

BYG 529081

ARCHIVE OF JAZZ

VOLUME 31

**DUKE ELLINGTON**

BILLY STRAYHORN • OSCAR PETTIFORD • JO JONES



MADE IN FRANCE

**BYG**  
RECORDS

volume 31



Side 1

33 T.

ARCHIVE OF JAZZ

529.081

**DUKE ELLINGTON - BILLY STRAYHORN**

**Volume 3**

- 1. Cottonfall (Duke Ellington) 2'51
- 2. C Jam blues (Duke Ellington) 2'55
- 3. Flamingo (Grouya-Anderson) 2'55
- 4. Bang-up blues (Duke Ellington) 3'04
- 5. Tonk (Ellington-Strayhorn) 2'55
- 6. Johnny come lately (Strayhorn) 2'67

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Side 2

33 T.

ARCHIVE OF JAZZ

529.081

**DUKE ELLINGTON - BILLY STRAYHORN**

**Volume 3**

- 1. In a blue summer garden (Ellington-Strayhorn) 4'02
- 2. Great times (Ellington) 2'52
- 3. Perdido (Juan Tizol) 2'53
- 4. Take the "A" train (Billy Strayhorn) 2'17
- 5. Ocalypso (Oscar Pettiford) 2'41
- 6. Blues for Blanton (B. & M. Ellington) 2'37

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# ADDITION

## DUKE ELLINGTON

### SIDE 1

- 1 Cottontail (a)
- 2 C jam blues (a)
- 3 Flamingo (a)
- 4 Bang-up blues (a)
- 5 Tonk (b)
- 6 Johnny come lately (b)

### SIDE 2

- 1 In a blue summer garden (b)
- 2 Great times (b)
- 3 Perdido (c)
- 4 Take the « A » train (c)
- 5 Oscalypso (c)
- 6 Blues for Blanton (c)

#### Personnel and recording dates :

(a) Billy Strayhorn trio : Duke Ellington & Billy Strayhorn (p), Wendell Marshall (b) ; N.Y., October 3, 1950.

(b) Billy Strayhorn trio : Duke Ellington & Billy Strayhorn (p), Jo Shulman (b) ; N.Y., November, 1950.

(c) Oscar Pettiford quartet : Oscar Pettiford (cello), Duke Ellington (p), Billy Strayhorn (celesta), Lloyd Trotman (b), Jo Jones (dms), N.Y., September 13, 1950.

Photo : Jacques Bisceglia / Nadja Pictures.  
Serie directed by Jacques Bisceglia.



As musical history this album is priceless. It presents Duke Ellington and his long-time associate composer, arranger, confidant and friend Billy Strayhorn in a series of piano duets. It is the only place where these two musical milestone-makers can be found in piano interplay.

This material was originally recorded late in 1950 by Duke's son Mercer Ellington and jazz critic Leonard Feather, and the first eight selections were issued in limited quantity as a 10-inch album in the early 50's.

The idea for duo recording grew, says Leonard Feather, out of "Tonk". This tune, the only one on the LP that might even loosely be termed "arranged", was often performed at parties by Duke and Billy. The two composer-pianists sat down together and played four hands on the keyboard when two pianos were not available, and the bright, sparkling sound of their music never failed to break up the assembled guests. But, according to both Mercer and Leonard, the other duo-piano tracks here were done in off-the-cuff fashion. The two men just sat down in the studios and played spontaneously. But it was, of course, the kind of "casual" performance that is only possible after years and years of the closest association and mutual respect and affection. Most of the tracks are familiar Ellington-Strayhorn collaborations. "Cottontail, C-Jam Blues, Perdido, Take the «A» Train, Great Times, Johnny Come Lately and Blues For Blanton" are standards to jazz-and-Ellington devotees. What the two composer-pianists do with these melodies, however, will be a revelation to the majority of listeners.

The entire performance is so unified that Billy Strayhorn once said in an interview: "I really have to sit down at a keyboard and play it out myself to know for sure who is playing."

This becomes more understandable when Billy ex-

plains his relationship with Duke: "What it comes down to is that, although we feel very differently about life, we really understand what each one of us wants in a composition. As a consequence, Duke can call me and say, 'I've got these notes here and I haven't got the time'. I write it out from there." Strayhorn not only knows exactly what Duke Ellington wants in a composition, but also what Duke's band expects and needs. As a result, he says, "Although my style of playing away from Duke and the band is quite different, when I play with the band I play like its leader. I know what Duke would do in a particular section of a composition, and I know the band expects it to happen." This complete fitting of the Strayhorn style with that of Ellington is really the key of these recordings. A guide to who's playing when can only be given in general terms. In most cases Duke makes the opening melodic statements. The light, airy phrases, touched with suggestions of Tatum and Teddy Wilson (and the French classical Impressionists as well - as on "C-Jam") seem most often to be Strayhorn's.

The final four tracks here feature the late Oscar Pettiford. Originally included in another album, they marked the great bassist's recorded debut on cello, and were probably the first jazz cello performances ever recorded. O.P. had experimented with the instrument during his tour of duty with the Woody Herman band in 1949, when a slow-healing broken arm hampered his bass style. Another feature of these particular tracks is the addition of Strayhorn on celesta. The sound of cello and celesta gives a bright, bubbling quality to the numbers on which they are included.

Ellington fans will find this a fascinating set. It deepens and broadens the historical understanding of Duke's work and greatly increases an already-monumental legacy.

J.M.