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**Michael P. Gladstone, Arts Reviewer**

### **JAYWALKIN'**

From the first note of this debut album, one can't help but be smitten with the charm and delivery of this San Francisco-based singer. I would expect that such an effort would be worthy of a jazz chanteuse on the order of Susannah McCorkle or another San Fran singer, Weslia Whitfield. The album was produced by guitarist Peter Sprague, a personal favorite during the late '70s and '80s. I wasn't surprised to find seven Sprague albums in my collection on Xanadu, Concord and Nova. Jennifer Lee is a late-in-life jazz singer who has studied with Kitty Margolis. She is also the house vocalist at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in San Francisco. As a pianist-vocalist, Lee has put together a good mix of standards, some originals and two Brazilian tunes. What is striking is the warmth and clarity of her voice, reminiscent of the June Christy-Chris Connor school of jazz vocals. On three of the tunes - the title tune penned by Sprague, "Baltimore Oriole," and "November in the Snow" from Bill Mays/Mark Murphy - she scats in perfect unison with the accordion of Rich Kuhns and the tenor sax of Tripp Sprague. The result is a delightful musical experience. "Note to my Niece," a Lee original, is a latter day "Waltz For Debby." The Brazilian entries, "Chega de Saudade" and the lesser known "Rosa," coupled with Debussy's "Claire de Lune," are both sung effectively in Portuguese. Frank Loesser's "Inchworm," not heard too frequently these days, is given an interesting reading replete with a spoken word "rap." The session closes with an original instrumental, "Cathy's Song," written for an ailing friend. The remainder of the album, "Blue Skies," "Night and Day," "I'm Old Fashioned" and "Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone," could have been given a tired presentation inasmuch as they've been heard so

# jennifer lee

vocalist • pianist • guitarist

often, but Jennifer Lee gives these songs a respectively bright or reflective treatment. All of the musicians chosen for this date play an important part ranging from Sprague and Magnusson's support to the fine tenor sax work of brother Tripp Sprague, subtle percussion from Lewis and Aros, and atmospheric accordion work from Kuhns. I don't know when Ms. Lee will be appearing in the NYC area next, but I do hope that I can be there too.

**Michael P. Gladstone**