



DUKE ELLINGTON'S FAR EAST SUITE

Following are the original 1967 LP liner notes:

East meets West through the swinging music of Duke Ellington

When Duke Ellington left New York on September 6, 1963, he began one of the most eventful journeys of his long career. The next evening, he and his orchestra found themselves in Damascus, the first stop on a State Department tour that was to take them to Amman, Kabul, New Delhi, Ceylon, Tehran, Madras, Bombay, Baghdad and Ankara. Also on the itinerary were Istanbul, Nicosia, Cairo, Alexandria, Athens and Thessalonica, but concerts in these cities were indefinitely postponed when the tragic news of President Kennedy's assassination reached them in Ankara.

"The tour was a great adventure for us on what is indeed the other side of the world", Duke Ellington wrote in Musical Journal ("Orientations", March 1964). "Sometimes I left it was this world upside down. The look of the natural country is so unlike ours and the very contours of the earth seem to be different. The smell, the vastness, the birds, and the exotic beauty of all these countries make a great inspiration". More specifically, he detailed lizards, chameleons, camels, cobras, an all-rose sky in Calcutta, the Kandy dancers in Ceylon, and a twenty-piece orchestra in Delhi that used not one instrument familiar to the West.

"I hope much of this will go into Music", he continued, but doing a parallel to the East has its problems. From my perspective, I think I have to be careful not to be influenced too strongly by the music we heard, because there is a great sameness about it, beginning in the Arabic countries and going through India all the way to Ceylon. There are many different kind of drums, of course, and many strange instruments, and in India all the way to Ceylon they have about ten scales, but the moment you become academic about it you are going to fall into the trap of copying many other people who have tried to give a reflection of the music.

"So far as the rhythms are concerned, I don't think there is anything really new there. Other musicians who had been before us had picked up on all of them. That's another reason why I don't want to copy this rhythm or that scale. It's more valuable to have absorbed while there. You let it roll around, undergo a chemical change, and then seep out on a paper in the form that will suit the musicians who are going to play it. But it really takes quite a bit of doing to decide what to do and what not to do, particularly when you have that big, wonderful and beautiful world over there as a subject. You don't want to underestimate or understate it".

The musical impressions that "seeped out" onto paper from his pen and that of his friend and co-composer Billy Strayhorn were rich and rewarding. Although the impressions were at first concerned with the Near and Middle East, they soon became known to concertgoers under the generic title of "The Far East Suite". In 1964, moreover, the Ellington did indeed go to the Far-East to Japan on a tour which inspired **Ad Lib on Nippon**, the piece which concludes the set. Recorded in December 1966, more than three years after the original adventures began, this album is a well-considered collection of the most original material to appear under Duke Ellington's name since Afro-Bossa.

Tourist Point of View is the East, fresh to the inexperienced eye of the West-exotic, dramatic and strange, a world "upside down". While the swift rhythm –mic patterns of John Lamb's bass and newcomer Rufus Jones' drums provide an undercurrent of mysterious excitement, Paul Gonsalves' sinuous saxophone lines reveal the inspiration of unusual chords. This perhaps parallels Ellington's recognition of the fact that Paul, one of the tour's most successful ambassadors on and off the stand, "makes friends wherever he goes". Some of the color changes here are obtained by Jimmy Hamilton and Russell Procope using clarinets in the reed section, and by Mercer Ellington and Herbie Jones using flügelhorns with the brass.

Bluebird of Delhi, or Mynah, Ellington explains, "was the bird that sang the pretty lick Jimmy Hamilton plays on clarinet. He sang it all the time Billy Strayhorn was in his room. Then, when he left, the bird sounded the low raspberry you hear at the end of the number". Besides the bird, however, we are given its context in a rich orchestral impression. Incidentally, there is no pianist to be heard on this. He was busy conducting.

Isfahan is for the city that has been called the Pearl of Persia. "It is a place", Ellington recalls, "where everything is poetry. They meet you at the airport with poetry and you go away with poetry". The main role in this beautiful, melodic souvenir is accordingly entrusted to the poetic saxophone of Johnny Hodges. "Isfahan", a Persian poet once wrote, "is half the world".

Inspired by a dance Ellington witnessed in the Near East, **Depk** brings a change of pace and mood. "It was a wonderful dance by six boys and six girls", he says, "and I tried to get the cats in the band to do it. All I could remember afterwards was the kick on the sixth beat". The spirited but intricate arrangements

requires an interchange of musical progressions by the sections, thinning out to a statement by Hamilton and Carney on clarinet and baritone saxophone respectively.

The band reached Baghdad just in time for a military coup, during which jets shot up the presidential palace. Later, when he arrived safely in Beirut, the press eagerly sought Ellington's reaction to the experience. "Baghdad?" he said in a much quoted reply. "It was swinging!". In striking contrast with this excitement was his first view of Mount Harissa, fifteen miles from Beirut. Crowned by a huge statue of Our Lady of Lebanon, this inspired the serene and swinging **Mount Harissa**, on which is piano and Paul Gonsalves' tenor saxophone are so handsomely featured.

Blue Pepper or Far East of the Blues, speaks of the universality of the blues. The title might also be a subtle reminder of the time when pepper –to the West-was a luxury import from the East. The definitive solo statement is made by Johnny Hodges, whose muse here differs from that in **Isfahan**.

Agra, Ellington explains, "is our portrait of the Taj Mahal, but we take in a little more territory than that marble edifice dedicated to the tremendous love for a beautiful woman. We consider the room in which the man who built it was imprisoned by his son. For the rest of his life he was forced to live there and look out-at the Taj Mahal". Harry Carney, the nonpareil of the baritone saxophone, imparts great distinction to the noble theme.

Amad is surging damascene sketch with closely woven writing for the reeds, Lawrence Brown's call to prayer, and the leader's insistent piano emphases. The treatment is relevant to another of Ellington's observations about the State Department tour. "We didn't want to do anything others had done before. The

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When Duke Ellington left New York on September 6, 1963, he began one of the most eventful journeys of his long career. The next evening, he and his orchestra found themselves in Damascus, the first stop on a State Department tour that was to take them to Amman, Kabul, New Delhi, Ceylon, Tehran, Madras, Bombay, Baghdad and Ankara. Also on the itinerary were Istanbul, Nicosia, Cairo, Alexandria, Athens and Thessalonica, but concerts in these cities were indefinitely postponed when the tragic news of President Kennedy's assassination reached them in Ankara.

"The tour was a great adventure for us on what is indeed the other side of the world," Duke Ellington wrote in *Musical Journal* ("Orientations," March 1964). "Sometimes I felt it was this world upside down. The lack of the natural country is so unlike ours and the very customs of the land seem to be different. The smell, the scintillas, the herbs, and the exotic beauty of all these countries make a great impression."

More specifically, he detailed Istanbul, chandeliers, carnish, coban, slender choppers, a trim in Bombay, an all-male inn in Calcutta, the Kand dancers in Ceylon, and a ten-piece orchestra in Delhi that used one instrument similar to the West.

"I kept much of this will go into music," he continued, "but doing a parallel to the East has its problems. From my perspective, I think I have to be careful not to be influenced too strongly by the music we heard, because there is a great sadness about it, beginning in the Arabic countries and going through India all the way to Ceylon. There are many different kinds of drums, of course, and many strange instruments, and in India and Ceylon they have about ten scales. Just the moment you become academic about it you are going to fall into the trap of copying many other people who have tried to give a reflection of the music."

"So far as the rhythms are concerned, I don't think there is anything really new there. Other musicians who had before me had picked up on all of them. That's another reason why I don't want to copy this rhythm or that scale. It's more valuable to have absorbed while there. You set it all sound, undergo a chemical change, and then set out on paper in the form that will suit the musician who are going to play it. But it really stays quite a bit of distance to decide what to do and what not to do, particularly when you have that big wonderful and beautiful world over there as a subject. You don't want to underestimate or underestimate it."

"The musical impressions that 'seeped out' onto paper from his pen and that of his friend and co-composer Billy Strayhorn were rich and rewarding. Although the impressions were at first concerned with the Near and Middle East, they soon became known to concertgoers under the generic title of *The Far East Suite*. In 1964, moreover, the Ellington band did indeed go to the Far East for the first time in a tour inspired by *Ad Lib* on Nippon, the piece which concludes the set. Recorded in December 1966, more than three years after the oriental adventures began, this album is a well-considered collection of the most original material to appear under Duke Ellington's name since *Alto-Boa* ("Tussock Point of View" is the East, both in the concentrated eye of the West-exotic, dramatic and strange, a world "upside down." While the

with rhythmic patterns of John Lamb's bass and newcomer Rufus Jones' drums provide an undercurrent of mysterious excitement. Paul Gonsky's sinuous saxophone lines reveal the inspiration of unusual chords. This perhaps parallels Ellington's recognition of the fact that Paul, one of the tour's most successful ambassadors on and off the stand, "makes friends wherever he goes." Some of the color changes here are obtained by Jimmy Hamilton and Russell Procope using clarinet in the reed section, and by Mercer Ellington and Herbie Jones using flugelhorn, with the brass.

Blush of Delhi, or *Musha*, Ellington explains, "was the band that sang the pretty lark Jimmy Hamilton plays on clarinet. He sang it all the time Billy Strayhorn was in his room. Then, when he left, the band wondered the loud rasberry you hear at the end of the number." Besides the lark, however, we are given its context in a rich orchestral impression. Incidentally, there is no piano to be heard on this. He was busy conducting.

Istanbul is for the city that has been called the Pearl of Persia. "It is a place," Ellington recalls, "where everything is poetry. They meet you at the airport with poetry and they go away with poetry." The main solo at this beautiful, melodic encounter is accordingly entrusted to the poetic saxophone of Johnny Hodges. "Istanbul," a Persian poet once wrote, "is half the world."

Inspired by a dance Ellington witnessed in the Near East, *Depek* brings a change of pace and mood. "It was a wonderful dance by six boys and six girls," he says, "and I tried to get the cabs in the band to do it. All I could remember afterward was the kick on the snare lead." The twisted but intricate arrangement requires an interchange of musical progressions by the sections, turning out to a statement by Hamilton and Carney on clarinet and baritone saxophone respectively.

The band reached Baghdad just in time for a military coup, during which each sat on the presidential palace. Later, when he arrived safely in Beirut, the press eagerly sought Ellington's reaction to the experience. "Baghdad!" he said, "is a much-spelled reply. It was surprising" in striking contrast with this excitement was his first view of Mount Harina, fifteen miles from Beirut. Concocted by the huge statue of Our Lady of Lebanon, this inspired the serene and awe-inspiring *Mount Harina*, on which his piano and Paul Gonsky's tenor saxophone are so handsomely featured.

Blue Pepper, or *Far East of the Blues*, speaks of the universality of the blues. The title might also be a subtle reminder of the time when pepper — the West-way a luxury import from the East. The definitive solo statement is made by Johnny Hodges, whose mood here differs from that in Istanbul.

Agfa, Ellington explains, "is our portrait of the Taj Mahal, but we take it a little more seriously than that marble edifice dedicated to the tremendous love for a beautiful woman. We consider the room in which the man who built it was inspired by his son. For the rest of his life he was devoted to love there and look out of the Taj Mahal." Harry Carney, the nurturer of the baritone saxophone, imparts great distinction to the subtle theme.

Anatol is a surging dancepiece sketch with closely woven writing for ten horns, Lawrence Brown's call to prayer, and the leader's insistent piano emphasis. The treatment is relevant to another of Ellington's observations about the State Department tour: "We didn't write far from months afterwards," he said, "because we didn't want to do anything other's had done before. The supporting concentration behind the main themes is general in color for the whole tour, from Turkey to Ceylon."

This clearly does not apply to *Ad Lib* on Nippon, a long performance with displays of virtuosity by John Lamb and Jimmy Hamilton. The music is also a display of virtuosity, "some calls to Tokyo who were too much" Japan, he claims, sometimes lightning bolts, "because they have an ability there to do things better than the originals."

Some originals. Not those originals.

STANLEY DANCE

More LPs 3782
Sleeves L35-3782
The Far East Suite
Duke Ellington and His Orchestra
Produced by Brad Schaefer

SIDE 1

Tussock Point of View 0:35

Blush of Delhi (Musha) 1:10

Istanbul 1:40

Depek 2:36

Mount Harina 3:36

SIDE 2

Blue Pepper

Far East of the Blues 0:58

Agfa 0:58

Anatol 0:26

Ad Lib on Nippon 01:25

Public Performance Charge—ASCAP

Personnel

Duke Ellington, piano

Harry Carney, Baritone Saxophone

Johnny Hodges, Jimmy Hamilton,

Paul Gonsky, reeds

Lawrence Brown, Buster Cooper,

Chuck Connors, trombones

Cotler Williams,

William "Leaf" Hunter, Mercer Ellington,

Herbie Jones, trumpets

John Lamb, Bob

Rufus Jones, drums

Recorded in RCA Victor's Studio A,

New York City

Recording Engineer—Ed Ripley

DYNABROUVE

Development results are the product of RCA Victor's newly developed system of recording which involves the use of dynamic microphones in the recording process.

CHARACTERISTICS:

1. *Balance and clarity*—the original sound is recorded faithfully.

2. *Maximum presence*—every performance is presented in its original intensity.

3. *Full-bodied tone*—even when you listen to the loud.

4. *Reduced noise*—eliminating unwanted sounds.

5. *Dynamic range*—the dynamic range is not recorded, highly repeatable compression—dynamic range is not recorded.

6. *Wide range*—the dynamic range is not recorded, highly repeatable compression—dynamic range is not recorded.

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JAZZconnaisseur



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DUKE ELLINGTON'S FAR EAST SUITE

RCA VICTOR/LEGACY

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East meets West through the swinging
music of Duke Ellington

The recording of the Far East Suite in 1966 was blessed with featured soloists Cootie Williams, Lawrence Brown, Johnny Hodges, Jimmy Hamilton, Paul Gonsalves and Harry Carney. These legendary Ellingtonians bring Duke Ellington's and Billy Strayhorn's impressions of Indo-Eurasian scales, motifs and oriental modal riffs back home swinging.

Recorded in RCA Victor's Studio A, New York City
on December 19, 20, and 21, 1966

(Complete recording details inside)

Original sleeve reproduction

This CD contains previously released
material originally issued

1-9 as FAR EAST SUITE RCA VICTOR LP

LPM / LSP-3782 in June 1967

12 and 14 as THE FAR EAST SUITE SPECIAL MIX

Bluebird CD 07863665512 in 1995

10,11,13,15 and 16 as FAR EAST SUITE

Bluebird CD 82876556142 in 2003

1. Tourist Point Of View 5:09
2. Bluebird Of Delhi (*Mynah*) 3:18
3. Isfahan 4:02
4. Depk 2:41
5. Mount Harissa 7:40
6. Blue Pepper (*Far East Of The Blues*) 3:00
7. Agra 2:35
8. Amad 4:26
9. Ad Lib On Nippon 11:34

BONUS TRACKS - NOT ON ORIGINAL LP

10. Tourist Point Of View (*alternate take*) 5:17
11. Amad (*alternate take*) 4:14
12. Bluebird Of Delhi (*alternate take*) 3:08
13. Bluebird Of Delhi (*alternate take*) 3:21
14. Isfahan (*alternate take*) 4:11
15. Depk (*alternate take*) 2:45
16. Mount Harissa (*alternate take*) 8:47



SONY MUSIC

RCA VICTOR



JAZZconnoisseur

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