

# FAST TRACK



EDITED BY STEPHEN J. DUBNER

## BRIEF LIVES

## A Wonderful, Painful Thing

**M**OST CABARET SINGERS can make an album in a long week. Nancy LaMott takes nine months. "I don't have children; I have records," says the affable singer, who has been known to record a single line 40 times.

LaMott's fastidiousness has landed her at the Chestnut Room at Tavern on the Green, October 19 to 24. Len Triola, who books the room, discovered the singer not through her small-club appearances but through her two albums (a third, *My Foolish Heart*, will arrive later this month). That makes her something of an anomaly in the cabaret world, where most performers' albums are but a pale reminder of the club experience.

LaMott's honeyed voice, though, sounds terrific on record. You want to curl up

on a sofa with it.

Or you may want to do something else. "I've been told that children have been conceived, and born, to my records," says LaMott. On a more somber note, she has a pile of letters telling how friends with AIDS listened to her music in their final days, for comfort.

She sings standards, mostly, in small-combo arrangements with refreshing, even daring new twists. "Surrey With the Fringe on Top," for instance, is taken at a crawl, letting listeners savor every nuance of the ride.

LaMott grew up singing in her father's dance bands in Midland, Michigan. She joined San Francisco's thriving club scene before moving to New York in 1979 on a whim, with no friends and no furniture except two lawn chairs, both borrowed.



*Singer Nancy LaMott: Cabaret is a life.*

Her lucky break came when David Friedman, a songwriter and conductor for Disney films, approached her after a show. "You should record," he said.

there.' He said, 'You have to.' "I end up crying in the corner of the recording booth more often than not. It's a wonderful, painful thing."

ROXANE ORGILL

"Okay," she replied, "if you put up the money." He did. Some days, she wishes he hadn't. "Making a record is always a miserable experience," she says, "because I have to really discover what these songs are about. The other night, we were recording 'How Deep Is the Ocean,' and I just couldn't do it. David said, 'What's the problem?' and I said, 'There's some place I have to go to, and I don't want to go