



DUKE ELLINGTON

All Star Road Band

Volume 2

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(Bigard - Ellington - Mills)
- 2 **SATIN DOLL** 4:04
(Ellington - Mercer - Strayhorn)
- 3 **HAPPY GO LUCKY LOCAL** 8:05
(Duke Ellington)
- 4 **MEDLEY** 5:14
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(Ellington)
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(Goodman - Raza! - Sampson - Webb)
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(Don Gibson)
- 14 **DIMINUENDO AND CRESCENDO IN BLUE** 6:59
(Duke Ellington)

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Recording Engineer: JOHN GILL - Re-Mix: JACK TOWERS, BOB THIELE,
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Recorded at the Holiday Ballroom
Chicago - May 31, 1964

Duke Ellington's All Star Road Band at the Carrolltown dance (Doctor Jazz WX2 39137) enjoyed an international success immediately upon its release. For Bob Thiele, the producer, there was a double satisfaction in this, for it marked the renewal of a professional relationship, not only with the music of an artist he admired above all others, but also with Duke Ellington's son, Mercer. The album was an auspicious debut to a series in which this one is the second, and it effectively opened the door to an extensive program of which three other simultaneously released sets are a part (*Happy Reunion* FW 40030, *Hot and Bothered: A Re-creation* FW 40029 and *The Cotton Connection* FW 40031).

The second volume of the All Star Road Band was recorded at the Holiday Ballroom in Chicago by John Gill nearly seven years after that at Carrolltown. Situated at 4847 North Milwaukee Avenue, and still owned and operated by Joe McElroy, the ballroom had previously been an old theatre. The high ceiling, with acoustic treatment near the bandstand designed and installed by Gill, gave the place fine listening properties, which are reflected in the quality of the recording.

In the period between the dance at Carrolltown and this in Chicago, the Ellington band had continued to grow in popularity and had been kept busy in all parts of the world. During 1958, Ellington was presented to Queen Elizabeth II at the Leeds Festival. The following year, he wrote his first movie score for *Anatomy of a Murder*, recognition of which led to another in 1960 for *Paris Blues*. Although European tours were beginning to become annual events, the U.S. was not neglected and one of his most successful suites, *Suite Thursday*, was premiered at Monterey in 1960. There were recordings by Ellington as pianist with Louis Armstrong's group in 1961; a typical Bob Thiele branched, in 1962, he joined Charles Mingus and Max Roach for an unusual trio session, and a year later he almost single-handedly produced *My People*, a remarkable musical show for the Century of Negro Progress exposition in Chicago. At the same time he was writing the music for a production of *Timon of Athens* by the Shakespeare Theatre at Stratford, Ontario. He then left on a long tour of the Near and Middle East for the State Department. And in 1964 he followed up a European tour with his first in Japan.

These were just highlights of a period in which the steady grind of one-nighters and short engagements went on remorselessly to provide the financial glue that kept the best-paid big band in the world together. Yet "remorselessly" may seem inappropriate when one considers the atmosphere in the Holiday Ballroom, and so may "together" in the light of personal changes.

In retrospect, there is a tendency to regard the Ellington band as monolithic, because compared to most in jazz its stability and achievements were alike unique. The fact that many of its members served long periods of their lives in it ensured a special feeling of continuity. Yet here, on this Chicago date, the trumpet section is entirely different from that at Carrolltown, and so is the trombone section. On bass, too, Peck Morrison has replaced Joe Benjamin. While it would be idle to pretend that all the changes were for the better, the return of Cootie Williams and Lawrence Brown to the band was undoubtedly reassuring to its leader.

As he emphasized in his autobiographical *Music Is My Mistress*, Ellington had both admiration and affection for Chicago. While he was still in Washington, he said that Chicago "always sounded like the most glamorous place in

the world." Later, he had the good fortune to find Ivie Anderson and Ray Nance there. His favorite of all nightclubs, Frank Holtzland's Blue Note, was there. It was also where, not incidentally, he brought off several successful coups among the ladies, such as the one when he cultivated Count Basie at the Manor House, as described by his son in Duke Ellington in *Person*. He always seemed impervious to the windy city's abominable climate—baking hot in summer, bitterly cold in winter—or at least contrived to disregard it. He and his men had, of course, made innumerable friends in Chicago since their first visit to play a one-nighter at the Savoy Ballroom in 1930, and they had played the Holiday Ballroom several times before this appearance. The friends, old and new, were on hand to greet them, as the audible conviviality on and off stage makes abundantly clear. The expressions of friendship usually resulted in trips to the bar, which were not always beneficial to the quality of the music, but they also made the rigors of The Road more bearable.

A big advantage in hearing the band at a dance rather than a concert was the greater variety of music played. Because the customers—dancers and listeners—could get closer to the musicians, more requests were shown up and insisted upon. So our program opens with *Mood Indigo*, often a part of what the distinguished British critic, Max Jones, aptly termed the "dread medley," although the medley did have the effect of answering a lot of requests in a short time and of putting a lot of tunes on the performance report to ASCAP.

This *Mood Indigo* is one of only three titles duplicated from the Carrolltown album, and it is considerably different. The familiar 9-me is stated by a trio consisting of Russell Procope (clarinet), Harry Carney (bass clarinet) and Lawrence Brown (trombone), after which Procope, Brown (with plunger mule) and Ellington each take two solo choruses before the repress and band coda.

This *Mood Indigo* is written in 1953, was by no means an overnight hit, but eleven years later it was beginning to become familiar to the masses and to be frequently requested. Cootie Williams has eight distinctive bars in the second chorus, and Ellington dialogues with Peck Morrison in the fourth. It is a performance that the pianist virtually carries.

Two more requests are answered and rolled together on the second side: Johnny Hodges' perennial vehicle, *Things Ain't What They Used to Be*, and one that Lawrence Brown made very much his own, *Do Nothin' 'Till You Hear from Me*.

Guitar Amour, when first heard in the underrated *Midnight in Paris* album showcased Ray Nance's romantic violin. The solo responsibility is entrusted to Harry Carney and his sonorous baritone in this version, and the number's character is modified accordingly, following more hilarious vocalizing by the chief percussionist.

C-Jam Blues usually featured several soloists, but in this case it was handed over to Buster Cooper, a trombonist with a robust, energetic and decidedly individual style. Always game, he makes the most of the opportunity.

Silk Lace was first introduced in another much underrated album, *After Bossa*. It was well designed, as here, to demonstrate Jimmy Hamilton's mastery technique and supple phrasing. Although Ellington was often

impatient when questioned about the significance of his titles, this one was singularly appropriate. As far back as the heyday of the great New Orleans clarinetists, terms like "tligree" and "tmbroderie" were used to describe their embellishments, and "silk lace" relates knowingly to that tradition, although Hamilton's idiom is a bit later kind.

Side Three opens with no less than three numbers by Johnny Hodges. Since he solos on three others in this set alone, it may be wondered why Ellington was giving him even more of the limelight than usual. Well, it is also evident that his greatest star had been enjoying Chicago's hospitality fully if not wisely. So his solos are not delivered with their customary definition, a fact that makes his pauses, slips and recoveries both amusing and interesting. Certainly, this afforded some amusement to Ellington, but it is also an example of how he "punished" those who over-indulged.

I Got It Bad was originally sung by Ivie Anderson with support by Hodges, but here he has to do the "singing" - too. *Isfahan*, one of the noblest compositions Ellington and Strayhorn ever fashioned for him, nowadays looks like it's becoming a jazz standard. Hodges never played it quite the same way twice, although the routine did not vary. Having delivered two numbers, the saxophonist was understandably somewhat indignant when called upon for a third, the music Ellington had written for the banquet scene in *Timon of Athens*. The performance again follows the regular pattern established for the novel sixteen-bar theme, after which Hodges probably felt he could relax for the rest of the evening. In fact, there is a passage for the reeds in the next number when both allies seem to have absented themselves!

Tutti for Cootie was written by Ellington and Jimmy Hamilton for Cootie Williams when he returned to the band in 1962 after an interval of twenty-two years. He was still a master of the plunger mule and soon became as vital to the band as before he left. *Tutti* was another of Sam Woodyard's favorites and his liling shuffle gave it and the soloist exciting impetus.

Stomping at the Savoy, Chick Webb's famous theme, was a number Ellington had to keep in the book for dancers like those at the Holiday Ballroom. This arrangement was written by Dick Vance, who played in Webb's band. The solos are by Jimmy Hamilton, newcomer Nat Woodard, Harry Carney, Paul Gonsalves and Russell Procope.

Hodges is brought back for another of his hits, *Jeep's Blues*, on which Ellington is necessarily at his most supportive. Another chorus is reserved for Hodges on the then-popular *I Can't Stop Loving You*, where Lawrence Brown and Buster Cooper dialogue earnestly. Cootie Williams gets a chorus, too, and takes it out with the band at the end.

Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue brings Paul Gonsalves down front once more for his celebrated "wailing interval." He enters swinging and the rhythm section falls in delightedly behind him. Ellington and Woodyard were a great combination and as Gonsalves brings his epic ride to a storming conclusion, both of them are audibly "sent" to use the parlance of yesterday.

Then it is time for *Satin Doll* and goodbye. Ellington thanks the people for "the wonderful way you have inspired us" and assures them that "we do love you madly." Since his piano is well recorded throughout this album, the proof is here of how hard he personally worked to hold things together and ensure that the customers got their money's worth. In a real sense, this was an expression of outgiving love.

STANLEY DANCE

Après un premier double album mémorable qui a obtenu un beau succès auprès d'un public qui débordait de bonheur, et largement, du clan des mous du Duke, voici, enregistrés sept ans après, de nouveaux témoignages du plus fastueux des grands orchestres saisi dans les meilleures conditions possible. Comme ils le faisaient à Carroltown en juin 1957, les ellingtoniens jouent en effet pour la danse en cette soirée du printemps 1964. Et, à nouveau, ren n'a échappé aux micros, ni les moindres nuances, ni les apartés et les exclamations des musiciens, ni même leurs négligences et les libertés qu'ils prennent avec les partitions... Plus que jamais, à cette époque, sont privilégiées les individualités, au détriment d'un jeu d'ensemble par instants passablement brouillon (on comparera à ce propos les *Diminuendo in Blue* des deux albums!). Parmi ces individualités, Paul Gonsalves, immense saxophoniste ténor, et au comble de sa folie, proprement vertigineux dans *Happy Go Lucky Local*, dont incidemment Ellington ne fait jouer à ses musiciens que la seconde partie orchestrale. De même, *Diminuendo in Blue* n'est pas suivi de son complément original, *Crescendo in Blue*. L'impressionnant solo de Gonsalves reçoit en effet le soutien des riffs orchestraux de *Blow-By-Blow*.

Autre grand soliste largement mis en vedette, Johnny Hodges, "impérial" empereur de l'alto, unique soliste de quatre plages. Parmi celles-ci, *Isfahan*, qui sera intégrée deux ans plus tard à la *Far East Suite*, et apparaissant pour la première fois sur un disque du commerce, le "Banquet theme" de la musique de scène écrite par Ellington en 1963 pour le *Timon d'Athènes* de Shakespeare, à la demande du Festival de Stratford (Ontario). Au rayon des surprises et des françaises, *Guitar Amour*, l'un des thèmes du film "Paris Blues", qui fait ici la part belle à sa majesté Harry Carney et à quelques percussionnistes occasionnels et hilares, *C Jam Blues*, dont le seul soliste est Buster Cooper, tromboniste en équilibre, *Six face*, thème délicieux sur lequel tricote Jimmy Hamilton, clarinettiste bien mal apprécié et à redécouvrir. Et puis aussi les interventions de Cootie Williams et de Lawrence Brown, deux grands personnages de retour au bercail ellingtonien, et le swing phénoménal qu'engendre sans relâche de Sam Woodyard, notamment dans *I can't stop loving you*, tube de l'époque accapare définitivement, sur un tempo inattendu, par les voyous de la cour du Duke.

On en redemande!

Claude Carrière

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71'

PERSONNEL

DUKE ELLINGTON, piano - CAT ANDERSON, HERBIE JONES, COOTIE WILLIAMS, NAT WOODARD; Trumpets - LAWRENCE BROWN, BUSTER COOPER; Trombones - CHLICK COHNORS; Bass Trombone - JOHNNY HODGES, RUSSELL PROCOPE; Alto Saxophones - JIMMY HAMILTON, Clarinet & Tenor Saxophone - PAUL GONSALVES, Tenor Saxophone - HARRY CARNEY, Baritone Saxophone & Bass Clarinet - PECK MORRISON, Bass - SAM WOODYARD, Drums.



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