

CREDITS

ALL MUSIC ARRANGED FOR GUITAR BY STEVE HANCOFF

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LINER NOTES © 2004 BY STEVE HANCOFF

AN ACOUSTIC STEEL STRING MODIFIED DREADNOUGHT CUTAWAY GUITAR BY ERVIN SOMOGYI PLAYED ON ALL TRACKS (EXCEPT FOR A TAYLOR 12-STRING GUITAR ON VILLAGE OF THE VIRGINS)

FRONT COVER PAINTING XIAO HUA -- LITTLE FLOWER -- BY CHEN YONGLE, KUNMING, CHINA

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIMMY KATZ, NEW YORK

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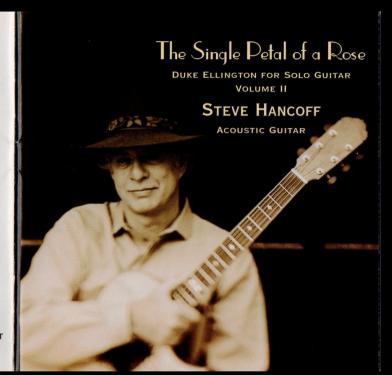
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- 1. HARD WAY (FROM AFRO-EURASIAN ECLIPSE) 3:14 D. ELLINGTON (FAMOUS MUSIC CORP.)
- 2. GYPSY WITHOUT A SONG 3:34
- D. ELLINGTON, J. TIZOL, & L. SINGER (FAMOUS MUSIC CORP. & EMI MILLS MUSIC)
- 3. THE GAL FROM JOE'S 3:08
 D. ELLINGTON & I. MILLS (FAMOUS MUSIC CORP. & EMI MILLS MUSIC)
- 4. THE SINGLE PETAL OF A ROSE (FROM THE QUEEN'S SUITE) 5:07
- D. ELLINGTON (FAMOUS MUSIC CORP.)
- 5. SERIOUS SERENADE 4:32
 - D. ELLINGTON (FAMOUS MUSIC CORP.)
- 6. THE CREEPER 2:47
- D. ELLINGTON (FAMOUS MUSIC CORP.)
- 7. MELANCHOLIA 4:05
- D. ELLINGTON (FAMOUS MUSIC CORP.)
- 8. **PELICAN DRAG** 3:29
- H. CARNEY
- 9. **VILLAGE OF THE VIRGINS** (FROM *THE RIVER*) 5:04 D. ELLINGTON (G. SCHIRMER, INC.)

- 10. **GOIN' TO TOWN** 2:58
- D. ELLINGTON & B. MILEY (EMI MILLS MUSIC)
- 11. GRIEVIN' = 2:32
- D. Ellington & B. Strayhorn (Famous Music Corp. & Cherry Lane Publishing)
 - ELLINGTON & B. STRAY
- 12. **STAR-CROSSED LOVERS** (FROM *SUCH SWEET THUNDER*) 5:35 B. STRAYHORN (TEMPO MUSIC & FAMOUS MUSIC CORP.)
 - . STRATHORN (TEMPO MOSIC
- 13. **JUNIOR HOP** 2:57 D. ELLINGTON (EMI MILLS MUSIC)
 - . ELLINGTON (LIVII IVIILLS IVIOSIC
- 14. **ISFAHAN** (FROM *FAR EAST SUITE*) 5:03 D. ELLINGTON & B. STRAYHORN (FAMOUS MUSIC CORP.)
- J. ELLINGTON & B. STRATHORN (TAMOUS MUSIC CORF.)
- 15. I'M IN ANOTHER WORLD -3:21 D. Ellington & J. Hodges (Famous Music Corp. & EMI Mills Music)
- 16. RACE (FROM DEGAS SUITE) 4:36

17. SERENADE TO SWEDEN - 2:54

- D. Ellington (Famous Music Corp.)
- D. Ellington (Famous Music Corp.)18. LOOKING GLASS 4:16
- D. Ellington (Famous Music Corp.)

1. Hard Way (from Afro-Eurasian Eclipse) 1971, Key G, 6th string - D

In his introduction to Afro-Eurasian Eclipse, Ellington quotes Marshall McLuhan, saying, "The whole world is going Oriental, and no one will be able to retain his or her identity, not even the Orientals." Having spent much of the last decade of his life traveling the world, Duke Ellington was what used to be called a world citizen.

Hard Way is a tribute to Johnny Hodges, about whom Ellington eulogized: "He reached into his soul for them [his notes], and automatically reaching into everyone else's soul." (Music Is My Mistress, pg 118). Norris Turney, Hodges' protegé, performed Hard Way after Hodges had died in his dentist's chair in 1970.

As I write this, I have just returned from a concert tour in China, home to one in four of the world's inhabitants. By now, I have had the good fortune to have visited, performed in and met people all over Asia, Africa, Europe, India and South America. The vast majority of humanity lives on the other side of the oceans that embrace us Americans. It is my impression that we Americans, often insular, tend not to realize what it means that the United States is a spacious, relatively underpopulated outpost of world civilization, with a blessedly reliable abundance of food and where a middle-class dwelling is palatial in contrast to the standards of most of the rest of the world.

2. Gypsy Without A Song 1938, Keys D, Dm, 2nd string - C

Gypsy Without A Song was composed by valve trombonist Juan Tizol, who is perhaps best known as the composer of Caravan, and Lou Singer, who worked on Irving Mills staff. Mills was the agent and publisher who devoted himself to making Ellington a star for a mere 45% plus composer credit - even though he is not known to have contributed a single note - presumably so that he could collect a share of the royalties. Lou Singer was a child prodigy who felt that the greatest compliment he ever received was from his music teacher who told him that he was one of the few people who understood Arnold

Schoenburg's music. (Richard Strauss said of Schoenburg, "He'd have been better off

shoveling snow." But I digress.) "Sometimes Duke would show up at a recording session without having prepared anything (hard to imagine!), and that's when Singer would help him out, and was amply rewarded with praise from Duke." (Leonard Feather, Downbeat Magazine, 1941)

When anybody in the music world hears the word "Gypsy," Django Reinhardt, the greatest of all jazz guitar players (in my opinion), and whom Duke called "one of the inimitibles," springs to mind. As French critic Hugues Panassie put it, "...out of the ten great guitarists in the world, Django is five of them."

In 1946, Duke invited Django and his partner in Le Quintette du Hot Club de France, the groundbreaking jazz violinist Stephane Grappelly, to tour with the band in the US, Grappelly declined, but Django accepted the invitation. Figuring he'd pick up a guitar in the US, he did not bring his own guitar with him. But electric guitars of that era were not so developed as they are now, and Django never found one with which he could get comfortable. In the end, the tour was a disaster. Grappelly tells the story that on the afternoon of the first concert, Django met a boxer, and did not make it to the gig that evening. Instead, he went to the ring to take in the fight! Ah! Such is genius, I suppose.

3. The Gal From Joe's 1938, Key Am, standard tuning

I don't know who "the gal" was, but she must have been amazing. And for that matter, I don't know who "Joe" was either. The piece, one of my absolute favorite Ellington recordings, swings like crazy, and is rhythmically complex and satisfying.

4. The Single Petal Of A Rose (from The Queen's Suite) 1959, Key G, standard tuning

In 1958, Duke was invited to perform at the First Festival of the Arts, Leeds, England. As part of the festivities, he had the opportunity to meet Queen Elizabeth. Stanley Dance reported that when the Queen inquired when he had last visited England, Ellington replied with characteristic grace, "1933, Your Majesty, years before you were born."

Apparently taken by the Queen, Duke returned to New York and composed *The Queen's Suite*. He recorded it with his own money, and had one -- and only one -- copy of the record pressed. He then arranged to have the record delivered to Buckingham Palace as a gift to the Queen. Duke Ellington knew how to make quite an impression on a woman! Even a queen!

Jane Vollmer, who worked with Ellington from 1968 until 1974 and who was known, mysteriously, as Madame Zajj (according to Mercer Ellington, Duke's son, there were actually five different women whom Duke called Madame Zajj - talk about mysterious!), told me that "the Diamonds, close friends of Duke Ellington, had a party at their home in London. There on the piano sat a vase of roses. One petal had fallen onto the piano, and this is what originally inspired the piece. Duke told Renee Diamond that he composed The Single Petal Of A Rose for her. Later when he composed The Queen's Suite, he wanted to include it in the suite. So, he called Renee to get her approval, which she willingly gave." It is the only composition ever publicly performed from The Queen's Suite before it was finally released on a record after Ellington's death. In Ellington's autobiography, Music Is My Mistress (pg 113), he wrote, "The Single Petal Of A Rose represented wonder." To my ear, it is the highlight of the record.

5. Serious Serenade

1952, Key Em, standard tuning Ellipston composed Serious Seronade for his great haritone savon

Ellington composed *Serious Serenade* for his great baritone saxophonist, Harry Carney. Carney grew up in a house four doors down the street from Johnny Hodges. Ellington had to con Carney's mother to allow him to join the band at 17 rather than return to school. He was forever after nicknamed "Youth." As it turned out, Carney was the one who was with Duke continuously and longer than anyone else — from 1927 to 1974.

Before settling on the title *Serious Serenade*, the working titles were *Barisol* and *Apes and Peacocks*, a Biblical reference (*Kings I*, 10:22, enumerating the gifts the Queen of Sheba brought to King Solomon: "...gold and silver, ivory, and **apes and peacocks**"), and later the title for the fifth movement of *The Queen's Suite*. Because the original recording features Carney, you hear much of the melody played on the bass strings.

6. The Creeper 1926, Keys A. E. D. 6th string - D

This barn-burner is among the very first of Ellington's recordings, his first being in 1923. The key changes mirror *Tiger Rag, Milenburg Joys* and *The Original Dixieland One-Step* three of the earliest jazz hits that actually ushered in the Jazz Age. Also, as noted by Dr. Edward Brooks (*The Young Louis Armstrong On Records*, pg 86), a break in the trio section from the OKeh King Oliver/Louis Armstrong recording of *Snake Rag* (in which the young Armstrong not only plays his unmistakable cornet but also a slide whistle!) appears here in the B section of *The Creeper*. Great musicians steal from great musicians.

In 1920's slang, a "creeper" meant a man on the prowl looking to hook up with a woman. Jim Riley, a Baltimore banjoist and jazz historian, told me that in 1938, Johnny Mercer, the poet laureate of Hollywood moviedom, reportedly heard Henry Fonda mutter "jeepers creepers!" on a movie lot. Where Fonda got the expression and whether Fonda's creeper" has the same lineage as Ellington's, I don't know. But by the 1950's, with America's evolving social sensibilities, the meaning of the word "creeper" degenerated into "creep," with its decidedly negative connotation.

7. Melancholia

1953, Key B, 5th string - F#, 6th string - B

Steven Lasker, one of the most active researchers of early Ellingtonia, sent me a cassette of a live recording of *Melancholia* from a 1962 concert at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art. This is the version on which I base my arrangement.

As I heard the tonic played over and over, with poignant and evocative chords revolving around it, I felt that only the open second string of the guitar was where that tonic had to be...it just felt right. That is why I play it in B, usually such an unwieldy key on the guitar.

To my ear, the beautiful *Melancholia* expresses disillusionment. It is about recognizing and coming to terms with the insight that one is not who one had thought/imagined/pretended/presented oneself to be. The cure is facing up to one's reality: who you are, what your heart yearns for and what the purpose of your life is.

8. Pelican Drag 1940, Key Em, 4th string - E

To save or make more money, producer Helen Dance came up with the idea of making records with small groups comprised of members of big bands, using sidemen as session leaders. Composed by Harry Carney, *Pelican Drag* was released under the name of Barney Bigard [Ellington's wonderful New Orleans born and bred clarinetist] and His Orchestra, even though all the players, including Duke himself, were Ellington guys. Ellington was big enough to go along with the idea. Duke wrote, "He [Bigard] was invaluable for putting the filigree into an arrangement, and sometimes it could remind you of all that delicate wrought iron you see in New Orleans." (*Music Is My Mistress*, pg 115) Louisiana is known as the Pelican State. Hence the title.

9. Village of the Virgins (from The River) 1970, Key A, 3rd string - F#, 6th string - D

The moment I heard *VIVI*, as Ellington referred to it, I felt it was made for 12-string guitar. I myself have a deep connection with rivers, and I hope this comes through in my version of it. In 1981, I had the opportunity to train to be a whitewater river guide on the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon (affectionately known as "The Ditch" by aficionados). So, I was faced with the choice of becoming a boatman or playing guitar seriously. Because the skin of a boatman's hands cracks, and his fingers are always in jeopardy from banging hard up against iron oar-locks, I figured I could not do both.

The rapids of the Colorado River are legendary. When one pushes off down the river, the rapids are big, beautiful and exhilarating, but not so technically challenging or dangerous. That is, until you get to Crystal Rapid at mile 98.5. About a mile before you reach Crystal, you start to hear what sounds like a locomotive. My first time down the river, I even asked the guide how it was that there could be trains in the vicinity! As you get nearer, it is customary — and prudent — to row over to the river bank, get out of the raft and scout the rapid to plan the descent. What you see is awesome, because there is a massive rock — think Volkswagen bus (I'm showing my age here; if you are under 40 years old, think "minivan" or SUV!) — smack dab in the middle of Crystal. The water roaring

-- and I do mean roaring -- around the boulder creates what is called a "hole." If your boat gets sucked into the hole, you are in real danger. Trouble is, you have to go right next to the hole to get through the rapid.

Back to VIVI...I aimed to paint a picture of a river trip — giving oneself over to the immensity and majesty of the Grand Canyon itself, the placidity of the water at first, the rapids becoming bigger and bigger, the tempestuous torrent of Crystal Rapid, and finally the eddying out and joy/relief afterwards. And music, like river rafting, indeed like life itself is, in Ellington's words: "an experience in which, of course, you must really immerse yourself to appreciate the hazards." (Duke Ellington, liner notes to *The River*)

The River was commissioned by the American Ballet Theatre, and Alvin Ailey choreographed its premiere. Originally, Ellington intended to describe a float trip. As he aged, he turned increasingly to religion and spirituality, so that for him, The River became a religious allegory "...of birth...of the wellspring of life...of reaffirmation...of heavenly anticipation of rebirth." (Duke Ellington, preface to The River)

10. Goin' To Town 1928, Key D. 6th string - D

Goin' To Town is a collaboration by Ellington and Bubber Miley, the wonderful gut-bucket trumpeter whose growl helped establish the sonic identity of the band as it was just becoming known. According to Stanley Dance, "In the parlance of the time, 'goin' to town' meant to get 'hot' or play with abandon." (The Ellington Era, Volume 2, liner notes).

Incidentally, it was Miley who coined the expression, "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing."

11. Grievin' 1939, Keys C. D. 6th string - D

Jack Towers, who recorded Duke's famous Fargo concert and subsequently mastered more than 50 Duke Ellington records, gave me a tape of *Grievin'* taken from a live 1940 radio broadcast. Even though (to my knowledge) three studio recordings of *Grievin'* exist, I prefer the live one, and base my version on it

12. Star-Crossed Lovers (from Such Sweet Thunder)

1956, Kev C, 5th string - G, 6th string - C

The Stratford (Ontario) Shakespeare Festival commissioned Ellington to compose music for the festival. The result is the suite whose inspired title is *Such Sweet Thunder*. Each movement is a musical depiction of a Shakespearean character, and the star crossed lovers are, of course, Romeo and Juliet. In the original recording, Johnny Hodges' alto represents the voice of Juliet, and Paul Gonsalves' tenor the voice of Romeo as they intimately weave their respective lines around one another. It was Gonsalves who literally drove the audience wild at the 1956 Newport Jazz Festival by playing an incredible 27 choruses in a row on *Crescendo and Diminuendo In Blue*, thereby resurrecting the reputation of the Duke Ellington Orchestra at a time when it had dimmed in the wake of bop, cool and rock. Composed by Billy Strayhorn, *Star-Crossed Lovers* was originally entitled *Pretty Girl*. but it was never released as such

The tragedy of Romeo and Juliet's love is onomatopoeically expressed, first by the suggestion of the sweetness of Eros reverberating in measures 17 - 24 with the Dm7 - Em7, and then the Fm6 - Em7, G7b9 gliding smoothly against one another, and then by the torment of ultimate loss with the note C# clanging discordantly against the C11/G in measure 26 and the dark chromatic chords descending underneath the melody that follow it.

13. Junior Hop 1940, Key G. 5th string G. 6th string D

Junior Hop was recorded by Johnny Hodges and His Orchestra in another small group setting. A "hop" is a rent party. Guests paid maybe \$1.00 to get in, and another \$.25 for a drink. By the end of the evening the host would have collected that month's rent.

14. Isfahan (from Far East Suite) 1963, Key C, 5th string - G, 6th string - C

In 1963, the US State Department sent Duke Ellington and His Orchestra on a good-will tour to Jordan, Afghanistan, India, Sri Lanka, Iran, Iraq and Turkey. They were also scheduled to appear in Cyprus, Egypt and Greece, but the assassination of President Kennedy in November put a premature end to the tour...

But not before the journey inspired the Far East Suite. Many people, myself included, feel the Far East Suite is the most comprehensive and successful large format music that Duke and Billy Strayhorn composed. Duke himself wrote: "The tour was a great adventure for us on what is indeed the other side of the world...Sometimes I felt it was this world upside down. The look of the natural country is so unlike ours and the very contours of the earth seem to be different. The smell, the vastness, the birds, and the exotic beauty of all these countries make a great inspiration." (Musical Journal, 1964). "Isfahan," the legendary Persian city, described by some as the most beautiful city in the world, "is a city of poetic beauty, where they give you poems instead of flowers." (Music Is My Mistress, pg 325)

Billy Strayhorn actually composed what became *Isfahan* before leaving the US for the tour. Its original title was *Elf* -- perhaps autobiographical? Using prototypical jazz progressions (basically C - A7 - D7 - G7 and then F - F#dim - C - A7 - D7 - G7 - C), he manages to capture the mysterious sounds and exotic colors and aromas of the East by harmonizing with chromatic descending scales, and emphasizing flatted ninths and major sevenths. As Duke put it, "You let it roll around, undergo a chemical change, and then seep out on paper..." (*Musical Journal*, 1964)

Indeed, Far East Suite itself can be said to be a poem set to music.

Incidentally, in 1958 Benny Goodman became the first US State Department Artistic Ambassador. In fact, he asked Duke to accompany him as a sideman on his tour. (Can you imagine?) Duke turned him down.

I myself have been an Artistic Ambassador since 1993, first for the United States Information Agency and now for the State Department. This means that I (along with my colleague Bud Wachter) perform concerts and teach master classes, usually in developing countries, with the intention of bringing seminal American music and spreading such will for the United States. I dearly hope that one day the world will be transformed such that American artists will once again be enthusiastically welcomed to play music in Isfahan. We shall be following in gigantic footsteps.

15. I'm in Another World 1938, Key E, standard tuning

Like Junior Hop, I'm In Another World was recorded under the banner of Johnny Hodges and His Orchestra, with Hodges and Ellington sharing composers' credit. Many pieces attributed to Ellington were actually composed by band members -- here Hodges -- or at least initiated by an improvisation that somebody played at a gig.

The creative relationship between Ellington and his men was complicated. Hodges, for one, might come up with a "lick" (musicaleze for a short musical phrase) that Ellington might remember and later use as a kernel of inspiration for a new piece of music. The amiable way in which the matter was worked out was a standing agreement that Duke would pay Hodges \$500 for appropriating one of his licks. Hodges did well because his creativity was such that he, seemingly effortlessly, could come up with new ideas almost at will. In fact, sometimes after a particularly inventive solo, Hodges would rub his fingers together and give Duke a meaningful look as if to say, "Here's another lick I know you're going to use. Get ready to give me some money." Duke wrote: "I am the world's greatest listener...If you love music, then it follows you love to listen to it, which makes the ear the most essential instrument, the most essential musical instrument in the world." (Duke Ellington, Jazz Journal, "The Most Essential Instrument." December, 1965)

Originally, I'm In Another World, was entitled Sexxita. But I guess Duke, or the record company suits, thought better of the name.

16. Race (from Degas Suite) 1968, Key C, 6th string – D

Ellington visited a Paris art gallery where he viewed an exhibit of impressionist and postimpressionist paintings about horse racing, including works by Raoul Dufy, Kees Van Dongen, Jean-Louis Forain and most notably, the remarkable series of masterpieces by Edgar Degas. Duke and producer Sam Shaw hit upon the idea of creating a soundtrack

for an art film, under the working title of *The Impressionists at the Racetrack*. Money ran out before they completed the project, and so the movie was never produced.

From Stanley Dance's liner notes: "Ellington found Forain's painting of the crowd especially amusing. It showed a distant horse and rider, and a bearded gentleman in top hat close up who was holding the form sheet but with his eyes fastened on the bosom of a nearby lady. 'You see,' said Ellington, 'this cat's horse is winning and all his mind is on is blowing the loot he wins on the chick.'"

The structure of the *Degas Suite* reminds me of Moussorgsky's *Pictures At An Exhibition*, in which individual movements are heard while the viewer takes in each painting, and the theme is played while the viewer passes between them. Played searingly by the incomparable Johnny Hodges, *Race* is the theme of the *Degas Suite*, played once at the beginning and again at the end of the Suite. Even though the form of *Race* is essentially a blues, the harmonies and tonal qualities render the music suitably impressionistic so as to match the ambience of the exhibit.

17. Serenade To Sweden 1939, Keys G, C, 6th string D

Jack Towers also introduced *Serenade To Sweden* to me. The first time I heard it, the bridge simply captured me. I couldn't stop humming, whistling, singing it.

On his 40th birthday, Duke was performing in Stockholm. That morning he was awakened at his hotel by a group of school children singing *Happy Birthday* in Swedish. Moved, Duke premiered *Serenade To Sweden* that night. Incidently, among the children was Alice Babs, who years later in 1968 went on to sing as soloist in Duke's *Second Sacred Concert*, and who is the purist coloratura soprano I have ever heard.

When Ellington returned to New York, he recorded it. The session notes list the title as Serenade To A Sweetie! The legendary record producer John Hammond, then just starting out in A&R at Columbia, clashed with Duke on this piece. Hammond claimed that one of the soloists (Wallace Jones? Lawrence Brown? Sam Nanton? Harry Carney?) was "departing" too much from the melody, and insisted that Duke "should make him keep it straight.' Duke fixed him with a cool grin and said: 'John, you're getting more and more like Irving Mills (with whom Ellington had recently parted company) every day.' According to those in the studio that day, Hammond never quite got over that." (Leonard Feather, Jazz Magazine, May, 1943) Even so, Hammond may have had his way, as Serenade To Sweden is completely scored, with virtually no improvisation.

18. Looking Glass 1966, Key C, 5th string G, 6th string - C

Looking Class was originally a piano solo. Even though the chord structure is based on the standard doo-wop, 1950's rock chords -- C - Am - Dm7 - G7 -- Ellington manages to create a haunting melody and profoundly introspective feeling. Just imagine the inner journey of a man, whose musical roots are ragtime and Harlem stride, nearing the end of his life -- Ellington died in 1974 -- and coming to compose such a deeply contemplative piece of music.



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DUKE ELLINGTON FOR SOLO GUITAR

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DROP ME OFF IN HARLEM MISTY MORNING DAY DREAM MOVE OVER LAMENT FOR A LOST LOVE AWFUL SAD MISSISSIPPI MOAN COME SUNDAY MORNING GLORY RENT PARTY BLUES BEAUTIFUL ROMANCE Dusk AFTER ALL HAVE A HEART BLUES OF THE VAGABOND REFLECTIONS IN D

Music

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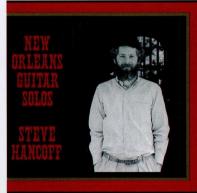
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Goose Pimples
Over in the Gloryland
Just a Little While to Stay Here



Music

STEEL STRING GUITAR

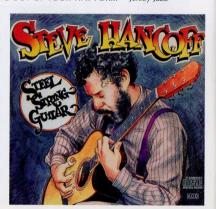
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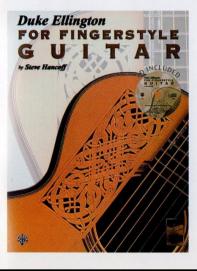
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Roaring 20's Medley
Magnetic Rag
I'm Gonna Sit Right Down
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Hürricane Helen
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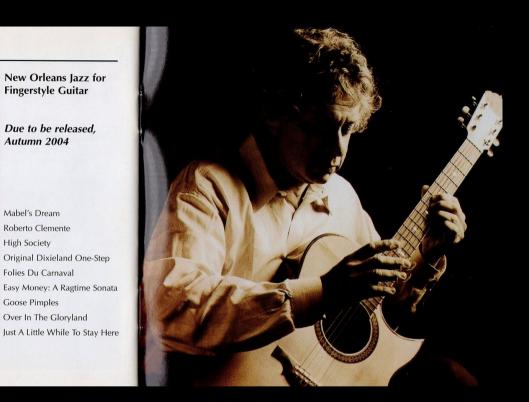
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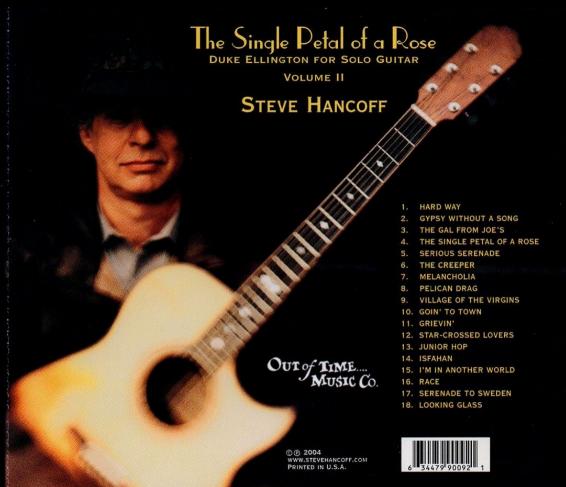
VOLUME II

STEVE HANCOFF

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- 3. THE GAL FROM JOE'S
- 4. THE SINGLE PETAL OF A ROSE
- SERIOUS SERENADE
- THE CREEPER
- MELANCHOLIA
- PELICAN DRAG VILLAGE OF THE VIRGINS
- 10. GOIN' TO TOWN
- 11. GRIEVIN'
- 12. STAR-CROSSED LOVERS
- 13. JUNIOR HOP 14. ISFAHAN
- 15. I'M IN ANOTHER WORLD
- 17. SERENADE TO SWEDEN

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