

Songs of the 1940's

STELLA BROOKS

WITH
FRANKIE NEWTON, trumpet, GEORGE BRUNIES, trombone,
SIDNEY BECHET, soprano sax, JOE SULLIVAN, piano,
JACK LESBERG, string bass, GEORGE WETTLING, drums



GRETA KELLER

WITH HARRY LUBIN ORCHESTRA

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE



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FOLKWAYS RECORDS FJ 2830

Songs of the 1940's

STELLA BROOKS

SIDE ONE —

1. AS LONG AS I LIVE (Koehler-Arlen)
2. WEST END BLUES (Williams-Oliver)
3. ST. LOUIS BLUES (Handy)
4. JAZZ ME BLUES (Delaney)
5. I'M A LITTLE PIECE OF LEATHER (Brooks)
6. I'LL NEVER BE THE SAME (Kahn-Malneck-Signorelli)
7. BALLIN' THE JACK (Burris-Smith)

GRETA KELLER

SIDE TWO —

1. TIME ON MY HANDS (Youmans)
2. STRANGE MUSIC (Forrest-Wright)
3. L'ACCOREONISTE (Emer)
4. TU SAIS (Walter)
5. ICH WAR SO GERN EINMAL VERLIEBT (Kreisler)
6. ERST WANN'S AUS WIRD SEIN (Frankowski)

Credits

Programming & Notes: David A. Jasen

Recordings: Moses Asch

Remastering: Carl Seltzer

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ANNOTATED BY DAVID A. JASEN
RECORDED BY MOSES ASCH

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FJ 2830

DIVERSE SONGS AND MOODS: STELLA BROOKS & GRETA KELLER

The idea for this album originated in a place called Julius's downtown, a west side place frequented by musicians. The crowd was especially thick that night and so was the smoke, since the ventilator was working poorly. From the sawdust floor to cobwebbed ceiling, the place had a homey touch for musicians from Chicago and points south and for Stella, who'd got her first job in a San Francisco speakeasy during the late days of Prohibition.

Some of us, and of course, Stella, made a beachhead of a corner table in the back room, and settled down for a quiet evening amidst the uproar that reached us from the bar, despite bad acoustics. To neutralize the atmosphere, we turned on the juke box. Luckily we got purely instrumental numbers played by small bands such as the Condon mob. With this as background, Stella let us hear the voice we had wanted to hear since the days when she sang at Greenwich Village haunts.

Two of the numbers fed right into the album idea. The blues, obviously, and Jazz Me Blues. Who had ever heard the words for Jazz Me Blues? That seemed enough in itself, when accomplished with a throaty, tremulous voice and dragged tempo. But the idea rode along as such things do. Henry Hewes presented Stella in a Town Hall concert called "Exit Singing" which led most critics to assume that jazz was dead and this was the trip to the graveyard. It wasn't that at all. It was merely an attempt to show that jazz could be of more than one type.

And this brought us to our second idea and the design for the album in its entirety. It was to include blues, including one of Stella's tunes early and more often played as band numbers than sung, and tunes more or less in the show music style. And that's the pattern we followed, including W. C. Handy's great St. Louis Blues, Stella's Little Piece of Leather, and the seldom heard words of West End Blues. So much for the blues. Jazz Me Blues is not strictly blues but is certainly Dixieland and Stella sang it, verse and all. For the two tunes in show music style we chose—or rather, Miss Brooks chose—I'll Never Be The Same (Malneck-Signorelli) and As Long As I Live (Kochler-Arlin).

There seems to be a tradition that the best blues singers tip the scales at a minimum of two hundred pounds. This may have started with big, solid, blues-singing Bessie Smith. If so, it indicates a lack of perspective. Bessie's teacher was "Little" Ma Rainey, who sang in minstrels and on the T. O. B. A. circuit with a \$20 gold piece necklace and a voice rich and low. Anyway, size had nothing to do with it. Stella is a little girl, but if you called her "dear little Stella" you'd be hung out to dry. She's small and her voice is big enough so that she can be off mike while on stage and still hold her audience. She has dark hair in a page-boy bob and blue eyes and she claims she just grew, like Topsy.

CHARLES EDWARD SMITH

Annotated by David A. Jasen

Contrasts in songs, moods, vocal technique, sounds and feelings make this a most unusual and exciting album. Originally recorded in the mid-1940's, these two singers achieved popularity in the United States by entirely different means.

Side One - STELLA BROOKS

AS LONG AS I LIVE is one of the most imaginative pop tunes ever written. Harold Arlen composed this haunting melody and Ted Koehler wrote the perfect lyrics to this 1934 show tune which was first heard in the Cotton Club Parade, the annual show given at the famous Harlem nightspot.

WEST END BLUES was the 1928 entry of Joseph "King" Oliver and composer-bandleader-publisher-lyricist Clarence Williams. This dixieland classic is here presented, it is believed, for the first time on record, with its vocal. Stella is accompanied by the Chicago stride jazzman, Joe Sullivan (see also JOE SULLIVAN: PIANO, Folkways FA-2851).

ST. LOUIS BLUES was the 1914 masterpiece of W. C. Handy which became the standard of blues songs. Accompanying Stella on this and all of the others except West End Blues is an exceptional band comprised of Frankie Newton, trumpet; George Brunies, trombone; Sidney Bechet, soprano sax; Joe Sullivan, piano; Jack Lesberg, string bass; and George Wettling, drums.

JAZZ ME BLUES was a song written by Tom Delaney, but because the Original Dixieland Jass Band was the first to record it, it has become a dixieland standard with the words lost in the mist of time. This recording once again establishes the lyric with the music.

I'M A LITTLE PIECE OF LEATHER is a Stella Brooks original. She used this as part of her act during the forties

in the various night clubs in Greenwich Village in New York City.

I'LL NEVER BE THE SAME was one of these rare tunes which immediately caught on and remained a standard hit. It was published in 1932. The composers were violinist Matty Malneck and pianist Frank Signorelli, and the words by veteran Gus Kahn.

BALLIN' THE JACK was the joint effort between Chris Smith (music) and Jim Burris (lyrics) in 1913 and it has remained a perennial favorite ever since. Although never previously issued, this version by Stella was recorded at the same time as the others on this side.

Side Two - GRETA KELLER

Greta Keller represents a very special type of singer - the European chanteuse. She established a fine reputation on the stage, in music halls and cabarets in Belgium, Germany, Holland, Sweden and Denmark. From her native Vienna, Austria, she went to Paris and then to London where she broadcast over the BBC. She came to the United States first in 1932 when she made her American debut at the Algonquin Hotel supper club in New York City.

Greta was born in Vienna probably around 1904. Her career got off to a fine start in 1928 when she starred in the play Broadway in Vienna (Marlene Dietrich was among those in the cast). She went from the show to singing at The Pavillion, a club also in Vienna. She began her recording career in 1929 and it continued until her last LP in the mid-1970's.

She had her own club, "Chez Greta" in St. Moritz. During the 30's, she was the darling of the then jet set. During and after the second world war, she entertained over the radio and in clubs.

From the mid-fifties on, Greta would travel between her beloved Vienna and her adopted home in Manhattan. She resumed her acting career appearing in summer stock in this country. She

also appeared in the most elegant supper clubs - one of her most successful engagements was at the Waldorf-Astoria where she recorded an album of her special material. She continued her club career in the 1970's, her last appearance being at the Stanhope Hotel in New York City. She died on November 4, 1977 in Vienna.

Of the six recordings on this album, two are in English, two in French, and two in German. She was provided with superb backing by the Harry Lubin Orchestra.

The songs in English are Vincent Youmans' marvelous TIME ON MY HANDS and Forrest & Wright's STRANGE MUSIC. The French songs are Michael Emer's partisan song L'ACCORDEONISTE and Serge Walter's TU SAIS. In Viennese is Fritz Kreisler's ICH WAR SO GERN EINMAL VERLIEBT and the German lyric of Hans Frankowski's ERST WANN'S AUS WIRD SEIN.