





Duke Ellington Band - 1929

DUKE ELLINGTON'S BAND SHORTS

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Edward Kennedy (Duke) Ellington (1899-1974) was the black genius of jazz whose contribution as bandleader, composer and arranger is virtually immeasurable. He started playing piano and composing while still in his teens in Washington, D.C., and led his first band in 1918. Always an innovator, Duke used the band as an instrument to create the effects he desired — such as the sensuous throb of the tropical night during his "jungle" period, or the impression of a philharmonic orchestra in his many forays into experimental symphonic jazz.

The young Duke began to gain a reputation along the East Coast after some gigs in Atlantic City. By 1923, he had the nucleus of his future orchestra accompany him on stints with various bands, including a week with Wilbur Sweatman in New York. In 1924, his own band started its 3-year residency at the Hollywood Club (later renamed Kentucky Club) in downtown Manhattan, then moved to the Cotton Club uptown and international fame. His prodigious recording career started late in 1924 and continued until his death half a century later.

BLACK AND TAN

When he was a youngster, Duke often in-

vented to his house a friend, Arthur Whetsol, who tried to pick out on trumpet what Ellington came up with on the piano. Later, Arthur became one of the original members of the earliest Ellington aggregation, and remained with the Duke until illness forced him to retire in 1937.

In the first filmed appearance of the Ellington Orchestra, Whetsol plays his real-life role of a friend coming to improvise with Duke at his house, while a couple of installment collectors are trying to repossess the piano.

Fortunately, the piano is saved by Fredi Washington, in the role of Duke's dancer who took a leave because of heart ailment, but now says she's ready to come back to work.

The scene shifts to the club where the full band is playing accompaniment to a precision-dancing male quintet. Fredi's solo is announced, and she does a lively number, at the end of which she collapses. The club owner bids the Duke to segue quickly into a number for the chorus girls, but when he gets word she is seriously ill, Duke leaves the stand. At Fredi's bedside, the whole band does a lengthy version of "The Black and Tan Fantasy."

Fredi Washington was a major Harlem nightclub entertainer and stage star. Hailing from Savannah, Georgia (born 1903), she came to New York as a teenager, appeared in one of the tour companies of *Shuffle Along*,



Billie Holiday - 1937

and later in *Singin' the Blues*, *Porgy*, and finally in *Black Boy* opposite Paul Robeson. She also teamed up with Robeson in the film *Emperor Jones* (1933), and played the crucial role of the unhappy half-breed Peola in *Imitation of Life* (1934).

A BUNDLE OF BLUES

After *BLACK AND TAN*, which was made in New York, Duke Ellington's orchestra made its second film appearance in a Hollywood production featuring Amos 'n' Andy of radio fame, *CHECK AND DOUBLE CHECK* (1930).

A BUNDLE OF BLUES is Duke's third film, and it is another band short made in New York. It is distinguished by the appearance of one of Duke's best discoveries, the immortal Ivie.

Ivie Anderson was Ellington's featured vocalist from 1931 to 1942. She was born in Gilroy, California, in 1904, and died in Los Angeles in 1949. She started as a vocalist in a Marmie Smith troupe, played the Cotton Club in New York in 1925, and returned to the West Coast to sing with the orchestras of Curtis Mosby, Paul Howard, Sonny Gray and Anson Weeks. Finally she organized her own traveling show, and was featured in the *Grand Terrace Revue* with Earl Hines in 1930 when Duke spotted her. She can be seen, outside of this short, only briefly in the Marx Brothers film, *A DAY AT THE RACES* (1937).

SYMPHONY IN BLACK

The year 1934 saw Duke involved in four films. In Hollywood, during April and May, the band worked on the Mae West film, BELLE OF THE NINETIES, and the thriller MURDER AT THE VANITIES. It also accompanied Larry Adler in an off-beat Burns & Allen short, MANY HAPPY RETURNS, where the featured orchestra was Guy Lombardo's.

After returning to New York, the band once again repaired to the Paramount's Long Island City studio to do a band short, which, however, remained unreleased until the following year. Duke was one of the few jazz composers who consistently tried to do extended pieces, and here he devotes the entire running time to the SYMPHONY IN BLACK, a composition into which he wove a number of previously used themes, as well as several new ones — which, conversely, were later incorporated into other works.

SYMPHONY IN BLACK is an expertly mounted and tightly edited film, alternating shots of the Ellington band with various scenes enacted to underscore the musical moods. During the "Laborers" theme, for example, the camera emphasizes the dull monotony of various types of hard manual labor.

The standard triangle situation is handled by the very young Billie Holiday (she was 19) standing under the window where her man (Snakehips Tucker) is seen dancing with another girl (Bessie Dudley). When she confronts him, he rudely knocks her down, and Billie sings a very brief vocal blues.

In the "Harlem Rhythm" segment, Snakehips is seen again, in multiple exposures intercut with a chorus of girls, doing one of his specialty hip-twitching numbers.

Billie Holiday (real name, Eleanor Gough, born in Baltimore, Maryland) makes here the first of only three film appearances. Always giving vibrant emotions to her singing, she was much in demand as a recording artist and band vocalist, and was featured regularly with Teddy Wilson, Benny Goodman, Count Basie, Artie Shaw, and eventually with her own hand-picked accompanists.

An illegitimate child of guitarist Clarence Holiday, she left her home town at 13, and was jailed in New York for prostitution. Writer-producer John Hammond heard her at a night club in 1933, and arranged for her to appear with Benny Goodman, launching her on a meteoric career. Billie spent much of the 1940's and 50's in a futile effort to kick her drug habit, to which she finally succumbed in 1959.

MASTERING: Don Van Gordon, Sound Wave Studios

FRONT COVER ART: Joseph LiMarzi
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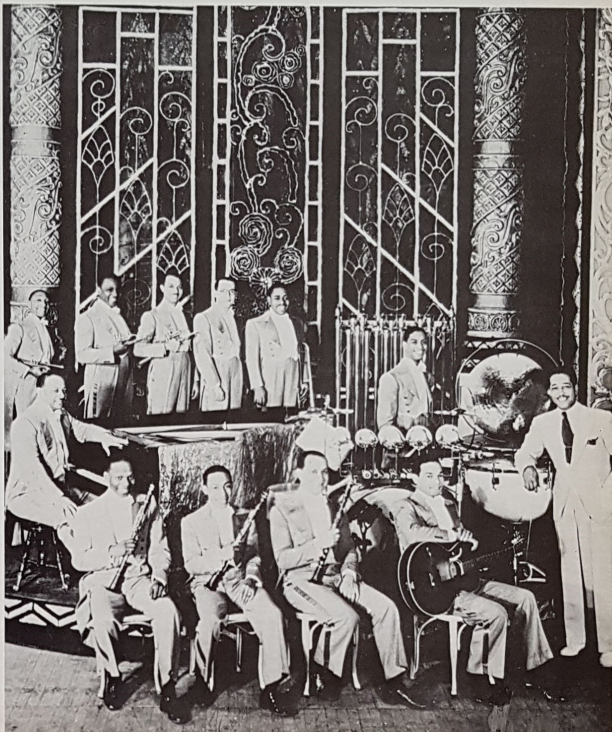
BACK COVER PHOTO: David Meeker, *Jazz in the Movies*

Information about the musical content of the films was supplied by Jerry Valburn, author of *The Microgroove Ellington*.

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PRODUCTION CO-ORDINATOR: JOEL BERNSTEIN

PRODUCED BY ARNOLD S. CAPLIN



Ellington Orchestra
November 1932

Biograph

DUKE ELLINGTON'S BAND SHORTS (1929-1935)

SIDE 1

BLP-M-2-A

BLACK AND TAN (1929) (18:50)

1. Black and Tan Fantasy
2. The Duke Steps Out
3. Black Beauty
4. The Duke Steps Out
5. Black Beauty
6. Cotton Club Stomp
7. Hot Feet
8. Same Train
9. Black and Tan Fantasy

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DUKE ELLINGTON'S BAND SHORTS (1929-1935)

SIDE 2

BLP-M-2-B

A BUNDLE OF BLUES (1933) (9:00)

1. Lightnin' - 2. Rockin' in Rhythm - 3. Stormy Weather
4. Bugle Call Rag - 5. Lightnin'

SYMPHONY IN BLACK (1935) (9:00)

6. Symphony in Black:
Part One: The Laborers
Part Two: A Triangle
Dance-Jalousy-Blues
Part Three: A Hymn of Sorrow
Part Four: Harlem Rhythm

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DUKE ELLINGTON'S BAND SHORTS (1929 - 1935)

The Complete Soundtracks
with

Ivie Anderson, Billie Holiday, Fredi Washington



SIDE ONE

THE FILMS AND THE MUSIC:

BLACK AND TAN (1929)

18:50

Written and directed by Dudley Murphy.
Duke Ellington and His Orchestra, Arthur Whetsol, Fredi Washington,
the Hall Johnson Choir.

Arthur Whetsol, Freddy Jenkins, Cootie Williams — trumpets
Barney Bigard, Johnny Hodges, Harry Carney — reeds
Joe Nanton — trombone, Fred Guy — banjo
Wellman Braud — brass, Sonny Greer — percussion
Duke Ellington — piano

1. Black and Tan Fantasy. Duke Ellington, piano; Arthur Whetsol, trumpet.
2. The Duke Steps Out. Orchestra.
3. Black Beauty. Orchestra. Danced by a male quintet.
4. The Duke Steps Out. Orchestra.
5. Black Beauty. Orchestra, the dancing quintet.
6. Cotton Club Stomp. Danced by Fredi Washington.
7. Hot Feet. Danced by the chorus girls.
8. Same Train. Hall Johnson Choir.
9. Black and Tan Fantasy. Full orchestra and choir.

SIDE TWO

A BUNDLE OF BLUES (1933)

9:00

Duke Ellington and His Orchestra, Ivie Anderson, Bessie Dudley,
Florence Hill.

Marshall Royal, Harry Carney, Barney Bigard, Johnny Hodges —
saxes

"Tricky Sam" Nanton, Juan Tizol, Lawrence Brown — trombones
Cootie Williams, Arthur Whetsol, Freddie Jenkins — trumpets
Fred Guy — guitar, Wellman Braud — bass
Sonny Greer — percussion, Duke Ellington — piano

1. Lightnin'. Introductory music.
2. Rockin' in Rhythm. Orchestra.
3. Stormy Weather. Vocal by Ivie Anderson.
4. Bugle Call Rag. Dance by Florence Hill and Bessie Dudley.
5. Lightnin'. Closing theme.

SYMPHONY IN BLACK (1935)

9:00

Directed by Fred Waller.
Duke Ellington and His Orchestra, Billie Holiday, Snakehips Tucker,
Bessie Dudley.

Arthur Whetsol, Freddy Jenkins, Cootie Williams — trumpets
Joe Nanton, Lawrence Brown, Juan Tizol — trombones
Barney Bigard, Johnny Hodges, Otto Hardwicke, Harry Carney —
reeds
Fred Guy — guitar, Wellman Braud — bass
Sonny Greer — percussion, Duke Ellington — piano

6. Symphony in Black: A Rhapsody of Negro Life.
Part One: The Laborers. (Part of Jealousy used as intro.)
Part Two: A Triangle:
Dance. (Based on Ducky Wucky.) Tucker, Dudley.
Jealousy. (Original music.)
Blues. (Based on Saddest Tale.)
Vocal by Billie Holiday.
Part Three: A Hymn of Sorrow. (Original music.)
Part Four: Harlem Rhythm. (Based on Merry-go-round.)
Danced by Snakehips Tucker.

Produced by Arnold S. Caplin.

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