

By **Stephanie King**

Opening with a solo piano that seesaws gently between chords, there is something deliciously schizophrenic about Joanna Newsom's [Good Intentions Paving Co](#) .

On the one hand, Joanna Newsom's voice is at its most accessible and earthy, like a warm, generous hug. The song has the kind of relaxed, voluptuous, Sunday morning back-to-bed vibe that could resurrect an ailing marriage. But although structured around a simple melody that builds and pushes towards a climactic chorus, it persists on curling back on itself. Beneath its cosy country sound simmers a restless, excitable energy - the barely contained bursts of neuroses inspired by infatuation.

These shifts in mood recall the quietly gutsy [Laura Nyro](#) ; the heart-rending tug that [Carole King's](#) best can inspire, tempered by [Rickie Lee Jones](#) at her sunniest.

Good Intentions Paving Co's instrumentation shifts from hearty pianos to rumbling percussion, fat, breathy brass and cheerful banjos, while Newsom's mercurial warble switches from grating to hissing to bewitching. This is a love song on the joyful verge of a nervous breakdown.

When halfway through Newsom and the song retreat, exhausted and riddled with self-doubt, they drift into a piano-backed lilt that is part-lullaby, part-prayer, cuddled by sympathetic brass accompaniment. Stripped of a driving beat, fragile and vulnerable, when Newsom coos *Lord you know it's a shame when I only want for you to pull over and hold me, 'til I can't remember my own name,* you'd have to be dead to your core not to melt a little.

Joanna Newsom seduces the listener with her repeated melodies until you are *in love with the hook on which everything hangs*

. Playing with the basic structure, the song is a bumpy journey on a road

laid down by the good intentions paving company

. This is a song about being derailed by love, a song that cruises for the first third, speeds into the middle with breathless momentum, before pulling back and surrendering. The last minute grooves out with a drowsy trumpet, skipping piano, and a friendly goodbye wave, returning to the same upbeat melody with a petrol tank filled with more quivering apprehension.

One of the freshest, most uplifting and romantic songs I've heard in ages. Yum.