

Judy Wexler
Easy on the Heart
 Rhombus
 (March 2005)



Review by Alex Henderson

In the jazz world, there is a joke that goes like this: how many vocalists does it take to sing "My Funny Valentine"? All of them. That joke is a response to what can be called the "warhorse factor" — that is, improvisers who stick to the most overdone Tin Pan Alley warhorses and don't do anything unusual with them (something that instrumentalists and singers are both guilty of). It isn't that the improvisers are performing bad material; no one is saying that "My Funny Valentine" and "Our Love Is Here to Stay" aren't great songs, but they're songs that have been totally beaten to death — and the fact is that jazz artists who perform warhorses exclusively are just plain lazy.

Well, no one will accuse Judy Wexler's debut album, *Easy on the Heart*, of being plagued by the warhorse factor. The California vocalist obviously realizes that worthwhile songs don't just come from Tin Pan Alley, and she successfully brings her interpretive

powers to everything from Bob Dylan's "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right," the Beatles' "In My Life," and Henry Mancini's "Moment to Moment" to Abbey Lincoln's "I'm in Love." Wexler includes some Tin Pan Alley material as well — most notably, Jerome Kern's "Nobody Else But Me" and Irving Berlin's "I Got Lost in His Arms" — but even then, she doesn't go for the beaten-to-death warhorses. Of course, having an interesting, far-reaching repertoire wouldn't mean much if Wexler couldn't sing — and thankfully, she has a big, appealing voice and a healthy sense of swing to go with her broad-minded song selection. Hard-swinging but with a definite romantic streak, Wexler is someone admirers of Abbey Lincoln or Dianne Reeves should have no problem getting into — and she's someone who shows a lot of promise on her memorable debut album.

Title	Composer	Time
1 Moment to Moment	Mancini, Mercer	5:41
2 I'm in Love	Lincoln	4:40
3 Humdrum Blues	Brown	3:22
4 Easy on the Heart	Haden, Hamilton	5:00
5 Nobody Else But Me	Hammerstein, Kern	2:48
6 In My Life	Lennon, McCartney	4:25
7 Beautiful Love/Gorgeous Creature	D'Ambrosio, Young	4:08
8 Tell Him I Said Hello	Canning, Hegner	5:22
9 Love Is a Necessary Evil	Fisher, Segal	5:45
10 Don't Think Twice, It's All Right	Dylan	4:37
11 If You Could Love Me	Simmons	3:19
12 Down Here on the Ground	Garnett, Schiffrin	5:12
13 I Got Lost in His Arms	Berlin	4:16