

Album reviews

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CD OF THE WEEK

STEVEN LINDSAY

Exit Music

Seminal Records sem001, 13.99

Since the demise of The Big Dish well over a decade ago, Steven Lindsay all but slipped off the musical radar, save for a guest vocal on his old bandmate Craig Armstrong's album *As If To Nothing*. After dabbling in artist management and an uncomfortable involvement in the Nashville songwriting scene, he has finally returned to the studio to make a record so beautiful and melancholic that it could stop the traffic.

Exit Music is emotionally charged from the off, and it is abundantly clear all these songs are deeply personal, yet masterfully toe the right side of the sentimental line. Lindsay's lyrics are concise and direct - "You're the candle by the bed/You're the book I never read" being the album's first couplet on 'Breakdown', and his distinctive vocal sounds as pure and driven as ever. 'Goodnight' has the brevity of any lullaby worth its salt, blessed with a bittersweet edge powerful enough to make any parent cry. Musically, he favours the uncomplicated, predominantly piano-led with tasteful string arrangements, including two provided by Armstrong by way of returning favours. Interesting use of sampled sitars on 'Butterfly' and guitar undercurrents, particularly on the very stealthy 'Submarine', provide measured contrast on a record that is clever without being contrived. Chris Martin must dream of being able to make an album this good, and Glasgow independent label Seminal Records may prove to be very aptly named.