

Lorez Alexandria - For Swingers Only (1963)

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01. *Baltimore Oriole* 02. *Little Girl Blue* 03. *All or Nothing at All* 04. *Traveling Down a Lonely Road* 05. *Mother Earth* 06. *Love Look Away* 07. *The End of a Love Affair* 08. *That Old Devil Called Love* Lorez Alexandria – Vocals George Eskridge – Guitar John Young – Piano Ronald Wilson - Flute, Sax (Tenor) Jimmy Garrison – Bass Phil Thomas - Drums

Originally released in 1963, *For Swingers Only* is singer Lorez Alexandria's tenth album and her fourth for Argo. While Alexandria is best known to ardent jazz fans, she was one of the great interpretive vocalists of her time, and this set is proof of that. Alexandria was a Chicago native who had established her reputation there. That said, she was successful enough to relocate to Los Angeles in 1960 to lend her voice work to soundtracks, television commercials, and recordings, and to hold a club gig as a headliner. Unlike some of her previous Argo dates, this one was recorded in Chicago at Ter-Mar Recording Studios. Her band for the session included some regulars like guitarist George Eskridge and drummer Phil Thomas. The great Chicago pianist John Young and the amazing reed and woodwind studio player Ronald Wilson were also on the date. Her bass player for the session was Jimmy Garrison from the John Coltrane Quartet. The material is ambitious. Alexandria had cut Hoagy Carmichael's "Baltimore Oriole," before on the Deluxe label, but this version -- with its slippery, slightly Latin rhythm and popping flute -- is more sultry and atmospheric, and carries within it a loneliness that the earlier one doesn't touch. Her reading of Rodgers & Hart's "Little Girl Blue" is, though this may seem blasphemous, every bit the equal of Nina Simone's -- especially with its deeply soulful a cappella opening. The flute adds exponentially as it softly winds through the ends of lines, filling the space between the rhythm section and the singer. The sadness literally drips from her mouth, saturating the listener. These aren't all sad songs, however. The strutting "All or Nothing at All" is a finger-popping swinger with gorgeous work by Garrison, Young, and Wilson. Given that there are only eight cuts on this set, each one counts -- though these are far from one or two-minute selections, and they dig into their grooves and allow Alexandria to stretch out. The beautiful guitar work on "Traveling Down a Lonely Road" gives the listener the feeling that the protagonist doesn't mind so much. It is the first known vocal recording of the song -- it originally appeared as an instrumental in Federico Fellini's *La Strada*. Eskridge and drummer Thomas, with his subtle breakbeat style in the intro, set up a beautiful transaction for the piano, bass, and

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lilting flute work. The true highlight of the set is "Mother Earth," a 12/8 blues with Wilson blowing a gritty tenor and Garrison strolling the bassline in full gutbucket mode. Alexandria allows some of that large throaty range of hers out of the box and lets it rip. This is simply among Lorez Alexandria's most stylized, disciplined, soulful, and satisfying recording sessions, and is highly recommended. [While this fine album had been out of print in the United States for decades, Chicago's own Dusty Groove imprint licensed the master from Universal and had it remastered for release on compact disc for the first time in 2008.] ---Thom Jurek, Rovi

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