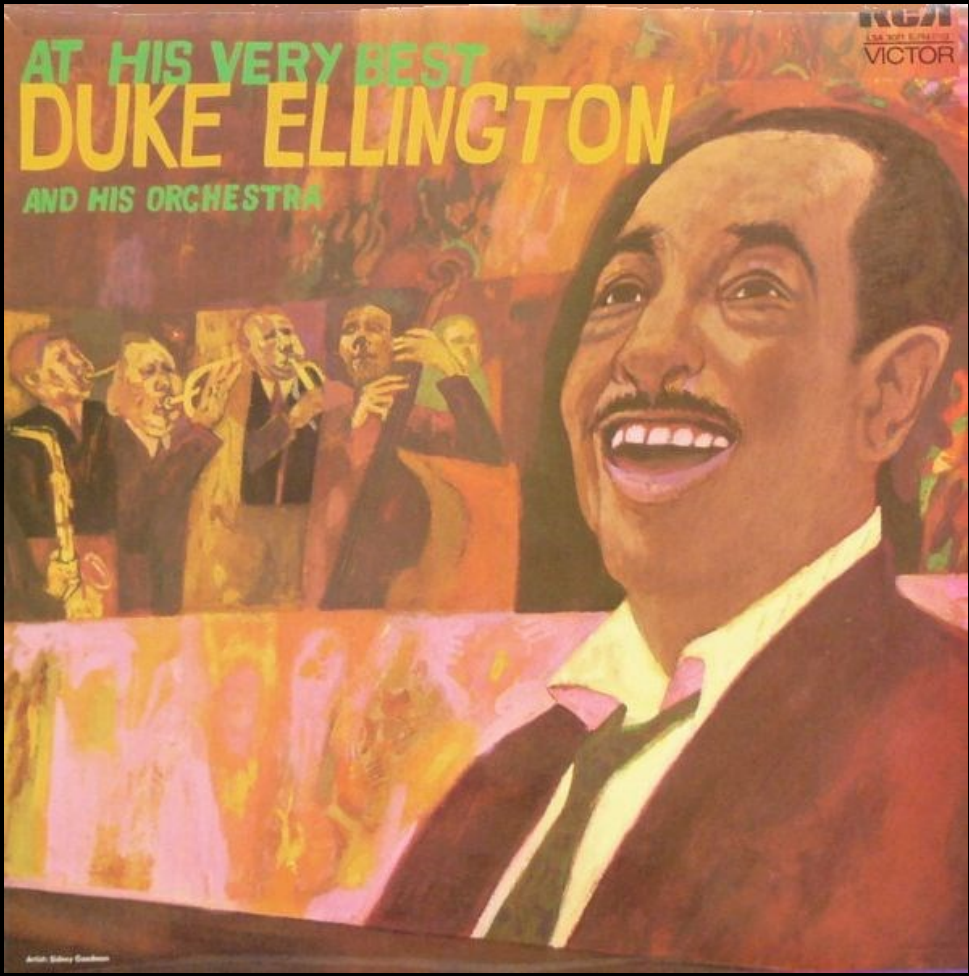


REMI
L.S.A. 1951 ELLINGTON
VICTOR

AT HIS VERY BEST
DUKE ELLINGTON
AND HIS ORCHESTRA



Artist: Sidney Goodson

Side 1 Mono

LSA 3071 (LPM 1715) J2JP 5034

AT HIS VERY BEST

- 1 JACK THE BEAR (Duke Ellington) Robbins Music
- 2 CONCERTO FOR COOTIE (Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me) (Bob Russell, Duke Ellington) Sun Music
- 3 HARLEM AIR SHAFT (Duke Ellington) Robbins Music
- 4 ACROSS THE TRACK BLUES (Duke Ellington) Robbins Music

RCA

Victor

- 5 CHLOE (Song of the Swamp) (Gus Kahn, Neil Moret) Francis Day & Hunter
- 6 ROYAL GARDEN BLUES (Clarence & Spencer Williams) Peter Maurice
- 7 WARM VALLEY (Duke Ellington) Robbins Music
- 8 KO-KO (Duke Ellington) Robbins Music

DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

- 2 Cootie Williams, Trumpet Solo

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Side 2 Mono

LSA 3071 (LPM 1715) J2JP 5035

AT HIS VERY BEST

- 1 BLACK, BROWN, AND BEIGE (Duke Ellington) Campbell Connelly
- 2 CREOLE LOVE CALL (Ellington, Miley, Jackson) Lawrence Wright
- 3 TRANSBLUCENCY (A Blue Fog That You Can Almost See Through) (Lawrence Brown, Duke Ellington) M.C.P.S.

RCA

Victor

DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

- 1 Joya Sherrill, Vocal
- 3 Kay Davis, Vocal

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RCA

MONO
USA 3071
CLPM-17163

THE BEST OF DUKE ELLINGTON And His Orchestra

The personnel of the band on the first side, unless otherwise noted, consists of: Trumpets - Williams, Jones, Coates, Williams, Ben Street, Trumbauer, Joe "Tracy" Sen, Duke Ellington; Trombones - Lawrence Brown, Juan Tizol, Christian, Barney Bigard; Saxophones - Otto Hardwick, Johnny Hodges, alto, Earl Bostock, tenor, Harry Carney; Drums - Elmer Schooner; Rhythm Section - Fred Guy, guitar, Jimmy Greer, drums, Jimmy Houston, bass, Duke Ellington, piano.

Side 1

Jack the Bear (March 6, 1940)
This Ellington composition and arrangement was, noted Leonard Feather, "the first real number written to present Jimmy Blanton when Ellington had discovered a few months before and who, until his tragic death in 1942, was to revolutionize the concept of the use of his instrument in jazz, raising it from the level of a rhythm instrument to one with melodic solo potentialities." The soloists are: Blanton, Ellington, guitar, Williams, Bigard again, Carney, Tricky Sam Nanton and Blanton.

Concerto for Coctie (March 21, 1940)
Lester called Duke Nathan. *Till You Hear From Me, Concerto for Coctie* (Williams) is the subject of a detailed analysis in André Hodeir's jazz. *In Evolution and Essence* (Grove Press). Written by Hodeir: "Concerto for Coctie is a masterpiece... because it doesn't have that slight touch of softness which is enough to make it many other deserving records masterful... because the musical substance of it is so rich that not for an instant does the listener have an impression of monotony... We have here a real concerto in which the orchestra is not a simple background, in which the soloist doesn't waste his time in belated orchestration or in gratuitous effects. Both have something to say, they say it well, and what they say is beautiful. Finally, Concerto for Coctie is a masterpiece because what the orchestra says is the indispensable complement to what the soloist says, because nothing is out of place or superfluous in it; and because the composition flows without a hitch."

Harlem Air Shaft (July 22, 1940)
"So much goes on in a Harlem air shaft," said Duke once. "You hear fights, you smell dinner, you hear people making love. You hear intimate groups snoring down. You hear the radio. An air shaft is one great big loudspeaker. You see your neighbors' laundry. You hear the neighbor's dog. The main upstairs aerial falls down and breaks your window. You smell coffee. A wonderful thing, that smell. One air shaft has got every contour. One eye is cooking dried fish and eyes and another eye's got a great big turkey... You hear people praying, fighting, singing. Jitterbug, are jumping up and down always over you, never below you... I tried to get all that in *Harlem Air Shaft*." The soloists are: Nanton, Williams, Bigard, Coates, and Bigard again.

Across the Track Blues (October 28, 1940)
Many New Yorkers have come to know this intimately as the theme for John Wilson's excellent WURLER series. "The World of Jazz." Soloists are: Blanton and Ellington, Bigard, Stewart, Brown, Barney again.

Chloe (Song of the Sump) (October 28, 1940)
A song that had rarely, if ever, before constituted part of any kind of case in this Ellington treatment to sound as if it were an Ellington original. The soloists are by Nanton, Bigard, Brown, Blanton, Williams and Webster.

Royal Garden Blues (September 3, 1940)
By the time the Ellington made were Jimmy Hamilton, Russell Procope, Al Sears, Hodges and Carney, Trumpets were Sheldon Harnish, Ray Nance, Harold Baker, Ted Jordan, William "Duke" Anderson and Francis Williams. Trombones were Lawrence Brown, Charlie Jones and Wilbur De Paris. In the rhythm section were Duke, Freddie Guy, Oscar Pettiford and Sonny Greer. *Royal Garden Blues* is a jazz tune with a relatively long tradition of performance; but when being played in Ellington perspective, the song sounds fresher and more interesting to this very reader - or since. Soloists are Nance, Brown, Anderson.

Warm Valley (October 27, 1940)
The song is a setting for Johnny Hodges, with a trumpet solo by Coctie Williams. This kind of material is usually fitted to Hodges' "unusually" lyrical romanticism.

Ko-Ko (March 6, 1940)
No one recent can totally summarize the 1940-44 Ellington period, but this comes close in the thoroughly personal aspect of the writing, the quality of the work as we say, the way the solo is integrated into the texture of the work as a whole, and the unique combination of sophistication and joyful idea that characterizes Ellington and his orchestra at their most exhilarating. Ko-Ko also indicates several of the ways - harmonic especially - in which Ellington progressed a greatly portion of current "modern jazz" writing: An Miles Davis once said to Leonard Feather during a "Blindfold Test": "I think all the musicians should get together one certain day and get down on their knees and thank Duke."

Side 2
Blacks, Brown, and Beige (December 11 and 12, 1941)
"The *Factors of Four in Jazz*" (Saturday Review, January 12, 1947), Gunther Schuller wrote: "The idea of extending or enlarging musical form is not a new one in jazz. By the middle Thirties Duke Ellington had already made two attempts to leave behind the confines of the ten-beat-dance jazz with his *Cotton Candy* (1931) and the twelve-minute *Reminiscing in Tempo* (1935). "An even more ambitious Ellington attempt to explore the possibilities of large-scale jazz works came in 1943 when he wrote *Black, Brown, and Beige*. True Parallel to *The American Negro*. The premiere performance was at Carnegie Hall January 23, 1943. The concert was to be the first of an annual series that many remember so strongly the most stimulating jazz experience of their lives. The work originally ran 50 minutes, and only excerpts were recorded for Victor. These excerpts form the large percentage of the second side of this album. The results on these recordings were: Hamilton, Hardwick, Hodges, Sears, Carney, Trumbauer were Humphill, Nance, Jordan, Anderson, Trumbauer were Brown, Jones, Nanton. The

rhythm section had Duke, Guy, Greer, and the late Alvin "Artie" Haglin, bass. On *Black, Brown, and Beige*, the opening section, solo are: Alvin "Artie" Haglin, Nanton with Otto Hardwick's also leading the spiritual-like theme that ends the section with promise. "That's the way it should end," said Ellington at the time of the concert. "How can it be tied and bound and stored away when there's so much more to do." These unbridled endings are reality." So in the mockingly perceptive humour of Tricky Sam. As described in the notes to the original recording, the beginning of *Come Sunday*, with Ray Nance on violin, depicts "the movement trucks and outside of the church," while the workers stand outside, watch and listen, but are not subjected. "The theme develops to the time when the workers have a church of their own..." at which point Johnny Hodges' almost translucent solo is heard.

The *Blues* includes a tenor solo by Al Sears, but is best remembered for Duke's lyrics, singer is Joyce Sheerin:

"The Blues
The Blues ain't...
The Blues ain't nothin' but a cold grey day,
And all right long it stays that way,
Ain't nothin' but love you alone,
Ain't nothin' I want to call my own,
Ain't nothin' with sense enough to get up and go,
Ain't nothin' like nothin' I know
The Blues
The Blues don't...
The Blues don't know nobody as a friend,
Ain't been nowhere where they no welcome back again,
Low wally wally... Blues I know
The Blues ain't nothin' that you can sing in rhythm,
The Blues ain't nothin' but a dark cloud markin' time,
The Blues is a one-way ticket from your love to nowhere,
The Blues ain't nothin' but a black creep wally ready to weep.
Sighin'... Cryin'
Feel most like dyin'
The Blues ain't nothin'...
The Blues ain't...
The Blues

The first of the *Three Dances a War Jagan Dance*, dedicated "to the valiant deeds of the seven hundred free Haitians of the famed Fontaine Legain who came to aid the Americans at the siege of Savannah to the Revolutionary War." *Emancipation Celebration* (continues the Duke) "describes the mixture of joyfulness on the part of the young people, and the belatedness of the Haitian people, and the great point: 'up moment'." Each exultantly anticipated a lifetime of glorious freedom; but see, after long, weary years of servitude suddenly found their freedom to go... but when "The initial strain captures the spirit of youth's ardor and exuberance and ebullience" in the solo of Jordan, Nanton and Raglin."

Sugar Hill Penitence (also known as *Crummy Brown*) is described by Ellington as "representative of the atmosphere of a Sugar Hill penitence in Harlem, which cannot be understood nor appreciated unless one has lived there." In characteristic Ellington phrase, he added: "If you ever sat on a beautiful mezzanine club overlooking New York City, you were on Sugar Hill." *Creole Love Call* (October 26, 1942)

Translucencies
In Blue (Big That You Can Almost See) (through July 8, 1941)
The album closes with the two examples of another way in which Ellington was a significant direction-influencer in jazz - the use of the voice as an additional instrument in the orchestra. Only recently have modern jazz composers begun again to explore the possibilities of the almost fully instrumental voice, and it seems quite likely that as more attempts are made to broaden and deepen the texture of jazz compositions, more work along this line will be undertaken. Ellington was doing this at least as far back as October 26, 1937, when *Creole Love Call* was made. The vocal is Adonis Briles, with a particularly sensitive good trumpet. The actual trumpet is Bubba Miller and the clarinet is Rudy Shickman.

By July 9, 1940, and *Translucencies*, Ellington had experimented a number of times with the voice as instrument, and his own over-all use of his voice as an instrument had, of course, developed highly. The voice here is Kay Davis, and it is more much central and closely involved a figure in the texture of the work than Adonis Briles had been in *Creole Love Call*. Soloists are Brown, with whom Mus Davis also plays a duet, and Ellington. He also plays alongside Hamilton's clarinet, develops the possibilities of the voice for that you can almost see through," and says a developer of *Blue Light*, recorded in 1938. Presented in the same as on *Blue Garden Blues*, with a dedication of Nanton on trombone. As often happens with men who have been producing for a long time, Duke is somewhat taken for granted by many of us that look through the catalogue some time, and listen once more to some of the recordings he made, the pieces he wrote, the albums he released (including he has been). The ones - for all his needs in public - has left a reservoir body of music which a casual listener is likely to be stuck in.

Not Hotteloff. Co-author of *The Jazz Review*