

## **Opie Bellas**

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## **Cadence Magazine**

### **Once Upon A Time**

Old Devil Moon / Once Upon A Time/ On The Strings Of My Heart/ A Quiet Storm / Swinging On A Star / I Thought About You / Here I Go Again / Be Patient Alice / It Ain't Over 'Til the Fat Lady Sings / Samba 3619

Collective Personal: Bellas, vcl; Jerry Dantry Frank Cunlmondo, p; Joe Hegrl, Eric Susoeff, g; Dave La Rocca b; Al Wrubelsky, Lenny Rodgers, Stowe Trottle, d; Michael Moricz, perc; Ralph Guzzl, tp, flh, No date, Pittsburgh (1990 release).

Now here's a now voice. Bellas, who doubles as a classical deejay in Pittsburgh, has a rich full instrument with good range and no rough edges. To quote from Lou Tracey's notes, "There is no one I know who is any better at understanding the a story-content and the lyric-intent of a song." Statements like these are more commonly reserved for better-known (yet still underappreciated talents like Susannah McCorkle or Carol Sloane, but Opie shows the comparison to be appropriate throughout.

She's ebullient in "Devil Moon" and \*On The Strings," wistful on "Once Upon A Time," reflective on " Quiet Storm," and conversational on 'Swing On A Star.'" And that's just the first side. Every chance taken, every daring intervallic leap, is carried off with seemingly no effort, even though it feels like she's rock skipping across a wild river.

Many of the tunes here were written by the album's participants with Tracey himself collaborating on five: "Quiet Storm" with Billy VerPlank. "Strings," Alice," and "It Ain't Over" with Negri, and "Here I Go" with Susoeff. There's an awkward moment in the reprise of the first verse of "I Thought About You" where Opie holds the I way out, as if unsure on which note to land next. That's the only hint of someone who's not yet an established veteran. Very impressive.

**Alan Bargebuhr**

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