

MONTY ALEXANDER

"Echoes of Jilly's"

Concord Jazz. 13 tracks.

JAZZ

Grade: B+

This jazz trio's tribute to America's most beloved saloon singer is the latest in a recent spate of releases from jazz artists paying homage to Frank Sinatra. A difference is that, in the '60s, Alexander was a young lion of a pianist in Jilly Rizzo's employ during the fabled Manhattan nightclub's and the Rat Pack's heyday. It was in the Latin-influenced player's job description to provide accompaniment whenever Sinatra dropped in. As "Echoes" demonstrates, the unnerving experience paid off. Although Alexander's free-wheeling style is better suited to the Chairman's swinging numbers like "I've Got You Under My Skin," the surprise here is Alexander's tender, intuitive, lyrical treatment of Sinatra's ballads. The only mis-step? Program the disc player way past the closing number, "Strangers in the Night," a solo number performed on the *melodica*.

— Richard L. Eldredge

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