

Black Olive Jazz



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| A Night In Tunisia | Jazz | Play Song | Download |
| Enchantment | Jazz | Play Song | Download |
| Surrey With The Fringe on Top | Jazz | Play Song | Download |
| Slow Hot Wind (Lujon) Key Largo | Jazz | Play Song | Download |
| Never Never Land | Jazz | Play Song | Download |
| Wisteria | Jazz | Play Song | Download |
| Lotus Land | Jazz | Play Song | Download |
| Caravan | Jazz | Play Song | Download |

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Black Olive Jazz is a group from the San Francisco Bay area that features the warm singer Kay Kostopoulos and the veteran Noel Jewkes on tenor, alto, soprano and flute. Exotica was an idea conceived by Kostopoulos, Jewkes (who provided the arrangements) and pianist Grant Levin. The singer, whose background is in theater, wanted to perform dramatic material that could be considered both exotic and modern jazz. The concept works quite well on such pieces as "Bali Hai," Horace Silver's "Enchantment" (on which Ms. Kostopoulos added new lyrics), "Slow Hot Wind" a slightly spooky "Never Never Land" and "Caravan." With vocals that range from powerful to tender, a lot of spots for Jewkes to display his versatility and swinging ideas, and two guest appearances by pianist Larry Vuckovich, this is a very successful set. Kay Kostopoulos' perfect pitch allows her to sing wordlessly on the more atmospheric pieces such as "Lotus Land," and to engage in close interplay with Jewkes. - Scott Yanow

ALBUM NOTES

I have always felt drawn to plays, melodies and rhythms of another time. When I started singing jazz, I felt as if I'd come home--I am more comfortable in that world than in any other performance genre. Like theatre, jazz transcends time and defies absolute definition--it is at once past and present, ethereal and earthy, stark and complicated.

"EXOTICA" was an idea generated by myself, jazz legend Noel Jewkes, and piano genius, Grant Levin. I was looking for something unique, my own voice, where I could incorporate my full vocal range and theater background, my Mediterranean musical heritage, with polyrhythms and unusual scales, and my passion for jazz. One afternoon as we met for a session at my home in San Francisco, we brainstormed on ideas--Grant came up with "Slow Hot Wind"; and Noel remembered he had arranged a medley of that with Key Largo. Then Noel suggested a Ray Brown feel on "A Night in Tunisia", and a Miles Davis chordal progression for "Surrey with the Fringe on Top"; incorporating abrupt tempo changes. The ideas were bursting forth--Grant tried them out on my piano, Noel played tenor, and I sang and recorded. Over the next year, I kept offering ideas--and Grant and Noel supported me and added their own artistry to each thought. Inspiration came from other sources: Drummer Akira Tana introduced me to "Never Never Land". I added in my own lyrics to Horace Silver's "Enchantment"; (from Larry Vuckovich's beautiful album with Noel, "Something Special?") "Bali Hai" came out of my love for Broadway, and "Lotus Land" was a reflection of Noel's and my taste for the extraordinary and exotic, with influences from John Coltrane and Yma Sumac. Noel's beautiful playing evokes Johnny Hodges on Billy Strayhorn's "Passion Flower".

We tried the songs with Noel's amazing arrangements in his studio and out at our gigs, with wonderful feedback from the educated jazz audience of the San Francisco Bay Area. This album is the result of those experiences-- adding in the fine playing of my long time female jazz colleague, Carla Kaufman on bass and cello; and David Rokeach, one of the most sensitive and creative drummers I've ever heard. I am forever indebted to my band-- their generosity is unsurpassed. I love them so much, they are a dream team! Added also to this mix are recordings from earlier sessions which have the "Exotica" feel. "Caravan" and "Out of This World" include piano master, Larry Vuckovich, Bill Douglass, bass; and Eddie Marshall, drums. "Wisteria"; and "Cleopatra and the Viper"; two original songs written by Noel and myself, feature Grant Levin, piano; Adam Gay, bass; and Jake Shandling, drums. Thank you, everyone!

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