

Patty Griffin's music is renowned for reaching inside you and grabbing you by the heart—or at the very least, gently uncovering a depth of feeling you didn't know existed. In one sustained and haunting note, she once brought the audience at Stubbs' Amphitheater in Austin, Texas to a Cathedral-like silence.

With her stunningly beautiful voice and a few lilting guitar chords, Patty has delivered heartrending stories of old age remorse, farewells to the dead, and wistful reflections on the uncertainties of life. On *Impossible Dream*, she quietly opens her heart and lays bare more of herself than ever before.

The CD begins with the energizing, gospel-like *Love Throws a Line*, seemingly to empower us with the realization that, no matter what dark and distressing emotions we're in for next, things are going to be okay. Then she lets us have it. First with *Cold as it Gets*, a dark reckoning song with a final line that punches: "I live only to see you live to regret everything that you've done." Then *Kite Song* offers a sad reminiscence of childhood dreams, accompanied by an old and slightly out-of-tune piano that sounds like the one you used to plink around on at Grandma's house. The two songs to brace yourself for, if there's a love in your life that you've been forced to let go of, are *Useless Desires*—a song so image-rich that you feel like you're walking along with Patty as she sings—and *When It Don't Come Easy*. But the first of the two offers a certain hopeful resignation in the last chorus, as Patty belts it out over and over, and the latter puts a comforting arm around you, assuring you that love remains constant no matter how much life disappoints or changes. In *Florida*, Patty gives us a glimpse of her past, then lets us in on a little secret—sometimes even the life of a famous singer/songwriter can be lonely and desolate. *Mother of God* is perhaps the most stirring song on the CD in which a portrait of the Virgin Mary is a child's oasis of comfort in a troubled household. It's sung almost in a pleading and prayerful child's voice, trying to make herself believe in a happy ending during the song's dreamy fadeout.

Patty has consistently outdone herself on every recording, and *Impossible Dream* is no exception. This time around, she even experiments with some new musical styles that include gospel harmonies, a Burt Bacharach-like hornline, and—of all things—a tuba.

Aside from writing songs that make the crustiest of grown men weep, Patty Griffin can also catch fire and belt out driving, passionate songs that fall into the fringes of rock, blues and soul. Her songs have been covered more than once by the Dixie Chicks, and she is held in highest esteem by other Austin musicians. If you've never heard of Patty Griffin before, now would be an excellent time to get to know her.