



DEMOLITION:

Local CD Reviews

Deborah Lombardi

On The Fringe

This is the debut full-length from Sound Beach's Deborah Lombardi, a singer-songwriter who combines her musical talents on guitar and piano with a soulfully distinct voice and a well-sharpened songwriter's pencil. She was the focus of a Long Island Spotlight cover feature in March.

On the Fringe finds Lombardi at one of life's crossroads, using her heart and her guitar as the compass to point her in the right direction. This is certainly felt on "Keep Lookin," where she sings about seeing "warning signs" on the road and thinking aloud to a lover: "I can't keep myself from feelin' ashamed, and I can't help you unless you want to change." She wanders further on down the road by tackling issues of negative body image in "Almost Beautiful," chastising a culture that demands beauty despite the fact that it's too vague to define. On "City Limits," Lombardi drives home the alt-country vibe and down-and-out relationship angst that have earned her comparisons to Lucinda Williams.



Where Williams had producers and collaborators such as Roy Bittan, Lombardi has the unimpeachable Doug Kwartler, who plays bass, drums, keyboards, and guitars on top of his producing and mixing duties. Kwartler doesn't need to steal the show – not when he has such a powerful voice in the front of his mixes.

Throughout the record, there are suggestions that Lombardi is knocking at a door of opportunity, so close to figuring out the sham and confusion of life only to open another door to find more questions and puzzles. Her yearning on the rolling, fiddle-driven "My Dog's Life" builds on these feelings of uncertainty. In a vocal style quite similar to Chrissie Hynde, she sings, "Could it be the biggest thing you fear, barking at the noise no one could hear," alluding perhaps to her own self-doubts.

However, *On the Fringe* is just a title. Lombardi's vocal style and instrumentation are anything but "fringe music," and are right up the alley for fans of everyone from The Pretenders to The Jayhawks. Despite the fact that Lombardi keeps trying to pick the magic door that is going to lead her to answers, this fantastic full-length debut proves that it's only a matter of time until she breaks on through.

For more on Deborah Lombardi, log on to her website, deborahlombardi.com, where this CD is available.

– **Bill Reese**