





DUKE ELLINGTON OCTET  
AT THE RAINBOW GRILL 1967

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Billy Strayhorn once stated that "Duke Ellington plays the piano, but his real instrument is the orchestra". Even if this is in some way true, Duke's sporadic experiments with smaller groups and his skills as a pianist were nevertheless superb. The live performance at the Rainbow Grill offered here gives additional evidence of his stature as an instrumentalist. The octet was formed taking several of the major soloists from the 1967 Ellington band, including five horns (Cat Anderson on trumpet, Lawrence Brown on trombone, Johnny Hodges on alto sax, Paul Gonsalves on tenor sax and Harry Carney on baritone sax), plus the rhythm section including the Duke himself, John Lamb on bass, and Steve Little on drums. The reduced environment called for new arrangements for familiar tunes like "In a Sentimental Mood", "Perdido", or "Solitude". Moreover, on these performances Ellington never got up from the piano and his accompaniments for the other soloists are as creative and wonderful to listen to as his own improvisations.

The evening begins with Duke alone playing a piano solo Medley. He was surely testing the instrument while the other members of the band took their places. A portion of this

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performance was to be broadcast by CBS, but fortunately the radio sound engineer began his work a bit early, and recorded not just the segment intended to be part of the radio show, but all the initial tunes, including this amazing piano solo Medley. Some small volume fluctuations occur from time to time during the initial tracks, as the engineer was testing the balance. You can hear people talking, eating and drinking, but no one seems to be paying much attention to the delicate sound of Ellington's solo. Moreover, there is no applause at the end of the song! Things begin to warm up from there, when the full octet begins to play. But applause continues to be a little sparse and when (after "Rock the Clock") a CBS radio broadcast begins to transmit the performance, the announcer explicitly asks the public to applaud!

The broadcast begins with the Ellington band's "theme", Billy Strayhorn's "Take the A Train", which would be performed again (this time a complete version) a bit later. "Heaven", the initial piece of the piano solo Medley, was the third movement of Ellington's "Second Sacred Concert", which would be professionally recorded on January 22, 1968. The one we have

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here is, thus, the first of four known versions of that tune. (A second version was recorded in a trio format on August 24, 1967 during another (still unissued) performance at the Rainbow Grill. The tune's last reading consists of a vocal version performed in Toronto on June 23, 1972.) The second tune of the Medley, "Le Sucrier Velours", is the third movement of Ellington's "Queen's Suite", which was recorded in the studio on February 25, 1959. Apart from these two versions, only one other reading exists, performed at the Union Theatre in Madison, Wisconsin, on July 21, 1972. Ellington's perennial classic "In a Sentimental Mood" marks another highlight, played here by a quartet including Paul Gonsalves and the rhythm section.

The Duke Ellington Octet performed at the Rainbow Grill during the full month of August, 1967. Apart from the August 17 performance issued here, eight more concerts were recorded (those of August 2, 3, 10, 14, 21, 24, 30 & 31). Although a few tunes from these broadcasts were partially released on obscure LPs many years ago, none of them have ever been previously issued in their entirety.

Liner notes by Matias Rinar

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01 · HEAVEN/LE SUCRIER VELOURS	6:58
Duke Ellington	
02 · IN A SENTIMENTAL MOOD	4:27
Duke Ellington	
03 · AZURE	7:23
Duke Ellington-Irving Mills	
04 · I'M BEGINNING TO SEE THE LIGHT	4:13
Ellington-Hodges-James	
05 · ROCK THE CLOCK	3:51
Duke Ellington	
06 · TAKE THE "A" TRAIN/SATIN DOLL	5:08
Billy Strayhorn/Duke Ellington	
07 · SOPHISTICATED LADY	3:50
Ellington-Parish-Mills	
08 · TAKE THE "A" TRAIN	3:36
Billy Strayhorn	
09 · PASSION FLOWER	4:10
Billy Strayhorn	
10 · PERDIDO	3:39
Tizol-Drakes	
11 · SOLITUDE	2:21
Duke Ellington	
12 · THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE	3:13
Mercer Ellington	
13 · OCHT O' CLOCK ROCK	3:17
Duke Ellington	
TOTAL TIME	56:09

DUKE ELLINGTON OCTET: Cat Anderson (tp), Lawrence Brown (tb), Johnny Hodges (as), Paul Gonsalves (ts), Harry Carney (bs), Duke Ellington (p), John Lamb (b), Steve Little (d).

Recorded live at the Rainbow Grill, Rockefeller Center, New York, August 17, 1967.  
CBS Radio Broadcast.



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