

Church Songs played on the piano & sung by LITTLE BROTHER MONTGOMERY

Rock of Ages

Zion of God
Wilderness
He'll Understand

I Got a Father
This Train
Now When the Saints Go Marching Ir

God Be With You
Veil of Beulah
Down By the Riverside

Over on That European Shore
In the Blood

It Pays to Serve Jesus
She Has Gone to Heaven
I'll Be There

1975

Church Songs played on the piano & sung by

Side I

- 1. Rock of Ages
- 2. Zion of God
- Wilderness
- 4. He'll Understand
- 5. I Got a Father
- 6. This Train 7. Now When the Saints Go Marching In
- 8. God Be With You

The black spiritual, though neglected of late, was the earliest form of black music to attract the patronage of both the sophisticated critic and the white listening audience, and the only black musical form with a demonstrable pedigree dating to slavery. Chronicles of the ante-bulum South generally focused on black sacred slavery. Chronicles of the ante-bulum South generally focused on black sacred slavery. Chronicles of the ante-bulum South generally focused on black sacred slavery. Chronicles of the ante-bulum South generally focused on the sacred of the science of the spiritual strains of the sacred by such novels as Uncle Tom's Cabin (1851), in which you goed of the actual development of the music there was less smith of the sacred of the actual development of the music there was less smith of the sacred of the sacred forms of the sacred o

weaned on spirituals, and some even considered them the root of blues music itself.

Enter Little Brother Montgomery, one of the blues' premier piano stylists, whose gospel debut on this album marks another chapter in the blues singer's age-old flirtation with the spiritual. In retrospect it would appear that gospel had remained flirtation with the spiritual. In retrospect it would appear that gospel had remained flirtation with the spiritual. In retrospect it would appear that gospel had remained the single aspect of traditional black music he had not recorded before making this album; in the course of his sixty-year career, Montgomery had played blues (both album; in the course of his sixty-year career, Montgomery had played blues (both the country and vaudeville variety), ragtime, and jazz with equal aplomb, to say nothing of Tin Pan Alley stuff.

Montgomery's professional history has been admirably recounted in Karl Gert Mollowing particulars emerge. Born Eurreal Wilford Montgomery in 1906 near the following particulars emerge. Born Eurreal Wilford Montgomery in 1906 near the sawmill town of Kent, Louisiana, he was of part Creek descent. More important, his father operated a local honkey-tonk where numerous wandering pianists, including Jelly Roll Morton, paused to play. At the age of five or six, Montgomery had already begun work on his first piano tune, a one-finger melody for beginners called Kunjine Baby, which was also the first tune mastered by the Mississippi called Kunjine Baby, which was also the first tune mastered by the Mississippi called Kunjine Baby, which was also the first tune mastered by the Mississippi called Kunjine Baby, which was also the first tune mastered by the Mississippi called Kunjine Baby, which was also the first tune mastered by the Mississippi called Kunjine Baby, which was also the first une mastered by the Mississippi called Kunjine Baby, which was also the first une mastered by the Mississippi called Kunjine Baby, which was also the first tune mastered by the Mississippi

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barrelhouse in Holton, Louisiana, and then drifted off to such places as Plaquemine and Ferriday. There (with the aid of two uncelebrated pianists, Delhco Robert and Long Tall Friday) he began to arrange his signature song, the rhythmic masterpiece 44 Blues. After Montgomery moved to Tallulah, Louisiana in 1922 it would be further refined by a musician named Ernest (Flunkey) Johnson. Out of such joint musicianship would emerge what became the blues' most widely-copied piano theme outside of Cow Cow Blues, eventually recorded in 1929 by Roosevelt Sykes and Lee Green (a Vicksburg pianist who showed it to Sykes), and adapted by numerous blues guitarists: Skip James (as Special Rider Blues), Howlin' Wolf, Sonny Boy Nelson, and J.B. Lenoir (as Mississippi Road). As late as 1941 it would have hit status as the vocal part of Arthur (Big Boy) Crudup's If I Get Lucky, while Montgomery himself would record three definitive (but commercially unlucky) versions of it as Vicksburg Blues.

Montgomery remained a free-lance barrelhouse pianist (working in such places as Vicksburg and Mound, Louisiana) until around 1924, when he briefly joined a aband from Slidell, Louisiana headed by trumpeter Leonard Parker. Four years later he became a member of Clarence Desdune's Joyland Revelers, a New Orleans outfit hat picked him up while touring in Jackson, Mississippi, and normally engaged only sight-reading musicians. He traveled with them to Omaha, Nebraska, but soon quit and moved to Chicago. There he took lessons from Bob Robinson, the husband of Paramount Records' arranger Aletha Dickerson, and played at house parties with such legendary figures as Blind Blake and Charlie Spand.

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Although one of his early (1931) recordings was subsequently re-touched by Arthur Crudup and became a hit as Mean Old Frisco, his own commercial success was nil.

Yet his career has persisted even with the demise of blues as a popular performing art among blacks, and the tardy white recognition of the country blues medium has given him a new audience. In 1948 he played Carnegie Hall behind Kid Ory, and later, after moving to Chicago (his current home) he became a member of Franz Jackson's jazz group. In 1961 he recorded his first album (Blues) for Folkways, which featured an instrumental version of Vicksburg Blues. This LP was produced shortly afterwards, as a result of Little Brother's own desire to venture into gospel music. He makes the transition effortlessly, with the occasional aid of a chorus and an understated guitar.

The mixture of Montgomery's material reflects some of the new strains that have entered gospel since the 1920s. During the early years of the Depression its style of presentation was completely revamped by Thomas A. Dorsey (a disciple of C.A. Tindley), who slowed down its tempos and infused the music with white harmonic structures, while freeing its texts from their traditional dependence on Biblical paraphrase. The Dorsey flavor is evident in such songs as He'll Understand and God Be With You, while such songs as Just Got Over At Last retain an earlier an vocal trademark, is often given more emphasis than his deliberately subdued piano accompaniments. In this sense his performances remind one of the epirituals Skip James liked to play in the 1900s for his private enjoyment, letting pyrotechnics bow to piety.

Some of the tunes have a long and distinguished history. Rock Of Ages, one of the most famous of all humns, was originally published as a poem in 1776, and as a sacred song in 1832. It was evidently taught to beparture from the original. As a stock song in the safety subdued his pyrically related to the ante-bellum black spiritual builded as a poem in 1776, and as a sucred song in t