THIS IS THE KIT

MOONSHINE FREEZE

“I’ve been thinking a lot about truth and storytelling and the way that stories and truth change over time according to who’s telling them or who’s listening to them,” explains Kate Stables, the core around whom This Is The Kit has been built for the past ten years.

Now four albums in, the story of This Is The Kit is itself one of time and change and listeners. It has carried Stables from Winchester to Bristol to Paris, across tours and festivals and the admiration of critics and her peers, among them The National, Sharon van Etten, Chris Thile (of Nickel Creek, Punch Brothers, and now the host of A Prairie Home Companion), as well as Guy Garvey and much of BBC 6Music.

And the story has now led to *Moonshine Freeze*, This Is The Kit’s Rough Trade debut, and her most sonically accomplished and compelling album to date. For their fourth LP, Stables wanted her band – Rozi Plain, Jamie Whitby-Coles, and Neil Smith – involved from the start. “They’re three of my favourite musicians, and what they do with their separate projects and what they bring to the band is brilliant.”

Stables once again enlisted John Parish (PJ Harvey, M. Ward, Perfume Genius) to produce; they had previously worked together on the band’s 2008 debut. Parish’s known brilliance for capturing a close-mic’ed vocal is felt here: Stables’ uniquely-textured voice is brought to the fore, and - following the tradition of exquisitely strange troubadors like Karen Dalton, Will Oldham, or Robert Wyatt - is simply arresting.

The themes and patterns that emerge in *Moonshine Freeze* encompass folklore and oracles, memory, language, secrets, superstition, lives out of sync, and “the strange accidental fortune-telling nature of the writing process”: ideas fed by the writing of Ursula Le Guin and Alan Bennett, the African folk stories collected by the ethnomusicologist Hugh Tracey, by grey coastal days and the taste of blood and copper coins.

“With a lot of these songs I can picture them all in the same environment,” says Stables, “the same colors and the same lighting. They all happen at night where there’s a small amount of light in a dark place.”

With “Hotter/Colder,” for example, she thinks “about Durdle Door at Lulworth Cove [in Dorset, England], where you swim out under this archway and it’s just insanely deep dark water teeming with seaweed, and it’s very easy to get totally freaked out by what is under the water. Those colors and that light is in throughout the album I think. Shadows in the darkness and not quite knowing what you’re looking at.”

The album’s title track, “Moonshine Freeze” comes from a clapping song taught to Stables and her daughter by a friend. “At the end it goes ‘moonshine, moonshine, moonshine - Freeze!’ and everyone has to stop moving,” she explains. “And it really pierced me somehow. I think there are certain lines and melodies and little rhythms that hook into you and send your brain in spirals.”

Somewhere between them, between the extraordinary closing piano swell of “Solid Grease” or the arresting banjo line of Empty No Teeth, and the buried rhythms of long ago, This Is The Kit create something quite mesmerizing, a sound seemingly unbound by time or place.

Kate Stables has long been an exceptional songwriter, but with *Moonshine Freeze* has comes the thrilling sensation of an artist truly finding her voice: as if these are the stories she has been waiting to tell, these the dark coves and shadowy glens she’s been longing to lead us through.