



## **IN MY PRIME**

**Niamh Parsons**

**Green Linnet GLCD 1203**

**12 Tracks 54 minutes 49 seconds.**

From the cover of this album one might suspect that Green Linnet are planning a box set of Niamh Parsons albums. The muted green and beige colours and matt finish is carried over from last year's CD (Blackbirds and Thrushes) which featured a 50's retro dust jacket liner. So how do the contents square up to what was one of the most refreshing vocal albums of the year?

The opening track is a gentle version of Bonny Woodhall made famous by Andy Irvine a quarter of a century ago. Niamh takes this song to heart and makes it her own; in an easy, effortless, emotional, sympathetic and totally convincing way the song has become her. She's also found her best foil to date in

Graham Dunne whose guitar never detracts or intrudes but always enhances with something solid. Other musicians include Siobhann Peoples, Mark Kinsella, Paul Kelly, Alan Whelan, Josephine Marsh, Seamus Brett and Steve Dunford and Anne Parsons-Dunne, class line-up, class product.

The constant stamp of a Niamh Parsons album is that songs take precedence over the instruments and this tradition is once again faithfully respected. Again full credit is given to the suppliers and carriers of the songs, this is music that comes from and belongs to a tradition, even if the songwriters are known and although she has a unique and commanding voice, she is never one to misappropriate material or snub the generosity of the givers.

The range of songs is much less challenging than on the last outing, nothing as 'big' as the Flower of Finae for instance. About a quarter of the track time is devoted to modern chestnuts, Annan Waters, Black is the Colour, Two Sisters, Lakes of Coolfin, Bold Doherty, Páistín Fionn. A track list like that, will only invite comparisons, here the quality comes in the interpretations and arrangements, none better than Mark Kinsella's inspired harmonica backing on The Orphan's Wedding, a modern song from Andy

M Stewart.

Finally the last track, So Here's to You, a reworking of the Parting Glass theme will surely become a staple of singers clubs up and down the country. And so the tradition continues to circle.

Sean Laffey