



CHESKY RECORDS

JD366

ALEXIS COLE

A **KISS** IN THE DARK

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A *KISS* IN THE DARK

All songs arranged by Alexis Cole. Published by Chesky Productions, Inc. ASCAP

1. Ain't We Got Fun 4:04
Music: Richard A. Whiting Lyrics: Gus Kahn/Raymond B. Egan
2. Whip-poor-will 4:32
Music: Jerome Kern Lyrics: Buddy DeSylva
3. Do You Ever Think of Me? 3:47
Music: Earl Burtnett Lyrics: Harry D. Kerr and John Cooper
4. Limehouse Blues 3:46
Phillip Braham
5. Chicago, that Toddlin' Town 3:16
Fred Fisher
6. Bimini Bay 5:00
Richard A. Whiting
7. Nobody Knows You when You're Down and Out 2:47
Jimmie Cox

8. After You've Gone 3:44
Music: Turner Layton Lyrics: Henry Creamer
9. There's a Broken Heart for Every Light on Broadway 4:33
Music: Fred Fischer Lyrics: Howard Johnson
10. A Kiss in the Dark 2:36
Music: Victor Herbert Lyrics: Buddy DeSylva
11. Indian Summer 4:10
Music: Victor Herbert Lyrics: Al Dubin
12. Turn Back the Universe and Give Me Yesterday 3:37
Music: Ernest R. Ball Lyrics: J. Keirn Brennan
13. Let the Rest of the World Go By 3:40
Music: Ernest R. Ball Lyrics: J. Keirn Brennan
14. Till We Meet Again 3:54
Music: Richard A. Whiting Lyrics: Raymond B. Egan



The darkly alluring, deep-toned voice that embraces these timeless melodies from the parlor song era and Tin Pan Alley days (roughly 1910 to the early 1920s) belongs to the wonderful Alexis Cole. In her previous eight recordings on various labels, the classy singer showcased her luxurious voice on innovative interpretations of modern jazz standards like "Easy Living," "Angel Eyes," "Body and Soul," "Walkin'" and "All the Things You Are," along with originals by the likes of Bill Evans, Clifford Brown, Jimmy Rowles, Antonio Carlos Jobim and Pepper Adams. This time out, she goes further back in time with her quartet of guitarist Saul Rubin, saxophonist-clarinetist Dan Block, bassist Pat O'Leary and drummer Phil Stewart to a more genteel time when sheet music was the most common method of dissemination of popular tunes.

With her relaxed style, clear articulation, unhurried, conversational approach and all-knowing sense of cool, Cole and her crew strike a swinging accord on nuggets like "Ain't We Got Fun," "Bimini Bay," "Whip-poor-will," the buoyantly swinging title track and ten other tunes from yesteryear in this engaging retro revue.

"We started out with a list of 50 tunes or more" says Cole, "and I chose these songs because I liked them and thought that they had a timeless quality that also translated well into the modern jazz sensibility. I've never delved into the early jazz repertoire before, so this was a singular, unique experience and a lot of fun."

They open the collection with "Ain't We Got Fun," a Tin Pan Alley tune originally written in 1921 and later recorded by another deep-voiced singer, Peggy Lee, for her 1959 album *Jump for Joy*. Rather than taking it at a brisk, giddy clip, as it is usually handled, Cole and company render it as a laid back Basie-styled mid-tempo swinger with saxophonist Block providing some robust, big-toned tenor work, a la Coleman Hawkins. On the following number, "Whip-poor-will," Block turns in some smoky tenor work that is directly out of the Ben Webster school while Alexis enunciates so clearly that you can understand every lyric (a quality that she shares with classic jazz vocalists from Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah



Vaughan to Carmen McRae, Shirley Horn, Chris Connor and Carol Sloane).

“Do You Ever Think of Me?” a tune introduced in 1921 by Paul Whiteman and his Orchestra, is rendered here as an up-tempo burner. It opens as a vibrant voice-drums duet paced by drummer Stewart’s brisk brushwork before the rest of the band enters. Block turns in a boppish, Getzian tenor solo and guitarist Rubin (who appeared on a couple of tracks from Cole’s 2007 album, *Zingaro*) follows with some heat of his own before the two principal soloists engage in some rapid-fire exchanges with Stewart at the tag.

“Limehouse Blues,” a tune that was invariably pulled out at jam sessions in both the Swing and bebop eras and was recorded literally hundreds of times at blazing tempos and strictly instrumental, is rendered here as a smoky mid-tempo swinger with the inclusion of rarely-heard lyrics. Originally penned in 1922, the song’s title was later used for the 1934 movie of the same name. “They did it slow in the movie,” says Cole, “and I just thought that our interpretation was more honest to the original intention from when it was written.”

Fred Fisher’s “Chicago, that Toddlin’ Town” was originally written in 1922 but later popularized by Frank Sinatra’s version from the 1957 movie



The Joker Is Wild. Block, a hot jazz veteran as a member of Vince Giordano & the Nighthawks, switches to clarinet here and gives the tune a loping swing feel behind Cole's easy, conversational reading. Block remains on clarinet for a clever interpretation of the 1921 novelty number "Bimini Bay" (written by the same songwriting team that composed "Ain't We Got Fun") that has drummer Stewart underscoring the proceedings with mallets for an exotic islands effect. Alexis next delivers a soulful reading of the bluesy 1923 tune "Nobody Knows You when You're Down and Out," which was recorded in 1927 by Fats Waller, in 1929 by Bessie Smith and made a hit in 1954 by Louis Jordan and his Tympany Five.

Their relaxed reading of "After You've Gone," another tune that was historically treated as an up-tempo jam vehicle by the Swing era and bebop set, features Alexis' first use of scatting on the album. And she more than holds her own with her cool, rhythmically assured approach to wailing without words. Says the singer, "I'm a pianist too, so knowing the harmony on piano makes it easier to have good note choices when you're scatting. And then I've done a lot of transcribing of Sarah Vaughan solos and Chet Baker vocal solos too. Sarah is an amazing scat singer, probably the best. But in her recordings there's not tons of scat singing. I think it's something that is actually better suited for live performance than for recording because it expresses something very ephemeral. It just seems more compelling as something to do in a performance than on a record, but it was fun to do it on this tune."

Cole's beguiling interpretation of Fred Fisher's lovely, though slightly melancholy ballad "There's a Broken Heart for Every Light on Broadway" was greatly inspired by Mel Tormé's 1964 recording of the tune from *Sings Sunday in New York & Other Songs About New York*. Block's expressive clarinet playing comes in particularly handy here.

The title track, "A Kiss in the Dark," a 1922 number that was popularized by Vaughan Monroe's 1947 recording, is taken at a breezy clip and features

buoyantly swinging solos from Block on clarinet and Rubin on guitar. "Indian Summer," a 1919 tune recorded dozens of times as an instrumental by the likes of Sidney Bechet, Dave Brubeck, Stan Getz, Coleman Hawkins, Tommy Dorsey and others, is rendered here as an easy-swinging number with Block shadowing Cole's appealing vocals on clarinet.

"Turn Back the Universe and Give Me Yesterday," originally written in 1916, is re-imagined here as an up-tempo swinger with Block delivering some brusque, Hawkins-esque tenor work and Rubin wailing with Johnny Smith-like facility on guitar. Bassist O'Leary and drummer Stewart also engage in some spirited exchanges on this upbeat romp. "Let the Rest of the World Go By," a lilting waltz from 1919, is given a sweetly sentimental treatment by Alexis with some warm-toned contributions on tenor from Block. And this survey of tunes from yesteryear concludes with a 1919 number, "Till We Meet Again," which opens with a little burst of hip scat singing before Cole and her crew settle into a nice 'n' easy waltz-time swing groove.

Everything goes down nice 'n' easy on this luxurious outing, and Alexis delivers with timeless charm from track to track.

—Bill Milkowski





Left to Right: Phil Stewart, Alexis Cole, Pat O'Leary, Lars, Dan Block, and Saul Rubin

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