



Hot Press

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JULIE FEENEY CRAWDADDY, DUBLIN

On stage, Julie Feeney is animated, highly emotive and, let's be clear about this, a little bit nuts. But she's also a thrill to watch.

The winner of the inaugural Choice Music Prize, Feeney is writer, composer, orchestrator, conductor and producer of her long-awaited new album *pages* – in fact, you wouldn't be too surprised if she'd sewn the

sleeve booklets by hand as well.

To the delight of her fans, all 12 songs (if you can call them songs – they feel more like a string of spirited interludes) from *pages* get an outing tonight, as well as eight from her aforementioned Choice Music Prize winning debut, 13 songs.

Like many great female composers, from Nina Simone to Regina Spektor, Feeney eschews the conventional Song-Banter-Song format in favour of something more interesting. This, we are made to understand, is a performance, not a gig: with 'Valentine's Song' we're transported to a hepcat cafe in 1960s Paris; 'Myth' plays out in a whirl of gossip, whispers and full blown cackling; and the whimsically bitter 'Mr. Roving Eye Guy' prompts more than a few chuckles with its cheeky premise.

We're even treated to a dramatic reading of 'The

Tale Of Albert Bottom', the genius accompaniment to which adds up to one of the highlights of the night.

Supported by a masterful eight-piece orchestra, Feeney's vocal chords are limber and haunting. Even the eccentric 'mmm hms' and 'woo woos' sound superb – when they could so easily have gotten on your nerves.

With kinky melodies and astute lyrics, some songs (in particular the sublime 'Love Is A Tricky Thing') could be straight out of Regina's *Soviet Kitsch*, but there's enough originality elsewhere to stop Feeney ever becoming a carbon copy. In fact, it's quite the opposite. There's no one like Julie Feeney, in this room, or in any part of the country for that matter – just five sensational minutes in her company are worth the price of admission alone.

CELINA MURPHY