

SOUND SOUNDBYTES

By Greg Helms & Kris Neises

Niamh Parsons By Kris Neises

American culture gets buried underneath so many talent-less pop stars that we sometimes forget that somewhere, somebody can really sing without the studio tricks and effects, can sing from the heart with raw, immeasurable richness, full-bodied passion, and pinpoint precision. That somebody is Niamh (pronounced Neeve) Parsons, Ireland's beloved traditional vocalist.

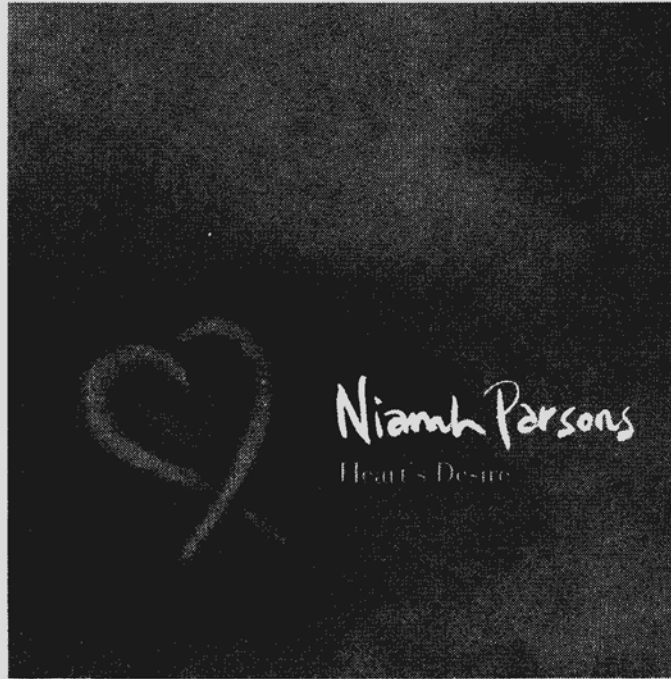
"I think I was like eight or nine when I really fell in love with Irish music," Parsons said. "It was because of singers like Andy Irvine and the band Planxty who really inspired me."

Parsons, born and raised in Dublin, has become the most distinctive voice in Irish music today. Her voice comes out of the speaker like smoke surrounding the ear with warmth and honesty to invigorate and uplift, as well as to entertain.

Her newest CD, *Heart's Desire*, was named Celtic Album of the Year by the Association for Independent Music. While it is considered traditional, Parsons' voice is unique.

"The songs are traditional in that they were written in an old-fashioned way," Parsons said. "The songs on the album I really tried to make my own. It's like they chose me to sing them."

Her album could easily be a hit in the U.S. (if we valued singing talent here) because of its sturdy, lyrical ladder, her accompaniment of



nylon acoustic guitar and mandolin, and a voice that, if Americanized, could make Tori Amos and Norah Jones a little jealous.

The album begins with an *a cappella* song called "My Lagan Love," which sets the mood for the rest of the beauty the listener is about to endure by allowing Parsons to entice the listener to explore the highs and lows of her voice.

On "West Coast of Clare," she sings poetically, "My mind was running back to the West Coast of Clare/ Thinking of you and the times

we had there," in a somber tone of yearning to see a lost love or friend.

The tradition sets in on "Jenny Picking Cockles/Colliers," an Irish instrumental complete with a fiddle, mandolin, and steel guitar. This track gives Graham Dunne, Parsons' equally famous guitar player, a chance to shine.

Heart's Desire, available on Green Linnet records, is particularly special to Parsons because she has dedicated it to the person who taught her how to sing and inspired her love for music — her late father, Jack Parsons.

"Dad had a beautiful voice and a great ear for a good song," she said. "I really tried to earn his respect, which I think I did."

This album is her fifth solo release and, thus far, the most successful. It has quickly gained a worldwide audience that gets larger by the day and is allowing a new audience to discover Irish music.

"I've travelled to Japan, Hong Kong, Australia, most all of Europe, and the States. The Americans make me feel very welcome," said Parsons.

Dayton is lucky to have this world-renowned artist as part of its CityFolk Series, which begins this week.

Parsons promises a performance to remember. "My performance is one guitar and one voice, good songs, and a gentle calming night (so I'm told)," she said.

So, whether you're a veteran Celtic music fan or just a fan of great vocal performances, don't miss Parsons.

Niamh Parsons will be performing at the Victoria Theater, located at 138 N. Main St. in Centerville, on Saturday, Sept. 18. The show begins at 8 pm and ticket prices range from \$23 to \$27. For more information about the performance, call (937) 228-7591. For more information on Parsons, including how to get her CDs, go to www.niamhparsons.com or www.greenlinnet.com. For more information on the CityFolk series, go to www.cityfolk.org.

Chris Dunnett By Greg Helms

Cincinnati guitarist Chris Dunnett, pronounced *da-nay*, will perform at the Dublin Pub in the Oregon District on Thursday, September 23; returning to that establishment every other Thursday thereafter. Dunnett is a self-described world fusion musician who weaves flamenco, neo-classical, gypsy, Middle Eastern, Latin American, Celtic, and New Age styles into a seamless amalgam.