



**THE  
ELLINGTON  
ERA**

**1927-1940**

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



**Part Two**

# 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, Irv 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 1956 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 Berle, Percy Faith, Arthur Fiedler, Benny Goodman, Morton Gould, Woody Herman, Lena Horne, Gordon Jenkins, Alvin Karpis, 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 absences ranging from a few weeks to 22 years: trumpeters Cootie Williams, Cat Anderson, Ray Nance, Willy Cook, Bombardier Wright and 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 understood. 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 either the simple melodies that take melody makers and earn wide popularity (*Solitude*, *Mood Indigo*), not the themes he has written for nightclub, Broadway and movie scores (*I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart*, 'I'm Gonna 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-1920 to mid-1930 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 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 a James P. Johnson-inspired piece called 'Chocolate 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, a Finnish pianist Otto (Toby) Hardwick, and a Swedish banjo and Sonny Greer on drums. Snowden at first was the nominal leader when they played at Barron Wilkins' 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 Kentucky 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) until the 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 Palace, which in the vaudeville frame of reference 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 musical band from a 16-piece band in a local 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 Bothered* and *The Mooch*, 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 *Each Time We Play*, there was no 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 some 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 form), and a hundred other devices all helped to establish the Ellington 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 incroads of time. The past 30 or 25 years have chewed up much of the early art of jazz, minimizing its subjective listening value because of the tremendously advanced sensitivity 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 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 constantly under his urgent prodding.

As you reach the final sides you may be reminded, too, of the oft-repeated and crushingly apt summary by André Previn: 'Another bandleader can stand in front of a thousand fiddles 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 II

DUKE ELLINGTON and His Famous Orchestra

SIDE 1



33

BPG 62179  
(CL 2047)

BIEM/HEB  
1. Lawrence Wright  
2, 3, 5-8. Mills Music  
4. Campbell Connolly

BPG-62179 1L

RECORDING FIRST  
PUBLISHED 1953

1. LIGHTNIN' (D. Ellington) 2. DUCKY WUCKY (D. Ellington/  
B. Bigard) 3. BLUE RAMBLE (D. Ellington) 4. DROP ME  
OFF IN HARLEM (D. Ellington/N. Kenny) 5. BUNDLE OF  
BLUES (D. Ellington) 6. SADDEST TALE (D. Ellington)  
vocal: D. Ellington 7. SLIPPERY HORN  
(D. Ellington) 8. HARLEM SPEAKS  
(D. Ellington)

MADE IN ENGLAND

THE ELLINGTON ERA:  
VOLUME I

Part II

DUKE ELLINGTON and His Famous Orchestra

SIDE 2



33

BPG 62179  
(CL 2047)

BIEM/HEB  
1, 2, 8.  
J. R. Laffeur  
3-5, 7. Mills Music  
6. Francis, Bay  
& Hunter

BPG-62179 2L

RECORDING FIRST  
PUBLISHED 1953

1. SOLITUDE (E. DeLange/I. Mills/D. Ellington) 2. MERRY-GO-ROUND  
(D. Ellington) 3. CLARINET LAMENT (D. Ellington/B. Bigard)  
4. ECHOES OF HARLEM (D. Ellington) 5. IN A JAM (D. Ellington)  
6. ROSE OF THE RIO GRANDE (E. Leslie/H. Warren/  
R. Gorman) vocal: Ivie Anderson 7. HARMONY IN HARLEM  
(D. Ellington/I. Hodges/I. Mills) 8. CARAVAN  
(I. Mills/J. Tizol/D. Ellington)

MADE IN ENGLAND

# VOLUME 1 PART 2

# THE ELLINGTON ERA 1927-1940

## Duke Ellington and his Famous Orchestra

### SIDE 1

1. **LIGHTNIN'**: Brunswick 6044 (mx W 12344-A), 21/9/32. *Personnel*: Freddy Jenkins, Cootie Williams, Arthur Whetsol, *bumbers*; Joe "Tricky Sam" Narvaez, *tenor sax*; Juan Tizol, *valve trombone*; Johnny Hodges, *alto and soprano sax*; Otto Hardwicke, *alto sax*; Harry Carney, *alto sax and baritone sax*; Barney Bigard, *clarinet and tenor sax*; Duke Ellington, *piano*; Fred Guy, *guitar*; Wellman Braud, *bass*; Sonny Greer, *drums*.

2. **DUCKY WUCKY**: Brunswick 6432 (mx B 12333-A), 19/9/32. *Personnel* as track 1.

3. **BLUE RAMBLE**: Brunswick 6336 (mx B 11866-A), 18/9/32. *Personnel* as track 1.

4. **DROP ME OFF IN HARLEM**: Brunswick 6527 (mx B 13081-A), 17/2/33. *Personnel* as track 1.

5. **BUNDLE OF BLUES**: Brunswick 6607 (mx B 13337-A), 16/5/33. *Personnel* as track 1.

### Notes by STANLEY DANCE

Jazz is so accustomed to free 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 contrasting material, the careful attention to dynamics and muted 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, too.

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 works." 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.

**LIGHTNIN'** lives up to its title. Carney and Bigard are heard in inspired solos, the last supported by superb muted-brass riffs. Duke pays tribute to Willie "The Lion" Smith in his solo, and the saxes, led by Hodges on soprano, figure excellently in the brilliantly arranged two last choruses.

**DUCKY WUCKY** opens with one of the most impressive choruses ever recorded by Lawrence Brown. Bigard and Williams split the second, the latter reappearing for the bridge of the third in which Hodges again leads the saxes on soprano. The fine, rocking tempo is a reminder that at this time the big bands mostly played for dancers.

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6. **SADDEST TALE**: Brunswick 7310 (mx B 15911-A), 12/9/34. *Personnel* as track 1. *Vocal* by Duke Ellington.

7. **SLIPPERY HORN**: Brunswick 6527 (mx B 13078-A), 17/2/33. *Personnel* as track 1.

8. **HARLEM SPEAKS**: Brunswick 6646 (mx B 13802-A), 15/8/33. *Personnel* as track 1.

### SIDE 2

1. **SOLITUDE**: Brunswick 6987 (mx B 15910-A), 12/9/34. *Personnel* as side 1, track 1.

2. **MERRY-GO-ROUND**: Brunswick 7440 (mx B 17468-A), 30/4/35. *Personnel* as side 1, track 1, but Charlie Allen, *trumpet*, and Rex Stewart, *cornet*, replace Jenkins and Whetsol.

3. **CLARINET LAMENT**: Brunswick 7550 (mx B 18736-A), 28/2/36. *Personnel* as side 1, track 2, but Whetsol returns, replacing Allen, and Billy Taylor, *bass*, replaces Braud. Hardwicke absent.

**BLUE RAMBLE** is a well-planned arrangement with two themes. Hodges and Williams are the major solo voices, Brown being responsible for the trombone breaks. The soloists, however, are of secondary importance in an orchestral score which demonstrates Duke's increasing skill and confidence.

**DROP ME OFF IN HARLEM**, a singing Ellington line, originated as Duke and Nick Kenny rode in a cab across the George Washington Bridge after a benefit. "Where are you going, Duke?" Kenny asked. "Drop me off in Harlem" was the answer. Later, Kenny came up with the lyric. The saxes and Lawrence Brown state the theme in the first chorus; the second is by Artie Whetsol with bridge by Freddy Jenkins, and the last is rhythmically climactic as the band's growls against a background of baritone and clarinet.

**BUNDLE OF BLUES**, also known as *Dragon's Blues*, is a sequence of marvelous blues choruses by Brown, Bigard, Duke, Williams and Hodges, with Cootie playing the eight-bar theme at the beginning and end. There are organ backgrounds, but the arrangement is spare and in perfect taste, the whole being performed with a sensitivity and feel unique to the Ellington band.

**SADDEST TALE** contains one of Duke's rare vocal appearances on record. "A sad man necessarily has to have a sad voice," he explains, "and I figured I sang sad enough to fit the character." A slow, sad blues, naturally, the soloists are Carney, Nanton, Hodges, Williams, and on bass clarinet, Harry Carney.

**SLIPPERY HORN** was, Duke says, "a title inspired by Lawrence Brown, who had then recently joined the band." The trombone trio's chorus was another of 1932's musical sensations, and it is followed by a beautiful chorus by Bigard. In the last two choruses, first Williams and the Brown group play counter-melodies to the theme as stated by Carney's baritone and the union saxes.

**HARLEM SPEAKS** was written in London. Duke remembers, "around the time of a movie, 'Africa Speaks'." The trip to England in 1933 was a success beyond expectations, the presence of an audience educated in jazz by writers like Spike Hughes and John Hammond being one of the many surprises. And long before Carnegie Hall opened its doors to him, Duke had packed one of London's biggest cinemas with musicians and fans for a farewell concert of uncompromising *Jazz Harlem Speaks* is exactly the kind of performance they wanted to hear. It features Williams, Hodges, Jenkins, Nanton, Brown and, in the last chorus, Nanton again.

**SOLITUDE**, another world-famous composition, was written in twenty minutes. "We were waiting to record and someone

4. **ECHOES OF HARLEM**: Brunswick 7650 (mx B 18737-A), 28/2/36. *Personnel* as side 2, track 3.

5. **IN A JAM**: Brunswick 7724 (mx B 19026-A), 26/7/38. *Personnel* as side 2, track 3, with Ben Webster, *tenor sax*, and Hayes Alvis, *bass*, added. Hardwicke returns to the band.

6. **ROSE OF THE RIO GRANDE**: Brunswick 8186 (mx B 833-1), 7/1/38. *Personnel* as side 2, track 3, but Wallace Jones, *trumpet*, replaces Whetsol. Hardwicke returns to the band. *Vocal* by Ivie Anderson.

7. **HARMONY IN HARLEM**: Brunswick 8044 (mx B 850-1), 20/9/37. *Personnel* as side 2, track 3.

8. **CARAVAN**: Master 131 (mx M 470-1), 14/5/37. *Personnel* as side 2, track 6, with Hayes Alvis, *bass*, added.

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

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

was late coming out," Duke recalls. "I needed a fourth number for the session and I sketched out this little thing leaning up against one of the studio's glass enclosures. Arthur Whetsol later suggested the title." The hymn-like tune, given an appropriately hushed treatment, has a warm solo interlude by Harry Carney.

**MERRY-GO-ROUND**, a crisp, firmly swung performance, brings into focus in turn the now-familiar soloists, Williams, Bigard, Brown, Hodges and Carney, plus a new one in Rex Stewart, who solos here after Hodges.

**CLARINET LAMENT**, or *Barney's Concerto*, was the first time a composition and arrangement were prepared by Duke with a single soloist in mind. In this case it was Barney Bigard.

**ECHOES OF HARLEM**, or *Cootie's Concerto*, was similarly a setting for the trumpet artistry of Cootie Williams. The irony that this and the preceding record set in motion was to develop to the point where a large proportion of later Ellington programmes consisted of individual showcases for the band's virtuosi. From some points of view this represented a gain, from others a loss. The concerto, with one soloist, had a more consistent development, more continuity, but, in the band numbers, the different soloists challenged and stimulated one another.

**IN A JAM**, a loosely swinging performance with effective riffs, shows that the band was thoroughly familiar with the formula that Count Basie was soon to bring out of Kansas City. Nanton and Bigard jam together, Hodges and Williams dialogue fluently, and Ben Webster and Duke split a chorus before Rex Stewart's last, vehement horn leads into the final few bars of ensemble.

**ROSE OF THE RIO GRANDE** is a happy showcase for Lawrence Brown's trombone, and twenty-five years later still gets, and compiles with, requests for it. Ivie Anderson delivers a light-hearted vocal chorus.

**HARMONY IN HARLEM** partially illustrates, in its arrangement, the developing powerhouse tendencies of the swing era, but Johnny Hodges (soprano) and Cootie Williams solo with unchanged taste and imagination.

**CARAVAN**, as Duke says, "was one of the good results of Juan Tizol's Latin influence." Made by the band for Irving Mills' new record company, it was an immediate success. In this version, the soloists are Tizol, Bigard, Williams and Carney. Sonny Greer rises to the occasion and the need for exotic percussion.

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

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