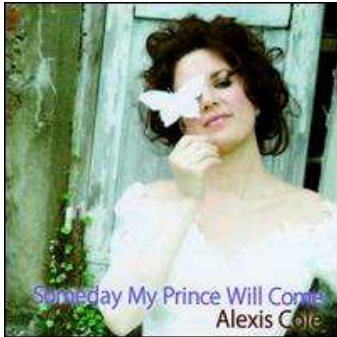


Reviews “Someday My Prince Will Come”

All About Jazz NY Magazine

VoxNews Column by Suzanne Lorge
Feb, 2010



Don't let Disney repertoire on Alexis Cole's new disc - Someday My Prince Will Come (Venus Records) - distract you from the hardcore musicianship at work on this recording. The youthful Cole has a mature sound and an expert rhythm section backing her (pianist Fred Hersch, bassist Steve LaSpina and drummer Matt Wilson), providing more than enough magic to transform the 12 schoolgirl ditties on the disc into serious jazz numbers.

Cornwall-ny.com

January 21, 2010

Alexis Cole is a jazz singer who believes in using music to touch the hearts and souls of her listeners and this Friday night she is offering a special concert at 2 Alices Coffee Lounge to help raise funds for earthquake relief in Haiti.

Cole, who is a singer with the USMA Jazz Knights, has delighted voices around the world, from Tokyo and Toronto to the clubs of New York City. While playing a long engagement in a club in Tokyo, she auditioned for the Jazz Knights and after she was accepted last year, joined the Army and went through basic training. (You can read about that experience in her blog, Jazz Diva Goes to Basic Training.) She now lives in this area.

Coles said that she has been singing professionally since she was a high school student in Miami, Florida, and that, in addition to musical talents she inherited from both sides of her family, she is inspired by a search for religious meaning. She said that when she performed Bob Marleys Redemption Song this past weekend that she invited people to send love and hope out into the world.

It is this spirit that inspired her to organize the To Haiti with Hope concert at 2 Alices. She will be performing there with other people from the Jazz Knights, including Sgt. Scott Arcangel on piano, and Michael Goetz on Bass. A clarinet trio, the Vino Trio, led by USMA musician Jeff Geller, will take part in the benefit as well as Neil Alexander, a jazz keyboardist, and Gordon Shepherd, a friend of Coles with whom she will sing a cappella Irish music.

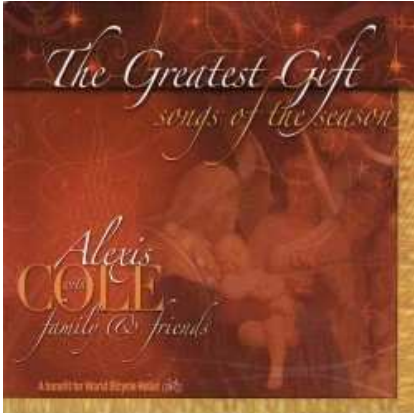
Cole says that she will set up two computer terminals at 2 Alices where people will be able to go online to make contributions for the Haiti relief effort. She hopes that people will be inspired by the music and the vibe of the evening to open their hearts and their wallets to help others.

Reviews "Greatest Gift"

Jazz Times

Editor in Chief Lee Mergner's Holiday Roundup

Dec 16, 2009



For many artists, holiday recordings can be more like a sampler as much because the material is itself so diverse in style and structure. That can be problematic for some artists, but Alexis Cole and her supporting cast really went with the flow on this excellent recording, using very creative yet distinct arrangements for each song. Cole's rather straight singing voice belies a fondness for the adventurous here, as she shares the spotlight gracefully and artfully. Listening without seeing the cover, one might not even know that she is the leader among such first-rate jazz musicians as Don Braden, Alan Ferber, Ike Sturm and other noted NYC players. And that's a good thing.

The music has a warm, organic feel, whether taking The Call off on an acoustic jam à la Oregon or doing Rise Up Shepherd and Follow with an Indian-raga feel. Cole and her supporting cast sound like they're having fun here. Emphasizing the uplifting side of holiday music throughout, Ms. Cole also deserves style points for donating proceeds from the CD sales to a humanitarian organization (World Bicycle Relief).

Downbeat

Nov 25, 2009

The Greatest Gift

"Benefiting the World Bicycle Relief project, vocalist Cole and her jazz friends (including Don Braden, Christian Howes, Alan Ferber), plus St. Paul's Children's Choir and the St. James Quartet, celebrate the sanctity of the season with busy but serviceable arrangements of the 14 seasonal songs. Secure in her religious faith, Cole really gives it her all singing the spiritual "Rise Up, Shepherd, And Follow," supported by Indian classical musicians.

All About Jazz

Nov 24, 2009

Award-winning vocalist Alexis Cole is getting ready for Christmas with *The Greatest Gift*. The disc features 14 tracks, including original songs and some Christmas favorites such as "Joy to the World," "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas," "Away in a Manger," and "Silent Night." The titles may be familiar, but Cole's unique interpretation turns the songs into jazz, blues and classical musical highlighting her warm and rich vocals, so emotive they register in the keys of love and gratitude.

Inspiration for the disc's title came from her father, singer/composer Mark Finkin, who in 2007 performed at a recital called "The Greatest Gift" during his long-awaited college graduation

festivities. It was around this time that Cole rededicated herself to the church and ultimately to music. Inspired by her religious feeling and the Christmas holiday, Cole is dedicating part of the sales from *The Greatest Gift to the World* Bicycle Relief Fund, an organization that raises money in support of disaster aid.

Standout performances include the disc's opening selection, an up-tempo instrumental of "Joy to the World"; "Jeanette Isabella/The Call," which includes original songwriting by Cole in a spiritual "call" to celebrate all children; a bluesy version of "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen," featuring vocals by Cole and her father; "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," done with a Caribbean twist; "Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow," an African-American spiritual reinvented to include Indian music; and "The Happiest Christmas," a stripped-down, bare-bones performance with piano, violin and Cole's vocals.

Expressions of charity and goodwill are sprinkled throughout the disc, from the liner notes to the enhanced CD featuring videos of the World Bicycle Relief fund. It's one thing to reference the celebration of Jesus in an album title, and quite another to honor love and community with the album itself. *The Greatest Gift* is more than jazzed-up Christmas music; it's a gift that comes from within.

Richmond Virginia News Review

Dec 4, 2009

The Greatest Gift begins with an instrumental modern jazz knock-out version of Joy To The World a la Brian Blade Fellowship Band (pianist Jon Cowherd is the link between that band and this one) and develops with variety. Lots and lots of variety. Take, for instance, the Caribbean-styled Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, the Indian tambura and tablas of Rise Up Shepherd, And Follow, or the string quartet chamber music of the Vince Guaraldi favorite Christmas Time is Here. Jazz is at the heart of it all, musically, with spirited solos and unique arrangements, many of which feature vocal quartets and children choirs. Pieces evolve in unsuspecting ways, and there's even father-daughter vocal duet time on many tracks with vocalist Cole and dad Mark Finkin. Best of all, the album is a benefit for the World Bicycle Relief, which provides simple, sustainable transportation for people in areas of disaster and poverty. iTunes

The Epoch Times Review

Dec 2, 2009

Christmas is a time for family, and jazz vocalist Alexis Coles new Christmas CD is definitely a family affair. Not only does it feature Coles pianist-composer father Mark Finkin, it was directly inspired by his much-anticipated college graduation recital. Taking its title from her father's commencement concert, Coles *The Greatest Gift* presents an eclectic program of seasonal and spiritual fare; the net proceeds from which will go to the non-profit World Bicycle Relief.

In a way, *Gift* also represents the extended family of St. Peter's the Manhattan church long identified with the jazz community that Cole has often played. Both St. Peter's jazz musical director, bassist Ike Sturm and his wife, vocalist Misty Ann, contribute to Coles Christmas CD. In addition, trombonist Alan Ferber and guitarist Jesse Lewis are no strangers to the Midtown sanctuary. Such relationships help explain the album's distinctly warm, inviting vibe.

Gift actually starts with an instrumental prelude, an upbeat traditional treatment of Joy to the World, arranged by bassist Sturm and featuring an almost rock-oriented solo from Lewis. Cole then makes a pretty soulful entrance on Jeanette Isabella/The Call, augmented by the St. Pauls Childrens Choir. Indeed, there is a certain R&B-ish influence, especially pronounced on God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen, a duet for Cole and Finkin. There is also a similar groove going on in the original closer, Jesus is the Best Part of Christmas, which benefits from Don Bradens funky sax flavorings (but the staged dramatic dialogue is unnecessary).

Cole herself arranges one of the highlights of the program reinventing Hark the Herald Angels Sing in a calypso-like cast. Blending the appealing sounds of Bradens soprano, Ferbers trombone, and Warren Chassons vibes, Hark has an infectiously joyous sound that demonstrates jazz and Christmas music can both be fun.

While Cole covers many beloved carols like What Child is this? and Silent Night, she also includes some less obvious standards like the spiritual Rise Up Shepherd and Follow. In another intriguing arrangement, Cole gives it a pronounced exotic flavor (quite in keeping with the songs Holy Land setting) adding tabla and tambura to Bradens soprano.

Cole has a rich, strong voice and her charts produce some consistently rewarding music throughout Gift. While she often gives the songs of the season a nice jazz twist, they will always be recognizable and accessible for jazz neophytes.

November 18, 2009

Someday My Prince Will Come featuring Fred Hersch, Matt Wilson, Steve LaSpina, Don Braden and Gregoire Maret is released in Japan on venus record

Tis The Season Blog

Dec 14, 2009

There have been quite a few interesting holiday releases for 2009, but among some of the best is Alexis Cole's new album, THE GREATEST GIFT. Best for jazz lovers, but the album contains an eclectic mix of both instrumental and vocal tracks. To top it all off, each sale benefits the World Bicycle Relief, which is an organization that provides sustainable transportation to individuals in poverty and disaster stricken regions.

For the featured track I chose "Jesus Is The Best Part Of Christmas" because the message of the song is oh so relevant these days. With much distraction from the actual meaning of Christmas, it is refreshing to be reminded once again why we celebrate in the first place. Throughout the album Alexis chose songs heralding the birth of the Savior, but none gets the message across clearer than this!

When in Rome - Army wife blog

Nov 20, 2009

Now that Halloween is over, I am in full on Christmas mode. For me, Christmas and Thanksgiving run together. I just love the holiday season. Don't you? If you do, and if you love holiday music, I have the perfect gift for you guys.

A while ago I received a promotional holiday CD in the mail from one amazing lady. Her name is Alexis Cole, and currently she's in basic training for the Army. What makes her even more amazing is that she's spent her life on a journey finding God and serving others along the way.

She asked me to listen to this CD and let you guys know what I think. And honestly? The CD is wonderful. It's a holiday jazz album, and all of the songs are very upbeat and, well, jazzy! Her voice reminds me of a different time all together. You know how you can get lost in Michael Buble's voice and feel transported? It's like that. When I listened to the CD, I felt like I was listening to a singer from the 1940's where women wore tea length cocktail dresses and satin gloves. Like an old USO show. It has quickly become one of my favorite holiday albums right now.

The best part about this CD, though, is that she's not taking all the profits. In fact, she's donating proceeds to the World Bicycle Relief. Read more below

I got the pleasure of doing an interview with her, holiday style.

1. What puts you in the holiday spirit?

Snow, snow, snow! And the smell of wood burning. And of course Christmas music! One of the reasons I made my new CD The Greatest Gift was so that I would have something to listen to myself at Christmas! I tried to make it as diverse as possible, different instruments, textures, repertoires, so that it would maintain interest through a great many repetitive listens.

2. What is your favorite Christmas song?

Is that really a fair question? One of my favorites is Jeanette Isabella, which is done as an instrumental on the album. I love that sweet French melodie!

3. Because youre in the Army, I am assuming youve spent at least one Christmas away from those you love most. Tell me about the weirdest/funniest/best Christmas away from family.

Actually, Ive just joined the Army, however, being quite an internationally based musician has meant that Ive spent many holidays away from my loved ones. Last Christmas I was performing in Tokyo. Christmas in Japan, which is not a Christian country, is more like Valentines Day. Lots of expensive gifts exchanged, and we threw a big couples bash at the lounge I was performing in. It was very otherworldly.

4. As I read your biography, it didnt say much about what lead you to the Army. You seem to have a service spirit, so did the Army seem like the next logical step? Or was there something more?

I was invited to perform with the Jazz Knights, an elite big band based at West Point. Once I accepted the invitation, the only thing between me and the job was Basic Training! My blog Jazz Diva in Basic Training (which I sent weekly installments of to my assistant to post) is on my website at www.alexiscole.com

5. What about Jazz music entices you?

Its spirit of improvisation, the way you can go anywhere, and do anything from that platform. You have to think on your feet, and you never really know whats going to happen next! Kind of like being in the Army!

6. Tell me in your own words what is important about the world bicycle relief in developing countries? Why does it speak to you specifically?

I got my first bike as an adult about 7 years ago, and it changed my life and the way I was able to access the city. I figured if it could do that much for me, in New York, how much more important is it for someone who has to get everywhere on foot, for whom saving time is the difference

between eating and not eating, making it to school, getting much needed medicines and care? Also, I was a residential volunteer for a year at a house for women with AIDS, and so the fact that World Bicycle Reliefs current project is with AIDS education and health care in Zambia, draws me even closer to their work.

Reviews of “Zingaro”

iTunes

Michael G. Nastos

The third recording for jazz singer and world traveler Alexis Cole has her in an intimate setting, with no drummer, pianist, or horns. Guitar and bass supply the cozy backdrop and playmates for Cole to weave her romantic spell based on her flatted, unpretentious style. There's a certain familiarity to her individuality that is hard to pin down, perhaps somewhere between the cattiness of Nancy Wilson, the unrushed feeling of Sarah Vaughan or the coy cool of Cassandra Wilson. Choosing a bevy of standards, Cole makes you wish the room she is in was nearer to you, and acts as the sage twice her youthful years. Her siren, sweet, and slow version of "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You?" is pretty convincing, as is the expressive light samba version of "Over the Rainbow" and the sleek, slinky take of "God Bless the Child." Don't peg Cole as simply a torch singer, though, as she changes up "Stompin' at the Savoy," starting leisurely, speeding up gradually, and scatting a bit. She does the same thing to "Walkin'" beginning with a snippet of "Walkin' My Baby Back Home" and merging into the well-established lithe and skittering Richard Carpenter bop line. A bowed bass from Jeff Eckels and curious guitar by Ron Affif identify the title cut as a personal statement Cole enjoys turning heartbreakingly darker. Of the ten tracks, the Affif/Eckels tandem appears on eight, with the consistently delightful Affif a standout. Two other cuts are from a 2003 session with guitarist Saul Rubin and bassist Jon Roche including "Walkin'" and the short, lovable "Morning with You" exudes a smiling, satisfied, waking up in bed with someone special glow. As Cole's travels to distant lands influence her tune choices, this may be the last of her legitimate jazz recordings. For now it's a good representation of how she feels about standard fare, done her way.