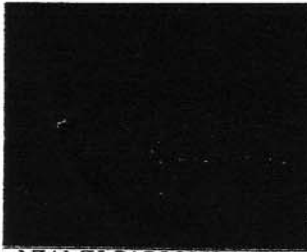


The Irish Herald



NIAMH PARSONS WITH
GRAHAM DUNNE
Heart's Desire
Green Linnet GLCD 1219

Many singers have followed a similar path to what Parsons does here, singing a mix of contemporary and traditional songs with simple or no accompaniment.

What makes this CD special is Parson's voice, thick and powerful but lovely, the antithesis of the fragile soprano that's the usual benchmark for female traditional singers. The opening, a capella "*My Lagan Love*," sets the tone.

I had to take a second look at the sleeve notes to realize that only half the songs are traditional, since she makes the contemporary ones sound as if they've been around for centuries, and the traditional ones sound tailor-made for a modern audience.

Other singers trying this often sound like they're doing a tribute to an outdated style, but whether on a jaunty traditional number like "*A Kiss in the Morning Early*," a song about a young girl's love for the local cobbler, or contemporary songs like the anti-war "*Bramble thorn*," and one each by Mark Knopfler, Andy Irvine, and Bill Caddick, Parsons makes every song sound timeless.

Aside from his subtle guitar playing on both steel and nylon strings, Dunne also plays a couple of solo jigs and reels as interludes, which break things up nicely.

— Dave Soyars

JUNE 2002