

New York Trio - Stairway To The Stars (2005)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Lover Come Back To Me* (S. Romberg) 02. *Stairway To The Stars* (M. Malneck, F. Signorelli) 03. *Lullaby Of The Leaves* (B. Petkere) 04. *Smoke Gets In Your Eyes* (J. Kern) 05. *I'll Be Seeing You* (S. Fain) [play](#) 06. *Can't Help Loving Dat Man* (J. Kern) 07. *Body And Soul* (J. Green) 08. *The Man I Love* (G. Gershwin) 09. *A Sleeping Bee* (H. Arlen) 10. *Stella By Starlight* (V. Young) [play](#) Musicians: Bill Charlap - piano Jay Leonhart - bass Bill Stewart – drums

The New York Trio has produced a series of enjoyable sessions for Venus since the beginning of the 21st century. Consisting of pianist Bill Charlap, bassist Jay Leonhart and drummer Bill Stewart, their fifth CD together is similar to earlier efforts, concentrating on accessible treatments of selections from the Great American Songbook. The opening track, "Lover, Come Back to Me," is a swinging affair, with lots of amusing quotes inserted into the mix. "Stairway to the Stars" is suitably a dreamy interpretation, full of romance and gorgeous voicings by Charlap. The bittersweet ballad "I'll Be Seeing You" (forever associated with World War II films where the soldier leaves his love) is a solo feature for Charlap, played with tenderness. "Body and Soul" is one of the most recorded songs in jazz history, but the trio's rendition is worthwhile, even if little new ground is broken. This well-played collection of timeless ballads is perfect for unwinding at the end of the day. --- Ken Dryden, allmusic.com

Performed "one night only," and that night November 12, 1989, at the London Palladium, Stairway to the Stars is billed as "a tribute to the golden years of the Hollywood musical," and finds some of the performers who appeared in Hollywood musicals in those golden years coming out of retirement as a benefit for the charity Aid of Action Research for the Crippled Child. Van Johnson ("I bet you thought I was older") serves as host, and the other stars include

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Dorothy Lamour, doing a medley of songs from the "road" pictures she appeared in with Bing Crosby and Bob Hope; Jane Russell recalling her triumphs in Paleface and Gentlemen Prefer Blondes; and the Nicholas Brothers singing and re-creating their dance routines in front of screenings of scenes from their films (not visible to CD listeners, of course, but at least their vocals can be heard). Some of the material seems shoehorned in. Lorna Luft, daughter of Judy Garland, devotes nearly 12 minutes to the core of her standard nightclub act, a piece of special material called "Not Even Nominated," which is a medley of famous songs that somehow went entirely unrecognized by the motion picture academy. Dolores Gray, who did not appear in the movie version of Gypsy, but has no doubt played it on-stage, gets seven minutes for an overdone performance of the entire "Rose's Turn" scene from that show (a scene that's hard to overdo). Much better are Russell and Arlene Dahl's duet on the scathing "Bosom Buddies" (even though this song from the 1966 musical Mame does not derive from the golden years of the Hollywood musical) and Gloria DeHaven's "Who's Sorry Now" (a song, she explains, that was introduced by her mother and that she sang, playing the part of her mother, in the film Three Little Words). Understandably, the performers often sound like they've aged, but they also sound happy to be on-stage again singing to an appreciative audience for a good cause. ---William Ruhlmann, Rovi

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