



# THE DUKE ELLINGTON STORY

volume **1**

part: 1

Jungle Nights in Harlem

part: 2

Bundle of Blues

**1927-1939**



# The Duke Ellington story 1927-1939



Duke Ellington and his Orchestra: Samy Carter - drums; Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton, Juan Tizol, Lawrence Brown - trombones; Coote Williams, Arthur Wharfedale, Freddy Yorkins - trumpets; Wilbur Brand - bass; Otto Hardwick, Harry Carney, Johnny Hodges, Barney Bigard - saxes; Fred Guy - guitar; Edward Kennedy (Duke) Ellington - piano.



Johnny Hodges, Otto Hardwick, Barney Bigard, and Harry Carney

## About the record...

The music of Duke Ellington falls into three distinct periods of development. The first period, dating from the earliest recordings by the full orchestra, in November 1926, lasted until the closing months of 1930, by which time the path through the second period was already lined out by the emergence of works as exceptional as *Mood Indigo*. The second period, marked by great advance in subtlety of writing and more perfect performance by the ensemble, flowered in the early months of 1931 and lasted until the end of 1939, when, with the introduction of Jimmy Blanton on bass, Ben Webster on tenor saxophone, and the beginning of Duke's long and fruitful association with his more youthful *alter ego*, Billy Strayhorn, he embarked upon his third, or what might be called "modern" period.

The three records which comprise "The Duke Ellington Story" are concerned only with the first two stages of Ellingtonian development, while this first record deals specifically with what has sometimes been called his Jungle Style - a style dominated by the growling brassy of Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton, the late Bubber Miley, and subsequently Coote Williams. Hence the subtitle for Side 1 - "Jungle Nights in Harlem" - comes from a work composed and recorded by Duke in 1930. For Harlem, in those early days, was Duke's balliwick, and the famed Cotton Club (on 142nd Street and Lenox Avenue) his castle!

The relationship of Duke and his players has always been subtly remarkable and mutually rewarding. For while Duke is gifted with the happy knack of bringing out the best in his musicians, they, in their turn, have not been without influence on Ellington's own work and personality. And in this first period of Ellingtonia no one player exerted more lively or obvious influence than James "Bubber" Miley - that prince of growlers and pastmaster in the use of the plunger mute. Indeed, as will be noted, Miley is listed as co-composer of two of Duke's most important early works - *Black And Tan Fantasy* and *East St. Louis Toodle-Oh*, which for many years was his signature tune and curtain raiser to countless remarkable Ellingtonian performances. This latter piece introduces one of Duke's earliest essays in writing for the brass section, and a particularly poignant trumpet solo by Miley.

### DUKE ELLINGTON

### BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

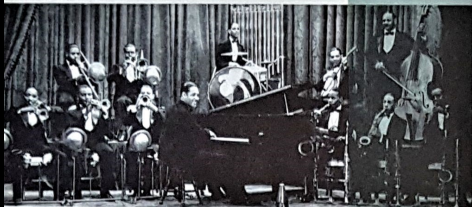
- 1899 Born April 29, Washington, D.C. Christian Edward Kennedy. Father - James Edward Ellington (1876-1937) - was teacher, later Navy shipyardmaster, by trade. Mother - Daisy Kennedy Ellington (1879-1935).
- 1907 Nicknamed "Duke" - featured by Washingtonian magazine.
- 1914-17 Attended Armstrong High School, Washington, working "after hours" as soda jerk at Pepple Dog Cafe. First composition, Soda Fountain Rag, circa 1916.
- 1916-22 Played piano, semi-professionally at first, with Louis Thomas; later with Russell Winding. Doo Ferry etc. Formed own gig band, including Otto Hardwick, Arthur Wharfedale, Elmer Snowden.
- 1918 Married Edna Thompson, Washington.
- 1919 Son, Mercer, born.
- 1922 Joined Wilbur Sweatman in New York.
- 1923 Formed Washingtonians. Played first important New York date at Kennedy Club.
- 1924 Bubber Miley joined Washingtonians.
- 1926 "Tricky Sam" and Harry Carney join Ellington Orchestra.
- 1927 Ellington Orchestra opens Cotton Club, New York.
- 1928 Made "Black And Tan Fantasy", musical short for R.K.O. Barney Bigard and Johnny Hodges join Ellington.
- 1930 Featured in R.K.O. picture - "Check And Double Check." Shared billing with Maurice Chevalier at Fulton Theatre, New York.
- 1931 Touring on Paramount, Warner Brothers, and R.K.O. circuits.
- 1933 First European tour, Britain, France.
- 1934 Appeared in two films - "Moodie At The Vanities" and "Bells Of The Nineties."
- 1935 Soloists won ASCAP Award for outstanding song of the year.
- 1937 Caravan won ASCAP Award for outstanding song of the year.
- 1938 I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart won ASCAP Award for outstanding song of the year.
- 1939 Second European tour - France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden. Billy Strayhorn and Jimmy Blanton join Ellington.



Prince of growlers:  
James "Bubber" Miller

(L.R.): Fred Guy, Barney  
Bigard, Cootie Williams  
and "Tricky Sam" Newton

Scene from the R.K.O. picture: "Clock And Double Check"



Rhythm section: Fred Guy - guitar, Sonny Greer - drums, Wellman Braud - bass



Barney Bigard... incisive clarinet



Sam Newton... growling brass

Miley does not appear in the version of *Black And Tan Fantasy* contained herein. His place is taken by that much underrated trumpet player of the era - Jabbo Smith, whose solo makes an interesting comparison with Miley's more pungent and dramatic improvisations in other recordings. *Black And Tan Fantasy*, like *The Mosche*, is compounded of several themes. A sinister opening theme, twelve bars long, is followed by a graceful melodic theme, sixteen bars long, felicitously performed by Otto Hardwick on alto saxophone. This leads into the "middle section" of the composition - a series of instrumental improvisations on the foundation of the twelve bar blues. The soloists are Jabbo Smith, Ellington himself, and the redoubtable "Tricky Sam" at his most barbaric. In *The Mosche* the third theme, or "middle section", is blues once more, and the inspiration of one of Bubber Miley's most evocative solos - a virile and masculine response to the yodelling of Miss Baby Cox, in the preceding chorus.

*Black Beauty*, a piano arrangement of an earlier orchestral work, is a delightful example of Duke's melodic invention, and may be likened to one of those descriptive pieces of ragtime beloved of Willie "The Lion" Smith, the veteran pianist much admired by Ellington in his formative years. To quote the Dutch critic, Joost Van Praag, writing in 1935 - "This piece with its light elegant swing lives up to its title: 'Black Beauty' indeed."

*Jubilee Stomp* and *Hot And Bothered* both owe much to the harmonic structure of *Tiger Rag*. Indeed, Ellington more than once in his subsequent career turned to this tried and true Dixieland favourite for inspiration: cf. *Sleepy Head*, *High Life*, *Darkeyed Express*. *Jubilee Stomp* contains an exceptionally good saxophone ensemble, and is also notable for being one of the first Duke Ellington recordings in which New Orleans clarinetist Barney Bigard is to be heard - in a sprightly dancing mood which compares well with the sombre character of his solo in *The Mosche* and the bravura low register of *Hot And Bothered*. Miley, too, plays his part in both pieces: his duet with Baby Cox in *Hot And Bothered* being extraordinarily and startlingly effective. It was of this piece that Constant Lambert wrote, in "Music Ho!" (1934) - "I know of nothing in Ravel so dextrous in treatment as the varied solos in the middle of the ebullient *Hot And Bothered* and nothing in Stravinsky more dynamic than the final section."

No jazz composer or arranger has made more consistent or rewarding use of blues than Duke Ellington. Not all the works in this "bundle", however, are blues of conventional design. *Saturday Night Function*, for example, comprises two themes, only the second of which is twelve bar blues. The main theme is a sombre processional of sixteen bars duration. *Blues Of The Vagabond*, again, is not blues in form - though of deepest blue texture. It is, in fact, in the familiar thirty-two bar AABA form of the popular song. This is one of Duke's most moving melodies, passionately stated by Barney Bigard on clarinet and echoed by vibrant open trumpet - quite probably Freddy Jenkins, whose contributions to Ellingtonia are too often minimised. *Vagabond* is by way of being an Ellington "notebook", for it contains germs of ideas subsequently developed and utilised in works more widely known and appreciated. The banjo tremolo of the introduction was to become the backbone of a leading motive in *Echoes Of The Jungle* - recorded a year and a half later, while the "B" section of the chorus was to be written into the impressive *Croole Rhapsody*, recorded in January 1931. In the titles already mentioned, in *Beggar's Blues* and again in *Mood Indigo*, Barney Bigard plays a dominating rôle among the soloists. Indeed, his sinuous yet incisive clarinet was a vital ingredient of many of these early Duke Ellington recordings.

In *Saturday Night Function* there is some wistful muted trumpet by section leader Arthur Whetzel; in *Beggar's Blues* Johnny Hodges plays a solo of sheer poetry and "Tricky Sam" one of melancholy ferocity. In both pieces the string bass of Wellman Braud - thanks to an over-generous balance - is to be heard in full bodied pick-and-slap. *Sweet Chariot* is a vehicle for Cootie Williams, who both plays and sings. His open trumpet tone, one of the fullest in jazz, rings out against a reiterated chordal cry by the saxophones in a manner at once moving and effective. *Rocky Mountain Blues* is an almost forgotten little masterpiece, perfectly played by the septet of musicians who also recorded *Mood Indigo* - "exquisitely tired and four-in-the-morning" as Constant Lambert described it - a piece which set the seal on Duke Ellington's worldwide acceptance and which was the first of the many to become a part of the standard repertoire of jazzmen and popular musicians everywhere.

Compiled and annotated by Denis Preston

PHILIPS

 Minigroove 33 $\frac{1}{3}$

AA 07363.1 L

B 07363 L



Side 1

**THE DUKE ELLINGTON STORY - Vol. 1**

*Jungle Nights in Harlem*

East St. Louis toodle-oo (Ellington)  
Jubilee stomp (Ellington)  
Black and tan fantasy (Ellington/Mills)  
Black beauty (Ellington)  
The mooche (Ellington/Mills)  
Hot and bothered (Ellington)



PHILIPS

 Minigroove 33 $\frac{1}{3}$

AA 07363.2 L

B 07363 L



Side 2

**THE DUKE ELLINGTON STORY - Vol. 1**

*Bundle Of Blues*

Saturday night function (Ellington/Bigard)  
Begger's blues (Bigard/Hodges)  
Blues of the vagabond (Ellington)  
Rocky mountain blues (Ellington/Mills)  
Sweet chariot (Ellington/Mills)  
Mood indigo (Ellington/Mills/Bigard)



B 07363 L



# The Duke Ellington story - Part I

B 07363 L



1927-1939

## SIDE I "JUNGLE NIGHTS IN HARLEM"

- 1 E 23 - East St. Louis Toodle-0o (Ellington) Recorded March 22, 1927 (A)  
 4 E 44 - Jubilee Stomp (Ellington) Recorded January 19, 1928 (B)  
 1 E 29 - Black And Tan Fantasy (Ellington, Mills) Recorded November 3, 1927 (C)  
 1 E 66 J - Black Beauty (Ellington) (D)  
 1 E 67 - The Mooche (Ellington, Mills) (E)  
 1 E 68 - Hot And Bothered (Ellington) Recorded October 1, 1928 (E)

## SIDE II "BUNDLE OF BLUES"

- 4 E 46 - Saturday Night Function (Ellington, Bigard) (F) -  
 1 E 49 - Beggar's Blues (Bigard, Hodges) Recorded May 26, 1929 (F) -  
 4 E 34 - Blues Of The Vagabond (Ellington) Recorded November 20, 1929 (G)  
 4 E 46 G - Rocky Mountain Blues (Ellington, Mills) Recorded October 14, 1930 (H)  
 4 E 47 G - Sweet Chariot (Ellington, Mills) Recorded October 30, 1930 (G)  
 4 E 47 J - Mood Indigo (Ellington, Mills, Bigard) Recorded October 14, 1930 (H)

## PERSONNEL

(A) Bubler Miley, Louis Metcalfe - trumpets; Joe "Tricky Sam"anton - trombone; Otto Hardwick - alto, soprano, and bass saxes; Harry Canary - also and baritone saxes and clarinet; Baby Jackson - clarinet and tenor sax; Duke Ellington - piano; Fred Coy - banjo; "Bass" Edwards - tuba; Sonny Greer - drums.

(B) As (A). Wellman Brand (bass) replaces Edwards. Barney Bigard replaces Jackson.

(C) As (A). Jabbo Smith replaces Miley (trumpet).

(D) Piano solo, Duke Ellington.

(E) As (D). Johnny Hodges (also and soprano saxes) replaces Hardwick; and Arthur Whetzel (trumpet); Louise Johnson (guitar); Baby Cox (vocal).

(F) Whetzel, Nanton, Hodges, Bigard only, plus rhythm section as on (B).

(G) Whetzel, Freddy Jenkins, Coatie Williams - trumpets; Nanton, Juan Tizol - trombones; Johnny Hodges - also and soprano saxes; Harry Canary - also and baritone saxes and clarinet; Barney Bigard - clarinet and tenor sax. Rhythm section as on (B). Coatie Williams (vocal) on Sweet Chariot.

(H) Whetzel, Nanton, Bigard only, plus rhythm section as on (B).

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B 07278 L  
Sul's Sweet Thunder



B 07253 L  
A Drum Is A Woman



B 07806 R  
Mood Ellington



B 07147 L  
Blue Rose



B 07123 L  
Mood Indigo



B 07611 R  
Liberian Suite



B 07568 L  
Ellington L



B 07142 L  
Ellington at Newport



B 07337 L  
Black, Brown and Beige

*It don't mean a thing  
if it ain't got that swing*