



Duke Ellington

Volume 9
1929 - 1930
COMPLETE EDITION



les plus éloquents. Ce morceau enlevé donne à chacun, en toute simplicité, l'occasion de faire son commentaire. Et c'est Bigard qui, en bon fils de La Nouvelle-Orléans, s'y exprime le plus brillamment, en particulier dans son solo joué dans le registre grave. Braud, son compatriote, y soulève à nouveau des montagnes. Les deux prises s'écoutent avec le même plaisir.

La plage suivante n'a été publiée que plus de trente années plus tard, après la découverte d'un test pressing en Angleterre. Une chance que ce **Cincinnati Daddy** ne soit pas tombé dans les oubliettes, Cootie en exposant encore une fois la belle mélodie avec grande émotion, Hodges, Nanton, trombone ouvert, et Bigard lui succédant au même niveau d'inspiration, le clarinettiste semblant exciter particulièrement le contrebassiste.

L'année 1930 s'ouvre pour Ellington dans la même atmosphère de travail forcené : son orchestre, outre ses nuits au Cotton Club, semble avoir joué des semaines entières dans divers théâtres du circuit Loew... Et il continue d'enregistrer, le plus souvent caché sous des pseudonymes pittoresques. En décembre, chez Brunswick, il s'appelait « The Jungle Band », pour les petits labels Bannet et Perfect, le 29 janvier 1930, il grave quatre pièces sous le nom fruité de « The Ten Blackberries ». De la première et de la troisième nous possédons trois prises, des deux autres deux prises. La plupart ayant été publiées à l'époque, il est difficile d'en désigner les « masters ». On appréciera en tous cas le fait de trouver ici la prise 3 de **St. James Infirmary** et la 2 de **When You're Smiling** et de **Rent Party Blues** qui perdent ainsi leur statut de raretés... Sunny Smith, le chanteur qui sévit

dans les deux premières plages de la série n'est autre qu'Irving Mills, manager du Duke. Les deux chansons ont déjà été illustrées par Louis Armstrong – **St. James Infirmary** en 1928, **When You're Smiling** en septembre 1929 – et sont devenues des succès qu'on se doit d'avoir à son répertoire. Les grands solistes de l'Orchestre tirent magnifiquement leur épingle du jeu, mais c'est dans les deux pièces suivantes, de l'Ellington pus jus, qu'ils s'envolent vraiment, Hodges, au soprano dans la première, Bigard et Nanton dans la seconde. À noter dans **Rent Party Blues**, dont le thème de trente-deux mesures (qui n'a rien à voir avec le blues de son titre) est co-signé par Hodges et son chef, un très joli « verse » délicatement joué par Arthur Whetsol, trompette bouchée. Ce morceau avait été enregistré une première fois chez Brunswick en mars 1929. Les nouvelles moutures nous semblent plus assurées. Quant à **Jungle Blues**, vrai blues co-signé Ellington et Bubber Miley, il nous replonge dans la jungle mythique et fonctionnelle destinée à faire frissonner les dames de la haute-société qui fréquentaient le Cotton Club. Sur un rythme très appuyé sont joués les deux thèmes, par le sombre trio de clarinettes puis par les cuivres, une sorte de mise en condition pour un chorus superbement « bluesy » de Barney Bigard, suivi de Freddy Jenkins, dans un rôle de trompettiste wa-wa désormais dévolu à Cootie Williams (mais Jenkins est plus proche de Bubber Miley, co-signataire du morceau et qui l'avait sans doute créé sur scène) et d'un Joe Nanton rugueux à souhait. La plage suivante nous offre une toute première version de **Maori**, sous-titré **A Samoan Dance**, pièce exotique dans le genre rumba, mais on danse plutôt le haka aux Îles Samoa, et son compositeur

panaméen, W. H. Tyers, avait-il réponse à ces légitimes interrogations ? Ce **Maori**, qu'on retrouve deux fois un mois plus tard, tout comme **Admiration** du même Tyers, sous-titré *Hawaiian Idyl*, semble en fait destiné à l'accompagnement de numéros de danse dans la revue du Cotton Club. Leur enregistrement correspond à la création, le 2 mars 1930 d'une nouvelle revue « The Blackberries Of 1930 ». Entre le 21 février et le 20 mars, Ellington a légèrement remanié l'arrangement de **Maori** : en mars Hodges apparaît dès l'introduction. Dans les trois plages, c'est Whetsol qui joue le joli premier thème, Joe Nanton le second, dans un style qui rappelle furieusement celui des trombonistes antillais. Tout s'éclaire lorsqu'on apprend que Nanton était né à New York de parents originaires des West Indies...

Entre temps, on aura retrouvé un **When You're Smiling** retravaillé dans deux prises gravées pour Brunswick, deux plages qui ne manquent pas d'atouts, en particulier dans l'exposition du thème par Joe Nanton et dans le dialogue entre Cootie et Hodges, lesquels s'entendent comme larrons en foire, ils le démontreront à nouveau cent fois. À noter qu'Irving Mills chante ici à visage découvert, ce qui n'empêche pas qu'on se serait passé de lui... À noter également que le thème, exposé dans la tonalité de Fa, est chanté en Si bémol, une coquetterie de plus par rapport aux versions précédentes du 29 janvier.

Les deux dernières plages furent gravées pour l'édition éphémère des « Hits of the week », les « tubes de la semaine ». **St. James Infirmary** a subi quelques retouches. Exit le solo de piano mais ajout d'un court solo,

splendide, de Joe Nanton, et juste après le vocal d'Irving Mills, de huit mesures jouées dans l'extrême grave de la trompette par Cootie Williams, une curiosité qui a égaré plus d'un discographe.

Sing You Sinners, enfin, vaut surtout pour les solos de Cootie et de Hodges, dans une ambiance vaguement religieuse. On est loin des chefs-d'œuvre qu'Ellington est capable de nous donner, tels que ceux qui contiendront les volumes prochains...

Claude Carrière

Claude Carrière :

Né en 1939. Producteur à France Musique (« Tout Duke », « Jazz Club » etc.) et à RFI. Pianiste. Co-auteur du « Guide Akai du Jazz » (1979-1985). Collaborateur des magazines « Jazz Hot » (1969-1980) et « Jazzman ». Président de l'Académie du Jazz depuis 1993.

À lire:

DANCE (Stanley), *Duke Ellington par lui-même et ses musiciens*, Paris, Filipacchi, 1976 (1/1970).

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TUCKER (Mark), *Ellington, The Early Years*, Oxford, Bayou Press, 1991.

TUCKER (Mark), *The Duke Ellington Reader*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1993.

ULANOV (Barry), *Duke Ellington*, New York, Da Capo, 1975 (1/1947).

THE NINTH VOLUME of our complete works of Ellington opens with the results of a recording session in the studios of the Brunswick Company on December 10, 1929. At the time, the Duke's orchestra was doing two different shows every day at the Cotton Club in the heart of Harlem, the first one at 12:15 a.m. and the second one at 2:00 a.m. Along with this regular gig, they were also playing in theaters (on the 8th at the Forrest Theater, on the 15th at the Casino Theater, on the 22nd at the Ziegfeld Theater, all in New York City) or in ballrooms (at a Charity Ball in Baltimore on the 18th). When we take into consideration the time spent cutting these records, we must admit that these young people had no shortage of energy. Because, after all, they *were* young: Their leader was thirty, Harry Carney was nineteen... Bass player Wellman Braud was the oldest at thirty-eight, going on thirty-nine (he was born in January in 1891), and it is a real pleasure to hear him again on the first track since he hadn't played in the previous session. All the more so, in that his instrumental presence is superb. His two-beat in *Sweet Mama* provides an impressive foundation for this pretty piece from beginning to end. It has a lyrical melody, exposed by Cootie Williams with both strength and tenderness, paraphrased by Johnny Hodges with feeling, reiterated by Nanton in the same vein, embellished by Bigard with his arabesques, so that the total impression radiates with charm and serenity. This *Sweet Mama* has nothing to do with the *Sweet Mamma (Papa's Getting Mad)* recorded by the orchestra in January 1928. The same four soloists appear in *Wall Street Wail*, a reference to Black Thursday on October 24th, and also in the fol-

lowing piece. Technically speaking, they are simply the best and the most eloquent. In this uplifting number everyone is given an opportunity to make his commentary. And Bigard, son of New Orleans, expresses himself the most brilliantly, especially in the lower register. His compatriot Braud rises to great heights. The two takes can each be listened to with equal pleasure.

The next track was only released thirty years later, after it was discovered in a test pressing in England. A piece of luck that saved *Cincinnati Daddy* from oblivion. Once again, Cootie exposes the beautiful melody with great emotion, followed by Hodges, Nanton with his trombone open, and Bigard with the same level of inspiration; the clarinet especially seems to get the bass excited.

Ellington maintained the same hectic pace in the new year of 1930 as he had in the old: In addition to playing nights at the Cotton Club, his orchestra seems to have spent weeks on end appearing in theaters on the Loew circuit... And he kept on recording, more often than not under picturesque pseudonyms. In December, for Brunswick, the orchestra was called "The Jungle Band," and for the small labels, Banner and Perfect, he recorded four titles under the colorful name, "The Ten Blackberries." We have three takes of the first and third titles, and two takes of the remaining two titles. Since most of them have already been released, it is difficult to designate the "masters." In any case, we are happy to find take 3 of *St. James Infirmary* and take 2 of *When You're Smiling* and *Rent Party Blues*, which removes them from the "hard to find" category... Sunny

Smith, the less than inspiring singer on the first two titles in the series, is none other than Irving Mills, Duke's manager. The other two songs had already been done by Louis Armstrong – *St. James Infirmary* in 1928, *When You're Smiling* in September 1929 – and had become "musts" in everyone's repertory. The lead soloists do an excellent job on these, but they really get off the ground in pure Ellingtonian style in the next two titles, Hodges on the soprano in the first, Bigard and Nanton in the second. In *Rent Party Blues*, whose thirty-two bar theme (unrelated to the blues in the title) was signed by both Hodges and Ellington, Arthur Whetsol's sensitive treatment with a muted trumpet results in a very nice verse that deserves mention. This piece had been recorded previously; the first time was for Brunswick in March 1929. The new versions sound better to us. As far as *Jungle Blues* is concerned (a genuine blues by Ellington and Bubber Miley), it plunges us straight into an imaginary jungle atmosphere whose role was to thrill the high society ladies in the Cotton Club audience. A strong beat backs up two themes, a somber one played by a clarinet trio and one played by the brass. They pave the way for a superb bluesy solo by Barney Bigard, followed by Freddy Jenkins in the role of wa-wa trumpeter. This role was subsequently passed on to Cootie Williams. (However, Jenkins sounds more like Bubber Miley who co-signed the composition and who had doubtlessly played live versions of it.) And then there is Joe Nanton, growling away as we expect him to. The next track contains one of the very first versions of *Maori*, subtitled *A Samoan Dance*. This was another one of those exotic dance numbers. Except that in the Samoan

Islands, they dance the haka, not the rumba. Did W. H. Tyers, from Panama, take that into consideration when he composed it? This *Maori*, and two more versions which were recorded one month later, as well as *Admiration*, subtitled *Hawaiian Idyl* and also by Tyers, appear to have been the accompaniment for the dance numbers of the Cotton Club chorus line. These recordings correspond to the creation of a new revue called "The Blackberries Of 1930," which opened on March 2, 1930. Between February twenty-first and March twentieth, the arrangement of *Maori* was somewhat modified by Ellington: in March, Hodges can be heard in the introduction. In all three tracks, Whetsol plays the rather pretty first theme, the second one is played by Joe Nanton in the style of trombonists from the Caribbean. This can be explained by the fact that Nanton was born in New York to parents from the West Indies.

In the meantime, *When You're Smiling* was reworked for two takes for Brunswick: two tracks with many high spots, especially in the theme exposed by Joe Nanton, and in the dialogue between Cootie and Hodges, with the two of them as thick as thieves, as we would hear a hundred times over. We should note in passing that Irving Mills sings here under his own name, but we could have done without him... We should also call your attention to the fact that the theme is exposed in the key of F, but is sung in B flat, one more embellishment of the previous versions recorded on January 29.

The last two tracks were cut for the ephemeral "Hits Of The Week." *St. James Infirmary* was touched up a bit. The piano solo was taken out, and

a splendid little solo by Joe nanton was put in. Following Irving Mills' vocal are eight bars played in the extreme lower register of the trumpet by Cootie Williams, so unexpected that it has put more than one discographer off the track.

Finally, the solos by Cootie and Hodges make *Sing You Sinners* worthwhile with a vaguely churchy atmosphere. The masterpieces that Ellington is capable of giving us are yet to come. The next albums will prove that...

Claude Carrière

Claude Carrière:

Born in 1939. Radio producer for France Musique ("Tout Duke", "Jazz Club" etc.) and Radio France Internationale (R.F.I.). Pianist. Co-author of the "Guide Akai du Jazz" (1979-85). Contributor to the magazines *Jazz Hot* (1969-80) and *Jazzman*. Elected president of the Académie du Jazz in 1993.

Recommended reading:

- DANCE (Stanley), *The World Of Duke Ellington*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970.
- DIETRICH (Kurt), *Duke's Bones Ellington's Great Trombonists*, Rottenburg, Advance Music, 1995.
- ELLINGTON (Duke), *Music Is My Mistress*, New York, Doubleday, 1973.
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NOTES DISCOGRAPHIQUES

– Les tonalités originales des morceaux ont été rétablies à l'occasion du transfert en CD de ces documents.

DISCOGRAPHICAL NOTES

– Pieces have been restored to their original key during transfer to CD.

DISCOGRAPHY

THE JUNGLE BAND

Freddie Jenkins, Arthur Whetsol, Cootie Williams (tp); Juan Tizol (v-tb); Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton (tb); Johnny Hodges (cl, as, ss); Barney Bigard (cl, ts); Harry Carney (bar, as, cl); **Duke Ellington** (p, arr, dir); Fred Guy (bj); Wellman Braud (b); Sonny Greer (d).

Brunswick — New York City, 10 Dec. 1929

1. E 31508-A **Sweet Mama**
Solos: Williams, tp — Hodges, as — Nanton, tb and Bigard, cl — Williams, tp.
2. E 31509-A **Wall Street Wail** (master take)
Solos: Bigard, cl — Williams, tp — Bigard, cl — Nanton, tb — Braud, b — Hodges, as — Braud, b — Hodges, as — Bigard, cl.
3. E 31509-B **Wall Street Wail**
Solos: same.
4. E 31510-A **Cincinnati Daddy**
Solos: Williams, tp — Hodges, as — Nanton, tb — Bigard, cl.

THE TEN BLACKBERRIES

- Same, except Sunny Smith (Irving Mills) (voc) added.
Perfect New York City, 29 Jan. 1930
5. 9319-1 **St. James Infirmary**
Solos: D. E., p (16) — Smith, voc, with Bigard, cl and Whetsol,
tp — Williams, tp — Hodges, as.
- Banner same place and date
6. 9319-2 **St. James Infirmary**
Solos: same.
7. 9319-3 **St. James Infirmary**
Solos: same.
8. 9320-1 **When You're Smiling**
Solos: Whetsol, tp — Nanton, tb — Whetsol, tp — Smith, voc
— Hodges, as — D. E., p (8) — Jenkins, tp.
- Perfect same place and date
9. 9320-3 **When You're Smiling**
Solos: same.
- Banner same place and date
10. 9321-1 **Rent Party Blues**
Solos: Hodges, ss — Whetsol, tp — Nanton, tb — Hodges, ss.
11. 9321-2 **Rent Party Blues**
Solos: same.
12. 9321-3 **Rent Party Blues**
Solos: same.

13. 9322-1 **Jungle Blues**
Solos: Bigard, cl — Jenkins, tp — Nanton, tb.
Oriole same place and date
14. 9322-2 **Jungle Blues**
Solos: same.

THE JUNGLE BAND

- Same, except Irving Mills (voc) for Sunny Smith.
?? New York City, 21 Feb. 1930
15. E 32210 **Maori (A Samoan Dance)**
Solos: Whetsol, tp — Nanton, tb — Bigard, cl.
- Same, except Sonny Greer plays tambourine in *Admiration*.
Brunswick New York City, 20 March 1930
16. E 32447-A **When You're Smiling** (master take)
Solos: Nanton, tb — Mills, voc, with Jenkins, tp obligato —
Williams, tp and Hodges, as — Jenkins, tp.
17. E 32447-B **When You're Smiling**
Solos: same.
18. E 32448-A **Maori (A Samoan Dance)**
Solos: Hodges, as (intro) — Whetsol, tp — Nanton, tb —
Bigard, cl.
19. E 32448-B **Maori (A Samoan Dance)**
Solos: same.
20. E 32449-A **Admiration (Hawaiian Idyl)**
Solos: D. E., p (6) — Whetsol, tp.

Reissue producer: Claude Carrière
Special thanks to Jean Portier
Transfers: John R. T. Davies - Mastering: Studio Dante (Vanves)
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English version: Patricia & Jean-François Kresser - Graphics: Isabelle Marquis, Marion de Dieuleveult - Photos: X
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THE JUNGLE BAND

1. *Sweet Mama* (D. Ellington, I. Mills)
2. *Wall Street Wail* (D. Ellington, I. Mills)
3. *Wall Street Wail*
4. *Cincinnati Daddy* (D. Ellington)

THE TEN BLACKBERRIES

5. *St. James Infirmary* (J. Primrose)
6. *St. James Infirmary*
7. *St. James Infirmary*
8. *When You're Smiling* (L. Shay, J. Goodwin, M. Fisher)
9. *When You're Smiling*
10. *Rent Party Blues* (D. Ellington, J. Hodges)
11. *Rent Party Blues*
12. *Rent Party Blues*
13. *Jungle Blues* (B. Miley, D. Ellington)
14. *Jungle Blues*

THE JUNGLE BAND

15. *Maori (A Samoan Dance)* (W. H. Tyers)
16. *When You're Smiling* (L. Shay, J. Goodwin, M. Fisher)
17. *When You're Smiling*
18. *Maori (A Samoan Dance)* (W. H. Tyers)
19. *Maori (A Samoan Dance)*
20. *Admiration (Hawaiian Idyl)* (W. H. Tyers)

THE HARLEM HOT CHOCOLATES

21. *Sing You Sinners* (W. F. Harling, S. Coslow)
22. *St. James Infirmary* (J. Primrose)

Total time 67'13

DUKE ELLINGTON

Volume 9

Dec. 1929-March 1930

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