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KATE MCGARRY

The Target (Palmetto)



Among the emerging coterie of ice-cool vocalists, New Yorker Kate McGarry rivals Chicago's Patricia Barber in her ability to pack stylistic minimalism with maximum wallop. Consider, for instance, the opening track of this, her third disc—an almost hymnlike treatment of Bobby Troup's "The Meaning of the Blues" that, in its anguished simplicity, superbly plumbs the lyric's depths. Similarly, the wishful dreaminess of "It Might as Well Be Spring" is gorgeously evoked with whispered sanguinity, and the ebullient bounce of "Nobody Else But Me" is heightened by McGarry's cleverly gentle approach. The cleverness continues as she dots her journey through Miles Davis' "Blue in Green" with hidden curves and cautionary yield signs, enriches Lerner and Loewe's "The Heather on the Hill" with a quiet mistiness that quivers with romantic anticipation, and transforms Sting's "Sister Moon" into a sultry slice of film noir sleuthing worthy of Elvis Costello's "Watching the Detectives." Nor are the original tracks any less enticing as she follows the angular liquidity of "She Always Will" to shruggingly accept destiny's flow, contemplates brighter days on the cautiously optimistic title track and, to finish, breathlessly evokes the fresh promise of spring buds on guitarist Keith Ganz's "New Love Song."