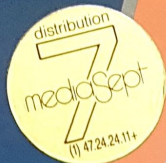
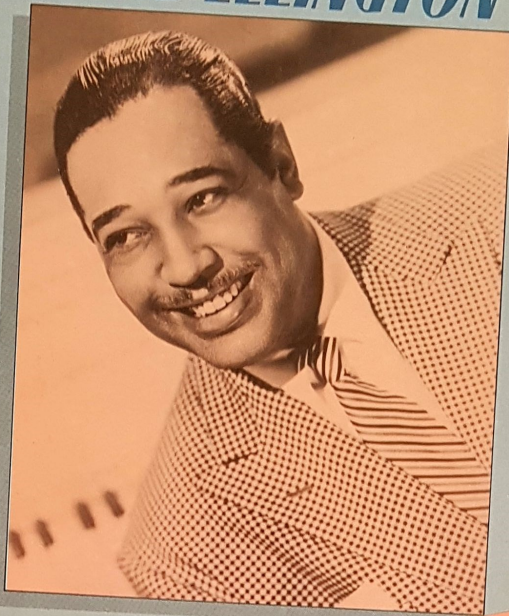


BIG BAND BOUNCE & BOOGIE



DUKE ELLINGTON



Duke-Classic Transcriptions

PERHAPS the most abused cliché in jazz is Strayhorn's iconic comment that Duke's instrument was his orchestra. But true. And here we have a good chance to study how the great man with one of the few, if ever, jazz orchestras, as it was in the early-forties, changed his instrument over the next decade or a time when the big-band scene itself had become quite a different world, and was indeed in some danger. Two of the three sessions here were made in 1941. Billy Strayhorn had been with Ellington a little while, and his importance, together with his ability to share Duke's immense load, cannot now be stressed too strongly. Strange that he should be recalled mainly on the pretext of his *Love Lie*, but the band's charts were soon graced by the addition of Strayhorn's compositions. — *Barnebeck*, *Passion Flower*, *Johnny Come Lately*. Clementine, the famous miniscore Chelsea Bridge, and, not to forget, the band's new theme tune, *Take the 'A'*. Then Strayhorn proved himself with the early fruitful burst of creativity, but it was no flippant flumm — you might say — more likely in part because of the ASCAP dispute which was keeping Duke's own compositions off the air and severely reduced programme material. Strayhorn was not with ASCAP until 1943. Ben Webster was also settling in nicely after just over a year, and these transcriptions prove just how eager Duke was to throw off his great tenor soloist. A third member nicely settled in by this time was the great — really great — Jimmy Blanton. So young, but good enough to displace Duke's two bassists at the time, one of whom, Billy Taylor, just walked out, it seems. Ellington was really riding high now and much of his well-known material was written and recorded at this time. Having severed his long association with Irving Mills — and that's a legendary tale, worth checking out some time — Duke was now with the William Morris Agency and his sights were being further broadened. Apart from playing in the swank hotels and broadcasting, Duke's band was filming, and after making the successful *Cabin in the Sky*, it went into the theatre too, into the famous black musical *Jump for Joy*, which ran for over three months in Los Angeles. The band was in the pit, but on the stage was much social comment and singers like Anderson, Herbie Jeffries, Marie Bryant, Dorothy Dandridge, and the great blues-shouter Joe Turner.

Following the Brunswick and Irving Mills' Master label, Duke Ellington had a five-year contract with Victor, and the superior recordings were further enhanced by such gems as *Perdido*, *I Am Blue*, *Main Stem*, *Things Ain't* — ... *What Am I Here For* and, of course, the shortened version of his longest work. This brings to mind the famous headline in Variety, *DUKE KILLS CARNEGIE CAYS* — a complimentary response to the first Carnegie Hall concert of January 1943. A milestone which was to mark the beginning of a mostly annual feature for the Duke Ellington Orchestra for the next few years. The famous *Black Brown & Beige Suite* was in that first Carnegie Hall concert, and it is Duke's extended works which have often drawn much professed criticism. So too have his secular works drawn adverse comment — even from his supporters, the jazz fans. But Duke, of course, survived all this and it is amazing that he survived this decade at all when you remember that Joe Anderson, Bigard, Shorty Baker, Taff Jordan, Nanton, Al Sears, Rex Stewart, Tizol, and even Ben Webster left the band, for various reasons, during this period. Many of them to return to Duke within a few years. This plus the infamous Pettinella banding towards the close of 1944).

World War II, with its many restrictions — and a big drop in recordings and standards of travel — more theatre work, a long and memorable series for the Treasury on radio selling Victory Bonds and, towards the latter part of the decade, the tragic decline in the public's favour for dancing and the closing of many famous dance-halls.

This was for a short time Duke Ellington's reward for a

decade that for any other human being would have been an outstanding life's achievement, assuming foolishly that another human could have achieved all that in one lifetime. Paradoxically, perhaps Duke did not do it either, because you'll remember he reckoned his musical life didn't start until 1936.

ALAN LEW

THE RIGHT personnel. That has been of overwhelming importance to all band-leaders, whatever the size of the bands, whatever the era of jazz history. For big bands, it is even more important, in terms of sheer numerical strength. To find, hopefully the kind of key individuals, whose own particular gifts will ensure that the section in which they will be performing has at least one significant — perhaps even memorable — ingredient. If for no other reason that every big band-leader, surely, must hope for a guy as well as happy existence, it has been of paramount importance through the years to find as many of the 'right guys' — and keep 'em. Where Ellington, in over 50 years' continuous band-leading, scored over practically every rival was that he not only found precisely the right players for whichever task they were needed, but, in most cases, he managed to retain their invaluable services for what amounted, in a few cases, to a lifetime.

Having captured your particular sideman, you have to keep them happy. Ellington, by all accounts, was never afraid to pay for money. That's part of keeping the guys contented. The other — and, in theory at least, it is to provide them with the kind of musical stimulus that will enable them to produce of their very best (well — hopefully) at most times. Certainly, there can be few arguments against any assumption that Duke Ellington remained, for all time, jazz' greatest composer, both in terms of creation and sheer output. Even though it is undeniable that Duke tended often to concentrate on a basic repertoire of tunes (which didn't always provide the incentive for inspiration to those long-serving musicians who'd heard — and performed — certain material an incredible number of times), inserting a current tune, or perhaps part (maybe all) of the latest extended work. In all probability, we'll never know which of the two major elements kept certain Ellingtonians fixed to their seats over a considerable period of time — the music or the bread — or maybe it was, simply, a combination of both. Both Duke and Heaven! They did —

taking a peek at the listed sidemen who participated in the radio transcription performances, which comprise this two-LP set, covering almost exactly 10 years, it is obvious that even Duke Duke did hope to maintain anyone loyal to a completely unshung personnel. But it's worth remembering that by the beginning of 1951 true indispensables such as Hodges, Carney, Brown, and Nanice remain as major individual forces within the ranks of the greatest-of-all jazz orchestras. Four sidemen — even important sidemen — might not sound too many for a big band, but in my mind the raucous of a world war, the kind of to-ing and fro-ing which has traditionally surrounded the big-band set-up, then even a seemingly small number of sidemen, stretching over 10 years, is impressive. And this is just even further into perspective when recalling too of the deaths during this time of formidable talents like Joe Anderson, Nanton (1942) and Joe Nanton (1946). Moreover, it is instructive to compare the relative personnel listings of other big bands contemporaneous to Ellington between 1941-1951.

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he was to return four years later, remaining much longer the time before his final departure, in 1945, and subsequent retirement from music. Guzman, formerly banjoist, Fred Guy had a long stint (1925-1940); so too did Puerto Rican valve trombone/composer Juan Tizol (1929-1944, 1951-1953), and, finally, for a brief spell in '60, Lead trumpet man, Wallace Jones, who undertook a basic task and performed it with great competency and in an eminently unflashy manner, could just about be called a regular in comparison with most of his colleagues. Jones was a baltion of the trumpet section between 1938-1944.

Yet there was more than just personal address at the passing of Nanton and Blanton in the early-forties. Tricky Sam, whose plunger-mute magic has never been equalled, is likewise a pioneer in terms of producing highly-vocalised noises on the trombone. Although much older than Blanton, Nanton could hardly be said to have died an elderly gentleman of jazz — he was, in fact, just over 42 years old when he died in San Francisco. He had suffered a stroke late in 1945 and, appropriately perhaps, passed away while touring as a member of the Ellington band. Quentin "Butter" Jackson (an Ellingtonian between 1948-1959), then, again, for a brief period in the '60s) remains the only post-Nanton plunger-man to approach Tricky Sam's extraordinary playing — sometimes mocking and humorous, sometimes poignant and moving. Since Blanton's premature death, aged 21 from tuberculosis — approximately a year-and-a-half after the recording of the two AFIS radio transcriptions — Ellington was fortunate to find a succession of first-class bassists. No better than Oscar Pettiford, with Duke from 1945-1948, and subsequently for very short periods. Pettiford's apart, though, no-one else approached Blanton's magnificence. Alone, he completely transformed the role of the bass in jazz, using a combination of phenomenal technique and harmonic and melodic ingenuity that was streets ahead of any other bass players, before and during his terribly short lifetime. The period of his involvement with Ellington — 1939-1941 — coincided with what many pundits feel was Duke's single most creative period. Certainly, with Blanton becoming its rhythmic pivot, the Ellington band swung like it had never swung before. (And, some cynics might add, rancidly swung after his death). If Duke Ellington had a real Achilles heel, it was his unmeritingly poor taste in band vocalists — a taste that could, on the odd occasion, be termed as appalling. No problems, though, with the warm-voiced lute Anderson who, regrettably, makes but one appearance here, in *mercure*, worked the longest single period of any singer associated with Duke (1931-1942), with unnecessary adornments or frills, she always sang with a consistency and a regard for lyrics (even if, at times, she was asked to sing some pretty dumb lyrics). And she seemed to know what jazz singing was about. Herb Jeffries (1940-1942) was a ballad singer, whose connections with jazz were, at best, tenuous. Still, it was Jeffries' vocal on Ellington's recording of *Flamingo*, a pop ballad of 1942, which helped it become a hit. Not surprisingly, Ellington and Jeffries reprise the number at the second AFIS session. The Music.

Appropriately, *Standard Transcriptions* (P-112) leads off with *Duke the A Train*, destined to become not only Duke's longest-running theme, but also one of the most popular items in the whole repertoire. Appropriately, too, Ray Nance is a soloist — a role he undertook hundreds and hundreds of times in the future. This particular version pre-dates the classic Victor recording by exactly one month, it's probably the first recorded evidence of Nance involvement with 'A Train, his solo isn't quite as assured as Victor's, but there is passion and fire aplenty. Nance, in fact, was to become one of the most consistent of Ellington soloists — especially on trumpet, but also an original voice on violin, not forgetting his campy-but-fun

contributions as singer and dancer. Nance, who joined the Ellington aggregate in 1940, was a soloist employed — with few exceptions — until 1963. (Thereafter, his time with the band was to become progressively less, but he was always a welcome figure, taking his position among the trumpets, Nance's final period with Ellington came in '71; he died three years later).

Sadly, there is very little more of Nance, except for a short outburst towards the end of *Clementine*. Shaped with one of the other great Ellington brassmen, Rex Stewart, who had for so long shared solo trumpet duties with Nance's predecessor, Cootie Williams, Stewart's marvellously idiosyncratic cornet had been a desired asset to the band since 1934. He was to remain an Ellington favourite until his exit in '45. Stewart, of course, was the principal trumpet soloist in 1941. There are numerous examples of his superb artistry to be found throughout the earlier cuts, including *Bounce* (muted, during theme), *Freeway* (right potent bar, with plunger), *The Girl of My Dreams* (another pungent solo, with mute, including short, but telling coda — and a perfect antelope to a dreadful pop ballad, sung by Jeffries, at his most lugubrious), *John Hardy's Wife* (savouring cornet contribution, with dynamic entrance), and the aforementioned *Clementine* (perfect illustration of Stewart's unique half-valving technique).

Too little of the ligand clarinet. Just brief interludes on a couple of items — towards the end of *Madame*, just a few bars, supported by Duke and the band, during *Jumpin'*. Punkins (which is mostly memorable for Blanton's surging bass, Carney's hugeness of sound, and a tremendously exciting performance by the band itself). Thankfully, however, there is no shortage of Webster! During the first transcriptions, he is everywhere. Saving the day on *I Hear a Rhapsody* (it would take more than Herb Jeffries to make this one sound real) with a sumptuous, sensual, two-part solo, plus coda that is as warm and memorable as his almost contemptuous swing which must have been to make Madame drop that goddam shawl. When the band moves from *Thumtha* to *Straight A's*, during *Freeway*, Webster takes positive action — with delightful results. His big sound — as warm as a freddie in mid-winter — dominates *Until Tonight*, causing the theme, before breathily insinuating his way through a sumptuous solo. But to show, yet again, how Duke would continually switch solo allocation, Webster is restricted to supporting Stewart in trying to make something worthwhile out of *Girl of My Dreams*. The 'A Train' transcriptions, recorded at New York's Metropolitan Opera House in January '51, were made in a brief concert in aid of the New York Association for the Advancement of Coloured Peoples. By this time, the Ellington trumpet section had grown from three to five. The ample frame of William 'Cat' Anderson — showcased in typical fashion as Ellington's improvisationalist — was to become a familiar sight since 1944 (apart from a near-four-year hiatus between 1947-1950). His two-part solo trumpet playing was always exciting, perhaps better appreciated within the ensemble. Harold 'Shorty' Baker had first been an Ellington trumpet player in 1938. He returned in '42, staying until the spring of '44, he was back again, for seven months, in '46; his four tenure commenced in March, '47, and was to last until the end of '51 — his longest single period with Duke. Nelson Williams (first appearance: '49) and Fats Ford ('50) were both comparatively new boys among the trumpets. With Tizol unavailable, Butter Jackson (with Duke for the past two years, three months) was Brown's sole companion on trombone, which hadn't been as small since the early-thirties, and before.

Two important additions to the reeds were clarinetist Robert 'Rock' Prosser (Hawkeye replacement as lead solo since '45, and an additional voice on clarinet), and Paul Gonsalves (a magnificent

player in his own right, and the only other tenor to adequately replace Webster in *Freeway*). Prosser's rather conservative, though always warm, and appealing, alto solo work contrasted satisfyingly with Hodges' exuberance. But more important, it was Prosser's more traditional clarinet playing which made his an excellent, if not wholly significant, solo voice from the time of his arrival until the Duke's departure in 1972. He was the perfect foil to the cool, academic style of Jimmy Hamilton (ligand replacement, from '41, and good, reliable second-tenor man who, curiously, adopted a viable billy style on his second instrument, with strong R&B overtones). Unfortunately, there is little from Prosser at the Met: some beautiful chulumeen-register clarinet for a fine reworking of *The Moose* (Hamilton, interestingly, supplying appropriate obbligato); a further low-down offering, this time during *A Time Passed to Harlem*. Hamilton's clarinet also appears, more than once, during the last named. And his peppy, always rhythmic, playing is easily recognisable during an impressive *Ring Ding Bell*, and is given liberal space during his own cleverly constructed *Dave Gonsalves*, later highlighted in the 1950-treated *Love You Madly* — with light-weight vocal from Yvonne Lezaune, one of the many Sarah Vaughan clones who cropped up around this time — and is used to even better advantage during a complete revamp of the band's signature tune, *Take the 'A' Train* not only taken at a much slower lick, but its theme is drastically reduced. And it works — especially with Gonsalves in such mellifluous form. After his first solo, the tempo reverts to customary medium-up. Gonsalves gets a second bite of the cherry, and unleashes a stunning second solo, climaxed with an electrifying coda.

Gonsalves plays his part with similar results during *Joe Parallel to Harlem*, of which the enclosed is the first-ever performance (its premier commercial recording came later in '51). So too do all the other soloists — Carney, Hamilton, Nance, Brown, Prosser — But this is as much a triumph for the compositional genius of Ellington and the superb way which the band itself plays what must be considered one of the Master's finest-of-all extended works. Which brings the author of these notes to his final tribute. To Edward Kennedy Ellington, whose overwhelming permeates each and every one of the enclosed 27 individual pieces — (including, coincidentally, or less than four items — *West Indian Stomp*, *Madame Will Drop Her Shawl*, *It's Sad But True*, and *Love & Me* — which Duke never was to put on to commercial record).

Altogether something of a feast for Ellingtonians of all hues and shades.

STAN BRITT
(Music Week)

Acknowledgements: Duke Ellington's Story On Records (1939-1947, 1951-1952/Massachusetts/Volante Musica Jazz Ed.); Who's Who of Jazz (London To Swing Street/Culter/Bloomsbury Book Shop).



AFSD 1032

AFSD 1032/A

33 1/3 RPM

1

STEREO

DUKE-CLASSIC TRANSCRIPTIONS

1. TAKE THE 'A' TRAIN (Billy Strayhorn)
2. I HEAR A RHAPSODY (George Frago, Jack Baker, D. Gasparra)
3. BOUNCE (R. Hannan)
4. MADAME WILL DROP HER SHAWL (L. Larrero)
5. FRENCH (Albert Dominguez, Ray Charles, G.K. Russell)
6. UNTIL TONIGHT (D. Lambert)
7. WEST INDIAN STOMP (Duke Ellington)
8. LOVE & I (D. Lambert)

DUKE ELLINGTON

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Annotation: Alan Luff, Stan Britt



AFSD 1032

AFSD 1032/B

33 1/3 RPM

2

STEREO

DUKE-CLASSIC TRANSCRIPTIONS

1. JOHN HARDY'S WIFE (Mercer Ellington)
2. CLEMENTINE (Billy Strayhorn)
3. LOVE LIKE THIS CAN'T LAST (Strayhorn)
4. AFTER ALL (Billy Strayhorn)
5. THE GIRL ON MY DREAMS (Sunny Clapp)
6. JUMPIN' PUNKING (Mercer Ellington)
7. FRANKIE & JOHNNY (Trad)
8. FLAMINGO (Ted Groya, Ed. Anderson)

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AFSD 1032/C

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3

STEREO

DUKE-CLASSIC TRANSCRIPTIONS

1. IT'S SAD BUT TRUE (Unknown)
2. THE MOOCHE (Duke Ellington, Irving Mills)
3. RING DEM BELLER (Duke Ellington)
4. FRUSTRATION (Duke Ellington)
5. COLORATURA (Duke Ellington)
6. ROSE OF THE RIO GRANDE (Edgar Leslie, Harry Warren, Rose Gorman)
7. LOVE YOU MADLY (Duke Ellington)

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AFSD 1032/D

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4

STEREO

DUKE-CLASSIC TRANSCRIPTIONS

1. TAKE THE 'A' TRAIN (Billy Strayhorn)
2. A TONE PARALLEL TO HARLEM (HARLEM SUITE)
(Duke Ellington)
3. DUET (Jimmy Hamilton, Duke Ellington)

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BIG BAND BOUNCES & BOOGIE

AF5D 1032

SIDE 1:

- 1 TAKE THE 'A' TRAIN (Billy Strayhorn) (S)
- 2 I HEAR A RHAPSODY (Jelly Roll Morton)
- 3 BOUNCE (K. Newman) (S)
- 4 MADAME WILL DROP HER SHAWL (L. Green) (S)
- 5 FRENCH (Robert Contreras, Bill Charles, S.A. Roach) (S)
- 6 UNTIL TONIGHT (D. Lindberg) (S)
- 7 WEST INDIAN STOMP (Duke Ellington) (S)
- 8 LOVE & I (D. Lindberg) (S)

SIDE 2:

- 1 JOHN HARDY'S WIFE (Duke Ellington) (S)
- 2 CLEMENTINE (Billy Strayhorn) (S)
- 3 LOVE LIKE THIS CAN'T LAST (Strayhorn) (S)
- 4 AFTER ALL (Billy Strayhorn) (S)
- 5 THE GIRL OF MY DREAMS (Duke Ellington) (S)
- 6 JUMPIN' PUNKINS (Duke Ellington) (S)
- 7 FRANKIE & JOHNNY (Frank) (S)
- 8 FLAMINGO (Duke Ellington) (S)

SIDE 3:

- 1 IT'S SAD, BUT TRUE (Duke Ellington) (S)
- 2 THE MOOCHE (Duke Ellington, Irving Mills) (S)
- 3 RING DEM BELLS (Duke Ellington) (S)
- 4 FRUSTRATION (Duke Ellington) (S)
- 5 COLORATURA (Duke Ellington) (S)
- 6 ROSE OF THE RIO GRANDE (Robert Carter, Harry Warren, Ross Gorman) (S)
- 7 LOVE YOU MADLY (Duke Ellington) (S)

SIDE 4:

- 1 TAKE THE 'A' TRAIN (Billy Strayhorn) (S)
- 2 A TONE PARALLEL TO HARLEM (HARLEM SUITE) (Duke Ellington) (S)
- 3 DUET (Jimmy Hamilton, Duke Ellington) (S)

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- (S) DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS ORCHESTRA: Wallace Jones, tp; Ray Nance, tp, vib; Ben Street, gtr; Joseph 'Freddy' Scott; Lawrence Brown, bnd; Sam 'Doc' West; Ashford & Simpson, db; L. Johnson, hb; Henry Larry, btr; S. M. Otto; Tully Harnwell; no Ben Webster; N. Edwards (Duke Ellington, gms, clng; m; b; Fred Guy, gtr; Henry James, bc; William 'Sonny' Turner, dr; later Jeffries, vib) *Rev. Hollywood, 15/1/81*
- Take the 'A' Train
 I Hear a Rhapsody (Vox, 11)
 Bounce
 It's Sad But True
 Madame Will Drop Her Shawl
 French
 Until Tonight
 D53251 West Indian Stomp
 Love & I
 John Hardy's Wife
 Standard Transcriptions (P 152)
- (S) DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS ORCHESTRA: Same as for (S), except add Lew Anderson, vib. *Rev. Hollywood, 15/1/81*
- Clementine
 Love Like This Can't Last (Vox, 14)
 After All
 The Girl of My Dreams (Vox, 11)
 Jumpin' Punkins
 Frankie & Johnny
 Flamingo (Vox, 11)
 Standard Transcriptions (P 155)
- (S) DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS ORCHESTRA: Harold 'Shorty' Baker, Nelson 'Fuddler' Williams, Anders Eric Ford, William 'Cat' Anderson, tp; Ray Nance, tp, vib, vib; Brown, Elmerine 'Butter' Jackson, hb; Jimmy Hamilton, cl; L. Johnson, Hargis, or Russell Procope, cl; m; Paul Gonsalves, tr; Carney, bnd; L. Brown, gms, clng; m; M. Wendell Marshall, Joe Benjamin, db; Gene, BB Clark, dr; Virginia Leeanna, vib. *Rev. Metropolitan Opera House, NYC, 21/7/51*
- The Mooche
 Ring Dem Bells (Vox, 89)
 Frustration
 Coloratura
 Rose of the Rio Grande
 Love You Madly (Vox, 71)
 Take the 'A' Train
 A Tone Parallel to Harlem
 Ellington Suite
 Duet
 VIA 1 13/54
 VIA 1 13/54
 VIA 1 13/54
 VIA 1 13/54
 VIA 1 13/54
 VIA 1 13/54
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