Ahmad Jamal – Jamalca (1974)

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1. Ghetto Child
2. Misdemeanor
3. Along the Nile
4. Trouble Man
5. Jamaica
6. Don't Misunderstand
7. Theme Bahamas
8. Children Calling
9. Theme from M*A*S*H (Suicide Is Painless)

Ahmad Jamal – piano, keyboards
Richard Evans – bass
Jamil Nasser – bass
Frank Gant - drums
Brian Grice - drums
Marilyn Haywood – vocals
Vivian Haywood – vocals
Jimmy Spink – vocals

Released in 1974, Jamalca is a far cry from Ahmad Jamal's classic trio recordings from the '50s but in line with his other early-'70s releases. In fact, it has a strong early-'70s vibe in general, in terms of both the arrangements -- which feature blaxploitation-tinged strings, anonymous female background singers, and the occasional flute -- and the repertoire, which includes such then-current numbers as Thom Bell's "Ghetto Child," Marvin Gaye's "Trouble Man," and the Johnny Mandel-penned "M*A*S*H Theme" (also known as "Suicide Is Painless," and a tune that was covered by several other jazz musicians during this era, including Bill Evans, Paul Desmond, and Jimmy Smith). Jamal himself splits time between Fender Rhodes and acoustic piano and showcases his usual taste and elegance throughout, despite occasionally being

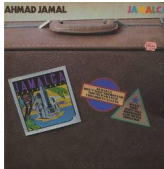**Ahmad Jamal – Jamalca (1974)**

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overwhelmed by easy listening strings and obtrusive background vocals. This is essentially a crossover album, and while it is dated, it is still enjoyable in spots. Highlights include the breezy "Misdemeanor," the chipper (if somewhat goofy) title track, and the M*A*S*H theme, which stays on just the right side of the cocktail-lounge background music line. At this point, the potential audience for this album will consist more of crate-digging rare groove enthusiasts than straight-ahead jazz fans, but for those in the aforementioned demographics, Jamalca is at least worth a listen. ---William York, rovi

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