

L.A. JAZZ SCENE

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Scott Yanow, Arts Reviewer

JAYWALKIN'

A warm yet cool-toned and subtle singer based in San Francisco, Jennifer Lee makes her debut as a leader with J-Walkin'. Her versions of standards are often unusual and full of surprises; Lee and guitarist Peter Sprague are responsible for the arrangements. On "Blue Skies" she sings way behind the beat. "Night and Day" is given a light Latin rhythm, "I'm Old Fashioned" is taken quite slowly and on "Inchworm", she adds an oddly charming talking section in which she philosophizes a bit. The other standards include a very effective "Baltimore Oriole" (which features tenor-saxophonist Tripp Sprague), "Chega De Saudade" and a lighthearted and swinging "Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone". There are also a few originals ("Note to My Niece" is touching), a wordless vocal on Debussy's "Claire de Lune" and a closing unaccompanied piano solo by Lee that is a tribute to a friend. In addition to the brothers Sprague, Lee is supported by bassist Bob Magnusson, drummer Jason Lewis, percussionist Tommy Aros and occasionally Rich Kuhns on accordion. Throughout the set, it is obvious that a lot of care went into the music and that each song means something to Jennifer Lee. Listeners who enjoy jazz-inspired vocalists who are superior interpreters of lyrics will find that J-Walkin' means something to them too. This set is recommended and available from www.jennifer-lee.net.

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