



**THE  
ELLINGTON  
ERA**

**1927-1940**

**Duke Ellington & His Famous Orchestra  
Volume One**



**Part One**

# THE ELLINGTON ERA 1927-1940

Volume 1

Foreword by Irving Mills

It is difficult to know where to start in a tribute to the genius of Duke Ellington. So much has been said before, by me and by countless others, that there is little to add except one general observation: the more time goes by, the more my original faith in him is justified.

From the time I first met him, in 1926, until our relationship ended in 1939, I was as close to Duke as anyone living, outside of his own family. I saw him rise from a position of obscurity to one of world-wide recognition, and I didn't see this from the sidelines as a spectator; as Duke's manager I was proud and happy to be an integral part of the developments, and to watch his mounting success with a great sense of personal satisfaction.

When I first met Duke he was leading a small group at the Kentucky Club, at Broadway and 49th Street. I remember the occasion well: I was with the late Sime Silverman, the founder of *Variety*, who was out for an evening's relaxation after putting the paper to bed.

Though the initial impact of Duke as a musician and person was unforgettable, one detail escapes me: I am still not quite sure which tune it was that particularly caught my attention. I've seen it printed that it was his arrangement of 'St. Louis Blues' that attracted me, though as I recall it today, I believe it was Duke's own *Black and Tan Fantasy*. In any case, the main point is that I was immediately and profoundly impressed by this young man who, it soon became obvious, was not just another pianist or bandleader, but a truly creative artist, with the latent potential for an unlimited career.

Gradually we formed an association; the first work I was able to give Duke was as an accompanist and musical director for singers on a few record dates. Then came the opportunity to work the band into a show at the Cotton Club. By now Duke had expanded the orchestra to ten pieces, and I gladly contributed the salaries of the additional musicians out of my share of the project, because this was obviously more than the mere launching of a dance orchestra or show band.

In those days it was necessary for a bandleader to play for shows and for dancers. Duke functioned efficiently in these capacities, of course, but it soon became clear that helping to organize his career was a big-scale operation. It involved a great deal more than getting dance dates or nightclub bookings for him, or selling his compositions. It was necessary to show the public a broader image of the man as a figure of real stature on the American musical scene.

Within a few years after the inauguration of this policy, Duke was able to claim a list of accomplishments that no other jazz orchestra at that time had ever experienced. The band had been featured in a Hollywood motion picture, Duke had several songs that had become international hits, and as early as 1933, aboard the *Olympic*, we arrived in England – Duke, the band, I've Anderson and myself – where we were greeted by Jack Hylton, the British bandleader and impresario who had helped to arrange our first overseas tour.

There is no need for me to review here the events that followed during the remaining years of our direct association. They are all admirably represented in this album, the first truly comprehensive panorama on records of a major segment of Ellington's career. The music speaks for itself, and it speaks eloquently as a reminder of the unique achievements of this man during the days when jazz was still in a formative stage and had to face a great deal of opposition on every level.

Despite all the difficulties, Duke remained loyal to his beliefs. His philosophy, a rare one in the musical world of those days, was that of a resolute, dedicated artist. Moreover, as I told the late Charles Emge for a *Down Beat* interview back in 1952, 'I never tried to persuade Duke to sacrifice his integrity as Duke Ellington, the musician, for the sake of trying to find a short cut to commercial success. There might be something for today's personal managers, booking agents and press agents to think about. Too many of them think solely in terms of developing and exploiting musicians as commercial attractions.'

I think the performances on these sides will bear out the belief I held then and hold now, that the finest and most lasting music of our time has been made by the men who have been unwilling to compromise. This attitude, and the talent that came with it, have made Duke Ellington the most durable figure in the history of American jazz, a music he played a great part in helping to build.

## The Ellington Mystique, by Leonard Feather

On the evening of April 29, 1963, a very active telephone line connected Beverly Hills, California, with New York City.

At the California end, where an amplifier was attached to the telephone so that the message would be audible to all the faithful, were Patricia Willard, an Ellington fan and

employee; Rex Stewart, an Ellington alumnus, and many past and present members of the Duke Ellington Jazz Society. As Rex blew out the candles on the cake, friends across the continent sent greetings.

At the other end of the line, almost crushed by cake-carrying mobs backstage at the Apollo Theatre, were Harry Carney, then in his thirty-seventh year as an Ellingtonian, and Edward Kennedy Ellington, composer, arranger, bandleader and pianist, celebrating his sixty-fourth birthday.

The events of that evening were remarkable in that they symbolized the perennial mystique that surrounds the Ellington orchestra and its iconic leader. No Masonic ritualism can surpass the intensity and dedication of the Ellington Jazz Society, whose members once held simultaneous birthday parties at 24 cities in 15 countries. The Society, founded in 1958 by Bill Ross, an Ellington enthusiast and discologist from Montreal, had been in existence effectively long before that, in the sense that Ellington students consider themselves a special breed, beyond the normal boundaries of jazz enthusiasm, tied together by the unique thread of the Ellington band that has run through a major segment of their lives.

In this sense, many of us, even those who differ strongly in other areas of opinion, have been bound by this thread for two, three and, in some cases, even four decades.

Ellington's music transcends the most violent disputes among musicologists, providing a bond for such disparate as Milton Babbitt, Percy Faith, Artur Schnabel, Goodman, Morton Gould, Woody Herman, Lana Horne, Gordon Jenkins, Andre Kostelanetz, Peggy Lee, Guy Lombardo, Cole Porter, Pee Wee Russell, Deems Taylor and Lawrence Welk. These names were not picked at random; they were among the dozens who, in 1952, on the occasion of the silver anniversary of Ellington's Cotton Club opening, paid tribute to Duke in *Down Beat* and named their five favourite Ellington records. It is highly improbable that any other musical figure, in or out of jazz, could induce such an eclectic assemblage even to name five of his or her records.

Ellington's music does more than cut across party lines; it induces an unparalleled kind of fierce, jealous loyalty. If you dare to say, in the presence of Joe Morgan (the New York press agent who once arranged a White House interview between Ellington and President Truman) that Count Basie's latest album is better than Duke's, you will be subjected to a harangue so withering that you will hasten to assure him you were only kidding (as you undoubtedly were). And if you happen to be a member of the Ellington band who at one point decided to quit, there is absolutely no assurance, no matter how final your terms of departure, that you have quit forever. Among the moths that have been attracted back to the flame in the past couple of years are no fewer than nine former members who rejoined, briefly or permanently, after dispiriting stints elsewhere: a few weeks to 22 years; trumpeters Cootie Williams, Cal Anderson, Ray Nance, Willie Cook; trombonists Lawrence Brown, Quentin Jackson; saxophonists Johnny Hodges and Paul Gonsalves, and Sam Woodyard, the drummer.

Ellington's place in American musical history was underestimated for many years before it was fully misunderstood. A factor that has tended to confuse the public (and to some degree the historians) is that Ellington, as he himself pointed out long ago, functions on two main bases, as a bandleader and as a composer. 'Sometimes I compose for the band, sometimes I compose for other organizations, sometimes I compose in a vacuum,' he told Barry Ulanov. Ellington has fed the misconceptions by appearing on television shows and at jazz festivals as the performer of a medley of his 'hits'. The fact is that the most vital of his works in the main are neither the simple melodies that take on lyrics and earn wide popularity (*Solitude*, *Mood Indigo*), nor the themes he has written for nightclub, Broadway and movie scores (*I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart*, 'I'm Gonna Rock Go Fishin''), but the strictly orchestral pieces, in which his flair for the creation of interesting melodic lines is inextricably entwined with his skill in orchestrating them, in devising sectional and ensemble passages of an extraordinarily personal nature, and in presenting the results through the medium of what has always been called his favourite instrument: the Ellington orchestra.

Duke's accomplishments, in other words, are best evaluated not in relationship to his success along Tin Pan Alley, but entirely in terms of his achievements within the framework of jazz. As a songwriter he is a master, but Gershwin and Kern and Rodgers can be considered masters on the same plateau. As a composer-arranger-bandleader, in the irremovable-hyphen sense, he is unique.

There has been no continuous line of development in Ellington as a tunesmith, for in this minimalist art the plain diatonic approach of a *Solitude*, vintage 1934, is as satisfying and fulfils its purpose as adequately as any hit he may write today; but as a weaver of orchestral textures he has been changing, developing and expanding since the beginning. It is his continuous evolution on this level that makes the present album



—the first comprehensive set of its kind ever issued — a fascinatingly instructive subject for study.

The period to which the album is devoted was one of great stability on the big band scene as a whole and in the Ellington ranks particularly. Once the orchestra had reached a measure of artistic and economic security (that is to say, by the late 1920's), there were fewer changes of personnel than in any other orchestra in jazz history. There was expansion (the three-piece trumpet section later became four, the two trombones eventually were three, and the reed section ultimately expanded from three to four to five), but a track-by-track study of the line-ups shows that the only other actual personnel changes during the entire decade from mid-1929 to mid-1939 were three permanent defections, and two of these were caused by retirement due to illness (Jenkins and Whetsol). The third was the departure of bassist Wellman Braud.

This astonishing constancy was partly cause and partly effect of the Ellington mystique. No other composer-arranger had, at his daily command, a group of men whose abilities were so familiar to him, and so completely at his beck and call. Their talents became an extension of and complement to his own. No other orchestra was able to build, through so lengthy a period, an international retinue of admirers that followed minutely every aspect of the Duke's progress, every slight shift in orchestral detail, every new addition to the exclusive club, in which membership as a sideman was the ultimate seal of approval for a jazz musician.

I can write about these events with a deep personal sense of involvement, for it was the impact of specially imported Ellington records, some of them bought at near-prohibitive cost from a jazz-oriented record dealer in the East End of London, that led to my own love of jazz, to my own participation as musician and later as critic. It was at the time of the Ellington band's first visit to London, in the summer of 1933, that the ultimate direction of my life was determined along with the lives, I am sure, of many other English youths to whom he represented a distant peak of aesthetic achievement.

The Ellington orchestra was presented in England chiefly as a vaudeville attraction, though already there was genuine concern with the band on the part of Constant Lambert and other 'classical' composers. England and the Continent accepted Ellington on this level sooner and more profoundly than his native country, where all jazz musicians were regarded as entertainers, casual nightclub and ballroom attractions, rather than as men dedicated to a vital, growing, new art.

The facts of Ellington's background are available in a dozen books (though no longer, unfortunately, in Barry Ulanov's *Duke Ellington*, a 1946 biography that has been out of print for some years). Briefly: he was born in 1899 in Washington, D.C.; his father was a butler who worked at the White House and often at parties held in various embassies; later he became a blueprint maker for the Navy. Until his mid-teens, when his sister Ruth was born, Ellington was an only child, a well-adjusted and well-educated youngster who, for several years, despite private piano lessons, remained less interested in music than in painting. Shortly before leaving high school he was offered a scholarship to the Pratt Institute of Applied Arts in Brooklyn (he had won a poster contest sponsored by the N.A.A.C.P.), but he turned it down, having become interested by this time in ragtime piano and in making a living locally, playing gigs with local musicians and painting commercial signs.

Before World War I ended, Ellington had earned a substantial success in Washington, furnishing bands for parties and dances. His career as a composer began in 1917 when, while working at the Poodle Dog Cafe, he wrote the first of his Johnson-inspired piece called 'Soda Fountain Rag'. By 1924 he had made his first attempt to write a show score: 'The Chocolate Kiddies', ran in Berlin for two years but was never presented in the U.S.

Ellington came to New York twice. The first visit, in 1922, consisted of a brief and unhappy association with the ambitious band of Wilbur Sweatman, a sort of premature Roland Kirk (he played three clarinets simultaneously), followed by a few months of the only real poverty Duke ever knew. After returning to Washington, he was persuaded by Fats Waller, in the spring of 1923, to try New York again. His early associates were trumpeter Artie Whetsol, saxophonist Otto (Toby) Hardwicke, Elmer Snowden on banjo and Sonny Greer on drums. Snowden at first was the nominal leader when they played at Barron Wilkins' club in Harlem. Soon after, under Duke's leadership and with Freddy Guy in Snowden's chair, they moved downtown to the Hollywood (later known as the Knickerbocker) Club, where Irving Mills found them.

Without question the pivotal date in Ellington's career was December 4, 1927, when the enlarged band opened at the Cotton Club for an engagement that lasted (with time out for various tours, a Hollywood appearance in 'Check and Double Check' and other side ventures) until 1932.

In the remaining years of the period covered by these six sides, the other events recollected by Duke as those of greatest significance were, first, the band's opening at the Palco, while Frank the Audville friend of Duke's meant that it had arrived in the big time; the London Palladium opening in 1933 ('The applause was terrific; it was applause beyond applause!'), and his fortieth birthday celebration in Stockholm, when he was awakened by a 16-piece band from a local radio station, marching into his hotel room playing 'Happy Birthday'; (All day long huge bouquets of flowers kept arriving . . . there was a ceremony on-stage, followed by a big banquet for the entire orchestra. It all brought a very glowing end to our second European tour.).

What happened to the Ellington pen and the Ellington band during the 1927-1940 span could best be defined by a document several hundred pages long analyzing in full technical detail, bar by bar and chorus by chorus, every one of the 48 tracks in this album. Lacking this space, I can best summarize the developments by naming a few typical examples.

It is commonplace today to weave a wordless vocal into an orchestral performance; but in 1928, when Ellington used Baby Cox in *Hot and Bothersome* and *The Mourner*, it was a daring innovation. The use of rubber plunger as mutes, of growling trumpets and trombones, today seems quaint or even archaic; in Ellington's scores it was and still remains a rich coloristic trait.

Incredible though it may seem to the younger jazz student, until Ellington devised such works as *Clarinet Lament* and *Echoes of Harlem*, there was not a single example, in all of jazz history, of a composition built specially around a single soloist.

Most significantly, Ellington was the first to tear off the strait-jacket that had confined all of jazz to the three-minute limitation of the 78 rpm gramophone record. This was achieved through the extension of works to two or four sides, an initiative undertaken first with 'Creole Rhapsody', then with the four-part 'Reminiscing in Tempo', and on this set with *Diminuendo in Blue* and *Crescendo in Blue*.

Even such simple devices as switching from minor to major mode and back during a blues, or from a 12 to a 32-bar theme during the same three-minute performance, owed their jazz origin, or at least their early development, to Ellington's constant search for the structurally unconventional.

From the harmonic standpoint, Ellington was even further ahead of his contemporaries. The use of ninths, sometimes moving chromatically; the voicing of chords in a manner so resourceful that every other arranger of the day by comparison seemed harmonically paralyzed; the incorporation of minor sevenths into blues passages (and, indeed, a continuously fluctuating and exciting original approach to the already conventional 12-bar blues) — all these helped to establish Ellington as a uniquely gifted genius for bringing jazz out of the confining areas of folk music into a vast new arena that established it as a mature, literate art form.

Ellington's relationship with his sidemen was one of mutual indebtedness. Through his band we were introduced to the great brass men of the 1930's, Miley and Cootie and Rex, 'Tricky Sam' Nanton and Lawrence Brown and Juan Tizol: to the unique sounds of Bigard's spiraling clarinet and to Hodges' unprecedented saxophone facility (he was known in those days just as much for his 'hot' work as for the ballad solos); to the unsurpassed gentle roughness of Carney's baritone, and of course to the rich harmonic warmth as well as the striding swing of Ellington's piano.

These men, at the time of their emergence to international acceptance, were the creators of sounds and styles utterly distinctive in timbre, completely personal in tonal, rhythmic and melodic qualities. The decades that have passed since these virtuosi rose to prominence have produced extraordinary technical advances in jazz, but the passing of time has in no way reduced the subjective or objective meaning of their contributions.

Nevertheless, a number of these recordings must be examined today in terms of the context that produced them. If some of the simpler diatonic lines seem crude, if the clarinet's intonation is less than optimum, if the rhythm section does nothing but chug out four beats to the bar, it is necessary to remember just how advanced these seemingly primitive exercises were at the time; for even at this limited stage in the evolution of Ellington as an original and sophisticated creator, he was years ahead in the shaping of orchestral jazz.

As you progress through the sides, though, the necessity to make such allowances diminishes perceptibly, until around the end of Part 2 one is no longer studying treasured museum pieces under a microscope, but rather listening to aural documents that have miraculously survived the inroads of time. The past 20 or 25 years have chewed up much of the early art of jazz, minimizing its subjective listening value because of the tremendously advanced sensibility of present-day ears, and reducing the old-fashioned four-beat rhythm section to the very antithesis of the swing it was once taken to represent. Yet such thoughts never come to mind as the band exultantly rocks its way through, say, *Battle of Swing*.

As you make the nostalgic journey, having crossed in microcosm a thirteen-year moment in the history of jazz music, you are reminded that when Duke Ellington brought his first musical statements to it, the language of jazz was a pocket dictionary; today it is an encyclopedia. This is due in large measure to his own initiatives; the words and phrases and semantic folkways of jazz expression have grown constant under his urgent prodding.

As you reach the final sides you may be reminded, too, of the oft-repeated and crushingly apt summation by André Previn: 'Another bandleader can stand in front of a thousand fiddlers and a thousand brass, give the down beat, and every studio arranger can nod his head and say, "Oh, yes, that's done like this." But Duke merely lifts his finger, three horns make a sound, and nobody knows what it is!'

Here is Duke Ellington lifting his finger, while the twentieth century listens. Here, in the terms that Duke and Duke alone could propound and define, are 48 reasons why the Ellington mystique will surround this man's name long after the coda is written for all of us.

THE ELLINGTON ERA:  
VOLUME I

Part I

DUKE ELLINGTON and His Famous Orchestra

SIDE 1



33

BPG 62178  
(CL 2046)

BIEM/NCB  
1, 2, 4, 6, 7,  
Mills Music  
3, 8, Lawrence  
Wright  
5, J. R. LaFleur

BPG-62178 1L

RECORDING FIRST  
PUBLISHED 1963

1. EAST ST. LOUIS TOODLE-OO (D. Ellington/B. Miley) 2. HOP  
HEAD (D. Ellington) 3. BLACK AND TAN FANTASY  
(D. Ellington/B. Miley) 4. JUBILEE STOMP (D. Ellington)  
5. THE MOON (D. Ellington/I. Mills) 6. HOT AND  
BOTHERED (D. Ellington) 7. BLUES WITH A  
FEELING (D. Ellington) 8. ROCKIN' IN RHYTHM  
(D. Ellington/H. Carney/I. Mills)

MADE IN ENGLAND

THE ELLINGTON ERA:  
VOLUME I

Part I

DUKE ELLINGTON and His Famous Orchestra

SIDE 2



33

BPG 62178  
(CL 2046)

BIEM/NCB  
1, 5-7, Mills  
Music  
2, Chappell  
& Co.  
3, 4, Lawrence  
Wright  
8, B. Feldman

BPG-62178 2L

RECORDING FIRST  
PUBLISHED 1963

1. LAZY DUKE (D. Ellington) 2. OLD MAN BLUES (D. Ellington/  
I. Mills) 3. MOOD INDIGO (D. Ellington/I. Mills/B. Bigard)  
4. IT DON'T MEAN A THING (If It Ain't Got That Swing)  
(I. Mills/D. Ellington) vocal: Irvie Anderson 5. LAZY  
RHAPSODY (M. Parish/D. Ellington) vocal: Costie Williams  
6. BLUE HARLEM (B. Miley) 7. BLUE TUNE (D. Ellington)  
8. THE SNEAK OF ARABY (H. Smith/  
F. Wheeler/T. Snyder)

MADE IN ENGLAND



# VOLUME 1 PART 1 THE ELLINGTON ERA 1927-1940

Duke Ellington and his Famous Orchestra, the Washingtonians and The Harlem Footwarmers

## SIDE 1

1. **EAST ST. LOUIS TOODLE-OO**, Columbia 963 (ms W 43703-6), 20/02/27, Duke Ellington and his Washingtonians. *Personnel:* Louis Metcalfe, Bubber Miley, trumpet; Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton, trombone; Otto Hardwick, alto sax; Harry Carney, alto and baritone saxes; Rudy Jackson, clarinet and tenor sax; Duke Ellington, piano; Fred Guy, banjo; Henry "Bass" Edwards, tuba; Sonny Greer, drums.

2. **HOP HEAD**, Columbia 963 (ms W 43706-2), 23/3/27, Duke Ellington and his Washingtonians. *Personnel* as track 1.

3. **BLACK AND TAN FANTASY**, Okeh 40655 (ms W 81776-A), 31/1/27, Duke Ellington and his Orchestra. *Personnel* as track 1, but Jabba Smith, trumpet, and Wellman Braud, bass, replace Miley and Edwards.

4. **JUBILEE STOMP**, Okeh 41013 (ms W 40031-A), 19/1/28, Duke Ellington and his Orchestra. *Personnel* as track 3, but Bubber Miley returns, replacing Smith, and Barney Bigard, clarinet and tenor sax, replaces Jackson.

5. **THE MOOCH**, Okeh 4023 (ms W 40175-A), 11/1/28, Duke Ellington and his Orchestra. *Personnel:* Louis Metcalfe, Bubber Miley, Arthur Whetsol, trumpet; Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton, trombone; Otto Hardwick, alto sax; Johnny Hodges, alto and soprano saxes; Harry Carney, alto and baritone saxes; Barney Bigard, clarinet and tenor sax; Duke Ellington, piano; Fred Guy, banjo.

## Notes by STANLEY DANCE

Jazz is so accustomed to fiery talents which burn brilliantly, and burn out too soon, that a career of steady growth like Duke Ellington's is altogether exceptional. Most jazz musicians express—and continue to express—their impact upon the musical imagination of the times during which they reach a kind of maturity. Duke's imagination, to the contrary, seems to be constantly nourished by both past and present experience. Thus the most consistently progressive musician jazz has ever known is, paradoxically, one of its greatest conservatives. He adds the new and promising, but at the same time he cherishes the old and proven. This partly accounts for the richness of his music, for he builds into the future on the best of the past. Though he has long had the unanimous admiration of his profession, Duke's example is a lesson few have learned, or have apparently attempted to learn. The consistent material, the careful attention to dynamics and modal nuance, the unusual instrumental groupings and the resultant variety of orchestral colour, are all reflections of the Ellington genius, but the emulation they have inspired has, for the most part, been surprisingly inept. When Harry Carney was asked which band represented the biggest challenge during the period covered by this set, he thought a moment before answering: "Jimmie Lunceford's". A relatively broad approach, a good understanding and use of the jazz heritage, and a stable personnel for some years, were of course, characteristics of the Lunceford band.

The present selection of recordings illustrates the development and scope of Ellington's music from 1927 through the following decade, though the emphasis is deliberately on those orchestral pieces which Leonard Feather has justly described as the "most vital of his work". There is, however, such a wealth of material available from these years that a forthcoming second set is necessary to do it complete justice and to dispel the ignorance that still exists about the band's pre-1940 activities. If the '20s are regarded as the period when the foundations were laid, the '30s were a decade of extensive and imaginative building and one in which the supremacy of the Ellington band was firmly established.

**EAST ST. LOUIS TOODLE-OO**, Duke says, "was our theme for more than a dozen years before the ASCAP-BIEM fight began. The title meant, for me, the broken walk of a man who had worked all day in the sun and was leaving the field at sunset. I had never been in East St. Louis then, but I thought the locale sounded right". The ten-piece band gives the number and its contrasting moods considerable colour and excitement, the soloists being Bubber Miley (with plunger muck), Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton (open) and Rudy Jackson (clavinet).

**HOP HEAD** is a lively dance in which Otto Hardwick, one of the Washington originals, is the soloist most featured. The others are Bubber Miley, "Tricky Sam" Nanton and Rudy Jackson.

Guy, banjo; Lonnie Johnson, guitar; Wellman Braud, bass; Sonny Greer, drums; vocal by Baby Cox.

6. **HOT AND BOTHERED**, Okeh 8823 (ms W 41071-A), 1/10/28, Duke Ellington and his Orchestra. *Personnel* as track 5.

7. **BLUES WITH A FEELING**, Okeh 8862 (ms W 40130-0), 20/11/28, Duke Ellington and his Orchestra. *Personnel* as track 5, but Freddy Jenkins, trumpet, replaces Metcalfe, and Hardwick is absent.

8. **ROCKIN' IN RHYTHM**, Okeh 8869 (ms W 40404-A), 5/1/30, The Harlem Footwarmers. *Personnel:* Duke Ellington, Fred Guy, banjo; Sonny Greer, drums; Wellman Braud, bass; Cootie Williams, trumpet, replaces Miley; Juan Tizol, valve trombone, is added, and Johnson is absent.

## SIDE 2

1. **LAZY DUKE**, Okeh 8780 (ms W 40236-B), 20/11/29, The Harlem Footwarmers. *Personnel* as side 1, track 8.

2. **OLD MAN BLUES**, Okeh (ms W 40821-D), 30/10/30, The Harlem Footwarmers. *Personnel:* Arthur Whetsol, trumpet; Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton, trombone; Barney Bigard, clarinet; Duke Ellington, piano; Fred Guy, banjo; Wellman Braud, bass; Sonny Greer, drums.

3. **MOD INDIGO**, Okeh 8844 (ms W 40032-A), 30/10/30, The Harlem Footwarmers. *Personnel:* Arthur Whetsol, trumpet; Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton, trombone; Barney Bigard, clarinet; Duke Ellington, piano; Fred Guy, banjo; Wellman Braud, bass; Sonny Greer, drums.

**BLACK AND TAN FANTASY**, a famous part of the band's repertoire, combined Chopin, Ellington and Miley in its composition. The trumpet hero in this version, however, is Jabba Smith, not Miley. Hardwick is the alto soloist and "Tricky Sam" in his two appearances, shows how well he had grasped the significance of Miley's plunger technique. Despite the funeral atmosphere, Duke recalls that "The Black and Tan" was a spokesman of the period where people of all races and colours mixed together for the purpose of fulfilling their social aspirations".

**JUBILEE STOMP** was made after the big step in Duke's career when he went into the Cotton Club with eleven pieces. "Waiters were betting on whether we would be there one night or two weeks," he says. "Unfortunately for some of them, we were there for five years. I thought the leader should be a waiter, so I went and got one, but he didn't have communication and I found it could be done with just looks and nods." Replaced Baby Jackson was a real first clarinetist from New Orleans. Barney Bigard, who is featured on this number, and Duke's soloists being Hardwick, Miley, Nanton, and Harry Carney (alto).

**THE MOOCH**, another enduring favourite, is variously described by Duke as "a stylized jungle" and "a sex dance". There is nothing self-conscious about the way the then-unsavoury "jungle" atmosphere is created. Bubber Miley evokes animalistic images with the aid of his plunger and dialogue with newcomer Johnny Hodges. The theme of the well and Bigard solos in the low register over mellow chugging by Lonnie Johnson. Another guest, Baby Cox, sings and grooves to a mellow vamp.

**HOT AND BOTHERED**, from the same session, is an up-tempo romp in familiar territory. Duke's vocal and Baby Cox exchange phrases with an enthusiasm that almost effaces the differences of trumpet and voice. Bigard, Johnson and Hodges solo, and Wellman Braud's driving four-four bass rhythm, prominently recorded, gives the performance a restless mobility new to the time.

**BLUES WITH A FEELING** is also notable for Braud's bass, again prominently recorded. Duke's vocal is a little more boxed. Johnny Hodges plays soprano while Nanton and Miley are the other soloists in this poignant performance. It is interesting to note that Miley deserts the twelve-bar blues in favour of a thirty-two bar chorus.

**ROCKIN' IN RHYTHM** destined to a permanent position in the band's programme, is, Duke says, "as close as an arrangement gets to sounding spontaneous". Cootie Williams takes Bubber Miley's place and is the first soloist, followed by Bigard and then Nanton, who demonstrates increasing artistry with multi-plunger. Sonny Greer's cymbal accents are particularly effective here.

**LAZY DUKE** is a simply arranged and brightly recorded blues in which the five brass and three clarinets are strikingly displayed. The soloists are Williams, Bigard and Nanton.

4. **IT DON'T MEAN A THING** (If it ain't got that swing), Brunswick 6085 (ms B 11904-A), 27/2/32, Duke Ellington and his Famous Orchestra. *Personnel* as side 1, track 8, but Guy changes to guitar. Vocal by Ivie Anderson.

5. **LAZY RHAPSODY**, Brunswick 6286 (ms B 11905-A), 27/2/32, Duke Ellington and his Famous Orchestra. *Personnel* as side 2, track 4. Vocal by Cootie Williams.

6. **BLUE HARMONY**, Brunswick 6314 (ms B 11930-A), 16/5/32, Duke Ellington and his Famous Orchestra. *Personnel* as side 2, track 5. Lawrence Brown, trombone, and Otto Hardwick, alto sax, added.

7. **BLUE TUNE**, Brunswick 6288 (ms B 11923-A), 4/7/32, Duke Ellington and his Famous Orchestra. *Personnel* as side 2, track 5.

8. **THE SHEIK OF ARABY**, Brunswick 6336 (ms B 11940-A), 10/5/32, Duke Ellington and his Famous Orchestra. *Personnel* as side 2, track 6.

All recordings made in New York City. Produced by FRANK DRIGGS.

Technical Supervisor: Mike Figlio.

Original recordings loaned by Jeff Atterton, Stanley Dance, Harry N. Fein, Sidney Mills, Don Molinelli, and Jacob S. Schneider.

**OLD MAN BLUES** is another example of how Duke could routine and arrange a performance to give it shape and continuity without loss of spontaneity. No straightforward twelve-bar blues, this consists of a sequence of solos of varying lengths by Bigard, Williams, Nanton, Carney, Hodges (soprano) and Jenkins, interspersed with unexpected ensemble passages that provide contrasts in density and colour. Titles came easy in 1930. "The guys would be waking up Broadway after work, Duke has said, and they see this old man coming down the street, and there was the beginning of *Old Man Blues*. Everything had a picture or was description of something. Always."

**MOD INDIGO**, which Duke wrote in fifteen minutes, is undoubtedly his most famous composition. "It has to do with a little boy and a little girl," he claims. "Someone told the boy she was his girl, and he takes his responsibility seriously, although he's scared stiff of her. He tips his hat each time he passes the stoop on which she's sitting, until one day when he won't let her sit on the stoop any more. As she looks out the window, she has that *Mod Indigo*." There are only two horns on this—Whetsol, Bigard and Nanton. The first two are the soloists.

**IT DON'T MEAN A THING** with its we-ava brass, unique Ivie Anderson vocal, and solos by Nanton and Hodges, was a major romp in familiar territory. It was the first Ellington year. "We did not foresee then," Duke recalls, "that the world would take it to its own as the theme of an era." Certainly, the title is a slogan not yet outdated in jazz.

**LAZY RHAPSODY** was the very obvious predecessor of a wordless vocal. Moody Blue's vocal is a variation on the sound of the muted Ellington brass was to influence many a vocal in the later years of Duke, Carney and Hodges, Cootie Williams being the vocalist.

**BLUE HARMONY**, with the two preceding titles, was made with six brass and four reeds. Duke, as always, was making full advantage of his enlarged palette. Solos by Williams, Hodges and Carney are neatly dovetailed into the well-constructed arrangement.

**BLUE TUNE** is another attractive original from what might be called Duke's "blue" period, so many of his titles then carrying that adjective. Artie Whetsol takes the first chorus, Bigard the second, Bigard (tenor), Hodges and Williams are heard.

**THE SHEIK OF ARABY** opens with a chorus by Lawrence Brown which greatly impressed musicians in 1932. Equally striking is the third chorus on which "Tricky Sam" plays a plunger-led commentary on Hardwick's melodic statement. The second, also surprising, consists of graceful soprano multi-plunger. Duke's cymbal accents are particularly effective in the brass play chords like a rhythm section.

Further notes, by Irving Mills and Leonard Feather, will be found in this sleeve.

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