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Album review

## Rachel Grimes

By Mia Clarke

**Book of Leaves** (Rachel Grimes/Karate Body)

Even if you're a fan of Kentucky post-rock ensemble Rachel's, which was responsible for 1996's quietly majestic *Music for Egon Schiele*, you'd be forgiven for thinking the band was named after its extraordinary pianist, Rachel Grimes. In fact, the group (on hiatus since last year) began as a solo vehicle for Jason Noble, the erstwhile shredding guitarist for Louisville cult icons Rodan. Yet it's impossible to deny the overwhelming impact Grimes's bold piano playing had on the group's compositions.

With *Book of Leaves*, her first solo album, we finally hear Grimes isolated. Gone are the violins, percussion and cello that puffed up the structure of Rachel's. The gorgeous tones and deep swells of her grand piano radiate. The result is so intimate you feel as if you're alone with her in a room—or in a field when she injects the somber drama of her compositions with field recordings of birds and insects. (Grimes is clearly inspired by the great outdoors: Currently, she's renovating an isolated Kentucky farmhouse.)

Unfortunately, this doesn't always work. Birdsong over piano is a bit of a cliché, and the tweets, hisses and warbles on tracks such as "She Was Here" simply don't mesh well with the music. The piano is recorded with such remarkably thoughtful grace that the field recordings jar, draining the keys' hushed beauty.

As the title hints, there's something impermanent and fragile about this recording—a perfect album for fall. Alternating between sorrowful, discordant reflectivity and a wild, storytelling flourish, Grimes creates a series of resonant chapters that feel as though they could be lifted away by a gust of autumn wind.

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Time Out Chicago / Issue 239 : Sep 24–30, 2009


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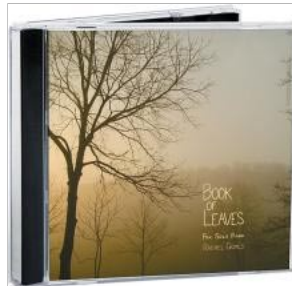
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