

Fitzgerald & Pass... Again

Side I

1. I Ain't Got Nothin' But The Blues

(Ellington/George) Morley Music & Co. Inc./ASCAP

2. 'Tis Autumn

(Nemo)
M. Witmark & Sons/ASCAP

3. My Old Flame

(Johnston/Coslow)
Famous Music Corp./ASCAP

4. That Old Feeling

(Brown/Fain)
Leo Feist Inc./ASCAP

5. Rain

(E. Ford)
Robbins Music Corp./ASCAP

6. I Didn't Know About You

(Russell/Ellington)
Robbins Music Corp./ASCAP

7. You Took Advantage Of Me

(Rodgers/Hart)
Harms Inc./ASCAP

Side 2

1. I've Got The World On A String

(Koehler/Arlen)
Mills Music Inc./ASCAP

2. All Too Soon

(Ellington/Sigman)
Robbins Music Corp./ASCAP

3. The One I Love (Belongs To Somebody Else)

(Kahn-Jones)
Gus Kahn Music Co./ASCAP

4. Solitude

(Ellington/De Lange/Mills)
Shapiro Bernstein & Co. Inc./ASCAP

5. Nature Boy

(E. Ahbez)
Crestview Music Corp./ASCAP

6. Tennessee Waltz

(Stewart-King)
Acuff-Rose Publications Inc./BMI

7. One Note Samba

(Jobim/Mendonca)
Duchess Music Corp./BMI

Produced by Norman Granz

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So far as the musician is concerned, there are few sadder spectacles in this world than the outstanding song allowed to fall into disuse – unless of course it is the spectacle of the musician allowed to fall into disuse. Around the time Ella and Joe Pass were cutting the sides for this album, I found myself in conversation with a charming old gentleman called Mr. Fain, and, remembering that he had once composed a melody to which in my playing days I had been especially partial, I asked him for a signed copy of the piano music. The song was called "That Old Feeling," and Mr. Fain remembered it very well.

Unfortunately there didn't seem to be a copy anywhere on the premises. He could play it for me on the piano, or he could show me the framed Oscar nomination hanging on the study wall, but of the sheet music, not a sign. He thought it was out of print, which to someone like myself, so respectful of the kind of talent which can produce such a song, was like saying that Ernest Hemingway was out of print.

Mr. Fain had written the song in partnership with a Mr. Brown, for a comically bowdlerised version by MGM of Florenz Zeigfeld's life. Today more or less everything about that picture has been placed in the curio department – except the song that Mr. Fain and Mr. Brown wrote. It is a beautiful piece of work, that song, with a deceptively simple-sounding melody and a set of harmonies which fall quite exquisitely under the fingers of the improvising musician. Like hundreds of similar items, it ought never to be permitted to lapse into neglect, but then, in this world there never was any aesthetic justice. I was quite depressed by Mr. Fain's confession that he couldn't muster even one copy of the music, rather as though one had dropped in on Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, only to hear him say, "Hiawatha? Well, I could swear I used to have a copy somewhere around the place." Now I come to think about it, the scene at Mr. Fain's did seem a bit nostalgic. There were leaves floating on the surface of the pool, and the only sign of life on the terrace was a small dog sunbathing. It seemed like a scene out of "The Last Tycoon," perhaps, and I mourned for the passing of a once-popular song.

I had forgotten, of course, that Ella is as active as ever she was in singing songs which deserve to be sung, and there, in the most excellent of company, on this album, you can find that song that Mr. Fain and Mr. Brown once wrote, in a passing incident in their lives and then forgot about. The rescue operation on behalf of "That Old Feeling" is by no means the only one mounted by

the two great musicians who made the album. I think too of Mae West, who introduced to the world "My Old Flame," and wonder if she quite realized what fate, in the shape of Arthur Johnston and Sam Coslow, had dropped in her spectacular lap. I glance down the items in the programme and think of Henry Nemo's amazing and amusing presumption in "Tis Autumn," where he wrote the lines about the birds "having made their decision with birdie-like precision," and remind myself that it was Stan Getz who was the first instrumentalist to expose the jazz possibilities of the harmonies. And so on. To the musically inclined, every one of the items in this selection would be worth a chapter in a treatise on popular music, from "You Took Advantage of Me," composed by the young Richard Rodgers, the one who mysteriously disappeared when the partnership with Lorenz Hart, all youth and wit, was superseded by the alliance with Oscar Hammerstein, all sober, solid achievement, to "The One I Love Belongs to Somebody Else," yet another scandalously underrated song written by a bandleader who once employed Woody Herman. As to the performances themselves, they are faultless, both in the technical and emotional sense. A study of the way Ella and Joe Pass work together soon reveals a pattern of intensity which recurs in almost every track. Ella begins by giving a fairly chaste reading of the song, followed by a rather more free version of it, or part of it, played on guitar; Ella then re-enters to close the performance, releasing very much more power and linear energy, as though the jazz heat of the guitar playing had inspired her to greater feats of derring-do. This process is particularly noticeable in "You Took Advantage," and "World on a String." I had intended at this

stage to append an erudite paragraph on the very large corpus of Duke Ellington popular songs which have tended to be overlooked in the backwash of Duke's heavier jazz achievements, but I see that space is getting short. But it is worth saying that whenever he wrote popular songs, Duke had a kind of feline stealth when it came to finding unusual bridges, where the key is changed so cunningly that you have hardly noticed the switch at all before the tune is back again into its original theme.

There are dozens of other points worth bringing out; that Ella gives an airing to a fragment which is almost never heard these days, the verse of "My Old Flame"; that "Nature Boy" shows how, even in jazz, brevity can often be the soul of wit; that in "All Too Soon," Ella hits one of her lowest notes on the phrase "bottom fell out," and later, at the same point in the last chorus, reaches up for one of her highest. But the thing which strikes me most forcibly of all is slightly embarrassing. I am forever making out a case for literate lyrics whenever the opportunity presents itself, and occasionally even when it doesn't, yet for me the most affecting track of all has no words. I am thinking of "Rain," which Ella hums and croons, almost to herself, with a wonderful lack of self-consciousness. The song, which moves along the grooves of the kind of sequence which used to be found in good dixieland songs, is a most moving one. I have no idea what the words of "Rain" are, but they could not conceivably be sweeter, or more emotionally charged, than the wordless poetry which Ella gives us in their place.



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