



Alexandra Jackson Bio

"Alexandra Jackson: Legacy & Alchemy"

Today's music-listening culture has been increasingly intrigued by the hybridization of styles, such as hip-hop intersecting with jazz and classical connecting to r&b. But the most vital genre-blending sound in our global reality is created by the crosscurrents of cultural music. What used to be deceptively categorized as "world music," the new and vibrant sounds of today are best described by the iconic Brazilian songwriter/singer Ivan Lins as "total music"—an instrumental elixir of jazz, blues, funk, soul, neosoul, ethnic and regional music from around the world. Arguably the most remarkable new artist to give voice to this fresh, uncategorizable style of modern music is the dynamic and spirited vocalist Alexandra Jackson who makes her striking debut with the brilliant Brazilian-American "total music" collaboration, *Alexandra Jackson: Legacy & Alchemy*, executive produced by Robert Hebert.

It's a three-year high-concept project produced by Hebert and Larry Williams, featuring a wide range of Brazilian and American performers. *Alexandra Jackson: Legacy & Alchemy* pays homage to Brazilian music, which celebrated significant anniversaries in the last few years: 2016 marked the 50-year high point of bossa nova and 2017 was the 100th anniversary of samba. (Preceding the release of *Alexandra Jackson: Legacy & Alchemy*, the vocalist delivers a six-song EP preview.)

"There's a huge melting pot of music in our world today," says the Atlanta-based singer. "So this album offers the opportunity for people to step outside the box. It's not just jazz, not the blues, not soul, not bossa nova, not samba, but it's a mix of them all." As such, different idioms of Brazilian music come to life in Jackson's contemporary delivery of fifteen tunes on *Legacy & Alchemy*—each with an in-depth story as the backdrop—which in essence relaunches the rich music legacy of the country as a contemporary force.

Recorded in Rio de Janeiro, Los Angeles, London, New York and Atlanta and sung in English, Spanish and Portuguese, the tunes include:

- Singer-songwriter Djavan's Amazon at-risk percussive, jazzy "Amazon Farewell"—featuring Brazilian superstar Carlinhos Brown

- Ivan Lins' buoyant "Somos Todos Iguais Neste Noite"—featuring Lins and Brazilian guitarist Ricardo Silveira
- The sweet, swinging Antonio Carlos Jobim-Vinicius de Moraes bossa nova "A Felicidade" featuring The Jobim Trio—from the seminal 1959 *Black Orpheus*, which is credited with launching samba and bossa nova to the world
- The Oscar Castro-Neves/Lorraine Castro-Neves beauty "All One" featuring Al Jarreau's final recording
- The Jobim classic "Corcovado" that highlights Miles Davis' trumpet from an aborted, unreleased Brazilian project in the '60s, the songwriter's vocals from a '90s recording and a vocalese by Lins to accompany Jackson.

Given the breadth and depth of Legacy & Alchemy, Jackson's background makes her the perfect actor to tell the story. As the youngest daughter of Atlanta's first African-American mayor, the late Maynard Holbrook Jackson Jr., and businesswoman and NPR personality Valerie Richardson Jackson, she comes from a musical family. She learned piano as a child and studied classical music, but at home she was influenced by classic music that surrounded her. "My father would play music by the Blind Boys of Alabama then move on to Take 6," she says. "My mother loved Johnny Hartman and Phoebe Snow. And I was into Earth Wind and Fire, Michael Jackson and Maxwell. My older sister had a strong connection to Latin culture, so I heard a lot of Celia Cruz, Mark Anthony and Gloria Estefan." Opera also played a role in her family, given that Jackson's grand aunt was Mattiwilda Dobbs, the African-American coloratura soprano, who was one of the first black singers to enjoy a major international career in opera.

After experimenting with choral and musical theater, Jackson dove into jazz, attending the University of Miami's Studio Music and Jazz Vocal program. "There was a lot of energy and the influence of a lot of different cultures. That's what Miami is all about," she says. "In my classes, I was in jazz ensembles. One was a Brazilian ensemble and another was a salsa ensemble, so I came to appreciate all these forms of music that were new to me." She adds: "Latin and Brazilian songs are among my favorites to sing to this day."

After moving to Los Angeles for a stretch, she returned to Atlanta and continued to pursue her jazz-singing career. In 2013, she made it to the stage of the Atlanta Jazz Festival as the opening act for jazz/pop/rap singer-songwriter and bassist Meshell Ndegeocello ("That was a huge honor," she says). At one point during her set, she sang in Portuguese the milestone bossa nova tune "The Girl From Ipanema." In the audience was Hebert, who had known Jackson since she was a child. He talked with her afterward and noted that he loved her songs that brought together Brazilian music, American jazz and soul, and London soul jazz. "Robert asked me what my career plans were," she says. "I think what drew him to me was my passion as a singer. But, while he had this specific project in mind, he never thought of an American singer for it. So he held that back for what turned

out to be over a year. In that time, he explored what my musical interests were. Then, about 16 months later, when he felt confident that my natural interests and abilities dovetailed with his vision for this project, only then did he say: 'This is what we should do, and, this is why we should do it.' That turned into this album."

When she started working on Legacy & Alchemy, she contacted a Portuguese vocal coach for help in her pronunciation. "I didn't know Portuguese well," she says. "So I had to learn quickly because I wanted to give honor to the music I was going to be singing, such as knowing what the words meant in English and understanding the stories. I didn't want to be disconnected from the Brazilian people and culture."

Even though Jackson didn't know how big a production was involved in the making of Legacy & Alchemy—it involved some 150 people, among them a dream team of musicians and engineers in five cities on three continents—she recognizes that she went on a journey. "Robert took us through a lot of different stages," she says. "With all the different collaborators, the project took on a life of its own. I didn't see it coming. When I started, I was excited to put out an album singing the music I love. No one but Robert and Larry (Williams) could have known that it would turn into this. But I'm a firm believer that everything happens for a reason. Sometimes I was frustrated that the project was taking so long to complete, but then I realized that it made sense. And now the moment has arrived."

The multimedia project was led by its producers Hebert and Williams, with key creative contributions came from co-producers the late Rod Temperton (his final production of a song co-written with Lionel Richie), Chris Walker, Arthur Maia, Ricardo Silveira and Max Viana. The album features as guest stars legendary Brazilian and American performers, including those who have passed away: Miles Davis, Antonio Carlos Jobim, Al Jarreau, Oscar Castro-Neves, and the late British composer Temperton. Support came from music legends such as Lins, Carlinhos Brown, Banda Black Rio, 96-year old samba icon Dona Ivone Lara, The Jobim Trio, Robertinho Silva, Hubert Laws, Al McKay, Larry Dunn and Siedah Garrett.

One of Jackson's most exciting moments came with singing with the long forgotten Miles-Jobim material on "Corcovado." "I was into Kind of Blue that one of my teachers at Miami, Marcus Printup, had given me," she says. "Later I found out about Miles working with Gil Evans on Quiet Nights." Hebert worked with Vince Wilburn Jr. of the Miles Davis Estate to "borrow" this Miles part, and then he went to Rio and talked to the Antonio Carlos Jobim family, specifically son Paulo and grandson Daniel, to see if they could use Antonio's voice. Then, Ivan Lins was asked to join the collaboration (he and Miles Davis were planning to work on a recording of Lins' songs; but the trumpeter passed away before they could start). "Everyone was supportive," Jackson says. "So here I was joining three musical icons. It came out great, but it was a monster of its own on this huge project."

Another Jackson favorite was “All One,” an Oscar Castro-Neves tune that was supplied with a new 1st verse by his widow, Lorraine, specifically to be sung by Al Jarreau (his last recording session). “I adored Al since the first time I heard him playing with George Benson,” Jackson says. “Al was so good at bridging various styles of music and taking it to different people. Everyone loved him. For me it was magical the way we worked together. It’s one of my favorite tracks on the album.” (The tune was recorded by Castro-Neves in 2005 as his last studio date, and there’s a sample of his voice from that session in the mix.) Jackson adds, “Al and Lorraine massaged the final lyric for two months with Al refusing to record it until it was the perfect message. In hindsight, we look back and marvel that ‘All One’ turned out to be Al’s last recording session. God bless him and Oscar.”

Another noteworthy track to Jackson was her cooking version of Djavan’s “Amazon Farewell” with the composer on guitar. It’s a socially relevant song about the Brazilian diaspora and the importance of accepting cultural differences. Then there’s the Brazilian R&B fusion “Palco,” a 1981 Gilberto Gil song paying homage to Earth Wind & Fire (EWF) — with original Hall of Fame EWF members Larry Dunn and Al McKay returning 36 years later to give thanks to Gil. Joining them was Chicago bass player Darryl Jones setting up a Rio-meets-Chicago groove with Gil’s percussionists in the flow, under the direct guidance of Gil’s bassist, Arthur Maia, who graciously stepped aside to allow Jones to bring “Chicago” to the track.

The track intended to bring it all together is “Brazilica,” the first single from the album. Originally recorded in 1976 by Chicago legend Ramsey Lewis and produced by Earth, Wind & Fire maestros Charles Stepney and Maurice White, their classic ‘70s recording featured master musicians channeling African and Brazilian music influences through the Chicago jazz and r&b prism of the old Chess Records proving ground. On this 2017 Alexandra Jackson version, Hebert personally took the producer helm and brought her together with Chicago’s Darryl Jones, Brazilian greats Teo Lima, Armando Marcal, Ricardo Silveira, Marco Brito, Marcelo Martins and Jesse Sadoc, and Chicago maestro Charles Floyd (considered an heir apparent to Stepney) conducting The Bossa Nova Noites Orquestra — which was formed to record the six orchestral tracks on the album. Hebert then brought into the collaboration American masters: Larry Williams channeling Chicago jazz on tenor sax and Jackson’s star vocal ensemble for the album: Chris Walker, Darryl Tookes and Curtis King, and then asked Stepney/White protégé, Larry Dunn of EWF to complete the vision on both synth and kalimba ... starring in a fitting, final tribute to his two mentors.

“What a beautiful circle that was with having all these guys together,” Jackson says. “It was poignant and quite meaningful to me.” That sums up Jackson’s embraced viewpoint of her music collaboration — turning an essential substance into an evolved treasure ... Legacy & Alchemy. “These songs and the stories behind each is why I’m so passionate about this project,” she says. “I’m hoping to take this music and transport it to reach millions of people. Brazil’s music deserves that and more.”

END

Contact:

Robert A. Hebert, Esq., CEO

Legacy and Alchemy LLC

USA - Brazil

executive@legacy-and-alchemy.com

www.legacy-and-alchemy.com

Mobile / WhatsApp: +1-404-964-8136

Rio de Janeiro, Brasil: +55-21-98417-6053