

BIG BAND BOUNCE & BOOGIE

DUKE ELLINGTON



Duke Ellington Presents

Affinity

1

AFS 1013

AFS 1013/A

33 1/3 RPM STEREO

"DUKE ELLINGTON PRESENTS"

1. SUMMERTIME
2. LAURA
3. I CAN'T GET STARTED
4. MY FUNNY VALENTINE
5. EVERYTHING BUT YOU
6. FRUSTRATION

DUKE ELLINGTON

A "Bethlehem" Recording
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Affinity

2

AFS 1013

AFS 1013/B

33 1/3 RPM STEREO

"DUKE ELLINGTON PRESENTS"

1. COTTON TAIL
2. DAYDREAM
3. DEEP PURPLE
4. INDIAN SUMMER
5. BLUES

DUKE ELLINGTON

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BIG BOUCE & BOUCE

SIDE 1

1. SUMMERTIME
2. LAURA
3. I CAN'T GET STARTED
4. MY FUNNY VALENTINE
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6. FRUSTRATION

SIDE 2

1. COTTON TAIL
2. DAY DREAM
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4. INDIAN SUMMER
5. DUKES

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Such was Duke Ellington's enormous contribution to the history of jazz, as leader of one of the idiom's quintessential aggregations, in all its varied permutations for nearly fifty years, and as an arranger of ceaselessly inspired originality for his orchestra over that period, besides being a maestro of his own rhythm section, and an occasional soloist of individuality, that it is easy to overlook his prodigious output as a composer.

Had Duke never led a band or written an arrangement his fame as a major figure in the development of twentieth century popular song would have been ensured early on in his career. It is difficult to envisage the jazz repertory without *Black And Tan Cantata*, *I Don't Mean A Thing, Cottontail*, *The A Train*, *Satin Doll* and *Crooze Love Call*, to cite a few random examples. Imagine the broader landscape of popular song minus *I Got It Bad*, *I Didn't Know About You*, *Do Nothin' Til You Hear From Me* (originally conceived for trumpeter Cootie Williams) as the instrumental *Concerto For Cootie*, and *Dont Get Around Much Anymore* (likewise another instrumental, originally entitled *Never No Lament*), again to make an arbitrary selection from the Ellington songbook. Add to these the literally hundreds of numbers recorded exclusively by the orchestra, conceived by Duke for specific soloists besides his various annual portraits celebrating certain people and places, plus the later extended works. The subject matter of these works was extensive, with testimonials to the achievements of Black people, as depicted in *Black Beauty* (1929), in memoriam to the recently deceased star of *Blackbirds*, Florence Mills (and let it be said that the pride in his colour and racial heritage implicit in that title made Ellington the exception rather than the rule in musical terrain back then), in impressions of both Bill Robinson, *Bojangles* and Bert Williams, *Portrait of Bert Williams* (1940), animating in the suite, *Black Brown And Beige* (1942). There were tone poems of geographical locations, such as *Harlem Asylum* (1940) and *The Far East Suite* (1968), plus musical sketches of literary royalty, *The Queen Suite* (1958),

inspired by Duke's meeting with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and religious belief, in the various *Sacred Concerts*. All of which were a mere flavour of Duke's seemingly limitless

creativity in just one area of an illustrious career.

Throughout its history the Ellington Orchestra might easily be relied on the maestro's imaginative resources for its repertory, yet Tim Pan Alley material had always been part of the Duke handbook. In *The Shade Of The Apple Tree* and *Margin*, recorded in 1933 and 1935, are but two instances of the way in which pleasant but routine pop songs were completely reshaped by the Ellington Orchestra's musical personality. For the 1950 date featured on this album, Duke selected some quality standards alongside his own originals with which to showcase his star soloists.

Summertime, opens with a somewhat dramatic, lush arrangement that eases unobtrusively into a Latin mood as the spotlight turns on trumpeter Cat Anderson. The atmospheric, dynamic upper register flurries for which Cat will be always remembered are much in evidence here and although Ellington often explicated this aspect of the trumpeter's work to dazzling effect, Anderson, in common with most Ellington sidemen was a versatile performer, equally at home playing straight-ahead stuff in the middle or lower registers. As Cat concludes his pyrotechnical outing, notice how the orchestra has stealthily gathered momentum behind him to highlight the impact of the solo's climax with some swelling riffs.

Laura, takes at a gentle pace, focusses on the persuasive balladry of tenor saxophonist Paul Gonzales. It is claimed that when he joined Ellington, Gonzales could already play all of his predecessor, Ben Webster's solo note for note. Webster's intimate, abrasive approach to slower numbers certainly influenced Gonzales, but he had also and divinely studied Coleman Hawkins' work in all its many phases, combining both tenor saxophone's attributes into a highly personal, expressive style of his own. *Cotton Tail*, originally a feature for Ben Webster on the historic 1941 recording, here emphasises the braver, more extrovert side of Gonzales' musical personality and he walls with infectious excitement against the orchestra's punchy, aftereffect chords.

The full-bodied, delectable sound of Harry Carney's baritone provides the essential shading in Ellington's palette of reed instruments. It need not be the most durable asset too, for Carney remained a lynchpin of the Ellington orchestra for over forty eight years, until his death in 1974, within months of both Duke's and Gonzales' passing. A potent musical force in the reeds, where he occasionally doubled clarinet and alto, or as the main attraction, Carney's feature, *Frustration* is the perfect showcase for his concise, rich and exploratory solo voice.

Jimmy Hamilton displays his jazz credentials in a forthright, terse tenor saxophone solo. The versatile Ray Nance, Harry, takes the first trumpet solo heard here, in his cogent, concise style. Britt Woodman follows with a gritty, gummy trombone solo, after which comes the unmistakable Hodges, blowing his own brand of the blues, poised and earthy. The intense, vigorous Gonzales' solo is succeeded by Clark Terry's horn in a typically

One of the most individualistic and expressive of all jazz artists, not least of Hodges' gifts was the ability to make even the little-known war themes sound fresh and interesting to himself and the listener, merely by playing a melodic line as written, subtly shaping it into a jazz solo by dint of an inflection here or the bending of a note there. His unique solo style was a vital component of the Ellington sound, inspiring many masterpieces, such as *Day Dream*. Originally conceived for a Hodges small group in 1940 and co-composed by Billy Strayhorn, who also arranged it, the number rescues the typical Hodges' treatment in this version, elegantly wifful and serenely impassioned, yet avoiding the cloyingly sentimental. At its core the Hodges sound retained a steeliness and a rhythmic subtlety that has always seemed to elude the casual listener besides his legion imitators and disciples.

The vocals here are performed by Jimmy Crisman and Ray Nance. The former, although no match for his fruitily voiced predecessors, Al Hibbler and Herb Jeffery, makes a pleasant enough job of *Everything But You*, a number first recorded by Joys Sherrill with the orchestra in 1945, and typical of the fly, sophisticated, whimsical side of Duke's song writing. The very permissible singing of Ray Nance is ideally suited to *I Can't Get Started*, featuring also his violin style. The orchestra responds to Ray's second vocal chorus with some stamping, blues slanted blowing, a fitting conclusion. Vocalist Lawrence Brown had yet to return to the brass section, so it is the orchestra, richly textured muted work of Quentin 'Butter' Jackson that is to be heard on *My Funny Valentine*. The album incidentally features three of the few musicians common to both the Cotton Tail and Ellington orchestras, Jackson, Gonzales and trumpeter, Clark Terry.

In a sense these recordings Jimmy Hamilton was not the most creative musician to be featured with Ellington, yet his impeccable musicianship and distinctive tone precision were exploited to best advantage on such works as *The Tattooed Bride*, from *The Duke's Place* and his quintessences are much in evidence on his impeccable rendition of *Deep Purple*. The shullenent approach and rhythmic vitality of Russell Procope's alto was handled by Lester Miller to medium or up tempo vehicle, although he admittedly is not the most convincing of soloists with customary aplomb, building his lines with his idiosyncratic phrasing and 'bitter' warm, wry humour.

All the major soloists are assembled for *Black And Tan* for Carnegie Hall, as it is alternately known). Duke's crisp piano sets the tempo and the mood for the performance. The second soloist, Jimmy Hamilton displays his jazz credentials in a forthright, terse tenor saxophone solo. The versatile Ray Nance, Harry, takes the first trumpet solo heard here, in his cogent, concise style. Britt Woodman follows with a gritty, gummy trombone solo, after which comes the unmistakable Hodges, blowing his own brand of the blues, poised and earthy. The intense, vigorous Gonzales' solo is succeeded by Clark Terry's horn in a typically

witty, expansive outing, at times recalling Ben Stewart in his half-valving technique. After trailing fours and eights, Sammy Woodard enjoys a brief drum break, a skilful display of varied rhythmic patterns rather than staid, merely by playing a melodic line by the orchestra's close-knit riffs, building the tension behind him the exuberant Cat Anderson solo ends the proceedings on a high note. Exactly which was the finest Ellington personnel will always be a matter of contention. Suffice it to say from my viewpoint this was one of the strongest Dual line-ups, one which incidentally, with the exception of Shury Baker replacing Willy Cook, enjoyed a successful British tour in 1968. Duke Ellington resisted any attempts to analyse his music, often declaring that 'too much talk stinks up the place'. My cue, then, to leave the listener to enjoy a marvellous band playing the works of some of the greatest popular composers, including, of course, those of the Duke himself.

SALLY-ANN WORSFOLD.

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 Jazz Journal, July 1961.

TITLES

Summertime; Laura; I Can't Get Started; My Funny Valentine; Everything But You; Day Dream; Cottontail; Frustration; Deep Purple; Indian Summer; Blues 1 & 2; PERSONNEL:
 William Cat Anderson, Willie Cook, I Can't Get Terry (b); Ray Nance (tr); Britt Woodman, John Sanders, Quentin Jackson (tb); Jimmy Hamilton (cl); Russell Procope (al); Harry Hodges (as); Paul Gonzales (ts); Harry Carney (bar); Lester Miller (saxophone); Jimmy Woodie (b); Sam Woodard (d); Jimmy Crisman (vo) on *Everything But You* only. Recording: February 1956.

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