

Dean Martin - Forever Cool (2007)

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1. *Who's Got The Action (Feat. Big Bad Voodoo Daddy)* 2. *Ain't That A Kick In The Head (Feat. Kevin Spacey)* 3. *I've Grown Accustomed To Her Face (Feat. Chris Botti)* 4. *Baby-O (Feat. Paris Bennett)* 5. *Who Was That Lady? (Feat. The Capitol Studios Orchestra)* 6. *Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone (Feat. Robbie Williams)* 7. *I Can't Believe That You're In Love With Me (Feat. Joss Stone)* 8. *Just In Time (Feat. Dave Koz)* 9. *Baby, It's Cold Outside (Feat. Martina McBride)* 10. *King Of The Road (Feat. Kevin Spacey)* 11. *You're Nobody 'Til Somebody Loves You (Feat. Big Bad Voodoo Daddy & Shelby Lynne)* 12. *Arrivederci Roma (Feat. Tiziano Ferro)* 13. *Everybody Loves Somebody (Feat. Charles Aznavour)* 14. *Brahm's Lullaby A Capella*

The concept of the artificially created duets collection -- in which newly recorded vocal or instrumental performances by an array of big-name contemporary artists are spliced with existing tracks from another artist, living or dead -- is hardly a new one. Now it's Dean Martin's turn: Capitol Records, Martin's home throughout most of the 1950s, follows the established format by taking vintage tracks by the late, beloved crooner and grafting onto them vocal takes by country star Martina McBride, neo-R&B diva Joss Stone, actor Kevin Spacey, jazz musicians Chris Botti and Dave Koz and others, to unsurprisingly mixed results.

The thing to keep in mind before diving in to *Forever Cool* is that Martin's coolness credentials have never been in question -- hence the title -- whereas just about anyone who would dare breathe in his airspace is relatively uncool by default. Spacey, for example, may be engaging on the screen, but pretending to banter with the monumentally überhip Dino on "Ain't That a Kick in the Head" and Roger Miller's "King of the Road" (which Martin cut for Reprise, his post-Capitol label, on 1965's *(Remember Me) I'm the One Who Loves You* album), only makes Spacey seem dorky and the whole exercise somewhat ghoulish. Relative newbies like Stone and former American Idol contestant Paris Bennett don't stand a chance in this company, trying so hard when all Martin has to do is open his mouth. Even a seasoned vocalist like McBride, taking the traditional female role in Frank Loesser's seasonal perennial "Baby, It's Cold Outside," comes

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off as flat and uninspired. And Robbie Williams' turn on "Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone" just emphasizes that he's out of his league.

The instrumentalists fare better: Big Bad Voodoo Daddy was born to create Rat Pack-style big-band arrangements, and they do Martin justice on both "Who's Got the Action" and "You're Nobody Till Somebody Loves You," which they share not only with the big bad voodoo boozier himself but with country's Shelby Lynne, who holds her own. And both Botti (trumpet) and Koz (sax), maybe because they don't need to vocalize, only blow and brighten up their respective tracks: "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face" and "Just in Time." There is one true standout here, the only character in the bunch with as much certifiable personality as Martin, and that would be French superstar Charles Aznavour, who swings with Dino on the signature "Everybody Loves Somebody." Too bad, however, that the original hit single was not used but instead a lesser version. In the end, it's Dean Martin who saves the day each time out. What Forever Cool ultimately reaffirms is that there is no one like him. So just don't go expecting world-class performances from the posthumous partners and it's easy to have a good time with this experiment in studio manipulation. Now, where is that martini? [Note: The Deluxe Edition includes a DVD with "The Making Of..." and classic performance footage from Martin's eponymous NBC television show.] ---Jeff Tamarkin, Rovi

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