



THE DUKE ELLINGTON STORY

volume **2**

part:1
Harmony in Harlem

part:2
Merry - go - round

1927-1939





The mix that gave the early years of Duke's Middle Period their jaunty jilly: Williams, Whetzel, Jenkins



Duke Ellington and his Orchestra: Freddy Jenkins, Costie Williams, Arthur Whetzel - trumpets - Duke Ellington - piano; Otto Hardwick, Harry Carney, Johnny Hodges, Barney Bigard - saxes; Joe "Tricky Sam" Norton, Juan Tizol, Lawrence Brown - trombones; Sonny Greer - drums; Fred Guy - guitar; William Brazil - bass

About the record. . .

Duke Ellington's Middle Period was rich in achievement. It was a period of experiment with hitherto untried tone colours and orchestral devices: for example, mercurial brass battles as in *Merry-Go-Round*; reflective pasted portraits such as *Blue Tune*, and arrangements of contrasting sweetness and pungency like *The Sheik Of Araby*. And, thanks to virtually stable personnel, it was a period during which the orchestra attained that polish and virtuosity which to this day remains its hallmark.

Ellington is that most fortunate of musicians - a composer who has at his constant disposal a vastly satisfying medium of expression: his own magnificent orchestra. This happy situation, coincidentally, is the *raison d'être* of Duke's unique relationship with his players, since development of his own work is necessarily harnessed to personnel changes and technical progress in the orchestra itself. Nevertheless, there do exist purely Ducal idiosyncrasies, to be found in, and linking up, each stage of Ellington's development. For example, his usage and obvious love of growl and walk-with brass effects; his allegiance to the clarinet as a solo voice - even in times when this instrument



Freddy Jenkins's mace: Rex Stewart

suffered abuse by other jazz arrangers and leaders; his fidelity to the instrumental "hot" break - a device going back to the very origins of jazz; and, finally, his insistence upon the importance of the soloist in jazz and encouragement of inspired jazz improvisation.

Thus the flowering of Duke's Middle Period early in 1932 - already presaged by such works as *Mood Indigo* in 1930 and *Creole Rhapsody* and *The Mystery Song* in 1931 - may be directly attributed to certain changes which took place in the orchestra early that year, notably the addition of Lawrence Brown on trombone and the return of the mellifluous Otto Hardwick on alto saxophone. The presence of these players certainly inspired compositions of unaccustomed lushness and sentimentality, such as *Sophisticated Lady* and *In A Sentimental Mood*, while a reed section of four men doubling thirteen instruments now made possible tonal changes of almost limitless variety.

At first sight the musicians who comprised the Ellington trombone team must appear an ill-assorted trio: "Tricky Sam" - that forthright growler; Juan Tizol - suave valve trombonist from Puerto Rico; and Lawrence Brown - exhibitionistic virtuoso. Yet they knit together into the most formidable trombone section of their day and empowered Duke to write ever more ambitious trombone ensembles. The chorus for trombone trio in *Slippery Horn* was their earliest *tour de force*. But, splendid as were both trombones and reeds, it was that remarkable trumpet trio - Whetzel, Williams, and Jenkins - which gave these early years of Duke's Middle Period their finest fillip, and inspired Spike Hughes - in reviewing *Lazy Rhapsody* - to call the Ellington Orchestra "the greatest brass band on earth". *Blue Harlem* (originally entitled *Send Me*), *Lazy Rhapsody*, *Blue Ramble*, and *Blue Tune* are especially notable for the sterling work of the trumpet section. Whether vibrantly open, employing the multiplicity of mutes demanded by Duke's kaleidoscopic canvas, or dextrously manipulating their Derby hats, the three players who comprised this section displayed a unity of feeling and an attack which paid tribute to the skill of section leader the late Arthur Whetzel. While never a jazz improviser of first rank, Whetzel was a player of rare sensitivity and technical accomplishment. He is to be heard briefly in *Blue Ramble*, opening and closing the second chorus of *Drop Me Off At Harlem*, and in the statement of the theme of *Blue Tune* - a work which surely could not have been conceived in this manner without him. It is worth quoting Spike Hughes in connection with this outstanding example of Middle Period Ellington. "Blue Tune" (wrote Hughes in 1933) "represents an Ellington experiment in harmony and melody; a simple tune against a delicately scored, moving harmonic background. It is perhaps Duke's most 'modern' essay so far; but although there is more than a suggestion of the influence of Debussy, there is no feeling that the melody has in any way been deliberately 'harmonised' so a few unusual chords so the



Harry Carney



Duke Ellington



Irene Anderson

- 1907 *First audition by Ellington, Duke Ellington, Fred Krout, Taylor - James Earl of Ellington*
 (18 & 1917) was killed, last Negro pianist/arranger by wife - Darryl Kennedy Ellington
 (1878-1935)
- 1907 Nicholson "Duke" influenced by 14 subsequent neighbors
- 1914-17 Attended Armstrong High School, Washington, working "after hours" as solo job at Poodle Dog Cafe. First composition, Soda Fountain Rag, circa 1916.
- 1916-22 Played piano, unprofessionally at first, with Louis Tomasi; later with Russell Hooding, Doc Perry etc. Formed own gig band, including Otto Hardwick, Arthur Wharton, Oliver Steward.
- 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 Kentucky Club.
- 1924 Dubbed Miles Jindal, Washingtonians.
- 1926 "Tricky Sam" and Harry Carney join Ellington Orchestra.
- 1927 Ellington Orchestra opens Casino Club, New York.
- 1928 Made "Black And Tan Fantasy", musical short for R.K.O. Harry Bigard and Johnny Hodges join Ellington.
- 1930 Featured in R.K.O. picture - "Charik And Double Chuck". Shared billing with Maurice Chevalier at Fulton Theatre, New York.
- 1931 Touring on European, Warner Brothers, and R.K.O. circuits.
- 1931 First European tour: Britain, France.
- 1934 Appeared in two films - "Mister At The Vantiles" and "Belle Of The Nineties".
- 1935 Solistic work ASCAP Award for outstanding song of the year.
- 1937 Career won ASCAP Award for outstanding song of the year.
- 1938 1. Liza A Song Go Chie O' Me! 2. Let's see 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.

the music will sound impressively 'modern', as is the way with other Delius-conscious jazz composers. The harmony and melody of *Blue Time* are essential to each other. . . .

Freddy Jenkins, that often underrated member of the trumpet team, solos in *Harlem Speaks*, *Drop Me Off At Harlem* - the middle section of the second chorus, and *Slippery Horn* - in which he plays the third chorus. Sonorous open solo from Cootie Williams are to be found in *Rockin' In Rhythm*, *Blue Harlem*, and *Blue Time* - which contains a variant of the famous Louis Armstrong "break" from *Ain't Misbehavin'*, recorded in 1929. *Saddest Tale* features closely-muted Cootie, while in *Drop Me Off At Harlem* this same trumpeter delights with a superbly-phrased growl solo. Duke's Jungle Style is echoed also by the masterful growler of "Tricky Sam" in *Rockin' In Rhythm*, *Blue Harlem*, *The Sheik* - in obligatory to Otto Hardwick's creamy alto, *Saddest Tale* and *Harlem Speaks*. Lawrence Brown makes a brief but treasured contribution to *Merry-Go-Round*, solos gracefully in *Slippery Horn* and *Drop Me Off At Harlem*, and, most typically, in *The Sheik* - a lush improvisation rich in Armstrong phrasing.

Those three stalwarts of the reed section - Bigard, Carney, and Hodges - are generously featured throughout this selection of titles. Harry Carney is the doyen of Ellingtonians.

The trombone trio: Lawrence Brown, Juan Tizol and "Tricky Sam" Nanton



The Duke Ellington story 1927-1939

He joined Duke Ellington in 1926, and, at the time of writing, has completed thirty-two years unbroken service with the orchestra. A bubbling buoyancy typifies his solos at fast tempo: for example, *Merry-Go-Round* and *Harlem Speaks*. Yet in mood pieces like *Blue Time* and *Lazy Rhapsody* he plays with a delicacy altogether unexpected in an instrument as full belled as the baritone sax. He was co-composer of *Rockin' In Rhythm* - one of Duke's most perennially popular band pieces, and in *Saddest Tale* it to be heard playing an effective blues solo on bass clarinet.

Second in seniority only to Harry Carney is that remarkable alto saxophonist - Johnny Hodges. The Dutch critic, Joost van Praag, writing in 1935, described the alto playing of Benny Carter as the prose of jazz; that of Johnny Hodges as the poetry. . . . And, indeed, there is there poetry of sound in Hodges's solo work in *Blue Time* and *Saddest Tale*. At brighter tempi his playing is characterised by a carefree buoyancy which bears comparison with Carney in similar mood. His solos in *Harlem Speaks* and *Kissin' My Baby Goodnight* are joyous things both, as is his solo on soprano saxophone in *The Sheik*.

Sensuous, wistful, or mischievous, the playing of Barney Bigard at this time must be of immense satisfaction to the connoisseur of jazz clarinet. He is widely featured in this selection, with especially noteworthy solos in *Rockin' In Rhythm*, *Blue Harlem*, *Slippery Horn*, and *Kissin' My Baby Goodnight* - and some gentle lower register playing in *Lazy Rhapsody*.

Four of the titles included here are showcases for Ellington's ability to transform borrowed material into gems of true Ellingtonia. Five, if we include *Slippery Horn* - which is based upon the harmonic sequence of *Tiger Rag*, *Lazy Rhapsody* evolved from an accompaniment to *Sleepy Time Down South*; *Harlem Speaks* is the Dual version of a particularly trite popular song of the period - *Just An Echo In The Valley*; *The Sheik Of Araby* is a hackneyed jazz "evengreen" first published in 1921 as a popular ballad. Another popular song, *Kissin' My Baby Goodnight*, becomes, in Ellington's hands, a vehicle for one of the orchestra's most joyful excursions, with a minimum of orchestration and a maximum of extempore solos. Soloists are Hodges, Bigard, and Rex Stewart - Freddy Jenkins's successor, heard also in *Merry-Go-Round*, whose beautifully restrained playing is strangely reminiscent of Bix Beiderbecke. The leadover phrase into the release is especially Bixian. Ivie Anderson, whose singing is a feature of this recording, was Ellington's only vocalist throughout this Middle Period. To quote Billy Eckstine: "She was the perfect marriage for this band: Duke's best singer, male or female, before or since."

Compiled and annotated by Denis Preston

The stalwarts of the reed section: Johnny Hodges, Otto Hardwick, Barney Bigard, Harry Carney





33 1/3

PHILIPS

07364.1 L



B 07364 L

1



THE DUKE ELLINGTON STORY - Vol. 2

- Harmony In Harlem
- Rockin' in rhythm (Ellington/Mills/Carney)
- Lazy rhapsody (Ellington)
- Blue tune (Ellington)
- Blue Harlem (Ellington)
- Blue ramble (Ellington)
- The sheik of Araby (Smith/Snyder/Wheeler)



MADE IN

HOLLAND



33 1/3

PHILIPS

07364.2 L



B 07364 L

2



THE DUKE ELLINGTON STORY - Vol. 2

- Merry-Go-Round
- Drop me off at Harlem (Ellington/Kenny)
- Harlem speaks (Ellington)
- Slippery horn (Ellington)
- Saddest tale (Ellington)
- Kissin' my baby goodnight (David/Meyer/Wendling)
- Merry-go-round (Ellington/Mills)



MADE IN

HOLLAND

B 07364 L



The Duke Ellington story - Part II

1927—1939

SIDE I "HARMONY IN HARLEM"

Rockin' In Rhythm (Ellington, Carney)
Recorded November 8, 1930

(A)

Lazy Rhapsody (Ellington)
Recorded February 2, 1932

(B)

Blue Tune (Ellington)
Recorded February 4, 1932

(B)

Blue Harlem (Ellington)

(C)

The Sheik Of Araby (Smith, Wheeler, Snyder)
Recorded May 16, 1932

(C)

Blue Ramble (Ellington)
Recorded May 18, 1932

(C)

SIDE II "MERRY-GO-ROUND"

Drop Me Off At Harlem (Ellington)
Recorded February 17, 1933

(C)

Harlem Speaks (Ellington)
Recorded August 15, 1933

(C)

Slippery Horn (Ellington)
Recorded February 17, 1933

(C)

Saddest Tale (Ellington)
Recorded September 12, 1934

(C)

Kissin' My Baby Goodnight (Davis, Meyer, Wendling)
Recorded February 28, 1936

(D)

Merry-Go-Round (Ellington)
Recorded April 30, 1935

(E)

PERSONNEL

(A) Arthur Wharton, Freddy Jenkins, Costie Williams - trumpets; Joe "Tricky Sam"anton, Juan Tizol - trombones; Johnny Hodges - alto and soprano saxes; Harry Carey - alto and baritone saxes and clarinet; Barney Bigard - clarinet and tenor; Duke Ellington - piano; Fred Coy - banjo and guitar; Wellman Braud - bass; Sonny Greer - drums.

(B) As (A). Lawrence Brown replaces Juan Tizol (trombone). Costie Williams (sax) on *Lazy Rhapsody*.

(C) As (B). Add Juan Tizol (trombone) and Otto Hardwick (alto, soprano and bass saxes). Carney plays *harlem* and Duke Ellington takes on *Saddest Tale*.

(D) As (C). Rex Stewart replaces Jenkins (trumpet). Pete Clark replaces Hardwick (alto). Harper Alike replaces Braud (bass). Irate Anderson - vocal.

(E) Charlie Allen, Costie Williams, Rex Stewart - trumpets; Lawrence Brown, Joe Nanton, Juan Tizol - trombones; Otto Hardwick, Johnny Hodges, Harry Carey, Barney Bigard - reeds; Duke Ellington - piano; Fred Coy - guitar; Wellman Braud - bass; Freddy Arondepf - drums.

B 07364 L



B 07137 L
Blue Rose



B 07182 L
Ellington At Newport



B 07337 L
Black, Brown and Beige



B 07606 R
Mood Ellington



B 07008 L
Ellington Upturn



B 07253 L
A Drum Is A Woman



B 07123 L
Mood Indigo

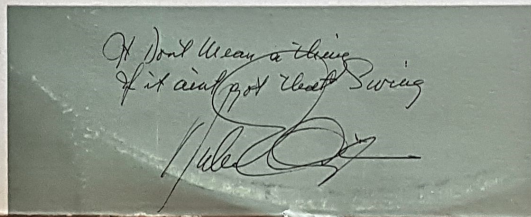


B 07611 R
Liberian Suite



B 07276 L
Such Sweet Thunder

Printed in Holland



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