

## Tony Bennett – Duets An American Classic (2006)

Written by bluesever

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### Tony Bennett – Duets An American Classic (2006)



1. Lullaby of Broadway (duet z Dixie Chicks) 2. Smile (duet z Barbra Streisand) 3. Put On A Happy Face (duet z James Taylor) 4. The Very Thought Of You (duet z Paul McCartney) 5. The Shadow of Your Smile (duet z Juanes) 6. Rags To Riches (duet z Elton John) [play](#) 7. The Good Life (duet z Billy Joel) 8. Cold, Cold Heart (duet z Tim McGraw) 9. If I Ruled the World (duet z Celine Dion) 10. The Best Is Yet To Come (duet z Diana Krall) 11. For Once In My Life (duet z Stevie Wonder) 12. Are You Havin' Any Fun? (duet z Elvis Costello) 13. Because Of You (duet z K.D. Lang & Chris Botti) 14. Just In Time (duet z Michael Bubl  ) 15. Boulevard Of Broken Dreams (duet z Sting) 16. I Wanna Be Around (duet z Bono) 17. Sing You Sinners (duet z John Legend) [play](#) 18. I Left My Heart In San Francisco (album version) 19. How Do You Keep The Music Playing (duet z George Michael)

Personnel:

Tony Bennett (vocals); Diana Krall, Dixie Chicks, Elton John, George Michael, James Taylor, John Legend, Juanes, K.D. Lang, Michael Bubl  , Paul McCartney, Stevie Wonder, Sting, Tim McGraw, Elvis Costello, Barbra Streisand, Billy Joel, Bono, Celine Dion (vocals). Lee Musiker: piano; Paul Langosh: bass; Harold Jones: drums; Gray Sargent: guitar; Jorge Calandrelli: orchestrations.

Tony Bennett, a Queens-born singer, celebrates his 80th with his voice sounding as great as it has been for years; on Duets, he revisits some of his classics with a group of friends and admirers.

Some of the guest appearances on these tracks are not really surprising, like Barbra Streisand's on "Smile." Celine Dion is one of those singers who suffers from bad choices in her own repertoire, but when given the opportunity to tackle a great song, she does it with gusto, as on "If I Ruled The World."

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The surprises come through performers who do not usually take on this kind of music. You barely recognize Paul McCartney's voice on "The Very Thought Of You." He just gives himself entirely to the song, shedding his pop sensibilities to perform the tune. Bassist Richard Bona has mentioned John Legend's incredible talent (Legend did a guest spot on Bona's recently released Decca CD, *Tiki*), but I was not ready for this—Legend almost steals the song away from Bennett. Juanes also makes a stellar turn on a bilingual version of "The Shadow of Your Smile."

George Michael has seen a considerable turn in his fortunes in recent years, which is quite a contrast from his superstardom during the '90s. At last year's Live 8 Festival, he was relegated to singing harmony vocals with Paul McCartney, and his career has been marred by tabloid scrutiny of his private life. We are reminded that Michael is a great singer in his own right on "How Do You Keep The Music Playing?" This is not the first time he has taken on jazz songs. A couple of years ago he released an album of standards, and he made "Desafinado" a hit again with his 1996 duet with Astrud Gilberto.

Hank Williams' "Cold, Cold Heart," a crossover country hit for Bennett, has since been remade by several artists. He revisits the tune with Tim McGraw, who sounds incredibly comfortable without his country-rock electric apparatus.

Bono appeared on Frank Sinatra's 1993 Duets album, and he appears here on "I Wanna Be Around." While he sounded like a rocker doing standards on his performance with Sinatra, this time he sounds more subdued and is able to better explore his vocal range. Sting sings beautifully on "Boulevard of Broken Dreams," and Stevie Wonder revisits "For Once In My Life," delivering a beautiful rendition (reportedly in one take).

The incredible thing about this record is that Bennett actually sang with his guests by his side—something that's become quite unusual in the era of MP3s and telephone linkups. You can feel the rapport in the studio—Bennett encourages James Taylor during "Put on a Happy Face," reacts emotionally to Stevie Wonder's improvisations, and flirts playfully with Streisand. This was possibly motivated by his own contribution to Sinatra's album, which was done from a distance. *An American Classic* is a wonderful album, and it sounds great even after repeated spins. ---Ernest Barteldes, [allaboutjazz.com](http://allaboutjazz.com)

Tony Bennett has so many adoring celebrity fans it should come as no surprise that when a major duets album is planned, he's able to draw a roster of the biggest recording stars from the rock and vocal worlds, plus a pair of country music wildcards. (This despite the fact that he recorded an album with several duets in 2001, and a full-album collaboration one year later with k.d. lang.) One surprise is how well producer Phil Ramone paired Bennett with both duet partners and fitting standards -- among them Barbra Streisand on the optimist's anthem "Smile," Dixie Chicks for the flapper standard "Lullaby of Broadway," Bono on the wickedly spiteful "I Wanna Be Around," Tim McGraw on "Cold, Cold Heart" (the Hank Williams song that was Bennett's biggest country crossover hit), Stevie Wonder on his own "For Once in My Life," Juanes for "The Shadow of Your Smile" (which was a hit first for the Brazilian Astrud Gilberto), and Sting on the torch song "Boulevard of Broken Dreams." (Even the title of "How Do You Keep the Music Playing?" seems fit for George Michael to sing.) Each performance was recorded with Bennett and his duet partner live in the studio -- it could be no different for such an old-school vocalist -- and the setup allows for maximum warmth and congeniality. Yet, aside from the novelty of the billings, Duets: An American Classic doesn't thrill like Bennett's solo recordings of the previous ten years. The arrangements of Jorge Calandrelli are heavy on serene strings that wrap the melodies in layers of soft gauze, and few concessions are made to the needs of the material; virtually every song is either a soft vocal pop number or a finger-snapping swinger. As befits an all-star affair, every edge is polished to a fine sheen and, more than a few times, the feelings his duet partners attempt to summon sound quite superficial. Of course, every vocal interpreter in the business sounds a little forced when compared to Tony Bennett. ---John Bush, All Music Guide

Radość wspólnego śpiewania. To właśnie słyhać na tej płycie. Nagrany przed pięcioma laty przy okazji osiemdziesiątych urodzin Tony'ego Bennetta album stanowi zbiór standardów amerykańskiej rozrywki, evergreenów pokroju „Smile”, „If I Ruled The World”, czy „The Best Is Yet To Come”. Do ich nagrania zacny jubilat zaprosił takich artystów, jak choćby Paul McCartney, Bono, George Michael, Sting, Michael Buble, Stevie Wonder czy Elton John. Wśród gości dominują wokaliści. Ale nie zabrakło też pań. Pojawiają się więc Barbra Streisand, Celine Dion, Diana Krall, czy Dixie Chicks. Świetne aranżacje, zabawa muzyką, optymizm. Mam wrażenie, że nagrywaniu tej płyty towarzyszyła niesamowicie pozytywna atmosfera. I to w jakiś sposób przekłada się na przyjemność słuchania. Tony Bennett, który ma za sobą z górą sześć dekad estradowego doświadczenia, nie musi już niczego nikomu udowadniać. Wciąż brzmi świetnie. Ciągłe słyhać, że muzykowanie sprawia mu ogromną frajdę. Choćby za to należy mu się szacunek. Nie mniej interesująco zapowiada się „Duets II”, którego premierę zaplanowano na jesień tego roku. Sama tylko lista wokalistek, które Bennett zaprosił do występu na kolejnej urodzinowej płycie robi wrażenie. A są to m.in. Lady Gaga, Aretha Franklin, Queen Latifah, Mariah Carey, Norah Jones, Natalie Cole, KD Lang i Amy Winehouse w swoim (niestety)

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ostatnim studyjnym nagraniu. Panowie tym razem w mniejszej reprezentacji, ale równie znakomici. ---Migootka, gomi.pinger.pl

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