



Kevin Jones for Fine Music (Australia) May 2018 (5 Stars)

Here is the supreme stylist at the height of her powers. No need to look any further for the next great jazz singer: this album is the proof, if any was needed. The title track, where Alexis Cole is backed by One For All, is worth the price of the album alone. This brilliant group, inspired by Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers of the 1960's, is named after the drummer's final Blue Note recording in 1990 at the age of 71. Under the nominal leadership of pianist David Hazeltine since 1979, it sizzles through the Cole Porter standard spotlighting the talents of the leader, trombonist Steve Davis, tenor saxophonist Eric Alexander, bassist John Webber and drummer Joe Farnsworth and an inspired Cole more than matches them. Compared with Carmen McRae after Cole's 2013 debut album, *The Sultry Sound Of Jazz* with the trio of pianist John DiMartino, it is interesting to compare their versions of *All The Thing You Are*. Originally written as a ballad by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II, I enjoyed McRae's 1957 recording on first hearing it but Cole takes her Latin-inflected version to even greater heights. But this is only one of the many highlights; Cole Porter's *So In Love* swings nicely, Cole sharing the spotlight with Davis, a soloist of the highest class. Surprisingly only one ballad! *You've Changed*, just another highlight as trumpeter Jim Rotundi compliments Cole's sophisticated delivery sublimely. The search for the next great jazz singer is over. This album is the proof.

Brian Robinson for Jazz Journal International April 2018
<http://jazzjournal.co.uk/review/6/0/2018-04>

New York-based singer Alexis Cole was a new name to me and a most welcome surprise, a positively talented artist without doubt. Allied with a sextet who take the name One For All they produced a masterpiece, a very upfront bop combo providing exemplary underpinning to this most uncompromising of singers. The album was produced in 2010 by Venus Records of Japan and doesn't have retail distribution outside that country but is now available directly from alexiscole.com/store. Cole herself says "I wouldn't want to miss an opportunity to share this first ever vocal jazz album of One For All!" and that band play an important role in this set as excellent arrangers and players.

The programme commences with the swinging *Golden Earrings* and the rendition of *Moon River* is a joy, not least for the juicy reharmonisations and Cole's similarly unexpected but tasty and perfectly placed melismas. Jim Rotundi's fiery trumpet is showcased on *Cry Me A River* whilst *A Beautiful Friendship* has that classic bluesy feel that ticks all the boxes. *All The Things You Are* is taken at a swinging medium/up tempo, a real gem. No prizes for guessing that Sarah Vaughan and Anita O'Day were amongst Ms. Cole's influences. Steve Davis's trombone and David Hazeltine's piano are heard to positive effect on *So In Love*. The disc ends with *You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To*, where Eric Alexander's fluent hard-bop tenor is much in evidence. There is so much to enjoy and admire on this disc, recommended to all who love great songs sung by an outstanding individual singer. Despite the editor's pleas not to overdo the star ratings I could not give less than five to such a perfect marriage of vocal and instrumental jazz. Buy it and be immersed in the warm musical ambience.

Dan Bilawsky for All About Jazz Online <https://www.allaboutjazz.com/you-d-be-so-nice-to-come-home-to-alexis-cole-venus-records-review-by-dan-bilawsky.php>

Vocalist Alexis Cole hasn't found a setting or theme that doesn't suit her. Since arriving on the scene near the turn of the century she's covered a tremendous amount of ground and delivered a good number of well-conceived and beautifully executed albums. Cole teamed up with dozens of A-listers for a charitably-driven Christmas outing, explored the sultry side of the jazz canon, gave voice to the music of baritone saxophonist Pepper Adams, put her own spin on Paul Simon's work, shined a light on love songs associated with Disney films, and partnered with guitar icon Bucky Pizzarelli for the classiest of gatherings. And that, believe it or not, is just the highlight reel. She's made it clear that she's not one to repeat herself—no two albums from Alexis Cole are alike—but that's not to say her catalog lacks any ties that bind. Cole's sophisticated yet relatable delivery carries across all of her music, including this winning date.

You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To finds Cole joining forces with hard bop-leaning sextet One For All. Together, they charm with a program of tried-and-true classics laced with individualistic sentiments. In "Golden Earrings" we're given bright swing and real heat as Cole tells and sells the tale. Trumpeter Jim Rotundi circles around her with muted obbligato work, and a number of soloists—trombonist Steve Davis, tenor saxophonist Eric Alexander, and pianist David Hazeltine—take the baton and run with it. Then there's an unusually sly "I Will Wait For You" that leaves just a hint of doubt in its tone, a "Moon River" stripped of cloying sentiments and recast as a 4/4 swinger, and a "Cry Me A River" elevated through Cole's world-wise delivery. All of those numbers indicate that nobody involved with this album is content with delivering cookie-cutter performances.

Every one of these songs is shaped in a way that makes them hard to let go of, but each is also followed by something taken happily as a replacement. For example, an "Alone Together" propelled by Joe Farnsworth's drumming and enlivened by horn interjections behind and around the vocals leads to a take of "A Beautiful Friendship" with a

million dollar rhythmic feel and an endearing atmosphere. Then that leads to an "All The Things You Are" with a few Latin mini-detours and notable contributions from bassist John Webber and *that* brings the listener to a "So In Love" toying with the oh-so-complicated nature surrounding the titular four-letter word. It's only in the album's conclusion that the ears are finally left without a suitable follow-up.

Alexis Cole and One For All somehow manage to leave us completely satisfied while also wanting more. That's the mark of a fine album, and that's proof that this one is most certainly nice to come home to.

Scott Yanow for Los Angeles Jazz Scene Mar 2018
(www.lajazzscene.buzz/waxing.html)

Alexis Cole has been a top jazz singer ever since she made her recording debut with 1999's *Very Early*. She has a warm and alluring voice, scats well, and has swinging phrasing, perfectly placing notes. She has spent periods of time as a teacher, living and performing in Japan, even in the U.S. Army where she sang regularly during 2009-15 in the U.S. Army. Her 12 CDs as a leader include a set with pianist Fred Hersch, a Christmas jazz album and full-length tributes to both Pepper Adams and Paul Simon.

You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To was recorded back in 2011 but only recently released by the Japanese Venus label. Alexis Cole is joined by an all-star group known as One For All that consists of tenor-saxophonist Eric Alexander, trumpeter Jim Rotundi, trombonist Steve Davis, pianist David Hazeltine, bassist John Webber and drummer Joe Farnsworth. The instrumentalists are so strong that only a very confident and skilled singer could avoid being overshadowed by them. Fortunately Alexis Cole is on that level.

While there are many excellent solos throughout the set by the three horn players and pianist Hazeltine, Alexis Cole emerges as the main star. She is particularly winning on "Golden Earrings," a haunting version of "Delilah," "A Beautiful Friendship," "So In Love" and the title cut although all 11 standards are given superior treatments. While the songs are all of vintage quality, Ms. Cole gives them fresh interpretations through her phrasing, bringing out the beauty of the lyrics while improvising with subtlety.

This CD is a delight, available from www.amazon.com. Alexis Cole deserves to be much better known in the jazz world and this set is an excellent way to discover her talents.

Suzanne Lorge for Vox News Column NYC Jazz Record, March 2018

Alexis Cole has recorded four albums for the Japanese label Venus, each one a masterful collaboration with premier jazz musicians like Fred Hersch and Bucky Pizzarelli. In 2010 she joined with the seriously swinging sextet One For All to record *You'd Be So*

Nice to Come Home To - 11 straightahead tunes (e.g., "Moon River", "Cry Me a River" and the title cut) that show off Cole's consummate command of vocal jazz. Cole is at her finest on this release, which just became available in the U.S. and will be at Smoke (Mar. 15th)

Alix Cohen for Cabaret Scenes <http://cabaretszenes.org/2018/02/11/alexis-cole-with-one-for-all-you-d-be-so-nice-to-come-home-to/>

Alexis Cole is a born jazz baby. Facility for extending, kneading, clipping notes, and/or slip/sliding keys makes interpretation hip and fluid. Her voice is silvery. The performer brings sophistication to every number. She's never carried away. Point of view often varies from the accustomed. Though I can't wrap my ear around the tradition of those up-tempo ballads included, vocals are appealing, musicality superb.

"I Will Wait for You" (Michel Legrand/Norman Gimbel/Jacques Demy) resembles incantation. It's lilting, plaintive, and balladic. Eric Alexander's tenor sax first actively shades, then meditates. "Cry Me a River" (Arthur Hamilton) offers elongated vocal phrasing. Cole sounds more irritated than despairing. Jim Rotundi's trumpet and Steve Davis' trombone seem to chide. The door is clearly closed on the guy, whoever he is.

Donald Kahn/Stanley Styne's "A Beautiful Friendship" is an ironic musical sigh. The singer is unsurprised and, curiously, doesn't sound happy about what seems like desired evolution: "...the end of a beautiful friendship/And just the beginning of love..." Rotundi's muted horn is like salve. "All the Things You Are" (Jerome Kern/Oscar Hammerstein II) is breezy and bright. Arced and sliding notes arrive playful/dancey. Davis' trombone veritably frolics.

"You've Changed" (Bill Carey/Carl Fischer) is slow, wistful, evocative. Cole holds onto the word "changed" as if she can't accept what's occurred. Rotundi's trumpet is eloquently mournful. Cole Porter's "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To" begins with seductive, Marilyn Monroe tone, then segues to up-tempo rhythm as if tickled. Horns bolster without interfering. Attitude is lighthearted. Each lyric passage emerges as if trying a vision on for size.

**Thomas Cunniffe for Jazz History Online
http://www.jazzhistoryonline.com/Love_and_other_Subjects.html**

Recorded in 2010 for release in Japan, Alexis Cole's album "You'd be So Nice to Come Home To" has finally been released in the US. Cole, a fine vocalist perhaps best-known here for her recordings of Pepper Adams songs, displays an exuberant personality, outstanding diction, flawless pitch and inspired scat technique, all qualities that should place her in the highest echelon of contemporary jazz singers

Her swinging variation on "I Will Wait for You"—performed in tandem with tenor saxophonist Eric Alexander—is a model of artistic collaboration where both artists' lines can

be heard clearly, but each line is enhanced by the other. Both “I Will Wait” and the next track “Moon River” are usually performed as ballads, but Cole’s versions recast them as medium-tempo swingers; however, Cole does not let the faster tempo impede the romantic messages of the lyrics. “Delilah” borrows its exotic treatment from the famous Clifford Brown/Max Roach recording, while the waltz setting of “Cry Me a River” features a sultry (but not breast-beating) rendition of the lyric, and a superbly executed scat solo. The sextet One for All (with trumpeter Jim Rotondi, trombonist Steve Davis, tenor saxophonist Eric Alexander, pianist David Hazeltine, bassist John Webber and drummer Joe Farnsworth) provides immaculate backgrounds for Cole throughout the album (although, on “Alone Together”, the intricate horn parts nearly engulf Cole’s vocal). In addition to being a superb ensemble, the members of “One for All” are also excellent soloists, with Rotondi turning in fine solos on “Delilah” and the title track, along with a marvelous improvised duet with Cole on “A Beautiful Friendship”; Alexander adding his meaty tenor sound to “River”, “Friendship” and “I Will Wait”; and Davis contributing bop-pish solos on “Alone Together” and “So In Love”. Webber gets his only solo on “All the Things You Are” and his lean walking lines support Cole at the beginning of the out-chorus. Hazeltine’s skill as an accompanist show on every track—even when he’s not soloing—and Farnsworth’s resourceful solos on “Delilah” and the title track should not overshadow his outstanding support of Cole and the band throughout the disc. If the album has one flaw, it is the near-absence of ballads. The one track in a slow tempo, “You’ve Changed”, shows that Cole can communicate an intimate mood with great passion. I would have enjoyed a second example. Nonetheless, this album is a welcome (and long overdue) addition to the vocal jazz canon. It is certainly worth your attention.

Robert D. Rusch for Cadence Magazine - Papatamus column April 2018

Singer **ALEXIS COLE** joins with the group One For All [Eric Alexander-ts, Jim Rotondi-tpt, Steve Davis-tbn, David Hazeltine-p, John Webber-b, Joe Farnsworth-drm] on **YOU’D BE SO NICE TO COME HOME TO** [Venus Records vhcd-1046]. This 2016 recording is classic jazz in that vocal and instrumental parts are equal. This immediately brings to mind Anita O’day whose singing was so often integrated with participating artists. I suspect Cole enjoys this interaction as she sure sounds comfortable with the interplay and with each listen a freshness remains. There are 11 standards addressed here [56:56] and Cole’s mood runs from *warm* and happy to vulnerable on “So In Love” and on to wistful on “A Beautiful Friendship”. This is a terrific recording that is going to be tough to top but it is my hope that it’s one of a series of toppers.

To my surprise two of **ALEXIS COLE**’s early recordings on her Canopy Records are still in print. **NEARER THE SUN** [Canopy Jazz Records cjcd 7628] is a trio [Ben Stivers-p, Anthony Pinciotti-drm, Jon [sic] Hebert-b] date from 2/19/04. The program is of 9 mostly standards and includes “Poem For #15” by Steve Kuhn. Kuhn wrote it for baseball player Thurman Munson, who died in a plane crash in 1979. It’s somewhat *avant* and is followed by “How Insensitive” which is taken very emotively. “The Peacocks” is given a straight reading followed by free verse. Following this comes “You Make Me Feel So Young” and I get the impression that at this time in her career, Cole is

uncertain in her direction as there is a self consciousness to her singing. Of course this release is early in her career and after spending time with her latest performance (above) most anything would pale in comparison. Just after *Nearer The Sun*, Cole released **ZINGARO** [Canopy Jazz Records cjcd 7629] which is a combines two trio dates [Ron Affif-gtr, Jeffry Eckels-b —7/30/06] and [Saul Rubin-gtr, Jon Roche-b—4/6/2003]. Here she sounds more relaxed and is more on the way to that Anita O'day feel. Again mostly standards, Cole's original "Morning With You" is paired with "Walkin'" from the 2003 date. Rubin is particularly effective. This is more straight ahead than the *Nearer The Sun* date, and the music and vocals are better integrated. The Venus CD is a synthesis of what the earlier recordings show. Her latest is exquisite and should help make Cole a regular on the circuit.

Ralph A. Miriello for Notes on Jazz Blog <http://notesonjazz.blogspot.com>

Full disclosure, I have been following the singer Alexis Cole for some time now. I first heard her when I lived back in the metro New York are and I caught her performing in a local Westchester venue after hearing her sing on a fabulous album *I Carry Your Heart : Alexis Cole Sings the Music of Pepper Adams from 2012*. The friends that I brought along at the time were so taken by her beguiling voice and charming, unassuming stage manner that they became instant fans and snapped up all of her recordings. At the same time they all wondered how such a fabulous singer had been running so low under the radar. I explained that Cole was serving her country as a member of the armed services for a stretch of six years, where she nonetheless continued to sing, fronting with the Army big band up at West Point.

She was just getting her professional career started after attending undergraduate studies at William Patterson College and later at Queen's College for graduate studies. I continued to follow her and saw her perform with the pianist Pete Malinverni at his Jazz Vespers series at the Pound Ridge Community Church, where he is musical director. She continued to impress me with her easy, unforced delivery and vocal acumen. I just loved her voice. By this time, she was snapped up by SUNY Purchase College as an instructor.

Later that year, I was curating a jazz series for the Stamford Center for the Performing Arts in Stamford CT. I wanted her to be the lead off act for a new jazz series that we were piloting and she enthusiastically obliged bringing with her a fabulous group of musicians that included the guitarist Jack Wilkins, the bassist Andy McKee and the drummer Mike Clark. Predictably she was a big hit.

When I moved to the Atlanta area we stayed in touch via email and I was pleased when she asked me if I would write the liner notes for a Chesky Records project she was doing covering Paul Simon tunes. The album, which was titled *Dazzling Blue* from 2016, was a fine mix of Simon's poetic music performed in a bare, roots-based style with Cole's haunting vocals, Mark Peterson's bass and Marvin Sewell's guitar on most of the

tracks. Cole was finally beginning to be noticed as the record climbed to 24 on the Billboard jazz charts.

The music on Cole's latest album, *You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To*, was recorded back in 2010 at Avatar Studios in New York. Cole's Japanese label, Venus, released the album in Japan in 2011. It was only available as an import before this year when the album was printed and released in the US. Lucky for us that the Japanese jazz fans didn't just keep this one to themselves, as this is a swinging session with Alexis in excellent form and her band offering inspired support behind her.

The group is made up of many of the musicians that regularly perform at the upper West Side of Manhattan super club SMOKE. They include tenor star Eric Alexander, versatile trumpeter Jim Rotundi, masterful trombonist Steve Davis, pianist David Hazeltine, bassist John Webber and ubiquitous drummer Joe Farnsworth.

Alexis has one of those lilting voices that seems to float in the air. Her delivery is so effortless, so natural, so fluid as to bespeak of some innate talent that requires no sweat equity; but be assured she has honed her craft with many hours of diligent study and assiduous practice. She is a serious student of the music and like many great singers she has trained herself to become an effective storyteller.

While in the past Cole has taken some material from more modern sources, on this one she has mined the reliable Great American Songbook. Composers like Victor Young, Michel LeGrand, Henry Mancini, Johnny Mercer, Julie Styne, Jerome Kern and of course Cole Porter have their work wonderfully represented by this talented songstress.

My favorite selections include the lead off Victor Young/Jay Livingston composition "Golden Earrings" where Ms. Cole starts out with a short, tasteful scat before introducing the lyrics out front of the three-horn section of Davis, Alexander and Rotundi and the swinging rhythm section of Hazeltine, Webber and Farnsworth. Rotundi's muted trumpet meshes beautifully with Cole's melodious voice, before Davis and then Alexander take turns soloing on this swinging piece. Webber's big round bass leads the way as Farnsworth's traps keep the time. Just listen to the ease with which Cole's voice negotiates the lyrics through the changes, impressive.

The Michel Legrand composition, "I Will Wait For You," is the perfect vehicle to showcase this lady's wonderful instrument. After a scatted lead accompanied by a walking bass lead in that sets the tone, Cole starts off with the iconic lyrics. She has an astute sense of timing and her inflections are always subtle with no vocal theatrics. Alexander offers a sublime harmonizing tenor solo before the group plays in tight section style behind her; Cole's years of experience playing in front of the Army Band has obviously paid dividends.

The highlight of Mancini and Mercers' "Moon River" is a splendid tenor solo by the powerful Eric Alexander.

Another more obscure Young/Livingston composition “Delilah” finds Cole at her most expressive. Her introduction to this theatrical version of Biblically inspired Middle Eastern music is emblematic of her storytelling acumen. Her voice gently sways into the swing of the music as the horn section plays the evocative Alexander arrangement. Rotundi’s open bell trumpet solo is just magic. Farnsworth’s drum solo is punctuated with a synchronous chorus of Cole’s voice and the stellar horn section. Cole is simply hypnotic. Like a snake charmer’s Punghi transfixes a deadly Cobra into docility, Cole’s sultry vocal treatment captivates you like the Biblical Delilah subjugated the mighty Samson. The soporific beat adds to the enchanting effect.

“Alone Together” is played as a quick tempo swinger with some wonderful solo work by Davis. Rotundi, whose trumpet work on this album raises the entire program, makes a brilliantly succinct statement. Bassist John Webber's beat is always strong and omnipresent.

The poignant “You’ve Changed” is played like a slow ballad with Cole and company wrenching out all the emotion and pathos that this classic song of lament can muster. Listen to Rotundi’s solo on this and marvel at the man’s ability to play precisely what is needed and then listen to Cole’s crystalline voice at the coda. Just beautiful.

Other songs on the album include “Cry Me a River,” “A Beautiful Friendship,” “All the Things You Are,” “So in Love,” and the title song of the album “You’d Be So Nice to Come Home To.”

For those of you who crave to hear familiar standards played with modern, creative arrangements and featuring a fabulous singer backed by a great band, then look no further than Alexis Cole’s *You’d Be So Nice to Come Home To*. Believe me this is an album you’ll be glad to come home to.

Ernest Barteldes for Music Whatever Blog <https://musicwhatever.wordpress.com>

Backed by the celebrated New York-based One For All Sextet (Eric Alexander: tenor saxophone; Jim Rotondi: trumpet; Steve Davis: trombone; David Hazeltine: piano; John Webber: bass; Joe Farnsworth: drums), vocalist Alexis Cole brings a collection of jazz standards taking full advantage of the chemistry among the musicians. The group swings hard on the opening track “Golden Earrings,” with plenty of improvisation from Rotondi, Davis and Alexander. “Delilah” opens a bit downtempo then evolves into walking bass-dominated blues, which seems to put Cole right in her comfort zone. The ensemble takes Mancini/Mercer’s “Moon River” to a surprising direction – instead of the slow ballad we have all gotten accustomed to hear over the decades, here it is played quite up-tempo – bringing a new meaning to the “two drifters” mentioned in the lyrics – their quest is a happy one this time around.

Maybe the best known recording of “You’ve Changed” was done by Billie Holiday on 1958’s “Lady in Satin,” which turned out to be her last album released in her lifetime. Alexis Cole does not seem to have sought inspiration on that beautifully sad track, but

instead she seems to draw from Ella Fitzgerald's 1966 version, making it her own with her honestly heartfelt rendition. "A Beautiful Friendship" seems at first to lament the end of a friendship but later it is revealed that the couple is no longer in "the friend zone" and are now lovers. Originally recorded by Ella Fitzgerald as a ballad, here it has more of a bluesy feel in which Cole stretches her vocal range, and it also features a nice call-and-response between Rotondi and Cole throughout.

The title track (by Cole Porter) closes the disc the same way it began: a high-energy, swinging number highlighting all performers. The disc seems to look back at past eras of jazz vocalists but not as something retro – this is probably indicating where vocal-band jazz should be going into the next decades.

Roberta Zlokower for Roberta on the Arts Blog
<http://www.robertaonthearts.com/cd/idCD179.html>

Recently, Alexis Cole wrote to me, asking for my thoughts on her new recording, *You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To*. I am thrilled to share this review of Ms. Cole's newest, rarified fusion of vocal and instrumental jazz and cabaret, as it creates a superb listening experience. Her effervescent and ebullient songs are enhanced by the crème de la crème music sextet, called One for All (Eric Alexander-tenor sax, Jim Rotundi-trumpet, Steve Davis-trombone, David Hazeltine-piano, John Webber, bass, Joe Farnsworth-drums), with generous instrumental interludes throughout. The opening track, "Golden Earrings", sets tone and rhythm to pulsating, professional standards, and all eleven tracks are uniquely arranged and presented. Ms. Cole is widely known for her live club and concert performances, and now you can hear her latest, iconically gorgeous vocal tracks on this lush recording.

Notable tracks:

#4 – *Delilah* – Composed by V. Young/R. Evans, J. Livingston. This sumptuous, shifting track opens with David Hazelstine's languid piano theme, featuring Alexis Cole's vocals in her finest shimmering tones. Soon Joe Farnsworth, on drums, and John Webber, on bass, charge up the tempo, dramatically, before the brass trio joins for a big band showcase. Jim Rotundi's trumpet solo and an ensuing drum spotlight make this song memorable and well worth a second listening.

#5 – *Cry Me a River* – Composed by A. Hamilton. Ms. Cole channels Ella Fitzgerald, here, and I happily verified this on You Tube, as Ms. Cole belts this song into your heart. She's sophisticated and swinging, earthy and elegant. The One for All solos, a billowy trumpet, then Eric Alexander on tenor sax, plus brass-trio blendings, add style to Ms. Cole's persuasive emotionality, in the yearning, searing lyrics. Her dynamic personality adds meaning to the 1953 torch song.

#10 – *You've Changed* – Composed by B. Carey, C. Fischer. This was one of my favorite tracks, with Ms. Cole seemingly singing to an offstage-off-studio man of the past, we all know them so well, with compelling conviction and exquisite, elastic tonality. She's in her finest range and spirit, and Steve Davis' expansive trombone solo is soulful

and seasoned. This is also sung as a torch song, and it's brimming with steam. When the band accompanies in a merged-tonal backup, the listener is impressed.

#11 – *You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To* – Composed by C. Porter. This title tune offers four solos from the band, first trombone, then sax, trumpet, and drums, and when the full ensemble, *One for All*, exudes bubbly musicality, it sounds like a big band in concert. Ms. Cole shifts lyrical pitch within the note with perfected ease, and you will feel like you're in your own nightclub, when you match this music to wine and candles. And, for entertaining, what could be finer.

Alexis Cole is represented by the JWP Agency www.jwpjazz.com/alexis_cole.html