

New York Trio with Ken Peplowski – Stardust (2009)

Written by bluesever

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1. *In The Middle Of A Kiss* 2. *Body And Soul* 3. *Serenade To Sweden* 4. *No Regrets*
5. *My Funny Valentine* [play](#) 6. *So In Love* 7. *Stardust* 8. *Summertime* 9. *Stardust*
Reprise [play](#) Personnel: Ken Peplowski (Klarinett); Bill Charlap (piano); Jay Leonhart (bass); Bill Stewart (drums).

How could this disc already be out-of-print, when it was only just released in 2009? Whatever. In any event, it's one of the better releases I've heard lately from Japan's redoubtable Venus Records, which mixes outrageous cover art with tastefully subdued jazz. If most of their releases only rise to about a 2 or 3 on a musical intensity scale of 10, this one manages a 4, with pianist Bill Charlap's excellent New York Trio swinging things just a bit harder. Meanwhile, Ken Peplowski continues his run of trying to earn the title as Venus's Most Valuable Player. On clarinet, he continues to amaze with a ravishing tone and virtuosic technique. His quest to become a major player on the tenor sax is another matter, however, although he's trying to ratchet up the energy level a bit here, and even take on a slightly scratchier tone, in an effort to distinguish himself from Stan Getz, of whom he can frequently sound like a slavish imitator. The proof is in the pudding. It takes a lot of nerve to record new versions of very familiar standards like "Body and Soul" and "My Funny Valentine" and the title track, Hoagy Carmichael's "Stardust", which have been given definitive readings by far more famous players. Do these guys pull it off? With "Body and Soul" at least, the answer's a resounding yes. They give it a surprising new twist by letting Charlap's piano state the theme, which he does richly and unapologetically, then passing the first solo to Peplowski's clarinet, for a very minimalist reading. I like it a lot. ---Matthew Watters, amazon.com

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