

NIGHTS AT THE TURNTABLE
by Scott Yanow

OLD SWEET SONGS

With a name like the Cosmo Alleycats, one may think that this group plays lowdown music for science fiction movies. But while some may use the 1930s phrase “out of this world” to express admiration for their performances, the Cosmo Alleys is actually a San Francisco-based swing band. It was formed in 2010 and has featured Emily Day as its singer since 2013. Since that time it has gained a large regional audience, focusing on vintage dance music of the 1930s and that of slightly before and after. With Day’s enthusiastic, versatile, and very musical vocals, the group makes the early standards that it interprets sound both fun and topical. The singer also contributes newer pieces in the swing style.

The Cosmo Alleycats consist of the singer, tenor-saxophonist Pete Cornell, trumpeter Andrew Storar, pianist Andrew “Carnegie” Hall, bassist Steve Height, and drummer Mike Burns. On their latest release, *Old Sweet Songs*, the sextet is also joined by Yanos “Johnny Bones” Lustig on tenor, clarinet and alto for six of the dozen songs with trumpeter Konstantins Jemiljanovs on trumpet in Storar’s place on two numbers.

Throughout the set, Emily Day is the main star whether interpreting a ballad, giving “I Had Someone Else (Before I Had You)” a sassy vocal, digging into the blues on “Trouble In Mind,” or scatting quite effectively as on “Just You, Just Me.” Cornell’s tenor playing is impressive throughout, often showing the inspiration of Lester Young. Such favorites as “Sweet Sue,” “When I Grow Too Old To Dream” and “I Can’t Give You Anything But Love” are swung in a fresh manner. The five originals by the singer (with “Sinners’ Stomp” being co-written with Mike Burns), other than the early r&b flavor of “In A Dream,” could have fit comfortably on a session from 1936, particularly “Problème Cést Moi” and the quietly emotional ballad “I Guess It’s Just The Mood That I’m In.”

The Cosmo Alleycats and Emily Day deserve to be better known beyond Northern California. Their often-rollicking set is a joy.

Old Sweet Sounds (Self-Released, 12 selections, TT = 50:29) www.cosmoalleycats.com