

Carmen McRae – Book Of Ballads (2003)

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01. *By Myself* (3:15) 02. *The Thrill Is Gone* (3:55) 03. *How Long Has This Been Going On?* (4:07) 04. *Do You Know Why?* (2:54) 05. *My Romance* (3:56) 06. *Isn't It Romantic?* (3:03) 07. *If Love Is Good To Me* (3:32) 08. *When I Fall In Love* (3:50) 09. *Please Be Kind* (3:17) 10. *He Was Too Good To Me* (2:44) 11. *Angel Eyes* (2:44) 12. *Something I Dreamed Last Night* (4:01) Carmen McRae – vocals Don Abney – piano Joe Benjamin – bass Charles Smith – drums Frank Hunter – conductor, arranger

The Book of Ballads in question is the Great American Songbook, and Carmen McRae breathes new life into some of its most dog-eared pages on this wonderful session that heralded the close of her Kapp Records tenure. McRae tackles material like "When I Fall in Love," "Isn't It Romantic?" and "How Long Has This Been Going On?" with uncommon care and intelligence, summoning rich new meaning from the familiar lyrics. In her hands, the songs pulse with energy and life. Arranger Frank Hunter and a supporting trio led by pianist Don Abney also merit commendation for nuanced, evocative backings that afford McRae the necessary space to do her thing. ---Jason Ankeny, Rovi

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