

Steve Tyrell - Back to Bacharach *Biography*

Every recording artist has one album that they are destined to make - an album so singularly in-sync with their sensibility and history that its' making smacks of pure destiny. For **Steve Tyrell** - the distinguished Grammy winner and Emmy nominated purveyor of pop standards, as well as a behind the scenes impresario- that album is *Back to Bacharach*, a deeply personal collection of songs from the piano of **Burt Bacharach** and the pen of **Hal David**.

For music lovers the world over, songs like "The Look of Love," "Walk On By," "Close to You," "A House Is Not a Home" and "Alfie" are indelibly bound to our DNA, haunting strands of melodious memories that bring forth a flood of emotions and associations. For Steve Tyrell, they represent milestones in a distinguished career and the joys and pains of his own personal life. It is because of his close proximity to the songs and their creators that Steve is able to bring something unique to his versions while being fortunate enough to include **Dionne Warwick**, **Herb Alpert** and **2008 Grammy Award winner Patti Austin** well as **Bacharach** himself on the CD to relive the golden moments.

"This album is different from any I'll ever do," states Tyrell, who in the last decade has been at the forefront of a renaissance in recordings from the Great American Songbook via his previous six projects and the Grammy winning albums he produced with Rod Stewart. "The music of my friends Burt and Hal has been a lifelong collaboration. Their songs are my songs. It's a very unique situation."

Indeed. It was as a bright and ambitious 19 year-old that Steve journeyed from Houston, Texas to New York City to work at pop and soul music giant Scepter Records. By that time, he'd already been a recording artist at 15, scoring local R&B hits on the Philips and London labels.

When Steve arrived at **Scepter Records** and its adjacent **Baby Monica Publishing Company**, he immediately found himself surrounded by swiftly developing super teams such as **Carole King and Gerry Goffin**, **Nickolas Ashford & Valerie Simpson** and **Barry Mann & Cynthia Weil**. But it was with a pair of outside contractors - songwriting producers **Burt Bacharach & Hal David** - that Steve would forge his most personal alliance.

Through his work with Bacharach & David, Tyrell got to work in motion pictures and at a very young age became one of the first music supervisors responsible for coordinating hit songs with the release of the films they appeared in. Those successes included the gold standard of foreplay songs, "The Look of Love" (recorded for the James Bond spy spoof *Casino Royale* by **Dusty Springfield**), and the theme for *Alfie* (sung by **Cher** in the film and by **Dionne Warwick** at the Academy Awards) as well as the theme from the legendary Jacqueline Susan film *Valley Of The Dolls* (which Tyrell helped to make Dionne's first number one Pop hit record.) The film song that Steve played a major role in was "Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head" - the one that earned Bacharach & David the Oscar® for 1969's Best Original Song in a Motion Picture. When looking for an artist to sing the song, Steve called in his friend from Texas, **B.J. Thomas** who recorded it for *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.

In the early '70s, Steve moved to California and co-founded (with Barry Mann) **Tyrell-Mann Music** in order to continue his innovative work in movie music. Among his many achievements, Steve won a Grammy® in 2004 for producing **Rod Stewart's** *Stardust: The Great American Songbook, Volume III*. And the 3X Emmy®-nominee co-produced with Peter Asher the groundbreaking "Somewhere Out There" for **Steven Spielberg's** 1986 feature *American Tail*. It marked 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**. That recording won two Grammy Awards for "Song Of The Year" and "Best Song From A Motion Picture."

Steve was content working his behind-the-scenes magic until he was "rediscovered" as an artist singing "The Way You Look Tonight" as the wedding singer in Disney's 1991 comedy *Father of the Bride*. After he sang two more numbers in the 1995 sequel, fans demanded more of Tyrell, resulting in his first album *A New Standard*, released on Atlantic Records to a 90-week run on the Billboard® jazz chart and peaking in the Top 5. A switch to Columbia Records resulted in three more Top 5 charters: *Standard Time* (2001), *This Time of Year* (2002) and *This Guy's In Love* (2003).

In 2003, the stage was finally set for Steve to do the Bacharach album. He called Burt in to help and got two songs completed before tragedy struck. His beloved wife and co-producer of the first three albums, **Stephanie Tyrell**, had been diagnosed with cancer. A gifted lyricist in her own right, Stephanie composed many wonderful songs including a 1992 Number 1 Pop hit entitled "How Do You Talk To An Angel?" But the song that she was most proud of was "Remember the Dream," a piece **Coretta Scott King** personally requested be sung over the grave of her husband, **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**, to commemorate the 25th anniversary of his death.

When Stephanie became ill, Steve put everything on hold. He completed his fourth album, *This Guy's in Love*, with other standards he'd already recorded and spent the last 18 months of his wife's life by her side. "Burt called me almost every day when she was sick...always concerned," Steve remembers. "And when she died, he played 'A House is Not a Home' - with James Ingram singing - at her memorial.

After Stephanie's death, Steve did not immediately return to the Bacharach project. First came the equally humbling and fortifying *Songs of Sinatra* project for Hollywood Records in 2005 which once again achieved Top 5 status on the Billboard jazz charts, followed by a collection of Disney film music titled *The Disney Standards* in 2006, which achieved Top 10 status on the Billboard jazz charts. Finally ready to get *Back to Bacharach*, Steve took a year and a half to handcraft his dream project.

When Steve first recorded "This Guy's In Love With You" in 2003, he had Burt customize the arrangement. For the version that appears on this album, Steve returned to the sound of the original chart-topping hit that was commissioned for an **Herb Alpert** television special. He also got Alpert to join him, reprising his trumpet and hummed melody parts. Steve then turned two Bacharach chestnuts into duets with recent Grammy-winner **Patti Austin**: "Don't Make Me Over" (Dionne Warwick's very first hit from 1963) and "I Say a Little Prayer" (the original of which earned Steve his very first gold single).

Among the most special songs to Steve on this CD is "One Less Bell to Answer," a smash for the **Marilyn McCool**-led **5th Dimension** in 1970. "That song has one of the most haunting melodies," Steve muses. Like many of the numbers on this collection, this song is usually associated with women singing it, but Steve was undeterred. "I was having lunch in Santa Monica with Burt when I told him I wanted to do it. We only had to change one line to make it work: 'One less gal to look after.'"

Also memorable is "Alfie," featuring co-producer and long time collaborator **Bob Mann** on guitar. "That song was not considered commercial when they wrote it," Steve shares, "but I loved it right away and worked hard to get Dionne's version exposed. It is now considered one of the finest songs of all time." It is also the piece that Bacharach - when pressed - acknowledges as the child of which he's most proud. But to Steve's ear, "A House is Not a Home" is Bacharach & David's finest hour. "You can't write a better song than this," he insists.

The song that gets the Technicolor treatment on *Back To Bacharach* is their 1965 anthem, "What the World Needs Now is Love," a song Steve believes is "more relevant now than it ever was." Bacharach's piano glues together the whole affair which features superstars **Rod Stewart**, **James Taylor**, **Martina McBride** and **Dionne Warwick** along with Tyrell. The all-star recording is for a worthy cause - all proceeds will go to the **National Colorectal Cancer Research Alliance (NCCRA)** in remembrance of Steve's wife Stephanie and **Jay Monahan**, the late husband of television journalist **Katie Couric**. Close friends, Steve Tyrell and Katie Couric have worked together constantly since his wife's death raising funds to benefit Colon Cancer research and co-host an annual benefit in Seattle called "Make The Evening Matter."

"I like to say *Back to Bacharach* was 40 years in the making," Steve concludes. "There is no other music like this in my life. And I am honored to share it with the world...my way."

Back To Bacharach is set for release on Tyrell's own **New Design Records** distributed by **Koch Records** on May 13, 2008.

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