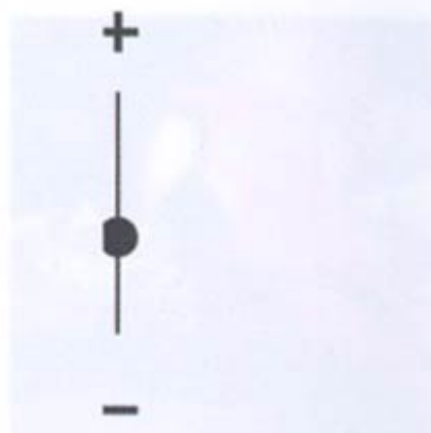


Jenny Lewis
Acid Tongue
Rough Trade



Coruscating, satirical, energetic - all terms that could be applied to Rilo Kiley's early work. Jenny Lewis's sophomore solo effort is sadly a different beast. Stripped of the alt country venom, excitement and indie sensibility of Kiley's pre *Blacklight* productions, her voice loses its trademark sting and drifts purposelessly into Martha Wainwright territory. Songs of humourless advice on men and life trickle joylessly into the mic, too embarrassed to raise a hackle. Lewis has always had drolly bitter corners, but here her 'Acid Tongue' fails her, bringing to mind unfavourable comparisons with Fiona Apple. "I went to a cobbler to fix a hole in my shoe," runs the title track, "He took one look at my face and said I can fix that hole in you." Most questionable is 'Carpetbaggers', in which Elvis Costello struggles with a severe case of strep septum while lending vocals to a too-bland-for-this-cruel-world duet. Motown background harmonies and gritty steel strings point at the direction Lewis was aiming for - this it seems, is an effort at an unironic rock and roll album. Lewis makes explicit melodic references to classic rock on tracks like 'Godspeed' (Lennon's 'Mind Games'), and 'Next Messiah' (the Doors 'Roadhouse Blues'). Sadly the result is second rate nightclub chanteuse rather than classic vinyl. If this is maturity, hurray for the terrible teens. **Gareth Stack**