

DUSTY SPRINGFIELD



<i>Recording years</i>	<i>Main genre</i>	<i>Music sample</i>
<i>1963-1995</i>	<i>Classic soul-pop</i>	<i>Do Re Mi (1964)</i>

Only Solitaire

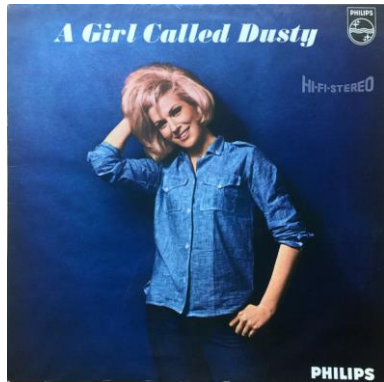
Artist: *Dusty Springfield*

Years: *1963-1965*

George Starostin's Reviews

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A GIRL CALLED DUSTY

Album released:
April 1964

V A L U E
3 5 4 3 3

More info:
W [Music] [Vinyl]



Tracks: 1) Mama Said; 2) You Don't Own Me; 3) Do Re Mi; 4) When The Lovelight Starts Shining Through His Eyes; 5) My Coloring Book; 6) Mockingbird; 7) Twenty-Four Hours From Tulsa; 8) Nothing; 9) Anyone Who Had A Heart; 10) Will You Love Me Tomorrow; 11) Wishin' And Hopin'; 12) Don't You Know; 13*) I Only Want To Be With You; 14*) He's Got Something; 15*) Every Day I Have To Cry; 16*) Can I Get A Witness; 17*) All Cried Out; 18*) I Wish I'd Never Loved You; 19*) Once Upon A Time; 20*) Summer Is Over.

REVIEW

At the time when Dusty Springfield's first album was released, there weren't all that many female pop stars in the UK – and there were most certainly no *modern* female pop stars, no young and brave girls who truly understood that the times they were a-changin' and that the Vera Lynn model might be just a tad outdated. Consequently, when Mary Isabel Catherine Bernadette O'Brien, already better known as «Dusty Springfield», the perky singing sister in the folk-pop trio of the Springfields, decided to cut short her career of revivalism and go it alone with a trendy soul-pop routine, this move was as much of a sell-out as it was a risqué act of personal bravery.



Even the album title and cover carried an element of surprise. **A Girl Called Dusty** – not only does the name bring on American associations (because of the whole *dust* thing, and also because most notorious people called Dusty were and are indeed Americans), but it is also clearly a masculine name in origin, being a diminutive from Dustin, which is itself a simplified variant of Thorsteinn – so, here, literally is a blonde lady who has the guts to call herself *The Stone of Thor*

without probably even realizing it. The photo is quite a big deal, too — a very tomboyish look with that denim shirt and confident, almost provocative pose, clearly more influenced by the French ye-ye girls than by the average British lady singer like Petula Clark. (Admittedly, Dusty's typical stage outfits were and would be far more conservative and lady-like, but that was probably because she just felt comfortable in them rather than forced to wear them).

And then there is the music. Admittedly, Dusty's first single and one of her best known songs, 'I Only Want To Be With You', was a homebrewn concoction: written by British songwriter Mike Hawker and arranged for orchestra by Ivor Raymonde who would go on to become Dusty's close partner, its melody has more of a French pop ring to it than American soul — though Johnny Franz's production clearly tips a hat to Phil Spector's wall-of-sound stylistics. But I am not a big fan of that kind of catchy sugary sentimentality, and, judging by Dusty's own decisions on the songs for her first LP, neither really was she, because there is virtually *nothing* on **A Girl Called Dusty** that comes close to capturing the same kind of sound. In this particular case, the pre-concept-album «LP Filler Curse» actually works to the artist's advantage — since LPs, unlike singles, were not expected to yield megahits, being instead regarded as expensive bonus offerings for the true fan, artists generally had more freedom of choice here, provided they actually had the capacity and will to handle it.

And what Dusty Springfield really willed was to become the UK herald for edgy American pop music. Who do we have here on record? The Shirelles. The Supremes. Lesley Gore. Dionne Warwick. Gene Pitney. Even frickin' Ray Charles. No actual rock'n'roll, but a good balance between romantic balladry and sturdy, upbeat, danceable Motown pop. If there is a problem, it is that many of the songs sound *too* close to the originals: for instance, 'Mama Said', the album opener, seems intent on copying the Shirelles note-for-note, right down to every single modulation of the backing vocals. The only thing that Dusty brings to the table is the understanding that a white British girl *can* actually bring as much earthy feminine power and confidence to that table as a black girl from New Jersey — because "there'll be days like this" regardless of race, creed, or any particular side of the Atlantic.

Not that it is such a little thing, of course: **A Girl Called Dusty** is arguably one of the biggest girl-power musical statements of 1964, all due to Dusty's highly unconventional (for the white entertainment world, anyway) approach to vocal performing. To the general listener, her style might seem a tad monotonous, projecting that husky nasal energy onto just about everything she sings — but this is a complaint that could be directed at a vast majority of performers, and it is easily dissipated by focusing on the musical and stylistic variety of the material rather than on the formally similar manner of delivering it. And yet it is precisely that manner which is the precious glue holding it all together. Next to all the other girl

singers whose songs Dusty claims here for herself, she sounds decidedly *woman-esque*, deeper, more experienced, more mature, making many of those teenage emotion anthems feel more serious while at the same time retaining their hooks, energy, and defiant attitude. Play her cover of 'You Don't Own Me' next to Lesley Gore's original, for instance, and the first thing you notice is that Lesley gives her jealous lover the finger as a teenage girl (which, admittedly, is quite adequate because she *was* a teenage girl in 1963); Dusty does the exact same thing as if she were a character from an Ingmar Bergman movie. Which, just to make myself clearer on the subject, does not make any one version of the song superior to another — it merely adds a new market slot for «adult-style rebellion» next to the already well-established «teen-style rebellion».

Actually, correcting myself, the first thing you shall probably notice is not the difference in singing, but the difference in playing and production: Johnny Franz does a good job adjusting all the tonalities and instrumentations for Dusty's specifications, so that 'You Don't Own Me' is played, I think, one octave lower than the original — again, creating a subtle feeling of more depth and extra psychologism. The exact thing happens with Dionne Warwick's 'Wishin' And Hopin' (in which the "you won't get him thinkin' and prayin'" bridge almost puts on a threatening ominousness) and lots of other stuff; additionally, it is hard not to admire just how much the sharpness and clarity of London's Olympic Studios sound surpasses the comparably thin and shaky Motown production values (though far be it from me to declare this glossy perfectionism as inherently superior).

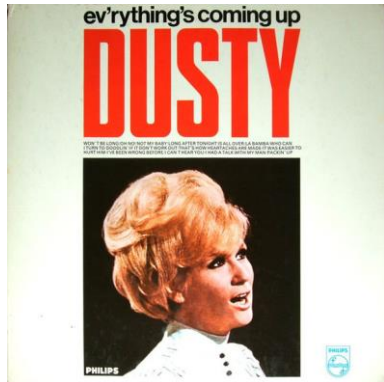
Dusty is also quite adept at inverting gender roles — for instance, on Gene Pitney's 'Twenty-Four Hours From Tulsa', or, even more notably, on the Earl King-penned New Orleanian novelty song 'Do Re Mi', which she probably nicked from Lee Dorsey with the explicit aim of showing that girls can come on to the opposite sex with a sense of ironic swagger that can actually make boys blush and cower in embarrassment. Again, it is amusing to play the Dorsey and the Springfield versions back-to-back and hear how much more mature the latter one sounds — mixing together playfulness, seriousness, and a strong whiff of sarcasm.

The girl called Dusty takes perhaps her biggest risk at the very end of the album, when she takes on Ray Charles' loud and rowdy anthem 'Don't You Know' to provide a high-energy final kick *à la* 'Twist And Shout' — which, much like John Lennon on that track, requires her to give it her all and show the public just how much of a reckless screamer she can be. And while Uncle Ray probably has nothing to fear, she still handles the job well enough: after all, all that strength of mind and cocky confidence displayed on the previous eleven tracks already had us prepared to believe that here is a woman who can truly

"love you daddy all night long" when she gets in that mood. Considering how the new liner notes to the album define Dusty in 1964 as a «shy, convent-educated twenty-five year old», I'd say this particular performance is pretty much a textbook example for all convent-educated ladies on how to overcome their shyness...

And speaking of new liner notes, the 1996 CD edition of **A Girl Called Dusty** is the definitive version to get, adding an extra eight songs from Dusty's contemporary A- and B-sides (including superb renditions of 'Every Day I Have To Cry' and 'All Cried Out') and more or less eliminating the need to lay one's hands on her *two* American albums from 1964 (the clumsily titled **Stay Awhile / I Only Want To Be With You** and the way too laconically titled **Dusty**) which sawed **A Girl Called Dusty** in half, padded each of the halves with singles and US-only tracks and doubled the profits for savvy record industry people, as usual. There are no huge surprises among the extra additions, but at this point in her career, more Dusty was simply better Dusty, and I imagine that if you do not get bored with the denim-clad powergirl in thirty minutes, you sure as hell won't be over fifty.





EV'RYTHING'S COMING UP DUSTY

Album released:
Oct. 8, 1965

V A L U E
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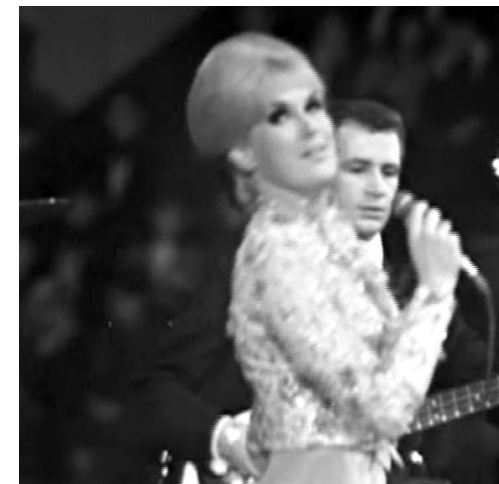
More info:



Tracks: 1) Won't Be Long; 2) Oh No! Not My Baby; 3) Long After Tonight Is All Over; 4) La Bamba; 5) Who Can I Turn To?; 6) Doodlin'; 7) If It Don't Work Out; 8) That's How Heartaches Are Made; 9) It Was Easier To Hurt Him; 10) I've Been Wrong Before; 11) I Can't Hear You; 12) I Had A Talk With My Man; 13) Packin' Up.

REVIEW

Before everything else, let's put back some order in a *really* messy discography. Like most of the big names in the British Invasion around 1964–66, Dusty Springfield had two different recording tracks running parallel to each other, the UK and the US ones, distinguished by the exact same commercial principles — the UK market offered the occasional (rare) LP with 13-14 tracks of new material, placing the rest of its trust in a series of 2-song singles and 4-song EPs; meanwhile, the US branch of the Philips label kept saturating *its* market with shorter-length LPs a-plenty while keeping singles and EPs to a relative minimum. Thus, in between the UK releases of Dusty's first album (**A Girl Called Dusty**) and second album (**Ev'rything's Coming Up Dusty**), the American public received no fewer than *three* albums: the crudely titled **Stay Awhile / I Only Want To Be With You** (June '64), the humbly titled **Dusty** (October '64), and the golly-gee-whiz-titled **Ooooooweeee!!!** (March '65). And actually, that's not all, because the majority of the songs on Dusty's second UK album did not really appear in the States until **You Don't Have To Say You Love Me** (July '66). Whew. Meanwhile, the UK branch just kept pumpin' out brief EPs (**Dusty**, **Dusty In New York**, **Mademoiselle Dusty**, etc.).



For the sake of formal consistency, this overview of Dusty's career should have probably followed the American path, as I do, for instance, with the discographies of The Rolling Stones and The Animals — mainly because this makes it easier to take into consideration lots of great songs that could have slipped through the cracks otherwise. But, truth be told, zooming in on an entire series of Dusty Springfield albums from the early British Invasion period is not a whole lot of fun, because to a large degree, they are interchangeable and do not reveal a whole lot of artistic growth — not for Dusty herself, at least; her diligent and intelligent «shadowing» of the pop / soul / R&B side of American music lets you know a thing or two about the growth and maturation of that side, but she continues to be more of a passive «chronicler» here than an active agent.

In the end, I just made my own «custom» edition of **Ev'rything's Coming Up Dusty** by combining the original 13-track album; the 8 bonus tracks from the 1998 CD edition (appended from the US-only **Dusty** and **Ooooooweeee!!!** LPs); and another 4 tracks culled from contemporary UK singles, which pretty much turns the whole thing into a short-ish double album, containing the absolute majority of commercial recordings made by Dusty from late 1964 to late 1965. However, trying to arrange them in some sort of chronologically relevant or conceptual order is largely useless: Dusty had very little by way of true «artistic evolution» at the time — her main weapon was consistency, as she cut one competent, confident, meaningful, enjoyable recording after another, worrying about hooks and emotions much more than about «edginess» or «relevance». So instead of chronology, I shall try to simply concentrate on the different sides of Dusty's artistic persona through that year — not a particularly easy task, either, as it could be argued that Dusty Springfield did not have her *own* artistic persona much at all, serving primarily as an interpreter of *other* people's artistic personae.

Indeed, just look at the track listing for the album: it's not even that there is not a single song by Dusty herself, as she never aspired to be a songwriter, it's that there isn't even a single song written specifically *for* Dusty. Although she continued to have a close association with Mike Hawker and Ivor Raymonde, who had provided her with her first couple of hits, they weren't prolific enough to keep up a steady supply: of all her singles in 1965, only 'Your Hurtin' Kind Of Love' was provided by the duo, although Raymonde loyally stayed in charge of orchestration duties for most of the other recordings. Without even a single regular «court songwriter» to invest his or her musical soul into the body of Britain's top singer, the top singer had to make do with what other investments had already been invested into *other* bodies, and try to convince her fans that the re-investment was worth their while. So you should actually take the title of the album — **Ev'rything's Coming Up Dusty** — quite seriously, because what is really meant by *ev'rything* is *ev'rything that ain't used to be Dusty*. But now it's all Dusty and it's all exciting in a different way from what it used to be... or is it? Well, let's look at what we got here.

Aretha coming up Dusty: I think most of us, on an average day, think of the Aretha Franklin / Dusty Springfield «rivalry» in terms of ‘Son Of A Preacher Man’ (which is actually a rare case of Aretha borrowing from Dusty, rather than the other way around), but it all began much earlier, as ‘Won’t Be Long’, the opening track on this album, is almost symbolically a cover of the opening track on Aretha’s own debut album from 1961. And not just a cover — a note-for-note recreation, with pretty much the same arrangement, same tempo, and same mood. Absolutely nothing except for certain inborn qualities of the two lady singers differentiates these two versions from one another — and, alas, I must say that when it comes to inborn qualities, Dusty Springfield inevitably loses to Aretha Franklin on the battleground of «hot / agitated / exuberant». When Aretha sings "*I'm so excited, my knees are shaking*" in the bridge section, it's much easier to suspend disbelief than when Dusty does the same: as much as she clearly *loves* that gospel-bred passion, she does not have it in her blood. It's a good enough substitute when you have nothing else around (like, say, the average horny British kid circa 1965), but when you're spoiled for choice, the concept of «Aretha coming up Dusty» is pretty much useless. (Running so much ahead, though, I must say that a song like ‘Son Of A Preacher Man’, with its sexuality less flamboyant and more subtly titillating, is a far better fit for Dusty than Aretha — there's no overall preference here, everything should be taken on a case-by-case basis).

Carole King coming up Dusty: Although Aretha actually covered ‘Oh No! Not My Baby’ as well (in 1970), that would be a long time in the future and kinda funkified — on the whole, Dusty fares much better with Brill Building material because, well, it's basically «white» music (I use this in the cultural sense, not racial, of course), and although the first successful recording was by Maxine Brown in 1964, Dusty's rendition is probably closer to the way King originally intended it (as confirmed by comparison with Carole's own performance from 1980). It's a subtly tragic song about refusing to believe the obvious — "*you're not like those other boys who play with hearts like they were toys*", yeah right — and Dusty gets it just right, mixing the proper amount of desperation, hope, and hysterics. Then on the second side of the album, she repeats the same feat with a fast one, literally wiping the floor with Betty Everett's original 1964 recording of ‘I Can't Hear You’, now that there's a few extra inches of muscular meat on every part of the arrangement. Lulu's version from the same year is a bit of an acquired taste (though some might take her grizzled raspiness as a nice «punkish» touch), and Carole's own recording on **Writer** (1970) is slowed down and funkified, going for a more contemporary vibe — which leaves Dusty's version as more or less the definitive one.

Burt Bacharach coming up Dusty: Well, it was only a matter of time (three tracks, to be precise) before a Bacharach-David composition found its inevitable way to a Dusty Springfield album. Strangely, it's just this one, ‘Long After Tonight Is Over’, a recent hit for little-known soul singer [Jimmy Radcliffe](#) that unexpectedly charted in the UK and led to Jimmy being

invited to perform on British TV — which is probably where Dusty got the song from. I am deeply allergic to Burt Bacharach and couldn't care less about his songwriting genius as long as it was all in the name of soapy schmaltz, but the build-up in this one ain't bad, and at least I'm mildly amused how, once again, Dusty punches the original soul singer into the corner with more power, emotion, believability, and even goddamn elementary breath control. Oh well, at least there's no direct competition with Dionne Warwick on this one.

Ritchie Valens coming up Dusty: Whose ridiculous idea was it to have Dusty Springfield perform her own version of 'La Bamba'? This is totally stupid, and shows how low one can fall when putting all of one's eggs in one basket. The entire thing about 'La Bamba' is that, with its rugged distorted riffage, it was trying to turn a Latin dance number into rock'n'roll; here, it's like "oh, I bet can outsing that poor wonderful kid, too, as long as they just keep blowing those pretty horns instead of all that ugly fuzz!" and *no*, doing 'La Bamba' this way is like performing wart removal surgery on Lemmy's face. Can't be done, shan't be done, can I have some more Burt Bacharach instead, please?

Tony Bennett coming up Dusty: 'Who Can I Turn To?' is probably mostly associated with Tony Bennett. Dusty Springfield cannot outsing Tony Bennett. Maybe she cannot outsing Dionne Warwick, either. Heck, she might not even outsing Shirley Bassey. But the bottomline is: why should we care? It's just more schmaltzy melodrama. I certainly think Dusty Springfield can do better than competing with Tony Bennett.

Hard bop coming up Dusty: Ah, but now we're talking. To be fair, this lyrical version of 'Doodlin' is not so much a cover of the classic Horace Silver original as it is of the then-recent [pop re-arrangement](#) by Baby Washington (which, in itself, inherited the reinterpretation by Jon Hendricks), but once again Dusty improves on her predecessors, showing that she can handle a rhythmically complex, almost «rappy» vocal challenge as fine as anything else. There are, of course, more complex and demanding vocal jazz renditions, e.g. by Sarah Vaughan, but if we're talking about smoothing and streamlining the rhythms to make the whole thing more poppy and danceable, Dusty does a great job highlighting the song's sunny, non-chalant, oh-so-Sixties attitude of "enjoying procrastinating". (There's another Baby Washington cover later on, 'That's How Heartaches Are Made', but it's a much less interesting slow pop ballad where the organ solo in the middle is more curious than any of the actual vocals).

UK pop-rock coming up Dusty: There's quite a conspicuous lack of contemporary material by British Invasion bands on Dusty's albums from that period, even if she did spend quite a bit of time in their companies while touring or doing her TV shows — perhaps due to the idea that this kind of music was, after all, a bit too «juvenile» for her image. One curious semi-

exception is 'If It Don't Work Out', a song that Dusty asked Rod Argent of The Zombies to write for her while they were touring together (there's a lady of culture for you, singling out the one guy in the pop-rock business who was already using *refined* chords in his writing way back in 1964). The Zombies themselves would cut a version of this song years later, during their short-lived reunion in 1969, by which time, of course, it already sounded a little dated — but this rendition is all but perfect for 1965, even if it had to add plenty of strings and backing vocals to make it «come up Dusty». Although she does not possess the natural misery of Colin Blunstone's voice to make this cute little hymn to anxiety-over-rekindling-an-old-romance, the sheer power of the voice almost makes up for it. I, for one, would have no problem if all those Bacharach songs on Dusty's albums were swapped with Rod Argent songs.

Randy Newman coming up Dusty: ...nah, not *really*. This is a very young, much too serious Randy Newman churning out decent, but generic love ballads with just a slight touch of paranoia for whoever might take a liking to them. 'I've Been Wrong Before' is one of those, first recorded by Cilla Black and then picked up by Dusty, and frankly, I'm not smitten with either version and cannot even decide who of the two does it better. Honestly, I just close my eyes and imagine it done by Randy himself, with his little-Jewish-loser attitude, and I already like my fantasy more than objective reality.

I could probably extend this account to indefinite length, seeing as how there are also all those songs from 1965 that ended up on US-only albums, but this is already getting tedious, and no matter how far we go, the degree of consistency would remain more or less the same. The overall message that we get to take home with us is that, compared to her earliest pop days, by 1965 Dusty seems to have gained a little «weight» (purely figurative, of course!), with more emphasis on slow melodramatic soul balladry and less on sprightly dance-pop numbers, though the ratios are still comparable to some extent; what she had *not* gained was the emergence of a special kind of «Dusty Springfield sound» — Johnny Franz's production is solid, but stereotypical, and while the producer and the singer do succeed in tightening up, beefing up, and «adulting-up», so to say, many of the selected cover choices, it's, well, not *absolutely* necessary for anybody to enjoy them specifically in these polished versions.

There might, in fact, be something subtly ironic in the fact that the second of Dusty's singles in 1965, written specially for her by American songwriters Buddy Kaye and Bea Verdi, was titled 'In The Middle Of Nowhere'. It's quite an exciting and catchy pop-rocker, but its basic style is that of Martha & The Vandellas (the backing vocals are like 100% Vandellas — think 'Heatwave', etc.) — and absolutely nothing other than Dusty's usual powerhouse of a voice stands out to make the overall sound preferable to an authentic Motown rendition.

The theoretical idea that Dusty Springfield was there to creatively and intelligently bridge the gap between American soul and European pop is seductive as hell — but more so on paper than in reality. As we can see by Dusty's UK popularity in 1964-1965, Britain adored her as its own resident «queen of soul», and she probably did more to popularize R&B from overseas than anybody else at the time, yet it was still a substitute; America, on the other hand, logically saw Dusty as a relatively minor and superfluous piece of import from the British Invasion, and actually cared more for her as a messenger of the European tradition — no wonder that she did not score any hits on the US market in 1965, and only managed to break through once more with the Italian-flavored 'You Don't Have To Say You Love Me' the following year.

In retrospect, there's no harm whatsoever to get some kicks out of Dusty Springfield, the 1965 edition, but little reason to insist that anything within that edition was in any way «important» for purely musical, rather than social, merits. It goes without saying that if you simply go nuts for that kind of voice, Dusty was in peak form on every single track (yes, even 'La Bamba'!) and it's just one non-stop sonic orgasm, track after track. But to my ears, it's not the kind of voice that reveals any hidden depths of emotional meaning, and it's certainly not enough to redeem a mediocre song or a song with not enough creative ideas to justify the production of a new cover version. When The Beatles covered Motown, they always made sure to give the covered song a new musical identity; when Dusty covers Motown, she and Franz just go along the lines of «oh, this particular vocal / piano / string note felt a little thin on the original record, let's tighten it up! Show those wussy Yanks the true meaning of good old-timey British discipline!» It makes sense (and I'm *pretty* sure that George Martin, on his own, shared exactly the same ideology), but it was still the house that Berry Gordy built — Dusty and Franz were merely giving it a brand new coat of paint to raise the nominal property value.

