

Steve Tyrell

A New Standard

A Simple Love for the Tune

Having achieved great success over the course of four decades as a songwriter, producer, and performer, Steve Tyrell confidently builds his musical dream in 1999 with "A New Standard" -- his Atlantic Records debut.

Beginning with a simple love of the tune and a rich, soothing voice, Tyrell brings engaging arrangements -- marked by his flair for unique phrasings -- to such notable album moments as Ray Noble's "The Very Thought Of You," the Harold Arlen/Ted Koehler tune "I've Got The World On A String," Irving Berlin's "I've Got My Love To Keep Me Warm," and the Billie Holiday classic "The Mood I'm In."

More than the fabric of our shared musical heritage, these seventeen stellar songs remain unrivaled in their ability to touch hearts and define the emotions that otherwise elude concise explanation. Without exception, Tyrell delivers the material with a sense for the original sentiment behind each song while rejecting any impulse to dress them up in the well-worn suit of nostalgia. After all, timeless doesn't necessarily mean dusty.

Tyrell -- the author behind such pop hits as the chart-topping "How Do You Talk To An Angel" and producer of Linda Ronstadt's Grammy-winning "Don't Know Much" (a duet with Aaron Neville) and "Somewhere Out There" (a duet with James Ingram) singles -- approached the project as an outgrowth of his standards recordings for the popular Charles Shyer-directed Father Of The Bride movies.

The Search for Origins

Reflecting Tyrell's reverence for the material and its origins, "A New Standard" features performances from the legendary likes of the late Harry "Sweets" Edison, best known for his work with Count

Basie, Frank Sinatra and Billie Holiday; "Toots" Thielemans, a pioneer in jazz harmonica; famed big band drummer/composer Louie Bellson, much touted for his key role in the stand-out bands of Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, Harry James, and Duke Ellington; horn player Clark Terry, celebrated for his work with Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Oscar Peterson and the Tonight Show Orchestra; bop trombone hero Bill Watrous, who has played with Quincy Jones, Kal Winding, Maynard Ferguson, and Woody Herman; and Plas Johnson, the tenor sax great who made The Pink Panther soundtrack so unforgettable while performing with the likes of Ella Fitzgerald, Nat King Cole, the Beach Boys, and Frank Zappa.

Additional contributors include Jazz Crusaders founding member, pianist Joe Sample and guitarist/arranger and Tyrell's longtime associate Bob Mann (James Taylor, Brecker Brothers, Linda Ronstadt, Neil Diamond) -- both of whom brought their skills as arrangers, producers, and performers to the album. "I've always considered myself a song man," says Tyrell. "And, if anything, that's the part of my nature that I poured into making this album. It was a true thrill."

Self-financed prior to its coming to Atlantic, the album was one that Tyrell had long been encouraged to make by friends, family, business associates, and total strangers. As an artist used to working on the other side of the studio glass and generally behind the scenes, Tyrell was taken aback by the positive outpouring that followed his high-profile performances on 1991's *Father Of The Bride* remake -- with "The Way You Look Tonight" -- and 1995's *Father Of The Bride, Part II*, with "Give Me The Simple Life" and "On The Sunny Side Of The Street."

"I wasn't looking to make a solo record and wasn't out for some pure ego trip," says Tyrell, whose three *Father of The Bride* tracks are also included on "A New Standard." "It was nice to have so many people calling about the work I've done on those films but it didn't seem like enough to build a whole album around."

Then came the fortuitous encounter....

A Chance Encounter

"I was running in the park in Sherman Oaks and - by pure chance -- I ran into Louie Bellson," says Tyrell, a Houston native who now makes his home in the Los Angeles area. "Louie is a legend, one of the great drummers of all time. We got to talking and eventually I played him some of the Father Of The Bride stuff I'd done. He told me he loved it and genuinely encouraged me to do this record." With that inspiration struck.

"I started asking Louie about some of my heroes from that era, y'know the ones that played his music in the first place. If I could, I wanted to track down those guys, the incredible soloists from the day, and see if they'd be willing to play on the album."

What Tyrell had previously regarded as a project without a real heartbeat had suddenly found a racing pulse. Along with his wife, partner, and album co-producer, Stephanie, Steve began researching material and rocking the phones to track down the right players to bring the record to life.

"I thought, if I could get the original performers from some of my favorite standards, then that would make the record truly special," says Tyrell. "I thought, if I record 'A Kiss To Build A Dream On,' which is a Louis Armstrong classic, who the hell's going to play the trumpet solo? It's got to be somebody from that era, right? And the only person in my mind that could really play that solo was Clark Terry. After all, 'Pops' Armstrong -- as he'd call him -- was Clark's mentor."

Tyrell went ahead and recorded "A Kiss to Build a Dream On" to near completion, with space only for a horn solo, and sent it off to Clark Terry. In tracking the Sinatra classic 'I've Got The World On A String,' Steve likewise decided to seek out the incomparable horn player Harry "Sweets" Edison to handle that song's solo. It was the legendary Edison who was featured on so many of Sinatra's most-famous recordings and was always right there on stage with him. ▣ After locating Edison and completing the number -- sans solo -- he

similarly dropped a tape in the mail. It wasn't long before things began to move.

"I was thrilled when Clark called me to say he'd be honored to play on the record," says Steve before stopping to laugh. "Clark told me that when he first heard the music he said to himself, 'This brother's into something.'"

"Sweets" Edison, who passed away just this year, phoned thirty minutes later with his enthused RSVP to join Steve on the project. The sudden coming-together of talents proved immediately inspirational.

"I was in the studio with Joe Sample and Bob Mann at the time," recalls Tyrell. "We were trying to figure out this Duke Ellington song, 'Don't Get Around Much Anymore,' and Joe gets this idea. He says, 'Well shit, we've got both Ellington and Basie's trumpet players here -- let's just take this Ellington tune and put it in a kind of Basie bag, y'know. So he starts playing for us. As it turned out, both 'Sweets' and Clark played on the track for us and it became a kind of historic recording. With that song and those guys - yeah, there was a lot of history going on. Clark told me he played that song the first time it had ever been played."