

## CHRIS CONNOR - "HAUNTED HEART"

**Haunted Heart** BUY CD

### Review by Thomas Pierce

Chris Connor's prolific career, which initially gained prominence in 1952 with Stan Kenton's orchestra when she succeeded June Christy, is still definitely alive and well. Her recent HighNote CD, "Haunted Heart", produced and arranged by pianist Michael Abene, should please those eagerly awaiting her first title recorded and released in the US since the 1992 "As Time Goes By" on Enja, as her voice strongly projects those qualities she is known for, with fine instrumental support.

The swinging opener, "By Myself", showcases her flowing buoyancy that takes one on a smoothly pulsating ride, nicely cushioned by the engaging brass work of Ingrid Jensen, who is excellent on trumpet and flugelhorn throughout the recording.

On the title track, after the bowed bass and muted trumpet set the stage, Ms. Connor's trademark rich, smoky delivery sustains the troubled message of this lovely ballad.

An enticingly gentle, medium tempo "Snowfall", that was an instrumental by the Claude Thornhill band with whom she performed as part of the Snowflakes vocal group in 1949, finds her in a lighter, almost youthful mood, appropriate to the peaceful, wintry images the song invokes.

She plunges into the CD's most energetic number, "Day In, Day Out", a composition she has long been comfortable with, using a bright, lilting sound and some delightful behind the beat phrasing.

"I Wished On The Moon" follows this in contrast, as a poignantly moving lament that features her well controlled and warmly resonant timbre.

The session concludes interestingly with "Drinking Again", the first time she has recorded this song. Those aware of her successful recovery many years ago from alcoholism will find this meaningful, as her firm tone here implies more resiliency than melancholy.

Repeated listening to this well crafted release confirms, for this reviewer, that Chris Connor is underrated as an interpreter of lyrics. She does not indulge in overly complex phrasing, with very dramatic pauses and accents. But her delivery quite effectively projects a wide range of moods, song to song, by distinct, but perceptive

changes in the emotional flavor of her voice to complement the lyrics. This is executed similar to truly talented actresses, whose subtle shadings, scene to scene, underscore the script, while avoiding unnecessary histrionics.

**TRACK LISTING:** 1."By Myself" 2."Haunted Heart" 3."Snowfall" 4."But Not For Me" 5."Stairway To The Stars" 6."Key Largo" 7."Only The Lonely" 8."Day In Day Out" 9."I Wished On The Moon" 10."Drinking Again".

**PERSONNEL:** Chris Connor - vocals; Ingrid Jensen - trumpet/flugelhorn (tracks 1,2, 4,6 & 8); Bill Easley - Tenor saxophone/flute (tracks 1,3,4,5 & 8); Michael Abene - piano/arranger; Chip Jackson - bass (tracks 1,2,7 & 8); Steve Laspina - bass (tracks 3,4,5,6 & 9); Dennis Mackel - drums (except track 10)

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