

"I Remember You"

Love: That Certain Standard

Tuck & Patti Embrace the Great American Songbook

Written by Carol Wright

Vocalist Patti Cathcart and guitarist Tuck Andress have been a steady performing duo for so long now, going on three decades, that it's somewhat surprising that **I Remember You**—their new T&P Records recording, licensed to Universal Music—zeroes in on the Great American Songbook. Surely they've already recorded their take on these enduring standards.

But no, it just seems so, seems as if everything they've written and recorded is already a standard. In their 11 previous releases, only a handful of tunes would fall under the typical, pre-rock era, standards banner.

Patti couldn't wait to dive into the project, slated for release in Asia in October, 2007 and worldwide in January, 2008. "We meant to make this album a few years ago," she says, "but then I started writing songs for **Taking the Long Way Home** (my take on creating standards), so we never got around to recording it. Finally, with **I Remember You**, I could salute Ella, and Tuck could be the big band and the orchestra. The album is our tribute, a loving thank you to Ella Fitzgerald and Joe Pass for the path they started us on."

"As always, Patti is the producer and the arranger," explains Tuck, "and the conductor, and I am the enthusiastically cooperative orchestra and occasionally the problem solver when the orchestra gets a little uncooperative or grumpy. We've definitely learned to capitalize on our strengths!"

The album's track lineup began to take shape as Tuck and Patti played gigs in Asia, Europe, and the US. They asked their audiences to email requests. What would they like to see on a Great American Songbook album? Patti was intrigued by the feedback.

"The most requested song, worldwide, was 'Summertime.' But it was interesting what fans in other countries requested in addition to what we traditionally would include: A Bob Dylan tune. A Beach Boys song. Sly and the Family Stone, Joni Mitchell, Woody Guthrie, Steely Dan, Earth, Wind and Fire. They drew fewer distinctions based on the era or style of music, just requesting great songs. Because we in the States have lived with them in a different way (and are perhaps even jaded about some of the best ones due to overexposure), we seem to have more opinions about how these songs should fit into categories. Outside our country, on the other hand, the Great American Songbook is thought to include the whole range of American popular music."

Tuck and Patti decided for this project, however, to focus on tunes from their parents' generation. "There a reason why these songs are called standards," says Patti. "They are gorgeous tunes, with perfect lyrics, and they speak unabashedly about love. They'll never stop being relevant. On iTunes and YouTube, we could easily compare how all the greats performed them. We knew we had nothing to prove by trying to outdo or redo any one version. All we could do at this point was be the best we could be and add our voice to that list.

"In our early years of touring, we suddenly found ourselves in the company of people we had never dreamed of even meeting, let alone sharing the stage with: Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Count Basie, Al Grey, Clark Terry, Keeter Betts, the Modern Jazz Quartet, Cab Calloway, Illinois Jacquet, Kenny Burrell, Joe Pass...the list goes on and on. Gradually people like this undergo a transformation from real people to mythical figures, but we were lucky enough to be there when they were very real people, who would tell us, 'You kids keep doing what you're doing.' It meant the world to us. We made this CD in remembrance of these bright lights, these enduring giants, and the remarkable songwriters we never got to meet. Thus our title **I Remember You**."

Often CDs feature "bonus tracks," but Tuck & Patti decided to offer another kind of bonus this time: They asked old friend, celebrated writer and now Poet Laureate of California Al Young to write liner notes. Not traditional liner notes designed to extol the praises of the music and sell CDs, in fact not really liner notes at all. "We gave him the assignment we would want to be given," explains Patti. "We said, 'Take what we recorded as a jumping off point to write whatever you want about anything you want.' Al ended up presenting us with an exquisite collection of meditations on remembrance, which we are honored to include in its entirety."

Speaking of eloquent writing, the "I Remember You" title track, written by Johnny Mercer and Victor Schertzinger, immediately immerses the listener in the deep water of an inspired lyric. Was it "long, long ago" or "an hour or so"? When you count time in kisses, when is then and when is now? What kind of love is it that could be remembered as "the thrill of it all" when "life is through"? From listening to Patti sing it, she might know the answers—at least she's asked the questions. "There is a reason why everyone imaginable did songs like this. They never let you down. They will keep taking you deeper for a lifetime."

Beginning the album with a departure from any of the duo's previous textures, Patti insisted on a sparse walking bass accompaniment, played on Tuck's guitar, of course. "It was surprisingly hard to leave out all the chords and countermelodies," says Tuck, "but Patti kept at me: 'No, no, just the walking bass: it sounds so cool.' And I agree."

To give Duke Ellington his due, Patti selected "In a Sentimental Mood," falling deeply into the dreamy lyrics penned by Manny Kurtz and Irving Mills. "We were trying to get an orchestral sound," explains Tuck, "with strings sustaining and swelling. The lyrics are so beautiful, especially when Patti sings them. We kept it simple to do justice to this sublime song."

The oldest song on **I Remember You** dates from 1926, Fred Rose and Walter Hirsch's "Deed I Do." Everybody did it," says Patti, "but I especially love the Ella/Count Basie version. We studied every detail of their groove. How do you play those tutti horn punches at the same time as the bass line and Basie's embellishments, plus guitarist Freddie Green's classic chunk-chunk style? There's no way to do it all at once, just on one guitar, without it sounding stiff and uncomfortable—it was supposed to be dance music! But Tuck found a way to juggle the parts just right, so he could evoke the sense of the Basie sound without losing the feel."

"It doesn't hurt to have Patti singing, either," Tuck adds. "It's fun to mute the guitar on playback and realize that she doesn't really need any accompaniment anyway, she's already swinging like a whole big band."

Patti had an unusual take on Ray Noble's ballad "The Very Thought of You," as a samba. "The lyrics—'I'm happy as a king'—were so jubilant and contagious that it brought back memories

of everybody dancing and singing the samba in Brazil. That sound always makes me feel like celebrating."

For Edward Heyman and Victor Young's "When I Fall In Love," Tuck provided a sparkling accompaniment, explains Patti, "like little prayers, little galaxies. It's beautiful music, beautiful guitar. One of Tuck's great strengths is that he sees all the harmonic options. It's magic to me that, out of all the possibilities, he chose the perfect ones."

Tuck adds, "When I heard Patti sing this song I'd known since childhood, it was like I heard it for the first time. She made me realize how innocent yet profound the lyrics are. That is what sent me in such a deep, meditative direction."

The duo always records live in their home studio, which is as carefully crafted as a piece of fine furniture, particularly with Patti's proviso that cables should be unseen and equipment fans unheard. Even visitors remark on the studio's uncluttered serenity. "There's a give and take," Tuck says, "a conversation that we cannot achieve by recording separately or combining separate takes. After all these years together, we live more and more in the subtle details. We set it up so we can't see each other, so we have to depend even more on listening—to every nuance—and just feeling each other."

This was the first time they actually mixed a project at home, though, made possible by a major studio upgrade. Patti explains, "Howard Johnston mixed all our previous albums at his San Francisco studio, Different Fur, building each time on what he did the previous time. When he decided to sell it, we took it as the cue to take advantage of all the technological advances over the last 12 years and set ourselves up to mix at home. With his help, of course—he is a genius and a generous, patient teacher. The learning curve was long, but we think it is the best-sounding CD we've ever made." As always, they went to their trusted old friend Bernie Grundman for mastering.

"A Foggy Day" was popularized in 1937 by Fred Astaire in **A Damsel In Distress**, but this Gershwin classic comes back to Ella for Patti. Their playful version, however, is bright with syncopation and an uptempo beat. Tuck says, "We'd performed it many times, but one of Patti's signature producer tricks to keep it spontaneous is to throw me a curve just before we record a song. This time she said, 'Check this out!' and played me a Wynton Marsalis version, which had a lot of polyrhythms and a completely different harmonic approach than I usually took. I didn't have time to figure much of it out before we went into the studio, but it certainly sent us bumping each other down a new path when we started recording."

"So, how did we get to the part where I sang 'There you were/There you were'?" Patti asks Tuck. "I think we were just jamming. Even with set arrangements, we leave room for what might happen. So we kept that as part of the arrangement on the next take."

"Even if we arrange and rearrange," adds Tuck, "it still has that edge. We don't want too many rough edges to distract from these beautiful songs, but it's supposed to be a real-time adventure, like walking a tightrope. That's the magic of it all."

"It Might As Well Be Spring" (Rodgers and Hammerstein) is Tuck's solo showcase, and listeners at first may not be able to pick out the unique slant. "When Patti suggested it, she casually said, 'It's a waltz.' Well, that was news to me; I'd never heard anybody do it that way. But I've learned not to question what I hear from Producer Patti, because it turns out there's always a method to her madness! Plus I thought she might like it that way, and who

better to please? My experience was improvising and tripping my way through it, trying to squeeze four beats of information into every three beats, but I think this led to a satisfying sense of adventure and rhythmic tension. And Patti likes it!"

"Old Devil Moon" by E. Y. "Yip" Harburg and Burton Lane was a favorite Tuck & Patti tune in their early years, but they took a fresh look when they decided to record it, combining a neck-slipping, ostinato bass line with a chord pattern from Benny Golson's classic "Killer Joe" for the feel. "We wanted to give this one that fat, 60's soul-jazz groove that we grew up on," says Tuck, remembering a time when you could hear Jimmy Smith's funky Hammond organ trio alongside The Beatles on top-40 radio.

Patti reminisces, "It's great to be able do to these songs. We just get to take a love bath and sing these tunes, unashamed and unapologetically. Let the listener have a really good time, leave their cynicism at home and enjoy these songs for what they are, good, old-fashioned love songs."

"In a way, we regain innocence lost," says Tuck. "We are blessed that we are not jaded about this music. To have every song feel like it's a dream to play; it doesn't happen for every performer, but for us, it happens every time." Surprisingly, given the couple's strong roots in jazz, all but two of the songs on **I Remember You** were new, never sung nor played before. So they got to savor the experience of discovery together.

The Gershwins' "Embraceable You" has a special appeal to the couple. "It was our first dance at our wedding reception," explains Patti, "yet we've never played it until now."

As meaningful as the song was to them, they labored over it, trying to find just the right approach. Tuck remembers, "As part of the process of exploring the song, I did a 24 hour marathon, reducing a complex orchestral version we both liked, replete with an exotic, atonal introduction, to the guitar. The result alternated between maybe-someday-playable and forever-impossible, and I was wondering how I would ever pull it off. Fortunately Patti had the wisdom to keep rearranging. Ultimately we used just one idea from that version, but it was a good one! We tried several other approaches, then, at the last minute, she started recording and had me play a syncopated pattern in double-time swing over a half-time bass while she sang it as a ballad in normal straight time, as if she were still listening to the original orchestral version! I was utterly confused trying to keep my part together while listening to her, but when we played it back, we both loved it."

Tuck adds that their website, tuckandpatti.com, will gradually post detailed transcriptions and analyses of many of these songs, the most common request from their fans, many of whom are musicians themselves. "We have an Austrian friend and scholar, who teaches at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna, Wolfgang Pedelstein, who has done this before, and together we make sure it is dead accurate. On 'With a Song in My Heart,' he discovered that, even though the song is full of repeating phrases, only one phrase was played the same way twice. I had never noticed, but it's different each time because of the shifting conversation between Patti and me. It inadvertently turned out to be an object lesson in revoicing, altering and substituting chords to complement a singer."

"With a Song in My Heart," the album's closing statement, is by the unparalleled Richard Rogers and Lorenz Hart. "I am a major Rogers and Hart fan," admits Patti. "They didn't write as a team very long, and they were so young, so idealistic. Perfect melodies and such pure lyrics. Simple and unashamed."

"So many of these standards had a special meaning then because of the war. And who goes to war? Kids go to war. Some of those kids became our parents, our grandparents. You can imagine the way they heard those tunes, especially with the knowledge that they might never see each other again."

Tuck adds, "People are always asking, how does your relationship, your marriage, play into your music? With songs like these you can't help but reflect on the personal, even though these are universal songs. You are performing the song, you are lost in the music, and the song has its own life. But still, we've had this extremely intense relationship with each other for over half our lives. So we can't help but put ourselves in there. How can it be possible for a casual word or glance from your partner still to take your breath away after all that time? In exactly 140 words this song completely describes the miraculous daily fabric of our personal relationship, something I've been trying to grasp and articulate to myself for decades. It is amazing what a song can do."

Sometimes when singing, Patti says she will suddenly remember there are people watching. "I become almost shy," she admits, "knowing I am all exposed, like I am naked in front of the audience. You are seeing our secret stuff, yet here we are! Our lives together are completely tied up in every one of those tunes. But somehow, because of the universality and timelessness of these standards, it's easier to share these feelings—I am singing not only about my experience, but about everyone's experience. To simply love: We all long for that."

"The balance of the personal and the universal is always in music, just like the balance between human and divine love," says Tuck. "Because of the sparseness of our sound and what I call 'the miracle of Patti,' Patti is able to sing them, articulate them, and make them real for people. It causes us to do a dance between the personal and the universal that we find endlessly fascinating."

Patti sees it as her responsibility to make a record like this. "The world is heating up; people are killing each other like there is no tomorrow. Children are horrified and do not think they are going to live; they feel hopeless and lost. It seems that now, when we have the knowledge and the ability to do something wonderful with technology, the world has allowed it to be so completely out of balance and crazy."

Mentioning news of a bombing at an Iraqi wedding, Patti becomes more somber. "It happened at a wedding, a wedding! In the midst of a war, people are still trying to love, get together, somehow cling to each other. For us, at this point in time, to stop and make an album that is all love songs with an 'isn't it romantic' feeling... 'I remember you' feeling... 'with a song in my heart' feeling... to just step back and allow that simple kind of feeling to wash through you is a gift.

"Singing songs like this now is like swimming upstream. Amazing to put out music like this instead of recording a lament about all that's going wrong. I think it's courageous, almost subversive in fact. To us a love song is the ultimate protest music. The light it casts reveals that a lack of love of some kind is the root cause of virtually every problem in the world."

Tuck adds, "If you want to hear about a 'standard'—our standard—it is this: 'Love is real. It is infinitely powerful. It is contagious and unstoppable. It is the secret sauce that makes life worth living. A lifetime spent in celebration of it is barely enough."

"How's this for a job description: 'For your partner, choose your favorite person. Make your life a living meditation on Love. Put that into music so other people can share it. Be sure to use your creativity and don't forget to become more and more yourself. Travel around the world and meet the coolest people (they will come to where you work and introduce themselves so you don't have to search them out). You'll be unsupervised; just get the job done your way to your satisfaction.' The hours may be long, but that's not a bad way to make a living."

"I think one day," muses Patti, "we'll put together a track combining all those little bits that we trimmed from the end of each track we knew was the final take. We've played the last note; the song is done. At the end it's quiet, and there is always this sigh. 'Yeah...that's it...it was cool!' That's what the feeling is. A big exhale. A nice sigh. And that smile. Ahhhhh!"

#

Written by Carol Wright

Contact Information:

T&P Productions/T&P Records: info@tuckandpatti.com

Phone: 650-327-4036