

The Guardian

[Review](#)

Christy Moore: A Terrible Beauty review – stirring tales of the polemical and the personal

(Claddagh)

The Irish national treasure ranges from humour to rage, Ukraine and Lyra McKee and on his 25th studio album

[Neil Spencer](#)

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The title, borrowed from WB Yeats's poem [Easter 1916](#), and the cover, a landscape with an ominous fiery glow in the distance, suggest a confrontational, political . There is indeed some score settling on the 25th studio album from a singer who, at 79, remains one of Ireland's national treasures, but Christy Moore has ever been a nuanced artist, offering the full emotional gamut in the songs he writes and curates. Humour, rage, empathy, sorrow and joy roll seamlessly into each other, united by Moore's uncanny narrative skills.

Take the lead single, Black & Amber, written by [A Lazarus Soul](#)'s Briany Brannigan, a tale of alcoholism and domestic abuse that requires only Moore's lilting vocals (with son Andy) to animate it. Most often there is instrumental support from Moore's guitar and from piano, accordion and bodhrán, but song is always primary. Honour is paid to Ukraine on Mike Harding's Sunflowers, to murdered journalist [Lyra McKee](#) and to Palestine. On Cumann na Mná, a hapless Sky Sports anchor objects to Gaelic chanting at a women's football match, eliciting a stinging tirade on the sins of empire. Its opposite is Moore's gentle tribute to Cork's annual big marquee with its "reels in Ringaskiddy, the jigs in Haulbowline".

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