



MELODY
Worrisome Heart
GARDOT

The Boston Globe

Melody Gardot delivers a debut album of quiet intensity

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Worrisome Heart (Verve)

ESSENTIAL "Worrisome Heart"

Melody Gardot is a cool-jazz, lite-pop vocalist who will easily win over fans of Norah Jones and Madeleine Peyroux. With a voice that sounds eerily like Fiona Apple's, the 22-year-old Philadelphian delivers a debut album of quiet intensity. The title track of "Worrisome Heart" is a personal ad set to a smoky, late-night jazz-club arrangement, and it is as clever as it is catchy: "I need a man who got no baggage to claim," it goes. The mood lifts with the French-café number "All That I Need Is Love" and the lilting, slightly swinging country ballad "Sweet Memory." The gorgeous voice-and-piano duet "Love Me Like a River Does" - which features an occasional muted trumpet in the background - brings the disc to an emotional climax.

The sustaining force of this stunning debut is Gardot's miraculous voice. And it is miraculous, for here's the back story: Gardot took up music as therapy. At 19, she was hit by a car while riding her bicycle. She suffered injuries to her head and pelvis, causing cognitive and physical impairments. She walks with a cane and must sit in a special chair when performing. She wears a device that monitors and alleviates muscle pain and dark glasses because bright light affects her. But it is her album, not her personal story, that could get her the best new artist Grammy next winter. [Steve Greenlee]