

San Diego County News

Independent publication serving San Diego County

March 2, 2012 By [sdcnews](#)



Kathy Kosins' 'To the Ladies of Cool' CD is a Commendable Tribute to Anita O'Day, Julie London, Chris Connor, and June Christy

Kathy Kosins' CD presents a wonderful and memorable toast "To the Ladies of Cool", Anita O'Day, Julie London, Chris Connor, and June Christy.

By Danny R. Johnson

LOS ANGELES – Kathy Kosins' latest Resonance Records CD, *To the Ladies of Cool*, scheduled for public release on March 13, 2012, is an ambitious collection of songs, which were sung by the late great jazz singers, Julie London, Anita O'Day, June Christy, and Chris Connor. Kosins, accompanied by a fine band, makes this 10-tracks CD a treasure chest filled with good music which brings back fond memories of the Golden Era of Jazz Singers (1945-1965).

To the Ladies of Cool highlights Kathy Kosins as more of a stylist as opposed to a singer, which I find an interesting distinction. This CD is perhaps one of her best, and one of the best of any contemporary jazz singer singing homage to four immortal women of jazz and pop. Moreover, that is where Kathy Kosins reputation so superbly lies. As one of the very best jazz vocalists still doing it up and an individual woman artist who is a great survivor in a very difficult business.

Kosins gives a toast to Johnny Mandel and Anita O'Day's rendition of *Hershey Bar*, and being a superb stylist as she is, rearranges the lyrics and gives us this marvelous remake called *Hershey Kisses*. Kosins sings *Hershey Kisses* with a pure voice that really sings the melodies as written. She takes the song and styles it. Improvises it, and swings it to a rapturous ending. She may have been

overshadowed by Ella Fitzgerald in Norman Granz's Verve Records, but to my ears Anita O'Day belongs to pantheon of all-time great jazz singers.

The Learnin' the Blues track, in tribute to Julie London, Kosins sings with real understanding and feeling about the blues. There is something of a bad girl in her rendition of this selection which I find very appealing; and while so many of commercially successful singers of London's time had vanished together with their cheerful smiles, the work of cynical and cool Kathy Kosins reminds us while artists like Julie London stands the test of time perfectly.

Kosins chooses to swing it up on Lullaby in Rhythm, a song made famous by Grande Dame June Christy, which she recorded on three different occasions. Kosins' voice is cool, sultry and with a touch of gravel. However, she sure sounds full-bodied in this package of gems of a song! The late Los Angeles Times jazz critic Leonard Feather gave Christy the Grande Dame tag during one of her stints at the former Hong Kong Bar in the Century Plaza Hotel. "To the extent that the term connotes professional prestige," he wrote, "it certainly applies." Christy was also called affectionately that misty Miss Christy because of her husky voice and her interpretation of the classic popular song "Misty."

A singer who used little vibrato and was admired for her inventive rhythmic alterations of ballads, Chris Connor belonged to the cool school of jazz singers that included Anita O'Day, June Christy, and Julie London, as Kathy Kosins so intuitively noted in To the Ladies of Cool CD. In the Don't Wait Up for Me track, a Connor classic, Kosins utilizes her straightforward vibrato less delivery and gives us a rendition that is both vulnerable and very guarded toward expressing her deepest feelings, keeping all but a few at a distance. She makes every note and every sound count. Like her honoree, Chris Connor, Kosins uses the subtle interpretation of Don't Wait Up for Me to interpret the melody so perfectly it sounds like a completely new song.

In a 1989 New York Times article, Anita O'Day revealed the little known secret to her distinctive singing style: "I am not a singer; I'm a song stylist. When I started out, I had no chops, just a lot of guts. I am not a singer because I do not have a vibrato. And I do not have a vibrato because I don't have a uvula, the little thing that hangs down in the throat and gives you a vibrato. If I want one, I have to shake my head to get it. That is why I sing so many notes – so you will not hear I do not have one. It is how I got my style."

When listening attentively to Kathy Kosins To the Ladies of Cool CD, you will find that there are essentially two camps of great American female singers, which are not always separate and not always regarded as equal. When we think of the major jazz singers, we start with Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Carmen McRae, Dinah Washington, and perhaps one or two unimpeachable other. Then there is the list of the great female pop singers like Judy Garland, Rosemary Clooney, Doris Day, and Dinah Shore.

Nevertheless, there are only a few singers who can be said to truly belong to jazz and pop royalty: Anita O'Day, Julie London, Chris Connor, and June Christy belong in the jazz and pop royalty pantheon. All of the selections Kathy Kosins sing on the *To the Ladies of Cool* CD, she personalizes them, generally liberally but always very subtly. When she makes her melodic alterations, it is so subtle that even the most discriminating music critic would have a hard time criticizing Kosins for being so. Yet, her music is, overall, just as swinging and satisfying as the *To the Ladies of Cool*.