

INSIDE TRACKS



The Broadway Album
Barbra Streisand

Barbra Streisand got her first big break on Broadway and most of her early albums contained show tunes and standards. Only in the '70s did she turn into the pop-rock diva we are familiar with

today. Still, Broadway is where she belongs, for her new album is a revelation.

Streisand's last LP was *Emotion*, a solid pop offering which went platinum (as do all of her albums), but made little impact on radio. Apparently, this convinced her to go ahead with her plans to record another album of Broadway tunes. Streisand always seemed uncomfortable singing pop music, for she really couldn't let loose while trying to keep in time with the backbeat.

So, she combed the best of the musicals and selected the songs she had promised herself she would sing one day. As one would expect, the majority of the tunes were by Stephen Sondheim, for he is easily the most important force in Broadway musicals today.

Backed by an orchestra and more

modern instruments, like synthesizers and drum machines, she recorded the tunes. The result is *The Broadway Album*, a stunning achievement that may well be the best album of her career.

Streisand isn't afraid to put some of her tunes into modern musical settings. She does this most notably in "Somewhere," from *West Side Story*. Her version is filled with synthesizers and space effects that provide a glorious base for her soaring vocals.

On the other hand, Streisand also knows when to pull back and rely on backing from the orchestra. "Not While I'm Around," a sweet little tune from *Sweeney Todd*, works best in a simple setting, and she knows this.

Besides a terrific version of "Send In The Clowns," she also displays her comic

skills in the hilarious "Adelaide's Lament." That tune best illustrates why this album is so successful. Streisand is a very good actress as well as an excellent singer, and since these songs were meant to be performed, she gets to display her many talents.

Since over half the tunes are by Sondheim, it is ironic that the most exciting song on the album is by Rodgers and Hammerstein. And yet, her medley, "I Have Dreamed/We Kiss In A Shadow/Something Wonderful," from *The King And I*, is simply the best performance of her career.

Anyone who is a fan of Streisand or Broadway, or anyone who wants to be, now has a place to begin: *The Broadway Album*.

By Michael Giltz