



Photo by Mark Billingsley

## Singer Judie Tzuke defies attempts to label her style

By Casey McCabe

For an English artist looking to make an impression on an American crowd, opening a show for Elton John is testing the waters in grand fashion.

Despite what some would view as intimidating circumstances, Judie Tzuke (pronounced "zook") is taking it all in comfortable stride. With two albums under her belt, the attractive 24 year-old Londoner has made a successful name for herself in England where her debut album went gold, while her latest effort, *Sports Car*, is nearing the same status.

The notion that her music may fall unfamiliar to most of the American ears on this, her first U.S. tour, doesn't worry Tzuke, and her relaxed stage presence along with that of her six-piece band reveals growing confidence in the material that has got them here.

"We've done very good in England, but while I want to make it in America, I don't think it makes any difference towards our career in England," says Tzuke. "I like to do America, it's like starting over here. And I can't tell you how different the audiences are here. In England when I first started, I was playing to 500 people a night, whereas here I start out with 15,000."

### People pleasing

Tzuke speaks in a thick English accent, which disappears in her crystalline, well-controlled voice. As the composer, along with guitarist Mike Paxman, of all the material she sings, Tzuke is interested in reaching more people with her work, but not at the expense of compromising her values, and submitting to labels.

"I don't have any labels," she says. "And if anybody gives them to me, they won't stick."

"I've been compared to just about every woman singer in the world, and a few men, and as long as they don't find me as one particular woman, I'll know none of them know what they're talking about."

The words she sings read almost more poetically than they do lyrically, and indeed it was an early involvement with poetry that made Tzuke seek out musical accompaniment.

"I was in a boarding school where I didn't like many of the people and got along with only one of the teachers and no one else," Tzuke said. "So I used to write a diary. What I tried to do was write a little poem about something that had happened in the day, and it just grew into

writing more things about how I felt. I started to teach myself guitar and started putting the poems to music."

### Music of experience

At 15 she met Paxman with whom she has collaborated since. They have tried to avoid any pretensions by "always keeping the songs about things we feel, that we really know about."

Her first album, *Welcome To The Cruise*, was a surprising debut success in England, but certain circumstances that surrounded the record kept Tzuke from giving it her full enthusiastic endorsement.

"I hated the production of the first album, that's why we decided to produce this last album (*Sports Car*) ourselves," explains Tzuke. "If you listen to the first album you will know what I mean, it was totally overproduced."

"It was really difficult for me because the album had done really well in England and I had to go around the country promoting it where people kept saying to me 'I really like the album, but I think it's overproduced. What do you think?...' thinking I was going to argue."

"I had to decide whether to tell them the truth and that I agreed with them, which was then an insult to the people who were buying the album, or not say anything."

"In the end I decided to tell the truth... that it was overdone, which was difficult," says Tzuke. "I was dying to get my second album out which I could promote and actually like."

Though creative control is a highly-prized value for Tzuke, she and Paxman will be handing over production chores solely to percussionist Paul Muggleton on the upcoming album tentatively entitled *The Flesh Is Weak and the Heart Is Willing*.

"Paul is doing the third one because we found we really enjoyed doing production, it was very difficult for Mike and I to be objective about ourselves," she notes.

It is the sixth week of the tour with Elton John and, according to Tzuke, "It's getting harder because we're getting tired and I'm losing my voice slightly."

Tzuke collaborated with Elton on the writing of "Give Me The Love" off his latest album, and though part of his lavish entourage for this U.S. tour, Tzuke does not want to be cast under any shadow.

"It (the collaboration) happened on the spur of the moment and has nothing to do with my career," she says. "I have my own career and he has his, I like him and he likes me. But I'm separate. I like to think I got here on my own."

## NETV features variety this week

—NOVA which examines the alarming rate of esophageal cancer in Lin Xian, a county in the People's Republic of China, on "The Cancer Detectives of Lin Xian" tonight at 8, repeating Friday at 11 p.m. NOVA is telecast with closed captions for hearing-impaired viewers.

—Charlie Brown's creator is highlighted in "Charles Schultz... To Remember," marking the 30th anniversary of the "Peanuts" gang, on Wednesday at 8:30 p.m.

—The comedy of Monty Python's John Cleese returns with all-new episodes in the series "Faulty Towers," Thursdays at 9:30 p.m.

Viewer questions and comments about preparation for the winter heating season will be answered by a panel of energy experts on this month's "Easy on Energy" program. The live, phone-in program airs Thursday at 8:30 p.m.

Topics include the use of natural gas for heating; a weatherization assistance program for low-income families; insulation; and what furnace checks need to be made before the arrival of cold weather.

—"Gospel and Spirituals" are featured on "From Jumpstreet," shown Saturday at 6:30 p.m.

—Gene Kelly and Frank Sinatra headline the 1945 musical comedy, *Anchors Aweigh*, on the MGM Movies Saturday at 8 p.m.

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