

Barbra Streisand – What Matters Most (2011)

Written by bluelover

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CD1: 01 – *The Windmills Of Your Mind* 02 – *Something New In My Life* 03 – *Solitary Moon*
04 – *Nice 'n' Easy* 05 – *Alone In The World* 06 – *So Many Stars* 07 – *The Same Hello, The*
Same Goodbye [play](#) 08 – *That Face* 09 – *I'll Never Say Goodbye* 10 – *What Matters*
Most CD2: 01 – *The Way We Were* 02 – *What Are You Doing*
The Rest Of Your Life 03 – *You Don't Bring Me Flowers (Duet With Neil Diamond)* 04 – *Papa,*
Can You Hear Me 05 – *Pieces Of Dreams* 06 – *The Island* 07 – *The Summer Knows*
[play](#)
08 – *How Do You Keep The Music Playing* 09 – *After The Rain* 10 – *A Piece Of Sky*

For her thirty-something-th album, Barbra Streisand returns to old married friends for 10 songs of bleeding-heart inspiration. Since the then-18-year-old club singer first met lyricists Alan and Marilyn Bergman, she's recorded 51 of their compositions (she says in the liner notes for "What Matters Most"), including songs from her 1983 film "Yentl." The most successful living female recording artist (judging by record sales and awards) knows a good thing when she's got it. "What Matters Most" is a lovefest: romantic songs drenched in strings and a booklet crammed with photos of Streisand nestled up to the Bergmans, the prodigal daughter and her musical parents.

But Streisand's somber production and emotional vocals evoke melancholy more than joy — a fitting mood for these theatrical but not sentimental songs. This career couple returns to themes of the struggle of commitment, the torment of passion, the loneliness of love ("Solitary Moon" and "Alone in the World"). Streisand, who has made her mark in part by dragging out the drama of ballads and pop tunes, sets the tone by singing the first few verses of the psychological thriller "The Windmills of Your Mind" a cappella. She precisely cups the mouthful of metaphors — "Like a clock whose hands are sweeping/ Past the minutes of its face" — in her sure, lovely tones, unshaken by age. She sings the Ol' Blue Eyes toe-tapper "Nice 'n' Easy" nice and slow.

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Not until the eighth track, the sprightly Cole Porter-esque “That Face,” does the old funny girl show up. But she doesn’t stick around for long, because love is a serious matter — the matter that matters most, as the Bergmans write in the title track. If this album goes to No. 1, Streisand will have topped the charts during six decades, demonstrating that even in pop, there’s such a thing as timeless talent. ---latimesblogs.latimes.com

At an age when many singers would be content to re-record earlier hits and package the end product as a ‘new’ release, Barbra Streisand has here produced 10 wholly new recordings of material featuring words by lyricists Alan and Marilyn Bergman, a duo with whom she has enjoyed a long and successful partnership, on both disc and film.

Throwing down the gauntlet, she begins by singing the first verse of one of their best loved songs, *The Windmills of Your Mind*, unaccompanied. It’s a daring move, but one that she pulls off thanks to her innate artistry; though it’s notable that even her peerless technique can’t quite disguise the greater effort required in sustaining the extended vocal lines. Many of the more familiar Bergman titles previously tackled by Streisand, like *The Way We Were* and *You Don’t Bring Me Flowers*, can be heard on the second disc contained in the deluxe edition of this CD.

For the single-disc version, though, Streisand focuses on new recordings, and she has roamed far and wide reintroducing songs that were written for Fred Astaire (*That Face*) and Frank Sinatra (*Nice n Easy*) – the latter a song so tailor-made for *Ol’ Blue Eyes* that it could well have been written by his house songwriters Sammy Cahn and Jimmy Van Heusen. Both arrangements include swing passages that show off the expertise of the orchestra. Other songs are romantic and frequently nostalgic in tone, including many titles from well off the beaten track. Some come from the world of jazz, including compositions by Johnny Mandel and Dave Grusin, and from the cinema with credits for John Williams and Jerry Goldsmith. *So Many Stars*, a gentle bossa nova from Sergio Mendes, rounds off the composer credits.

Something New In My Life is a real highlight. A rarely heard piece by Michel Legrand, composer of *The Windmills of Your Mind*, it brings out a new expressive vein in the Bergmans’ lyrics. Fans of John Williams will note his inimitable harmonic touch and lyrical style in *The Same Hello*, *The Same Goodbye*, originally composed for an enraptured Sinatra. The state of the art recording

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ensures that this is another unmissable feast of song from an artist seemingly unstoppable in her continuing quest to present something new to her worldwide audience. ---Adrian Edwards, bbc.co.uk

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