fooled. Pikelet's Tinkerbell touch strays into shadowy Grimm Tales territory too. In his quest to be "light, shiny and bright" the song's moribund hero sets himself "alight, alight, alight." As the tribal drums and jungle cries peel away from 'Smithereens', Morris expresses the breathless, bittersweet

dreaminess of being young and savouring it: 'I want to mark this year / To look back upon / As one that I lived, loved / And had lots of fun / There will be others / There will be more / Who knows what's in store?'

Stem's instrumentation is esoteric. Bells and chimes, clarinet and harpsichord,

accordion and glockenspiel intertwine with ease. But Morris' voice is the real jewel. On 'Face Paint' her sweet, rising lilt evokes The Sundays' Harriet Wheeler - "Just get older / You're much too young!" When her voice falls a little flatter it channels the ubercool deadpan of Stereolab's Lætitia Sadier. Stereolab's influence spirals its spaced-out way through the whole LP, especially on 'Allergies' and 'The Weakest Link'.

**Stem is a perfect storm of pop. I know, because I wear natural armour against pop music and, now, Pikelet is lodged between my chestguard and my heart after it fluttered in sideways like a paper aeroplane bearing a dainty arrow at its tip.**

*Kate Hennessy*