

Katie Melua - In Winter (2016)

Written by bluesever

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01. The Little Swallow (01:46) 02. River (03:26) 03. Perfect World (04:24) 04. Cradle Song (01:44) 05. A Time To Buy (03:31) 06. Plane Song (04:08) 07. If You Are So Beautiful (03:43) 08. Dreams On Fire (04:06) 09. All-Night Vigil - Nunc Dimittis (04:15) 10. O Holy Night (04:24)

As soon as I switched on Katie Melua's new album *In Winter* I realised that she had decided to take her music into a new dimension. I know this because as with her previous work, it wasn't just her voice humming through my speakers. There was something else present on the tracks, something harmonious and soothing, almost angelic. The sound is that of the Gori Womens Choir, a 24 piece assembly of masters of the Georgian style of polyphonic singing.

Katie is an artist whose strength lies heavily in her solitude, her moody and emotive style made even more so the lack of any other sounds. This element of her work may lead fans to question the addition of such a large group of female vocals. Will it overpower the music and weaken her individual style? After listening to the album in its entirety I can confirm wholeheartedly that Katie Melua and the Gori Womens Choir is a match made in musical heaven.

Katie is no stranger to success when it comes to her music. At the tender age of 19, she released her debut album *Call of the Search*. With its mesmerising blend of velvety vocals and haunting lyrics, it's no surprise that the recording reached the top of the UK Charts and sold 1.8million copies in its first five months. I'd suggest that Melua's new work is more quietly confident than this, but still pleasing nonetheless.

The 10 track album is appropriately titled *In Winter*, with songs and carols centred on themes of Christmas and the winter season.

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'The Little Swallow' is the first song on the album, and rightly so. Sung in Ukrainian, this mesmerising work showcases the dreamy union of Melua and the Gori Women's Choir in all its glory. What's so impressive is how delicate the vocals are, yet just how deeply the sounds can be felt.

The emotion is palatable throughout the album, and perhaps this is because, as ever, Melua sings from personal experience. The work is a reflection of her dual heritage. She was born in Georgia and moved to Belfast at the age of five. She has spoke of how tracks on the album remind her of elements of her childhood, such as stories her Grandad would tell her about escaping from a Siberian labour camp.

Melua's cover of Joni Mitchell's River is a standout track, presenting an emotional longing that is reminiscent of her earlier works like Blame it on the Moon. Her acoustic guitar was used as a backdrop for this track, which makes the perfect setting for the array of beautiful voices.

The album builds beautifully, with the interjection of Romanian carol Cradle Song heightening the festive feel of the album. This song is particularly poignant and the variation of voices that echo in and out of the track makes for a moving piece that conjures up joyous imagery.

What has been produced with In Winter is a beautiful, moving piece of work that is simultaneously powerful and gentle. However, it may not appeal to the masses as a Christmas album, as the subject matter is at times sad and lacks that upbeat feeling that many look for when hunting out a festive playlist. Melia has however proved her ability once again both vocally and lyrically and the addition of The Gori Womens Choir is a pleasant one that fits in perfectly with the overall feel of the record. --- millysmith,
stylebham.com/music/review-katie-melua-winter

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