

Steve Tyrell

the **DISNEY** Standards

Biography

It was only a matter of time before vocalist **Steve Tyrell** - who possesses a voice rich in warmth and character - would apply his gift to songs from the wonderful world of **Walt Disney**. This is a match made in movie music heaven. Having recorded four albums of Great American Songbook standards that have all been long-lingering Top 5 projects on the jazz charts, Tyrell has been at the crest of the wave of a renaissance in classy pop recordings, keeping company with such like-minded artists as Rod Stewart, Bette Midler, Harry Connick, Jr. and the incomparable Tony Bennett.

Now on the heels of a top drawer salute to the music of **Frank Sinatra** (*Songs of Sinatra* - Hollywood Records), Mr. Steve Tyrell turns his attention to *The Disney Standards* - a 14-track E-ticket travelogue through songs that have touched the hearts of generations around the globe for over half a century. The selections span the breadth of Disney film music history. From the heartwarming parent-to-child love song "Baby Mine" (from *Dumbo* - 1941) and the all-time dreamer's classic "When You Wish Upon a Star" (from *Pinocchio* - 1940) - the latter featuring top-selling trumpeter **Chris Botti** - to gems of the modern Disney era such as the delightful, Calypso-lilted love advice of "Kiss the Girl" (from *The Little Mermaid* - 1989) and the sunny, uplifting "You've Got a Friend in Me" (from *Toy Story* - 1995) - sung in instant classic style as a duet with New Orleans music legend **Dr. John** (a.k.a. Mac Rebennack).

Painstakingly A&R'd and then recorded over a three-month period, *The Disney Standards* is slated for a February 28, 2006 release on Walt Disney Records. The project marks a special homecoming for Tyrell who - after years of making his presence felt behind the scenes as a songwriter, producer and music supervisor in film and television - made a splash singing the standard "The Way You Look Tonight" in the 1991 comedy *Father of The Bride* (made for Disney's Buena Vista Entertainment arm). Reams of fan mail requesting more music from "that guy from Father of The Bride" instigated the music maven's return to his first love - singing - and the release of five acclaimed albums of American standards on the Atlantic and Columbia recording labels. "You could say my entire career has been a series of serendipitous occurrences," Tyrell surmises. "Now I'm back at Disney, where it all started, doing an album of Disney music."

The Disney Standards came to life as an idea Walt Disney Music president **Chris Montan** had with Tyrell in mind. "I loved his takes on the standards from his previous albums," Montan shares, "and thought it would be great to hear his voice on the great songs from the Disney catalog. Steve's sound is very unique (note: often likened to a "whiskey voice"). I knew right away that his versions of the Disney songs wouldn't sound like any I've ever heard before." Steve agrees. "They're not a complete

departure from what I do, yet they're unlike anything I've ever done."

Indeed, Tyrell's Disney takes are fresh and fit him like a hand in glove. His voice slides effortlessly into character-driven ditties such as the bouncy "Bear Necessities" (from *The Jungle Book*) and the slippery swing of "Cruella DeVil" (from *101 Dalmatians*). It is his singular poignancy that is the hallmark of tearjerkers such as "A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes" (from *Cinderella*) and "When She Loved Me" (from *Toy Story 2*).

Reflecting on his selection process from the vast number of classic Disney songs that have been created over the decades, Tyrell continues, "I picked songs I related to most... songs I could put in my bag. Disney sent me a batch of CDs and I went through them with my daughters, Tina and Lauryn, who grew up with this music. I picked 'When You Wish Upon a Star' because that's everybody's favorite. I immediately thought of Chris Botti to play trumpet because his sound is just perfect for it. But I also wanted some modern Disney songs like 'Beauty and the Beast,' the Phil Collins-penned 'You'll Be in My Heart' from *Tarzan* (featuring special guest Dave Koz on sax) and 'You've Got a Friend in Me' written by Randy Newman. I am especially thrilled to have had the opportunity to sing this great song of friendship with my buddy Mac (Dr. John), who I have been friends with since I started my career back in the '60s in New Orleans. And, of course, I *had* to do a jazz one. 'Ev'rybody Wants to Be a Cat' from *The Aristocats*, is so cool! Each one holds a special meaning for my girls. That's the beauty of these songs. They go from mother to child and get passed down through the generations, evoking such wonderful feelings and memories."

Music-wise, Tyrell worked with his regular team of "cats," including arrangers **Bob Mann** and **Alan Broadbent**. Among the charts Steve is most proud of is the track "Once Upon a Dream" (from *Sleeping Beauty*) - how it moves seamlessly from 4/4 time into an appropriately dreamy jazz waltz. Asked whether he sat down to watch some of the films during the selection process, Tyrell mused, "I looked at some of the scenes they were used in to refresh my memory. Mostly, though, I dealt with the songs from a strictly musical point of view. When somebody is listening to the album, the music has to work on its own merit."

Once *The Disney Standards* was completed, the Walt Disney Records team came up with the shrewd marketing strategy of having Steve film a music video for the song "Bella Note" that would be included as a bonus on the 50th Anniversary inaugural DVD release of Disney's 1955 classic *Lady and The Tramp*, and would tie Tyrell's CD release date in with that of the home video. In the clip for "Bella Note" - one of two songs Tyrell recorded from *Lady and The Tramp* (the other is the playful "He's a Tramp") - Steve performs with a combo in the same little Italian restaurant that the famous courting canines share spaghetti and . . . a smooch on the sly. With classic Disney limited edition home video releases known to sell millions of copies, Steve's presence in the DVD's bonus video clip will introduce him to that many more new fans spanning cultural and generational lines.

That's just the shot in the arm that Steve Tyrell's career is presently poised for. What do you do for an encore when your songs have been sung by **Ray Charles**, **Elvis Presley** and **Diana Ross**, plus you've produced **Elton John**, **Dolly Parton**, **Rickie Lee Jones**, **Bonnie Raitt** and **Chaka Khan**, to name a few? Then add producing musical numbers for big screen giants **Jack Nicholson** and **Shirley Maclaine**, as well as producing **Woody Allen**'s legendary comedy album *Woody Allen/Standup Comic*, plus composing some of TV's most memorable music for still-popular shows such as *The Partridge Family*, *WKRP in Cincinnati*, *Matlock* and, later, both *Brady Bunch* movies. Steve even produced a Grammy-winning gospel album in 1998 for **Andy Griffith**, went on to win his own Grammy in 2004 for producing **Rod Stewart's Stardust: The Great American Songbook Volume III**, and is nominated again in 2006 for Stewart's *Volume IV*.

Over the illustrious course of four decades in the music business, Renaissance man Steve Tyrell has enjoyed the kind of career that seems too good to be true. The three-time Emmy nominee went from R&B roots as a teen singer in an all-black band in Houston, and producing some R&B/Pop sides in New Orleans to landing in New York City at 18 to work at Scepter Records as a young staff producer alongside **Burt Bacharach**, **Hal David**, **the Shirelles** and **Dionne Warwick**. At Scepter, Tyrell produced and promoted three number 1 hits for **B.J. Thomas**: "Hooked On a Feeling," "Somebody Done Somebody Wrong Song" and the '70s film classic "Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head" (from *Butch Cassidy & The Sundance Kid*). Never sitting well with the "record executive" tag, Steve parlayed his A&R/promotion skills which led to his custom label New Design Music (a joint venture of Columbia Records under **Clive Davis** where he produced jazz/rock pioneers **Blood Sweat & Tears**), followed by a groundbreaking partnership with songwriting legend **Barry Mann** into the world of what has become "Music Supervision" for film and television. During this time Steve was responsible for several hits, including writing and producing the Billboard #1 pop smash "How Do You Talk to An Angel" in 1992 from the Fox TV show *The Heights*.

More importantly, Steve Tyrell produced the breakthrough "Somewhere Out There" from **Steven Spielberg's** 1986 animated feature *An American Tale* (the first time a song sung by animated characters was reprised at film's end by pop stars to become a hit, in this case for **Linda Ronstadt** and **James Ingram**). "I had a vision back in 1986 to take a song from the middle of the movie, weave it throughout the film then do a contemporary pop version over the end title," Tyrell states. "Somewhere Out There" - a chart-topping **Barry Mann/Cynthia Weill** composition - not only won two Grammys, but started a very successful trend in box office/pop chart synergy. That synergy very much comes into play on *The Disney Standards* in that same way as Tyrell takes character-driven animated film music standards and respectfully makes radio-friendly pop versions of them. Steve also accomplished this sort of thing successfully in 1990 when he composed the music for the animated television series *Peter Pan & The Pirates*. During this same period Steve reunited with his friend Linda Ronstadt, producing her Grammy-winning duet with **Aaron Neville**, "Don't Know Much."

With all of this success as a mover and shaker behind the scenes, it wasn't until a chance cameo singing "The Way You Look Tonight" in the **Steve Martin** comedy *Father of The Bride* that Tyrell - who was then only heard singing song demos - caught the ears and hearts of listeners around the globe wanting to hear more of his singular interpretations of classic American songs. He followed up with two more standards for the soundtrack of the 1995 sequel, *Father of the Bride Part II* to equal fan interest.

Seeing a chance to dust off his teen dream of singing stardom, Steve self-produced his debut album, *A New Standard*, which was personally picked up for Atlantic Records by the label's renowned co-founder **Ahmet Ertegun** and chairman **Val Azoli**. It swiftly went Top 5 and stayed on Billboard's jazz chart for 90 weeks. Switching to Columbia Records, Tyrell followed it with a second album, *Standard Time*, in 2001, the holiday themed *This Time of Year* in 2002, and the romantic themed *This Guy's in Love* in 2003 - all Top 5 Billboard jazz charters.

In 2005, Steve Tyrell embarked upon a more profound challenge when he released *Songs of Sinatra* on the Hollywood label. Serendipity, once again, came into play in the way this project came about. Sitting next to none other than **Quincy Jones** at a Beverly Hills birthday dinner for Tina Sinatra, Steve was asked by "Q" and the Sinatra family to sing "Fly Me to the Moon" at a Hollywood Bowl Hall of Fame concert inducting Frank Sinatra. Though nervous at first about being accepted by Sinatra buffs at such a prestigious level, Tyrell wowed the crowd. It didn't take a genius to see that it would be a coup for Steve to follow the performance with an album saluting "Sinatra the Great."

Songs of Sinatra was both a humbling and fortifying experience for Tyrell, who has been playing catch up in his mastery of what the former R&B singer still sometimes refers to as his 'parents' music.' "Studying Sinatra was like going to the University of Higher Vocal Education," he likens. "The success I had with that music right out of the box was a blessing." In the liner notes for *Songs of Sinatra, Frank Sinatra, Jr.* personally praised Tyrell thusly: "Listen to his sensitivity and feeling in the ballads, as well as the fun he has with the tempo songs. Only a man who has made music with swing bands - and in the same life felt the certain kind of hurt that emerges in his sad ballads - can sing the songs enclosed in this album with license and understanding." And in an e-mail sent just after her first listen to *Songs of Sinatra*, **Tina Sinatra** wrote, "Bravo, Steve! You were true to the music! How refreshing to hear the 'swing' where it should be and the 'ballad' held sacred once again. Your arrangements are wonderfully unique and pay tribute with every note. I know the composers are most grateful, and so am I!"

In a similar vein, Tyrell just completed a two-month stint at New York City's Carlyle Hotel, former home of the late **Bobby Short** who held a remarkable residency there for 33 years. Picking up the torch from Short and his like, Steve Tyrell plans to take his music from *The Disney Standards*, *Songs of Sinatra*, and all of his previous "Standards" CDs on the road throughout 2006 and beyond. Among the prestigious tour stops are dates with the Boston Pops and the Houston Symphony, plus a summer tour of Europe.

An American pop convert of the highest order, Steve Tyrell now plans to seize any and every opportunity to express his deep love for The Great American Songbook. "Those songs are America's greatest contribution to the arts," Tyrell proclaims, "and I am thrilled about the renaissance going on for this music. I am totally devoted to this music and its further exposure."

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