

Lost In Transition, by Sixpence None the Richer

reviewed by [Louis R. Carlozo](#) in the [November 28, 2012](#) issue

In Review



Lost In Transition

by Sixpence None the Richer

Self-released

It's been 14 years since Sixpence None the Richer released the single "Kiss Me." That irresistible pop song dominated the radio, peaked at number two on *Billboard's* Hot 100, anchored the movie *She's All That* and provided a backdrop for the

wedding of Britain's Prince Edward. Little did many listeners know that the song came from a group named for a C. S. Lewis analogy concerning God-bestowed gifts.

Now Sixpence has a new album—its first in ten years. The layoff was tumultuous, marked by turmoil both professional and personal. But the band hasn't picked up where it left so much as leapfrogged. Matt Slocum still embroiders joyful, ringing guitar sounds, and Leigh Nash still sings with diaphanous sparkle. Yet the album takes a brisk clip—ten of the 12 songs clock in at less than four minutes each—and producer Jim Scott (Wilco, Crowded House) delivers a full, vibrant sound that's short on frills and high on octane. Literally, in some cases—"My Dear Machine" salutes a rusted-out car; the song is spiked with sassy horns in counterpoint to its full-gallop beat:

The album soars with its spot-on songwriting and creative assertiveness. Tender moments never go mushy, and strong ones never turn into overkill. "Don't Blame Yourself" may rank as the most upbeat slice of pop sustenance that Sixpence has ever offered, providing a chiming response to the lament that precedes it, "Failure." With a snare drum that sounds smothered in sackcloth, the song paces menacingly while the lyrics roll in the ashes of defeat. "I fail to make it," Nash intones over and over, until the music abandons her, leaving only her voice—stripped bare.

Like many albums from bands with just one singer, *Transition* begs for more moments of vocal surprise. Yet if Nash and Slocum lean toward minimalism, it's generally the right call. The album's refreshing lack of gloss gives it a crisp quality: the piano, guitar arpeggios and vocal melodies pulse with warmth and life, without any goop getting in the way.

And it's no exaggeration to say this album holds and grabs the listener from start to finish, without any letup or emotional letdown—right down to the final, breathless syllable of "Be OK," a song of domestic discord. Nash repeats the word *OK*, sounding anything but. Her last gasp yields a shivery moment of contradiction that slaps the listener back to reality as the disc ends. Once lost in transition, Sixpence has found itself. Here's hoping a new generation of listeners find delight in the results.