

## CAROL SLOANE - "I NEVER WENT AWAY"



I Never Went Away BUY CD

### Review by Thomas Pierce

The last decade of the twentieth century, more than any other, witnessed the greatest loss of renowned jazz-related vocalists: Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Carmen McRae, June Christy, Betty Carter, Frank Sinatra, Joe Williams, Mel Torme, Billy Eckstine and Jimmy Witherspoon. Fortunately, there are many exceptional veteran singers still performing in this idiom and this just released recording strongly furthers the case that none continue the legacy any finer than Carol Sloane.

From her overwhelmingly praised appearance at the 1961 Newport Jazz Festival, followed by her classic "Out of The Blue" album on Columbia, up through her record setting three week engagement in August 2001 at the Oak Room in New York's Hotel Algonquin, musicians, other vocalists and serious observers have recognized her as a model of superior, refined jazz singing.

With this excellent CD (HighNote HCD 7085), one finds "I Never Went Away" an appropriate title also in light of her long term commitment to "keep at it", while maintaining the same level of quality in her material, musicians and method; this despite periods of not always obtaining consistent bookings to rely on performing as a sole livelihood, as opposed to her other talents such as writing and broadcasting.

There are numerous highlights, including her smooth urgency on Thad Jones' gorgeous serenade, "To You" and the sprightly elegant, medium tempo "I'll Buy You A Star" composed by Billy Strayhorn. However a number of other selections stand out as even better examples of what many view as her hallmarks - space, sound, swing and sensitive storytelling.

She skillfully uses space in her knowing, well-paced delivery of the opening track, the intriguing "I See A Million People", to create a focused sense of anticipation, which is nicely enhanced by the touching guitar and saxophone obligatos of Paul Bollenbach and Bill Easley.

Her haunting and controlled sound on the magnificent ballad, "Deep Purple", accompanied beautifully by Norman Simmons on solo piano, has such a deeply rich and clear timbre projected with flawless intonation, it reminds one of a remark made jokingly once by Joe Williams, after she sat in on one of his club dates - "Isn't perfect pitch disgusting?".

The swinging "Cotton Tail" is the latest instance of her practice of usually including at least one composition by Duke Ellington in every appearance or recording. That was exquisitely extended in her previous CD, "Romantic Ellington" to comprise ONLY his works. Steve Laspina's bass and Kenny Washington's drums provide the propulsion here a natural swinger like "La Sloane" thrives on. She also easily executes the tongue twisting lyrics that clearly show why in 1960, Jon Hendriks and Dave Lambert chose her to substitute, on very short notice, for an ailing Annie Ross. She quickly mastered the vocal group's demanding intricate solos and harmonies, including those at break neck tempos like this one.

Sensitive storytelling, in the opinion of many the most significant test of a singer, represents the essence of the title track, "I Never Went Away", which concludes the recording. Using a quiet, but inescapable intensity, her deliberately phrased reading convinces the listener of both her determination and ultimate inability to move on from an affair.

For a very thorough discography detailing all the songs on her extensive recordings, compiled by Jeanie Wilson and Steve Albin, reference the website, [www.carolsloane.com](http://www.carolsloane.com).

**TRACKS:** 1. "I See A Million People" 2. "How Could You Do A Thing Like That To Me" 3. "Maybe" 4. "To You" 5. "I'll Buy You A Star" 6. "You're Not So Easy To Forget" 7. "Deep Purple" 8. "I'm Not Alone" 9. "I'll Be Easy To Find" 10. "Cotton Tail" 11. "I Never Went Away".

**PERSONNEL:** Carol Sloane, vocals; Bill Easley, tenor sax, flute, clarinet; Norman Simmons, piano, arranger; Paul Bollenback, guitar; Steve Laspina, bass; Kenny Washington, drums.

[back to Record Reviews at jazzsingers.com](#)      [back to top](#)

JazzSingers.com welcomes reviewer Thomas Pierce. Thomas will be reviewing CD's for the web site. Please send an email to [recordreviews@jazzsingers.com](mailto:recordreviews@jazzsingers.com) if you would like to have your recording considered for review on this site. There will be other reviewers in the future in addition to Thomas.

