

Great Jazz  
Composers  
Series



The Music of

31 B-424

# DUKE ELLINGTON

played by

# DUKE ELLINGTON

"COLUMBIA" AND "EXTENDED PLAY" TRADE MARK REG. U. S. PAT. OFF. MARCA REGISTRADA. PRINTED IN U. S. A.



*The New East St. Louis Toodle-O*  
*The New Black and Tan Fantasy*  
*The Creole Love Call*  
*The Mooche*  
*In A Sentimental Mood*  
*I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart*  
*Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me*  
*Don't Get Around Much Anymore*

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By GEORGE AVAKIAN

• The compositions and the orchestra of Duke Ellington are nearly inseparable, for almost all his music has been written expressly for his own orchestra, and much of it has emerged from the orchestra itself.

Some of Duke's compositions in this collection came about through informal group creation in which Duke or someone in the orchestra would lay down a theme of sorts, and gradually a compositional development would take place as Duke demonstrated at the piano and shaped parts for the various members of the orchestra. As can be seen from this description, an orchestration tended to emerge as part of the composition itself, which is the method used by a "serious" composer.

As for the Ellington orchestra which interprets these wonderful compositions, it's really two or three orchestras, because of the time lapse involved. Duke had only a few changes of personnel for over a decade, but in the early forties the tenor of the music business underwent some unfortunate changes, and the general restlessness of the industry began a gradual break-up of the great Ellington person-

nel. (The departure of Cootie Williams, one of the most distinctive voices of the Ellington ensemble, inspired Raymond Scott to write a fine piece called *When Cootie Left the Duke*.)

Surprisingly enough, the 1928 recording in this set (*The Mooche*) does not sound at all dated; the technical quality of the recording is exceptionally fine, and perhaps only the use of a banjo in the rhythm section gives away its vintage. The Ellington style is already apparent — a unique, unmistakable sound of extreme richness, solos which combine simplicity and directness with great imagination, and ensemble playing of unusual harmonic texture and what can perhaps be best described as lazy swing.

The compositions are arranged in the order in which they are written, but the performances are not chronological. Rather they are merely performances which I think are wonderful and deserve to be used as the examples for the compositions. One theme (by Bubber Miley) from *East St. Louis* is omitted in this particular version, but it is, I feel, the most enchanting of Duke's many recordings of his theme; the familiar opening of *Black and Tan*

*Fantasy* is not heard at all in the version in this set, but gained instead are the best group of solos ever recorded by Duke on this familiar masterpiece. The ultimate end of this collection is, I think, admirably achieved: to bring together twelve of Duke's greatest creations, in performances which also make a marvelous program just to listen to.

#### SELECTIONS

*East St. Louis Toodle-oo.* The version in this set was copyrighted as *The New East St. Louis Toodle-o*, but to Ellington fans it will never be anything but *East St. Louis Toodle-oo*. Somewhere in the reaches of my memory is an article in a pre-war British jazz magazine in which Duke took great pains to point out that the correct pronunciation of the last word is "toad-low," and that it means a kind of shuffling walk; in his mind, the composition was meant to depict an old man slowly going down a dusty country road. This is Duke's first composition of real stature; it was written in 1926. For many years it served as the Ellington theme song; its majestic chords, underlined by Sonny Greer's dexterity on the temple blocks and chimes, bring back to countless Ellington fans the memory of late radio broadcasts, stage shows, and one-nighters. (The Ellington band in the thirties was the greatest one-night attraction any jazz fan could have hoped for.) For me, it recalls the silhouette of the orchestra emerging gradually behind the thin curtain of the Apollo Theatre in Harlem, with the two string basses — Duke used two at that time, one at each end of the bandstand — then as the lights behind the orchestra grew stronger, the outline of the brasses and finally Duke himself stepping forward from the piano. In this version, the first eight bars serve as an introduction within what emerges as a 40-measure chorus (24 bars, 8-bar release, and back to the original theme for 8); the second chorus is an orthodox 32 (16-8-8 in the AABA form). Cootie Williams and Barney Bigard are the soloists against the rich tapestry of the orchestra. Recorded March 5, 1937.

*Black and Tan Fantasy.* Again, this version is copyrighted as *The New Black and Tan Fan-*

*tasy*, but the only real justification is that Duke omits Bubber Miley's original opening chorus. Once more Sonny Greer performs percussive marvels; the soloists (in order of appearance) are Barney Bigard on clarinet, Harry Carney on baritone sax, Joe Nanton (known as "Tricky Sam" as a tribute to his agility with mutes), and Cootie Williams. Both trombonist Nanton and trumpeter Williams use two mutes at once in this record; each plays with a metal mute (shaped like a small light bulb) inserted into the bell of his horn, plus a rubber plunger manipulated by hand over the entire bell. The "Where shall we all be a hundred years from now" ending is traditional; so is the adoption of this piece by every burlesque stripper in the history of mankind. Another custom finds Barney Bigard holding a D-flat behind Nanton's solo, gradually sharpening it as he rises from *p* to *ff* (it becomes a D-natural in the 6th bar and an F-natural in the 10th) until in the last two bars he has completely dominated Nanton. Recorded January 13, 1938.

*Creole Love Call.* Written in 1927 to feature the voice-without-words of the celebrated comedienne Adelaide Hall, this is another Ellington classic which has shared the stage with every burlesque queen, bar none. As with *Black and Tan*, there are two themes of 12 bars each; the clarinet trio which traditionally opens this piece is especially sinuous and undulant. Kay Davis handles the unusual vocal, in which her voice is completely a solo instrument of the orchestra. Ray Nance interprets the original Bubber Miley muted trumpet part. (Miley not only created the trumpet parts in the first four compositions in this set, but it might also be said that all four compositions were created more for Miley than for any other member of the Ellington Orchestra of the time.) Some small fills heard on alto sax and clarinet are played by Johnny Hodges and Jimmy Hamilton respectively. Recorded September 1, 1940.

*The Mooche.* This is one of my very favorite Ellington records and, I think, the greatest of its period. It is an ingeniously constructed work. The opening section is a 16-bar theme,



COLUMBIA



B-424-1  
45 RPM

5-1960  
(ZEP 31809)

Band 1. THE NEW EAST ST. LOUIS TOODLE-O  
-Ellington-Miley-  
Band 2. THE NEW BLACK AND TAN FANTASY  
-Ellington-Miley-  
DUKE ELLINGTON  
& his ORCH.

"Columbia" and

Trade Marks Reg. U.S. Pat. Off. Marcas Registradas. Made in U.S.A.

COLUMBIA



B-424-2  
45 RPM

5-1961  
(ZEP 31810)

Band 1. THE CREOLE LOVE CALL - Vocal by  
Kay Davis -Ellington-  
Band 2. THE MOOCHE -Ellington-  
DUKE ELLINGTON  
& his ORCH.

"Columbia" and

Trade Marks Reg. U.S. Pat. Off. Marcas Registradas. Made in U.S.A.

COLUMBIA



B-424-3  
45 RPM

5-1961  
(ZEP31811)

Band 1. IN A SENTIMENTAL MOOD -Ellington-Mills-  
Band 2. I LET A SONG GO OUT OF MY HEART  
From "Cotton Club Parade of 1938"  
-Nemo-Mills- Ellington-  
DUKE ELLINGTON  
& his ORCH.

"Columbia" and Trade Marks Reg. U.S. Pat. Off. Marcas Registradas. Made in U.S.A.

COLUMBIA



B-424-4  
45 RPM

5-1960  
(ZEP31812)

Band 1. DO NOTHING TILL YOU HEAR FROM ME  
Vocal: Al Hibbler -B. Russell-Ellington-  
Band 2. DON'T GET AROUND MUCH ANYMORE  
Vocal: Al Hibbler -B. Russell-  
-Ellington- DUKE ELLINGTON  
& his ORCH.

"Columbia" and Trade Marks Reg. U.S. Pat. Off. Marcas Registradas. Made in U.S.A.

followed by an 8-bar strain; then comes what might be called the trio section, which is 12 bars in length. Three variations on this strain follow; then the orchestra returns to the first 24 bars to go out. The soloists are Bubber Miley, Barney Bigard (with responses by guitarist Lonnie Johnson), vocalist Baby Cox (again backed by Johnson), Miley (responses by Johnny Hodges), and finally Miley alone. Johnson's presence is a freak occurrence which happened a couple of times when Duke and Lonnie were both under contract to the old Okeh company (now owned by Columbia). Baby Cox is a vaudeville singer who could belt a pretty fair blues, but in this record she earns an all-time place in jazz annals with a wordless performance which is quite different from the way Adelaide Hall and Kay Davis have handled much the same idea with Duke; Baby is to voice what Bubber Miley was to trumpet. This particular record, made on October 1, 1928, was cut a few months after *The Mooche* was composed. For a new expanded version which should not be missed, we refer you to Columbia ML 4639.

*In a Sentimental Mood.* Another of Duke's series of commercial as well as artistic successes in the middle thirties. Toby Hardwick is again heard above the rest of the saxes, this time in more of a solo role; Carney's baritone sax plays the second eight. The first release finds Rex Stewart playing the fill-in phrases; that's Cootie Williams holding the muted notes. Hardwick returns for the last eight. The other chorus on this record is shared, eight-eight and eight-eight, by Freddy Jenkins on trumpet and Larry Brown on trombone. This is the original recording (April 30, 1935) of this composition.

*I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart.* This is the record (March 3, 1938) which created this remarkably rocking hit tune. Had there been a presidential election that year, Johnny Hodges could have won the nomination of both parties just on the strength of the first eight bars. Carney, backed by Hodges, plays the rest of the first chorus, except for Larry Brown handling its release. The swinging ensemble in the

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first half of the second and last chorus is one of the finest examples of the Ellington band in full but subtle cry. Barney Bigard plays the last 16, and Brown's trombone fill leads to a reprise of the major 8-bar theme, and finally a 4-bar coda. This arrangement is perhaps the epitome of Duke's marvelous use of "wa-wa" brass, especially in the first and last statements of the 8-bar theme.

*Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me.* Written in 1940 as a showpiece for Cootie Williams (it was originally called *Cootie's Concerto*), this is another of Duke's fine compositions which became a commercial hit only after words were added. Nance and Brown are the soloists in this performance, with Al Hibbler singing the vocal. Recorded November 18, 1947.

*Don't Get Around Much Any More.* This followed hard on the heels of *Cootie's Concerto*, and again it's the same story: an instrumental in its inception (under the name of *Never No Lament*), it became a hit when a lyric was written for it. Again, Hibbler sings, and this time Hodges and Nance handle the solo spots. Al's closing pronunciation of "any more" as "henty more" is something which attracted a lot of attention at the time, but I have always wondered why no one else seems to have noticed something which struck me hard a few hours after I had bought the original release of *Never No Lament*. There was something awfully familiar about this beautiful rocking tune, and suddenly I had it: it was a clever variation on *I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart*, so constructed that the earlier tune becomes a perfect counter-melody to *Never No Lament* (or, to be up to date, *Don't Get Around Much Any More*) except in the release, where the newer melody becomes a counter-melody for the old one. Try it yourself and see; the two versions in this collection are even in the same key, which makes it easier. The counter-melody Duke created for this recording (November 11, 1947) is pretty good, but some time it would be interesting to hear *Don't Get Around* performed with its natural "ghost" counter-melody.