



“She is a musician—not all singers are—and she knows that she can be as pure and uncut as jazz. She’s really got it.”

Jazz, like the United States Constitution, is a living force. The Framers could not envision the forms and colors of speech that would continually, challengingly expand the First Amendment’s guarantee of free expression. And jazz, the very spirit of open dialogue, cannot be confined to one era, to one style.

“I hate categories in music,” Duke Ellington told me more than once. “I listen to individuals.”

In Ellington’s own music—which Lorraine Feather celebrates here in her own voice (and lyrics) but with deep knowledge of the utterly distinctive, continually evolving music he created—Duke resisted the very idea of ending what he had composed.

Clark Terry, long a singular and witty presence in the orchestra, said of Duke: “He always likes to make the end of a song sound as if it’s still going somewhere.”

And that’s what jazz is—the sounds, the pulse, of the continuing life force.

Before moving to Lorraine Feather’s weaving of her lyrics into Ellington’s music, it is clear that only a jazz singer, all the way through her being, could, as a musician, become part of Ellington’s music. As I once said of Lorraine: “She is a musician—not all singers are—and she knows that jazz can be fun, and so is she. She’s really got it.”

For many years, however, in many languages, there have been irascible debates on what qualities define a jazz singer. By my criteria—having been energized by this music for more than half a century—the definition begins with what the wholly original clarinetist Pee Wee Russell said about anybody who finds his or her vocation in jazz:

“A certain group—I don’t care where they come from—have a heart feeling and a rhythm in their systems that you couldn’t take away from them, even if they were in a symphony orchestra.”

Lorraine swings! And on ballads, too, there are the rhythms of longing, loss, desire, fulfillment.

But swinging, though essential, must also be embedded with feeling—not just vocal pyrotechnics. And not manufactured emotion, but the kind that comes out of your life, and how much you understand of who you are as you keep changing. In jazz, music is continual autobiography, and it changes as you change.

Also, of course, the singer must have a signature sound—a sound that is at the core of the singer’s presence, and changes texture with her moods. It also helps if there is wit—the ability to put into your music the ironies of your own life that are mirrored in what you know of other people’s lives. Lorraine’s perceptive, empathic humor courses through her lyrics as well as her singing.

At this point I have to say, and I never had the temerity to say this to Duke, that in a number of others’ attempts to put lyrics to Duke’s music, they missed his swift and amused sense, for example, of the unintended consequences of desire. Lorraine has that perception in the stories that are her lyrics. I wish she had been around as a lyricist when Duke was. I think they could have collaborated.

What makes this current collaboration work is not only her musicianship and actual—not fake—sophistication, but that her affinity for Duke Ellington’s music has deep and long roots.

Born in New York, she was born into jazz. Her mother, Jane, had sung with big bands; her godmother was Billie Holiday; and her father was Leonard Feather. He was and remains one of the most influential

writers on jazz, as well as a producer, and something few of us jazz critics can claim—a composer of songs that jazz musicians actually use in their repertory.

Both Jane and Leonard Feather were close to Ellington and his family, and so Lorraine comes to this personal tribute to Duke after having absorbed his nonpareil musical language from childhood.

She also comes to this engaging project with a range of well-honed skills. Lorraine has been a successful actress; learned to interact with all kinds of audiences in all kinds of clubs; has written lyrics for diverse artists; and, with composer Paul Grabowsky, wrote the pleasurable songs for the Disney feature film *The Jungle Book 2*.

As musicians used to say when validating a colleague, Lorraine has paid her dues. Also, clearly intrigued by challenges, in her 2001 solo album, *New York City Drag* [Rhombus], she sang and put lyrics—as Charles Champlin of the Los Angeles Times noted—to “some cherished if occasionally obscure Fats Waller compositions [transmuting them] into wild lyrical delights.” Champlin noted that Fats Waller was a family friend. And so was Duke Ellington.

That set was followed by *Café Society* [Sanctuary/BMG], in which she set lyrics to classic jazz compositions, including Duke Ellington’s “Creole Love Call” and “Rockin’ in Rhythm.” Both these sessions received enthusiastic airplay around the country.

Such Sweet Thunder brings all of her history—the complete Lorraine—together. Jazz musicians used to say of a player they admired that he—or she—“tells a story.” This set abounds in stories that, I expect, will connect in varying ways with the personal stories of listeners. She can be as intimate as in three-o’clock-in-the-morning reveries, and as rollicking in spirit and verve as the Ellington brass section.

Indeed, listening to her in “September Rain”—based on Billy Strayhorn’s luminously lyrical “Chelsea Bridge”—I remembered a story Duke told me. “Sometimes,” he said, “when we played a ballad, and Johnny Hodges or Ben Webster moved into a sensuous, longing solo, we could hear a sigh from one of the dancers. And that sigh became part of our music.”

Few singers today could recreate that singular Ellington ambience that brings a listener deep into his own life, dreams and losses, and then swing into the joy of jazz.

And in “Mighty Like the Blues,” she pays deeply deserved tribute to the writer of both the music and lyrics of that enduring song—her father, Leonard Feather. He taught me a great deal about the music that was so essential a part of both our lives.

And now I am indebted to his daughter for the abiding pleasure of *Such Sweet Thunder*, a testament to the continual regeneration of this music that has become a common language throughout the world about the resiliency—and surprises—of the human condition.

John Coltrane once told me: “This music is the whole question of life itself.” And Charles Mingus: “I’m trying to play the truth of what I am. The reason it’s difficult is I’m changing all the time.”

Jazz is indeed the “Such Sweet Thunder” of life itself. And a final grace note about Lorraine: On jazzreview.com, Bill Falconer wrote, “With a Feather lyric, you don’t just hear, you somehow see!”

NAT HENTOFF

Jazz writer for *Jazz Times*, *The New York Times*, *The Village Voice* and *The Wall Street Journal*

“Few singers today could recreate that singular Ellington ambience that brings a listener deep into the joy of jazz.”

“And then swing into the joy of jazz.”

1) Rhythm, Go 'Way

Music by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn/Lyrics by Lorraine Feather (based on "Such Sweet Thunder," from *The Shakespearean Suite* [Ellington/Strayhorn]) Published by Famous Music/Music Sales, ASCAP

Rhythm arrangement: Russell Ferrante; horn arrangement: Bill Elliott; piano: Russell Ferrante; bass: Dave Carpenter; drums: Gregg Field; reeds: Bill Liston, Brian Scanlon, Jeff Driskill, Glen Berger, Jay Mason; trumpets: Wayne Bergeron, Don Clarke, Willie Murillo; trombones: Bruce Otto, Charlie Morillas, Andy Martin; trumpet solo: Wayne Bergeron

2) The 101

Music by Duke Ellington/Lyrics by Lorraine Feather (based on "Suburbanite" [Ellington]) Published by Famous Music/Music Sales, ASCAP

Rhythm arrangement: Bill Elliott and Lorraine Feather; horn arrangement: Bill Elliott; piano: Russell Ferrante; bass: Chuck Berghofer; drums: Peter Erskine; horns same as "Rhythm Go 'Way," but Gary Grant and Jeff Bunnell, trumpets, replace Don Clarke and Willie Murillo; tenor sax solos: Jeff Driskill, Glen Berger

3) Can I Call You Sugar

Music by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn/Lyrics by Lorraine Feather (based on "Sugar Rum Cherry," from *The Nutcracker Suite* [Ellington/Strayhorn]) Published by Famous Music/Music Sales, ASCAP

Rhythm and horn arrangement by Bill Elliott; musicians same as "The 101"; tenor sax solo: Glen Berger

4) Imaginary Guy

Music by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn/Lyrics by Lorraine Feather (based on "Dancers In Love," from *The Perfume Suite* [Ellington/Strayhorn]) Published by Famous Music/Music Sales, ASCAP

Rhythm arrangement: Shelly Berg; piano: Shelly Berg; bass: Dave Carpenter; drums: Gregg Field.

5) September Rain

Music by Billy Strayhorn/Lyrics by Lorraine Feather (based on "Chelsea Bridge" [Strayhorn]) Published by Music Sales, ASCAP

Rhythm arrangement: Mike Lang; piano: Mike Lang; bass: Dave Carpenter; drums: Terri-Lyne Carrington; tenor saxophone: Terry Harrington; vocal arrangement: Morgan Ames; background vocalists: Morgan Ames, Randy Crenshaw, Lorraine Feather, Shelly Flint, Carmen Twillie

6) Tenacity

Music by Rex Stewart/Lyrics by Lorraine Feather (Based on "Rexatious" aka "Rexercise" [Stewart]) Published by Michael H. Goldsen, Inc., ASCAP

Rhythm and horn arrangement: Bill Elliott; piano: Shelly Berg; bass: Dave Carpenter; guitar: Grant Geissman; drums: Gregg Field; reeds: Bill Liston, Jeff Driskill, Jay Mason; trumpets: Gary Grant, Willie Murillo; trombone: Bruce Otto; trumpet solo: Willie Murillo

7) Backwater Town

Music by Duke Ellington/Lyrics by Lorraine Feather (based on "Suburban Beauty"[Ellington]) Published by Famous Music/Music Sales, ASCAP

Rhythm and horn arrangement by Bill Elliott; musicians same as "The 101."

8) A Peaceful Kingdom

Music by Duke Ellington and Lawrence Brown/Lyrics by Lorraine Feather (based on "On a Turquoise Cloud"[Ellington/Brown]) Published by Famous Music/Music Sales, ASCAP
Arrangement/piano: Shelly Berg

9) Lovely Creatures

Music by Duke Ellington/Lyrics by Lorraine Feather (based on "Night Creature—Second Movement"[Ellington]) Published by Music Sales, ASCAP

Rhythm arrangement: Shelly Berg and Lorraine Feather; horn arrangement: Bill Elliott; musicians same as "Rhythm Go 'Way."

10) Antarctica

Music by Duke Ellington/Lyrics by Lorraine Feather (based on "The Ricitic"[Ellington]) Published by Famous Music/Music Sales, ASCAP

Rhythm arrangement: Shelly Berg; piano: Shelly Berg; bass: Dave Carpenter; drums: Gregg Field

11) Mighty Like the Blues

Music and Lyrics by Leonard Feather
Published by EMI/Mills Music, ASCAP

Rhythm arrangement, Russell Ferrante; horn arrangement, Bill Elliott; musicians same as "Rhythm Go 'Way"; tenor sax solo: Bill Liston

This album is dedicated to Duke Ellington, Billy Strayhorn, and all those creative spirits who contributed to the glory of the Ellington sound.

Produced by Lorraine Feather with Geoff Gillette and Carlos Del Rosario

Recorded at Entourage, Visual Rhythm and Mad Hatter ("September Rain" only)
Engineered and mixed by Geoff Gillette and Carlos Del Rosario; Mixed at Visual Rhythm
Assistant engineer: Mauricio Cajueiro
Mastered by Bernie Grundman at Bernie Grundman Mastering

Many thanks to Geoff, Carlos, and Bill for being the best collaborators imaginable; to Shelly, Russ, and all the other musicians and singers, for their great skill and good cheer; to the publishers who allowed me to record lyrical versions of their precious copyrights—Irwin Robinson at Famous Music most of all, who spoke to everyone on my behalf; Margaret Johnson at Famous; Barry Edwards and Maia Puryear at Music Sales; and Michael Goldsen and Delda Sciarba at Criterion Music. Thanks to Mike Jason, Bas Hartong, Nick Pinovano, Lenore Lello, Jack Ball and all at Sanctuary Records; Maggie Rodford, Tammy Krutehkoﬀ, Jazelle Azani and Mark Thomas at Air-Edel; Morgan Ames, Jean Bach, Ken Dryden, Scott Edel, Gary Fine, Don Grusin, Dick Hyman, Linda Lawley, Stegried Mohr and Mark Winkler.

Special thanks to the unstoppable Virginia Wicks.

Thanks always to my dear husband Tony, and to my late mom and dad.

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Design: Sarah Bolles and Michael Lythcott
Photography: Linda Vanoff. Duke Ellington photos donated by the estate of William "PoPsic" Randolph. www.PoPsicphotos.com
Hair: Lydia Geissman
Make-up: Charlene del Gaudio

www.lorrainefeather.com
(for lyrics, session pix, etc. etc.)



Chronological Discography

(record labels refer to CDs containing the instrumental tracks on which these versions were based):

Duke's Men: The Small Groups, Vol. 1 — "Rexatious" (1938—Columbia)

Duke Ellington—Braggin' In Brass: The Immortal 1938 Year — "Mighty Like the Blues" (1938—Portrait)

Duke Ellington—The Blanton-Webster Band — "Chelsea Bridge" (1941—Bluebird/RCA)

Duke Ellington—The Great Chicago Concerts — "Dancers In Love," "Suburbanite" (1946—Musicmasters/BMG)

Duke Ellington—The Private Collection, Vol. 6: Dance Dates — "Suburban Beauty," "Such Sweet Thunder" (1958—Saja/Atlantic)

Duke Ellington—Three Suites — "Sugar Rum Cherry" (1960—Columbia)

Duke Ellington Meets Coleman Hawkins — "The Rieitic" (1962—MCA)

Duke Ellington and His Orchestra — The Symphonic Ellington — "Night Creature: Second Movement" (1963—Discovery)

Dick Hyman Plays Duke Ellington — "On a Turquoise Cloud" (1993—Reference)

To Billie Jane
Love you madly
Lorraine Feather





06076-86353-2

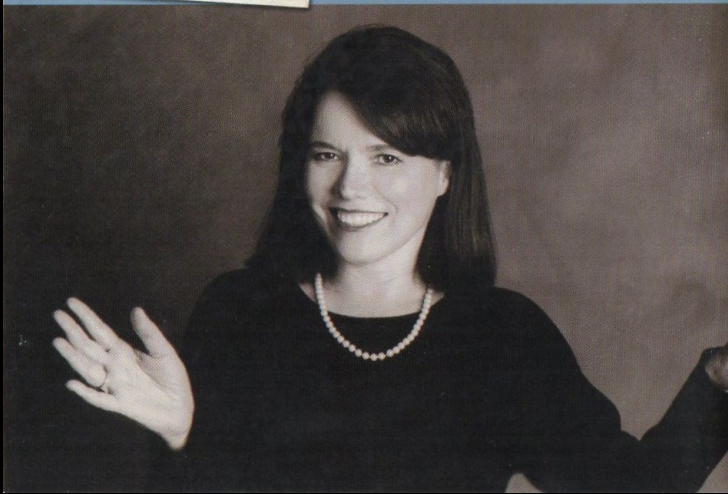


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LORRAINE FEATHER SUCH SWEET THUNDER

MUSIC OF THE Duke Ellington Orchestra



SUCH SWEET THUNDER

LORRAINE FEATHER

LYRICS AND VOCALS BY LORRAINE FEATHER

Rhythm, Go 'Way (4:45)

The 101 (3:14)

Can I Call You Sugar (4:06)

Imaginary Guy (3:25)

September Rain (5:15)

Tenacity (3:08)

Backwater Town (3:38)

A Peaceful Kingdom (3:54)

Lovely Creatures (5:06)

Antarctica (3:28)

Mighty Like the Blues (4:05)

TOTAL TIME: 44:08



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