

Rebecca Ferguson
Lady Sings the Blues

RCA

★★★★☆



The 2010 X Factor runner-up's previous albums had a satin-smothered ambience that might be best suited to a yoghurt advert. Nevertheless, Rebecca Ferguson has a melancholic timbre that distinguishes her solo material from that of most other generic reality-TV balladeers. It's less of an insult to Billie Holiday's legacy than you might think, then, that Ferguson has decided to interpret a number of songs from the jazz legend's seventh studio LP, *Lady Sings the Blues*, plus an additional handful of big-band covers. Her husky, resilient vocals ease effortlessly into these classic tracks, but without the subtext of Holiday's tragic backstory they are little more than languorous, luxurious exercises in easy listening. (Mercifully, though, there is no attempt at a coffee-table cover of *Strange Fruit*.) Like Lady Gaga's pairing with Tony Bennett or Robbie Williams' recent career, *Lady Sings the Blues* is a regal step into retro, and a guaranteed dinner-party pleaser. Müller, take note. **Harriet Gibsone**

