
Thao

When Thao Nguyen sings, she chops each husky syllable into a short story that starts with surprise and ends with disappointment. But any apparent similarity to Cat Power doesn't extend much further than a shared knack for channeling blues and country's melancholy through indie songwriting.

Where Chan Marshall wallows, Thao relies on self-deprecating humour, delivering pithy couplets such as Bag Of Hammers' admission 'As sharp as I sting/as sharp as I sing/it still soothes you doesn't it, like a lick of ice cream'.

The daughter of Vietnamese migrants, Thao grew up in suburban Virginia, writing songs while working in her mother's launderette and recording her 2005

debut album, *Like The Linen*, while still a college student. Released in January, *We Brave Bee Stings And All* has a similar sense of teetering on the edge of the parental nest, coating childhood joys and fears in a fragile shell of cynicism.

Her lyrics are emotionally direct yet sparse: the song *Swimming Pools* may have been inspired by a wet T-shirt contest, but it's unclear whether the narrator who says 'we splash our eyes full of chemicals/just so there's none left for little girls' is a jock or a protective older sister. Yet its message of feminist defiance shines



through, propelled by Thao's lively banjo and her three-man band, *The Get Down Stay Down*, who twang and strum with gusto. *Abi Bliss Tonight, Nice'n' Sleazy*, 421 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, 8pm, £7. Tel: 0870 010 0600. www.thaomusic.com