

## NEW YORK JAZZ GUIDE



Kate McGarry

**THE TARGET** — Palmetto Records PM 2125.  
Web: www.palmetto-records.com.

443 Greenwich Street #6D, New York, NY 10013  
*The Meaning of the Blues; No Wonder; It Might As Well Be Spring; Nobody Else But Me; Blue In Green; The Target (Miracles Like These); The Heater on the Hill; Sister Moon; The Lamp Is Low; Do Something; She Always Will; New Love Song*

**PERSONNEL:** Kate McGarry, voice; Keith Ganz, guitars; Gary Versace, organ, piano & accordion; Reuben Rogers, bass; Greg Hutchinson, drums; Donny McCaslin, tenor sax; Theo Bleckmann, voice loops & effects.

By Curtis Davenport

*The Target* is delightful; simply delightful.

Usually, I try to save my accolades in a review until at least the end of the first paragraph. But sometimes you've just got to get straight to the point. This disc from the Hyannis, Massachusetts native, with the Sheryl Crow looks and a voice like

Joni Mitchell in the seventies, left me with a peaceful smile on my face, the likes of which I hadn't had since...well; let's just say in quite a while. I had never heard of Ms. McGarry before this disc, her fourth, but I now intend to make up for lost time.

One of ten children, from a musical family, Kate grew up listening to musical influences as diverse as Al Jarreau, The Beatles, Catholic folk masses, the Mills Brothers and Earth, Wind and Fire. She began developing her vocal style, while training with the legendary saxman Archie Shepp. She has also worked with the Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra and pianist Fred Hersch. She spent some time in the mid nineties studying music in a meditation ashram, where she also taught harmonium and voice.

McGarry, who was the first, and only, jazz vocalist signed to Palmetto Records, is from what I call the coffeehouse school of jazz singing; birthed out of Ms. Mitchell and made so popular in recent years by Norah Jones and others. These singers favor a spare, often acoustic, instrumentation and are as likely to draw on Bob Dylan and Sting as they are Tin Pan Alley classics for inspiration. To the guitar, bass, drums and sax usually found in this kind of setting, Ms. McGarry adds a special twist, an organist, who adds a little bit of soul overlay to the folk-jazz proceedings. Her cohorts on this outing are top drawer New York session men: guitarist, Keith Ganz, a solid acoustic and electric player, who also is McGarry's husband; Reuben Rogers is the bassist and he has been a busy man of late, playing with Josh Redman, Dianne Reeves and Nicholas Payton, among others. Drummer Gregory Hutchinson, is a frequent musical partner of Rogers, as well as many of the greatest names in jazz for almost twenty years. Gary Versace is the organist (as well as the pianist and accordionist), who is making a name for himself these days for his work with up and coming guitarist Sheryl Bailey and Donny McCaslin who, as I have mentioned in previous reviews, is one of the most underrated tenor players in jazz today, adds his electrifying touch to three selections.

What first caught my attention about McGarry's voice is its unpretentiousness and clarity. She sings with a relaxed confidence, regardless of the musical setting. Among the many highlights of *The Target* are "It Might As Well Be Spring," which captivated me, with a gentle arrangement, underpinned by Ganz's acoustic guitar and Versace's spare piano. McGarry's sung and spoken vocals really allowed me to truly hear Oscar Hammerstein's lyric for the first time. Another Hammerstein lyric, "Nobody Else But Me," is also given a terrific reading. The interplay between Ganz' guitar and his wife's cool, scat infused wordplay, reminded me of the best work of another husband and wife guitarist and vocalist team, Tuck and Patti. McGarry's Joni Mitchell influence is most obvious on the haunting title track, which is the best of McGarry's compositions on the disc. McCaslin adds a nice counterpoint on tenor. McCaslin's work is also a highlight of "The Lamp is Low," along with nice electric guitar work from Ganz and Versace's organ. Versace's organ work is a true revelation throughout the disc. He is consistently adding a little something extra that helps to take the project to a higher level. My favorite track on the disc is an old warhorse, the wonderful "Do Something," which features Versace, Ganz and Hutchinson in a classic, swinging organ trio setting, chasing McGarry's inviting, Betty Carter-ish vocal.

As much as I love, the classic styled jazz vocalists (Sarah, Ella, Carmen, et al), I'm also enjoying the young singers coming along now, who are taking the lessons they learned from the greats and filtering the straight-ahead through some of their personal influences. When these experiments work, you get something as sublime as *The Target*. To reiterate the first sentence of this review, Kate McGarry's *The Target* is a winner that I highly recommend and Ms. McGarry herself is a refreshing and bright talent that I look forward to hearing more from in the years to come.