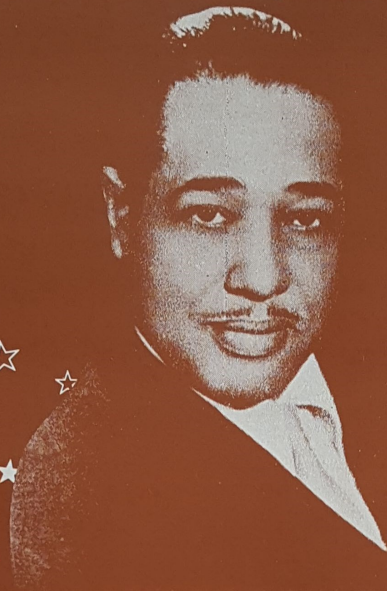


The Essential
DUKE ELLINGTON

DECEMBER 29th 1927 to OCTOBER 1st 1928

All instrumental recordings in chronological order



VJM TIMESPAN — THE LIVING HISTORY OF JAZZ



VINTAGE SERIES

VLP-73

VLP.73-A

MCPS

Made in U.K.

Side 1

Mono

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The Essential Duke Ellington, 29.12.27 - 1.10.28

1. RED HOT BAND (Fields/Healy/McHugh) (2.45)
2. DOIN' THE FROG (Fields/Healy/McHugh) (3.14)
3. SWEET MAMA (Rose/Little/Frost/Creamer/Layton) (2.54)
4. STACK O' LEE BLUES (Lopez/Colwell) (2.52)
5. BUGLE CALL RAG (Pettis/Mills/Schoebel/Meyer) (2.37)
6. TAKE IT EASY (Ellington) (3.12)
7. JUBILEE STOMP (Ellington) (2.45)
8. HARLEM TWIST (Ellington/Miley) (3.18)
9. TAKE IT EASY (Ellington) (2.33)
10. BLACK BEAUTY (Ellington) (3.10)

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VINTAGE SERIES

VLP-73

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MCPS

Made in U.K.

Side 2

Mono

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The Essential Duke Ellington, 29.12.27 - 1.10.28

1. BLACK BEAUTY (Ellington) (2.52)
2. JUBILEE STOMP (Ellington) (2.36)
3. GOT EVERYTHING BUT YOU (Paimor/Razaf) (2.58)
4. YELLOW DOG BLUES (Handy) (2.50)
5. TISHOMINGO BLUES (Williams) (2.56)
6. DIGA DIGA DOO (Fields/McHugh) (2.52)
7. DOIN' THE NEW LOW DOWN (Fields/McHugh) (3.06)
8. BLACK BEAUTY (Ellington) (3.01)
9. SWAMPY RIVER (Ellington) (2.50)
10. THE MOOCHIE (Ellington) (3.17)

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THE ESSENTIAL DUKE ELLINGTON — 29.12.27 to 1.10.28

VLP, 73

Side	Track	Title	Artist	Composer	Me	Personnel
1	1	RED HOT BAND	Duke Ellington & His Cotton Club Orchestra	McHugh, Healy, Fields	E6624	(a)
1	2	DOIN' THE FROG	Duke Ellington & His Cotton Club Orchestra	McHugh, Healy, Fields	E6626	(a)
1	3	SWEET MAMA (Papa's Gettin' Me!)	The Washingtonians	Rose, Little, Frost	145488-3	(b)
1	4	STACK O' LEE BLUES	The Washingtonians	Lower, Caldwell	145489-3	(b)
1	5	BUGLE CALL RAG	The Washingtonians	Patillo, Meyers, Schoebel	145490-3	(b)
1	6	TAKE IT EASY	Duke Ellington & His Orchestra	Ellington	W40030-B	(c)
1	7	JUBILEE STOMP	Duke Ellington & His Orchestra	Ellington	W40031-A	(c)
1	8	HARLEM TWIST	Duke Ellington & His Orchestra	Ellington, Miley	W40032-A	(c)
1	9	TAKE IT EASY	The Washingtonians	Ellington	2946-B	(d)
1	10	BLACK BEAUTY	The Washingtonians	Ellington	E27193	(d)
2	1	BLACK BEAUTY	Duke Ellington & His Orchestra	Ellington	43502-2	(f)
2	2	JUBILEE STOMP	Duke Ellington & His Orchestra	Ellington	43503-2	(f)
2	3	GOT EVERYTHING BUT YOU	Duke Ellington & His Orchestra	Palmer, Raaf	43504-2	(f)
2	4	YELLOW DOG BLUES	Duke Ellington & His Orchestra	W.C. Handy	E27711-C	(g)
2	5	TISHOMINGO BLUES	Duke Ellington & His Orchestra	Williams, Stern	E2772-A	(g)
2	6	DIGA DIGA DOO	Duke Ellington & His Orchestra	Fields, McHugh	W40085-B	(h)
2	7	DOIN' THE NEW LOWDOWN	Duke Ellington & His Orchestra	Fields, McHugh	W40086-C	(h)
2	8	BLACK BEAUTY	Duke Ellington	Ellington	W40117-B	(i)
2	9	SWAMPY RIVER	Duke Ellington	Ellington	W40117-B	(i)
2	10	THE MOOCHIE	Duke Ellington & His Orchestra	Ellington, Mills	W40117-A	(i)

Sleeve Design: Stephen Hill Transfer: John Watley Production: Trevor Benwell, Steve Lana, John Watley Source Material courtesy: C. Crump, T.H. Benwell, J.R.T. Davies, G. Ellis, J. Watley

Personnels:-

- (a) Bubber Miley, Louis Metcalf (trumpets); Joe Nanton (trombone); Rudy Jackson, Otto Hardwick, Harry Carney (reeds); Duke Ellington (piano); Fred Guy (banjo); Wellman Braud (bass); Sonny Greer (drums). 29th December, 1927.
- (b) As for (a) except Barney Bigard replaces Jackson, 9th January, 1928.
- (c) As for (b), 19th January, 1928.
- (d) As for (b), March 1928.
- (e) As for (b) except Arthur Whetsol (trumpet) replaces Miley, 21st March, 1928.
- (f) As for (e) except Bubber Miley (trumpet) replaces Metcalf, 26th March, 1928.
- (g) As for (b) except Metcalf replaces Whetsol and Johnny Hodges replaces Hardwick, 5th June 1928.
- (h) As for (g) except Whetsol replaces Metcalf, Irving Mills (vocal), 10th July, 1928.
- (i) Duke Ellington (piano solos), 1st October, 1928.
- (j) Bubber Miley, Arthur Whetsol (trumpets); Joe Nanton (trombone); Barney Bigard, Johnny Hodges, Harry Carney (reeds); Duke Ellington (piano); Lonnie Johnson (guitar); Fred Guy (banjo); Wellman Braud (bass); Sonny Greer (drums); Baby Cox (vocal), 1st October, 1928.

All selections recorded in New York.

The twenty tracks included in this volume span just over nine months in Duke Ellington's recording career. By the end of this period, three new musicians were part of the organisation, each in his own way adding a new dimension to the orchestral sound — but more of that later. Playing through this hour of music, it comes as a surprise to find so many lusty, open trombone solos from Joe Nanton, but perhaps the most astonishing thing is the discovery that only ten of the twenty selections are Ellington compositions, or collaborations with other members of the orchestra.

"Red Hot Band" and "Doin' The Frog" (also recorded by Frank Trumbauer as "Rainin' The Roof") are extremely rare as original issues. In more years of searching than I care to divulge, I have yet to see a copy of the 78. Positive identification of the saxophone solos is difficult, but I feel that my conclusions are reasonably accurate. On "Red Hot Band" Carney plays alto, with other solos by Miley, Nanton and Guy. "Doin' The Frog" has Hardwick on both alto and bass saxophones with Nanton, Miley and Metcalf sharing the brass responsibilities.

The three Harmony selections are acoustic recordings and the sound quality is somewhat dull. The first of the three personal changes occurs here, as Barney Bigard takes over from Rudy Jackson. On "Sweet Mama" he plays tenor behind Miley's opening solo, and clarinet during the final band chorus. Remaining soloists are Nanton, Metcalf, Hardwick (soprano) and Carney (alto). "Stack O' Lee" distinctly ill at ease in places, features Metcalf, Bigard (alto) and some two-faced piano from Duke. "Bugle Call Rag" with swifly changing breaks and solos, is worthy of close study. I hear it as Bigard (tenor), Metcalf, Nanton, Hardwick (bar), Carney (alt), Duke, Metcalf, Hardwick (alto), Nanton and Carney (alt).

The Dixie session which follows is beautifully recorded, and showcases three of Ellington's most celebrated compositions. "Take It Easy" has solos by Miley, Bigard, Nanton, Metcalf and Hardwick. "Jubilee Stomp" features Miley, Bigard, Nanton and two contrasting alto solos at the beginning and end by Hardwick and Carney respectively. "Harlem Twist" has solos by Miley, Nanton, Bigard and Carney, this time on baritone sax.

The Carney version of "Take It Easy", with identical solos to the Okeh, is nevertheless a very different performance. The inherent beauty remains, but the fierce intensity of Miley and Metcalf's contributions are a surprise and a delight.

The next session brings personal change number two. "Black Beauty", written as a tribute to Florence Mills, introduces the delicate, artistic trumpet of Arthur Whetsol. He takes the opening chorus, with Metcalf joining in for the "middle eight"; Nanton and Bigard also solo, and Duke provides a thoughtful, restrained chorus. The second version has Nanton replacing the Metcalf solo, and a more jaunty piano chorus with interesting bass breaks by Braud. Otherwise the solo entrance is identical. "Jubilee Stomp" uses the same solo format as before, except that both solo choruses are played by Hardwick. "Got Everything But You" is one of the least arranged Ellington performances, with an eight bar intro leading into solos by Miley, Hardwick, Nanton and Bigard. The final chorus is split between Carney (note the perfection of Whetsol's obbligato) and Miley. A delightfully spontaneous innovation.

Which brings us to the third, and possibly most significant personnel change. Johnny Hodges now joins the orchestra, and is heard on two very famous blues classics. Surprisingly perhaps, his first solo (on "Yellow Dog Blues") is on soprano, not alto. The clarinet duo at the start is presumably Bigard and Carney, with Miley, Nanton and Metcalf all featured. Note the touch of Morton's "Sourin' Tine" behind the trombone solo. "Tishomingo Blues" is an early example of understanding between soloists. Listen to the intricate interplay between Nanton and Bigard during the first chorus. Hodges takes his solo between Metcalf and Miley, and if a more authoritative or confident entrance on a recording debut exists, then I have yet to hear it.

The two selections are hit songs from "Blackbirds of 1928", with vocals by Irving Mills. "Diga Diga Doo", in addition to eight bars of Hodges, has successive solos from Whetsol and Hodges, clearly showing their diversity of style. "Lowdown" has short solos from Whetsol and Hodges.

Another Okah session provides the last three titles of this LP and a slice of Ellington history too. "Black Beauty" and "Swampy River" are the first piano solos Ellington ever recorded, and even in 1928 I suspect he was much undervalued as a soloist, as he seems to have remained for most of his life. The strongest influence apparent in these solo performances seems to stem from Willie "The Lion" Smith, but of course, even Ellington had to learn from someone. "The Moochie" is a sinister piece of music, which remained in the Ellington repertoire for over forty five years, in the final selection. In addition to the regular members, Lonnie Johnson is added on guitar, together with Baby Cox, who provides the wordless solo. One thing that is a pseudonym for Adelaide Hall, this has proved to be incorrect. The performance finds Miley at his most menacing. Bigard is provided with a guitar backing, and Hodges trades phrases with Miley, exhibiting an expertise which all sounds deceptively simple.

GEORGE ELLIS.

SPECIAL NOTE

This compilation includes different takes only where some significant musical variation is involved, such as changes of solo, soloist or arrangement. Takes which were originally rejected because of obvious mistakes in performance or recording, are not included, neither are closely similar duplicates.

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Made in U.K.

DUKE ELLINGTON

DECEMBER 1927

— OCTOBER 1928

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KINGSBURY
LONDON, ENGLAND