

Patsy Matheson - A Little Piece Of England (Witch Records)



It's barely a year since that fab female quartet Waking The Witch "quit while they were ahead", yet founder member Patsy wasted no time in returning to the studio to record a batch of fine new songs for her first solo release since 1997.

A Little Piece Of England is an admirably assured offering that both consolidates Patsy's proven songwriting talent and takes her into an arguably more considered musical direction - albeit still rooted in the contemporary-acoustic-with-folk-sensibilities mode.

Although the "little piece of England" of the title occurs in a literal sense through Patsy's referencing of specific locations for three of the songs, Englishness is probably more of an undercurrent, in the sense that the imagery used, together with the often quite wistful tone and acute sense of place, are elements that seem quintessentially English in songwriting terms.

Patsy cements our involvement with her songs through her ability to recount - with an enviable economy of expression - experiences and feelings common to all of us, which may have formed the basis of countless songs over time, but which are rarely voiced with such percipient sensitivity and simple, painful (yet in some ways also almost detached) honesty as here.

The consciously stripped-down musical settings reflect the intimacy of the lyrics too: Patsy's solo (mostly acoustic, sometimes electric) guitar is sparingly and tellingly augmented by that of her producer Sam Bartholomew, with only a very occasional accordion or percussion part to mildly thicken the texture. All of which produces a gently intricate sound-world which is (perhaps surprisingly) very direct in its impact.

Sadly I've no space to highlight individual songs, but trust me, there are very many incidental delights herein. But there's just space to praise the clear-toned recording, and the artful (in both senses!) presentation of the whole package, with its provision of lyrics and credits and graphics that fully complement the music within.

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