



Heart's Desire
2002

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Dublin singer Naimh Parsons may not yet have the name-recognition of, say, Mary Black -- or the stardom of Enya -- but on her latest release, *Heart's Desire*, Parsons once again demonstrates that she's nevertheless in the front rank of contemporary Irish divas.

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Heart's Desire is Parson's third solo set and, like her previous efforts (1999's *Blackbirds and Thrushes* and 2000's *In My Prime*), she sets her lovely voice against minimal acoustic accompaniment (mostly from longtime collaborator Graham Dunne's nylon-string guitar) on a collection of traditional ballads and relatively new pieces from contemporary songwriters. Trad classics such as "My Langan Love" and "The Rigs of Rye" lead into songs written by the likes of Andy M. Irvine and Mark Knopfler; while Parsons again demonstrates her keen ear for reviving lesser-known pieces and making them her own. Her voice may not be the strongest, but there's a clarity to her phrasing -- especially when she takes on the difficult *sean nos* style -- that's absolutely arresting, and both "Brokenhearted I'll Wander" and "Tide Full In" receive gorgeous makeovers here.

While individual songs sparkle, the overall tone of the album is quiet and reflective, with a melancholy suite of songs about the Napoleonic wars running through it like a sly, timely meditation on the futility of war. Parsons' down-to-earth demeanor, gentle delivery, and precise phrasing all conspire to deliver a sublime, if subdued, set.

Tom Pryor
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