



**Shantel & Oz Almog: Kosher Nostra
Jewish Gangsters Greatest Hits
CD in slipcase with 60p fully illustrated booklet
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Shantel presents on KOSHER NOSTRA an unparalleled journey back in time to the music clubs, vaudeville theatres and gambling casinos in the U.S.A. The sound can be described as wild mix of Swing, Jazz, Twist, Charleston and the adorable charm of Yiddish songs and ballads.

The idea of Jewish gangsters in America is not something that is deeply engrained in the popular imagination. Yet the character of Hyman Roth in Coppola's *The Godfather* is based on Meyer Lansky, one of the most colourful figures in the Jewish-American underworld. Films such as *Billy Bathgate*, *Cotton Club*, *Once Upon a Time in America*, *The Godfather*, *Bugsy*, *Casino*, *Gangs of New York* or the current HBO series *Boardwalk Empire* are a mix of legend, cliché, stereotype and historical fact. In Europe, especially, the widespread myth of a predominantly Italian mafia in America has long overshadowed the significance of Jewish gangsters. Yet nobody who looks into the history of the American mafia can deny the extent to which such figures as Meyer Lansky, Benjamin 'Bugsy' Siegel, Dutch Schultz or Louis 'Lepke' Buchalter shaped the machinations of the underworld, along with the classic Sicilian godfathers. It is only in the past ten years or so that any light has been shed on this in Europe. The artist Oz Almog, who is also a curator at the Jewish Museum in Vienna, addressed the issue in a high-profile exhibition featuring his own paintings together with police photographs, crime-scene sketches, newspaper articles and the biographies of the gangsters themselves.

Shantel, who actually wrote his undergraduate thesis at Frankfurt University on the topic of organised crime, has thoroughly researched the KOSHER NOSTRA and its influence on American musical culture, going to great and sometimes quite adventurous lengths to put together this anthology charting the hidden history of organised crime in America. The myth of KOSHER NOSTRA, mafia methods as well as the background, circumstances, lives and deaths of Jewish gangsters in America all seem to us to be closely interwoven with the musical history of the USA in a rich and fascinating tapestry of diverse musical genres:

- In such hot-spots as New York, Chicago, Detroit and later Las Vegas, the music of Eastern European Jews fused with African-American jazz to create a new sound.
- Yiddish songs became incorporated into mainstream culture and became internationally popular.
- Swing, a fusion of Black and Jewish musical forms, was the perfect vehicle for such musicians as Abe Ellstein, Benny Goodman, Dave Tarras, Sophie Tucker, Aaron Lebedeff and Al Jolson to go beyond the narrow confines of their own ethnic culture.

The tracks on this anthology represent a parallel society made up of various ethnic scenes, all with their own media and a open-minded curiosity for new and exotic inputs from the WASP community on the one hand and the predominantly Catholic Irish and Italian communities on the other. This development of an aesthetic approach that crossed all ethnic boundaries spawned a music, film and musical industry in 1920s/30s America that quickly spread, with an impact that was felt even in Europe.

In the course of his research, **Shantel** unearthed some extremely rare gems: who knew, for instance, that Connie Francis had once recorded an entire album of Yiddish songs, or that Tom Jones had sung the praises of „his“ Yiddish Mama? **Shantel** also explored the question of whether there was a musical milieu related to the criminal activities of the mobsters and which musical careers were launched or promoted at the time? What were the most famous and popular Yiddish songs at the time, and which dance rhythms prevailed? Anyone who has listened carefully to the music of the **Bucovina Club** in recent years is bound to recognise some of the melodies.

This unparalleled journey back in time to the music clubs, vaudeville theatres and gambling casinos of the 1920s to 1960s bears compelling witness to the enormous diversity and truly remarkable fusion of styles. The anthology is accompanied by an informative and detailed essay, giving an introduction to the theme of KOSHER NOSTRA and introducing each of the artists featured.

The tracklisting

01. Connie Francis: Anniversary Song
02. Tom Jones: My Yiddishe Mamme
03. The Andrews Sisters: Bei Mir Bistu Sheyn
04. Chubby Checker: Misirlou
05. Solomon Schwartz et son Orchestra: Hava Nagila
06. The Bagelmann Sisters with Abe Ellstein Orchester: A Vaibele, a Tsnie
07. Leonid Utjossow: Mu Mu
08. Al Jolson & Andrews Sisters: The Old Piano Roll Blues
09. Connie Francis: Shein vi de Levone
10. Barry Sisters: Zug Es Meir Noch Amool
11. Molly Picon Es Fehlt Ihr Die Rozinke
12. Aaron Lebedeff & Alexander Olshanetzky's Orchestra: What Can You Mach?-S'is America
13. Sophie Tucker: My Yiddishe Mamme
14. Yiddish Swing Orchestra: The Bridegroom Special
15. The Barry Sisters: Eishes – Chiyell
16. The Gilt Edged Four: Yiddisher Charleston
17. Cleo Brown: When Hollywood Goes Black And Tan
18. Sophie Tucker: Some of These Days
19. Wilmoth Houdini: Black But Sweet
20. Connie Francis: O mein Papa
21. Roza Eskenazy: Hariklaki

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