

Niamh Parsons

The Old Simplicity

[Green Linnet]

The new album by Niamh Parsons might just be her best one yet. That warm, earthy voice is sounding as gorgeous as ever, but it's the material she's chosen that really stands to her this time round. There are no less than three songs here by Scottish-Australian songwriter Alastair Hulett: 'Blue Murder' and 'He Fades Away', both of which concern the tragedy of asbestos miners, and 'No Half Measures', a song about the pain of being a drinking man's wife. All three manage to convey a devastating message in a beautifully understated way, and much the same could be said of two heart-rending songs inspired by the First World War – 'John Condon', by Derry-based composers Sam Starrett, Richard Laird and Tracey McRory, and David Olney's '1917'. Guitarist Graham Dunne does a lovely job of backing the songs, and also contributes two fine instrumentals.

Nine/Ten

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