

RCA

APL1-1023

THE LAST OFFICIALLY RECORDED CONCERT
NEVER BEFORE ISSUED

**DUKE
ELLINGTON**
EASTBOURNE
PERFORMANCE



Face 1 Stéréo

APL1 1023

APL1 1023 A

Duke Ellington

« THE EASTBOURNE PERFORMANCE »



(P) 1975

1. THE PIANO PLAYER (Arr. D. Ellington) 3'05
2. CREOLE LOVE CALL
(Perlis - Schuebel) 4'28
3. DON'T YOU KNOW I CARE
(David - Ellington) 4'30
4. I CAN'T GET STARTED
(Ellington) 5'57
5. NEW YORK, NEW YORK
(Ellington) 3'05

Face 2 Stéréo

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APL1 1023 B

Duke Ellington

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(P) 1975

6. PITTER PATTER PANTHER (Ellington) 2'30
7. HOW HIGH THE MOON
(Lewis - Handlon) 2'15
8. BASIN STREET-BLUES
(Williams) 2'55
9. TIGER RAG (La Rocca) 3'55
10. WOODS (Ellington) 3'45
11. MEDITATION
(Ellington) 3'55

RCA

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A&R Coordinator: Mike Lipskin

SIDE A

THE PIANO PLAYER (2:55)
CREOLE LOVE CALL (4:28)
DON'T YOU KNOW I CARE (4:30)
I CAN'T GET STARTED (6:57)
NEW YORK, NEW YORK (3:05)

SIDE B

PITTER PATTER PANTHER (2:30)
HOW HIGH THE MOON (2:15)
BASIN STREET BLUES (2:59)
TIGER RAG (3:55)
WOODS (3:45)
MEDITATION (3:55)Public performance clearance—ASCAP
Recorded at the Congress Theatre, Eastbourne, England
December 1, 1973Remix and Editing: Mike Lipskin and Bob Simpson
Illustrator: Ohi

Personnel:

DUKE ELLINGTON—piano
Mercer Ellington, Money Johnson, Johnny Coles,
Bary Lee Hall—trumpets
Vince Prudente, Art Baron, Chuck Connors—trombones
Harry Carney, Harold Ashby, Russell Procope—
"Geez!" Minerve, Percy Marion—reeds
Joe Benjamin—bass
Rocky White—drums
Anita Moore, Money Johnson—vocalists

Duke Ellington's last foreign tour, in the fall of 1973, was as strenuous as any of the many he made in the course of his long career. After premiering The Third Sacred Concert in Westminster Abbey on October 24, 1973 (RCA Records album APL1-0785), he had played in Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia, Spain, France and Belgium before proceeding to Ethiopia and Zambia. In Addis Ababa, he was presented to Haile Selassie, who conferred a high honor upon him. He returned to London just in time to appear before H.M. Queen Elizabeth II in the annual Command Performance at the Palladium on November 26th, after which a few more dates remained to be filled around Britain.

On the night of this recording (the last officially authorized recording of the band under his leadership), he arrived in Eastbourne by train—weary but game. The band had had a slightly horrendous bus trip from Preston in Lancashire through snow, deep by English standards. After a period of "defrosting" in the bar, the musicians were in "high good humor," according to the editor of *Jazz Journal*, Sinclair Trull, who is as experienced in such defrosting processes as he is in jazz. This good humor persisted despite the fact that they were to play not one, but two shows.

Eastbourne, on the south coast of England, has always considered itself a cut above the other neighboring seaside towns. It is still vaguely Edwardian and remains popular with retired people, just as it was in the days of the Raj, when it was a haven for crusty ex-officers of H.M.'s Indian Army. There are many hotels of varying standards, not to mention boarding houses specializing in "Bed and Breakfast" children, carried to Eastbourne by nostalgic parents, used to revile its shingle beach, while rough winds, heavy seas and grey skies could make it very bleak there, even in mid-summer. Englishmen know instinctively that the weather is better on the south coast, although you have, in fact, to go all the way west to Cornwall to notice any appreciable difference.

Anyway, to this resort, and to its excellent, modern Congress Theatre, Ellington and his men came on a very wintry night, and were met—not with cool reserve, but with warmth, affection, and even, one might say, love. The band's most loyal supporters had made the trip down from London, and despite the odds against it, the occasion became almost festive, as you will hear.

There are selections from both concerts in this album, and the opener is *The Piano Player*, a term Ellington always used in self-description before introducing himself. He is anything but the "apprentice" here, and throughout

both concerts he played with intensity and energy that belied the terminal nature of the illness from which he was suffering. "A lot of people didn't realize how much piano he could play," Earl Hines said sorrowfully after his death, "but he was original, and didn't copy anybody."

Creole Love Call follows, and it is worth noting that this enduring favorite was first recorded in 1928, for RCA. The treatment underwent subtle variations through the years, but the character of the piece was always maintained, just as the character of the clarinet solo Russell Procope plays maintains the tradition established by Rudy Jackson and Barney Bigard. Harry Carney's bass clarinet and Money Johnson's muted trumpet are also heard to advantage.

Don't You Know I Care was written by Ellington in 1944, and then lost sight of—like many of his other attractive songs—as emphasis was placed on the "big ones." It was brought back into the repertoire as a lyric vehicle for the alto saxophone of Harold Minerve, who plays it with a sweeping authority that used to inspire surprisingly romantic dancing at places like the Rainbow Grill in New York. The inimitable sound of Harry Carney's baritone saxophone lends distinction to the background.

I Can't Get Started, known as Bunny Berigan's *chef-d'oeuvre*, was also known to Ellington as a masterpiece by another Duke, one of the composers he most admired,

Vernon Duke. The number was entrusted to tenor saxophonist Harold Ashby soon after he joined the band, and he developed a warm, lush interpretation worthy of his friend, mentor and predecessor, the late Ben Webster.

New York, New York was written in 1972 when Ellington was an official host for the city's annual "Summer Festival." It is an example of the unassuming pleasure he took in lyric-writing, and the vocalist is Anita Moore, a Texan who sings as though she believes the words.

Pitter Patter Panther was originally recorded in 1940 by Duke Ellington and his most famous bass player, Jimmy Blanton. The band was nearly always fortunate in its bass players. The names of Wellman Braud, Hayes Alvis, Billy Taylor, Junior Raglin, Cascar Pattenford, Wendell Marshall, Jimmy Woodie, Aaron Bell and Harold Lamb come to mind, and Joe Benjamin, a longtime Ellington enthusiast and supporter was worthy of the tradition they had created. This performance is the more affecting as a souvenir since both he and the leader had mere months to live when it was made.

How High the Moon, a be-bop anthem, was suitable as a showcase for Johnny Coles, a soloist with a personality of his own. Ellington took an amused interest in bop, and was by no means averse to using its phraseology when he had players available who could deliver it with an agreeable tone.

Basin Street Blues was one of the numbers Money Johnson sang and played as a tribute to Louis Armstrong. It seems to have led to requests for *Tiger Rag* from some of the elders in the audience, who presumably remembered the two-part version the band recorded in 1929. Joking about this "southern" music in his dressing room afterwards, Ellington told Sinclair Trull, "Ah, yes, we're becoming adult at last—catching up with the Bunks and Boldens so to speak."

Woods, short for "woodwinds," was an arrangement in transition, its ultimate treatment probably not being fully resolved in the leader's mind. In this case, it serves as the context for tenor saxophone combat between Harold Ashby and young Percy Marion from Boston.

Finally, *Meditation*, the evocative piano solo Ellington used to play in *The Second Sacred Concert*. What was in his mind as he played it this night? Thoughts of farewell? Or memories of the warm welcome he received in England when he first crossed the Atlantic forty years before?

STANLEY DANCE
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