

The Staves - Dead and Born and Grown (2012)

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01 – *Wisely & Slow* 02 – *Gone Tomorrow* 03 – *The Motherlode* 04 – *Pay Us No Mind* 05 – *Facing West* 06 – *In The Long Run* 07 – *Dead & Born & Grown* 08 – *Winter Trees* 09 – *Tongue Behind My Teeth* 10 – *Mexico* 11 – *Snow* 12 – *Eagle Song* The Staves are: Emily Staveley-Taylor - vocals Jessica Staveley-Taylor - vocals, guitar Camilla Staveley-Taylor - vocals, ukulele

To steal a phrase from *Wisely & Slow*, the opening track on the Staves' debut album: tender women, why is it you whisper when you really need to yell? It's clear from their lyrics that these three sisters from Watford aren't wilting wallflowers: their songs unflinchingly demonstrate the difficulty of reconciling love with a desire for autonomy. "I can't be married," youngest sister Camilla tells one man on *In the Long Run*, while on *Snow*, eldest sister Emily dismisses another as "a little child", assuring him that: "I will never belong to anyone." Yet something gets lost in the translation to harmony: whether the sisters' gossamer voices are woven together or flutter alone, what you hear is a bloodless, polite prettiness. It doesn't help that the musical backing is so insipid: wisps of gentle guitar that too rarely surprise, as with the skewed chords of *Wisely & Slow* or the icy glint of *Tongue Behind My Teeth*. --- Maddy Costa, guardian.co.uk

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