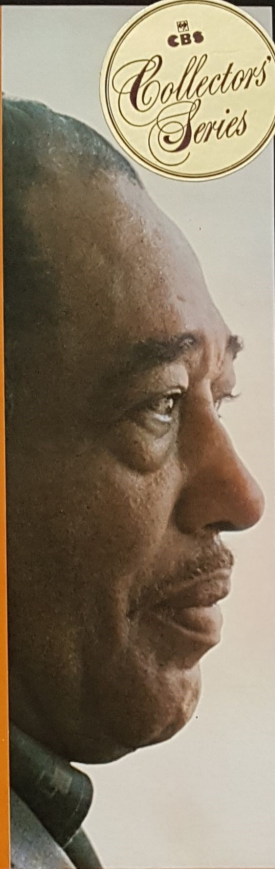


CBS 84419



STEREO
"360 SOUND"

DUKE ELLINGTON



PIANO
IN THE
FORE-
GROUND

CBS RECORDS USA

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HIGH FIDELITY



CBS

DUKE ELLINGTON PIANO IN THE FOREGROUND

SIDE 1

Stereo

33 T.

CBS 84419



A

1 - I CAN'T GET STARTED 4'19

(I. Gershwin - V. Duke) Chappell & Co., Inc.

2 - CONG-OO 4'12

(D. Ellington - A. Bell) Tempo Music, Inc.

3 - BODY AND SOUL 4'46

(E. Heyman - R. Sour - R. Eyton - J. Green) Harms, Inc.

4 - BLUES FOR JERRY 4'35

(D. Ellington) Tempo Music, Inc.

5 - FONTAINEBLEAU FOREST 2'48

(D. Ellington) Tempo Music, Inc.

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DUKE ELLINGTON PIANO IN THE FOREGROUND

SIDE 2

Stereo

33 T.

CBS 84419



B

1 - SUMMERTIME 3'47

(D. Heyward - G. Gershwin) Gershwin Pub. Corp.

2 - IT'S BAD TO BE FORGOTTEN 3'16

(D. Ellington) Tempo Music, Inc.

3 - A HUNDRED DREAMS AGO 2'23

(D. Ellington) Tempo Music, Inc.

4 - SO 4'32

(D. Ellington) Tempo Music, Inc.

5 - YEARNING FOR LOVE 1'46

(M. Parish - I. Mills - D. Ellington)

American Academy of Music, Inc.

6 - SPRINGTIME IN AFRICA 3'43

(D. Ellington) Tempo Music, Inc.

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Produced by
Irv Townsend

DUKE ELLINGTON PIANO IN THE FOREGROUND



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[CB 125]

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I CAN'T GET STARTED
CONG-GO
BODY AND SOUL
BLUES FOR JERRY
FONTAINEBLEAU FOREST

SUMMERTIME
IT'S BAD TO BE FORGOTTEN
A HUNDRED DREAMS AGO
SO
YEARNING FOR LOVE
SPRINGTIME IN AFRICA

I widely quoted remarks ever made by one jazz musician about another, Billy Strayhorn said that Duke Ellington played the piano, but his real instrument was the Ellington orchestra. Strayhorn, by virtue of his unique position as Ellington's friend, arranger, co-composer and nearly inseparable collaborator, is in an excellent position to know what he is talking about, and his comment is a highly astute tribute to the special nature of one of the most prodigious talents in the history of jazz. As composer, arranger and leader capable of making his entire personnel reflect his own personality, Ellington is unapproachable. But when Ellington speaks of himself in relation to the orchestra, he generally refers to himself as "the piano player." Some of that assessment may be mocking self-disparagement, some may be a manifestation of the elegant, sardonic facade Ellington erects before himself and the world. (I once spent an evening talking with a musician who had been a member of the Ellington band for about twenty years, and, even allowing for my companion's possible self-censorship in the interests of privacy, I got the impression that he didn't know Ellington very well.) Ellington himself notwithstanding, the process of critical re-evaluation started by jazz critics in the mid-Fifties (its most significant achievement to date is probably rescuing Thelonious Monk from obscurity) has begun to establish Ellington's importance as a piano player.

There has been little evidence to go on. Solo recordings, even with rhythm section, are rare, and at recording sessions with the band, Ellington often prefers to oversee matters from the control room, while Strayhorn plays piano. Even the most dedicated Ellington admirer might have trouble telling which man is playing on a given record.

It was not until late in 1962 that the first concert featuring Ellington as pianist was held, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Reviewing the concert for *The New Yorker*, Whitney Balliett offered an admirable analysis of the Ellington piano style. After

noting the origins in the Harlem stride style of James P. Johnson and, later, Fats Waller, Balliett continued, "He has taken the Harlem style apart and rebuilt it, with Gothic flourishes, into an infinitely more imposing structure. He has replaced the ump-chump ump-chump of the left hand with startling off-beat chords and generous basso profundo booms. He has added populous dissonances and far-out chords. And into these he has worked crooked arpeggios—directionless, seemingly drunken ones—and handsome upper-register necklaces of notes that poke harmless fun at James P.'s often lacy right-hand garlands. As such, Ellington's piano style has had a good deal of subtle influence, particularly on Thelonious Monk and Cecil Taylor; it takes iconoclasts to hear one."

In connection with this last, it might be worth mentioning that a good part of the authentication of Monk's credentials involved demonstrating his relationship to Ellington. Critics who disparaged a Monk album of Ellington pieces made several years ago would now probably revise their verdict; listeners interested in such matters need go no further than a comparison of the *Body and Soul* in this album with the one on "Monk's Dream."

The difference between the two is perhaps best noted by the third of Balliett's astutely chosen pianist-composers, Cecil Taylor. "One is conscious or one is unconscious of everything that happens," Taylor says, "and your music reflects it. Ellington is a sophisticated man, in many ways. Monk is a different type of person."

This sophistication, which a quarter of a century ago invited comparison to Ravel and Debussy, as well as dire warnings that Ellington was corrupting his music and would be washed up any day, is revealed here in the lovely, impressionistic pieces *Fontainebleau Forest* and *Springtime in Africa*. These tracks are cultural ages away from the stride style which Ellington so precisely delineates elsewhere in the album, and are small gems of the kind that only he has brought to jazz.

Besides these two pieces, there are five that have

never, to my knowledge, been heard before: *Cong-go, Blues For Jerry, It's Bad To Be Forgotten, A Hundred Dreams Ago* and *So*. It is by now legendary that at Ellington's big band recording sessions, there are often copyists hurriedly completing a score that Ellington has worked out only that day, or is working out during the session. It is quite possible that some of these—the blues, for instance—were improvised on the spot, brought up from Ellington's amazing fertile melodic sense, and titled later. (It should be acknowledged that there is wonderful, neglected poetry in some of those hundreds of titles.) Conversely, one title, *Yearning For Love*, was recorded by the Ellington band in 1936 and has not so far been made available on CD. There are countless forgotten treasures like this in the Ellington book; the recently issued first volume of *The Ellington Era* indicates how much wonderful music there still is to be made available.

Also, there are the standards—*Body and Soul, I Can't Get Started* and *Summertime*—to show how Ellington makes anything he touches peculiarly his own.

I feel that this album, recorded in one afternoon with Aaron Bell on bass and Sam Woodyard on drums, goes far to reveal the great jazz pianist that stands behind the great composer-arranger-bandleader, and perhaps even shows that the pianist propels all the other talents. If Ellington did nothing but play the piano this well, he would be a giant. And what Ellington said respectfully of James P.: Johnson can be said as well about Ellington himself: "There never was another."

—JOE GOLDBERG
(Contributing Editor, "HiFi/Stereo Review")

Other Duke Ellington albums you will enjoy:
Jazz Party in Stereo CBS 84410
Midnight in Paris CBS 84414
Selections From Peer Gynt Suites Nos 1 & 2 CBS 84416
And Suite Thursday CBS 84418
Piano in the Background CBS 84418

THE SELECTIONS PUBLISHED BY TEMPO MUSIC, INC. (ASCAP)	EXCEPT WHERE NOTED ARE FOLLOWED BY THEIR TIMINGS
SIDE 1 I CAN'T GET STARTED Chappell & Co., Inc. (ASCAP)	2:15
CONG-GO	4:12
BODY AND SOUL Harma, Inc. (ASCAP)	4:45
BLUES FOR JERRY	3:35
FONTAINEBLEAU FOREST	7:48
.....	2:00
SIDE 2 SUMMERTIME Gershwin Pub. Corp. (ASCAP)	3:47
IT'S BAD TO BE FORGOTTEN	3:16
A HUNDRED DREAMS AGO	2:23
SO	3:32
YEARNING FOR LOVE—American Academy of Music, Inc. (ASCAP)	3:43
SPRINGTIME IN AFRICA	19:52

Color photo: Jim Marshall/ASA photos: Don Hunstein

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