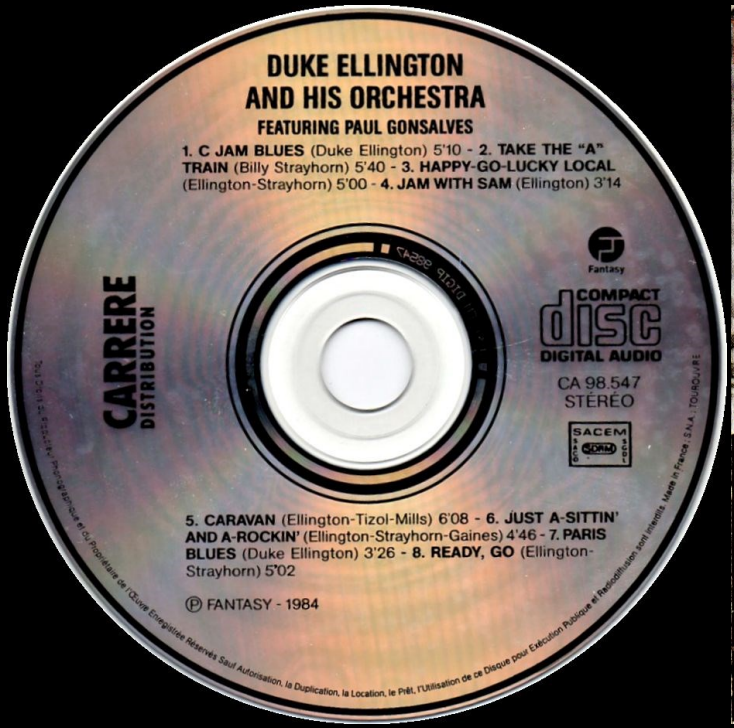
DUKE ELLINGTON
AND HIS ORCHESTRA
FEATURING PAUL GONSALVES
1. C JAM BLUES (Duke Ellington) 5'10 - 2. TAKE THE "A" TRAIN (Billy Strayhorn) 5'40 - 3. HAPPY-GO-LUCKY LOCAL (Ellington-Strayhorn) 5'00 - 4. JAM WITH SAM (Ellington) 3'14
Fantasy
COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO
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STÉRÉO
SACEM
CARRERE
DISTRIBUTION
5. CARAVAN (Ellington-Tizol-Mills) 6'08 - 6. JUST A-SITTIN' AND A-ROCKIN' (Ellington-Strayhorn-Gaines) 4'46 - 7. PARIS BLUES (Duke Ellington) 3'26 - 8. READY, GO (Ellington-Strayhorn) 5'02
℗ FANTASY - 1984


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1. C Jam Blues
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4. Jam with Sam
5. Caravan
6. Just a-Sittin' and a-Rockin'
7. Paris Blues
8. Ready, Go

Duke Ellington – piano
Roy Burrowes, Cat Anderson, Bill Berry. Ray Nance – trumpets
Lawrence Brown, Leon Cox, Chuck Connors – trombones
Russell Procope, Johnny Hodges – alto saxophones
Jimmy Hamilton – clarinet, tenor saxophone
Paul Gonsalves – tenor saxophone
Harry Carney – baritone saxophone
Aaron Bell – bass
Sam Woodyard – drums

Recorded at A&R Studio, New York (May 1, 1962).

Mastering, 1984, by George Horn (Fantasy Studios, Berkeley)

Art direction – Phil Carroll
Photography – Baron Wolman

Tenth and Parker
Berkeley, Ca. 94710

It was May Day, 1962, and it was going to be Paul Gonsalves Day, too.

While pausing for refreshment on the way from his Long Island home, Paul had toasted the world's marching workers through a grimy saloon window. Now he was on time and happy as he entered the studio on 48th Street in New York shortly before 2 p.m. He greeted the maestro at the piano, took out his horn and, sitting down like a cat who had just had the cream, waited to see which of his colleagues would be late. So often among the guilty himself, this was a moment to be savored.

Observing that his saxophonist was in good shape, physically and mentally, Duke Ellington resolved to set in motion a plan he'd long had in his mind. Truth to tell, he hadn't found time to write anything new for this session that he had called a couple of days before, but now he would make an album using existing charts and featuring his great tenor star on all of them. Musicians, of course, knew all about Paul's greatness, but some sections of Ellington's public still needed to be shown and convinced. This would be an opportunity.

Characteristically, Ellington did not explain his intention at first to the protagonist, but just said he wanted him to play right through "C Jam Blues," breaks and all, despite the fact that this was a number which usually featured several soloists. With drummer Sam Woodyard really taking care of business at a splendid, relaxed tempo, Paul states the theme before the band surges in behind him, and then he takes off in choruses of imaginative improvisation, where esoteric changes and unexpected notes abound.

"Takes the 'A' Train" is even more of a tour de force. It opens at a comfortable medium tempo, segues into a slow, lyrical mood à la Coleman Hawkins, and then doubles up as Paul goes for broke, ending with one of his remarkable unaccompanied codas. When he had finished, he turned to Ray Nance, whose showcase it usually was, and gave his his familiar, self-deprecating Stan Laurel grin.

"Happy-Go-Lucky Local" has a somewhat portentous beginning before the beat-up old train gets under way, and Paul snakes his way in over some expert cradling from bassist Aaron Bell and his good friend, Sam Woodyard. As the band keeps answering him, one realizes that Elling-

ton really wrote the railroad as well as the train. When the local passes Blues Town, Paul salutes it with some special, rocking twelve-bar blues. As he goes 'way down, 'way down, getting very breathy, he suggests a train that "damn near breaks down," but the local struggles gamely on and eventually fades away into the distance. The band provides extraordinary backgrounds – "non-sounds" only Ellington could conceive – as Paul, thinking fast on his feet, fashions this very personal picture-story of a train that normally required a variety of horns to depict its scope.

"Jam with Sam" is a number on which Ellington was in the habit of introducing several of his band's virtuosi, major and minor. Here again there was only one, the up-tempo being the kind with which Paul was always associated after his success with "Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue" at Newport. He enjoys himself once more in the coda.

"Caravan" seems at first an unlikely vehicle for the tenor saxophonist, and he begins by weaving skillfully in and out of Ellington's treatment, but in the release he finds a beautiful song to sing, not at all what most people find in the number. After this, he prepares the listener for an interlude of gutbucket swing before returning to the desert, the palms, and the camels. Embroidering around the theme very effectively, he gives emphasis to the leader's exotic pianistics before tying up the performance with unaccompanied "arabesques" of mysterious but undoubtedly profound significance.

"Just a-Sittin' and a-Rockin'" was first recorded in 1941 and featured Ben Webster in two choruses. The story has often been told how Paul got the job with Ellington because he could play Webster's solos note for note. By no means a slavish imitator, however, he was soon showing the world that he was himself an innovative and imaginative musician, as he does here in an interpretation that departs radically from Webster's and those of Webster successors like Al Sears. He brings the last chorus to a close with such emphasis that one can almost "hear" the word."

"Paris Blues," theme of the 1961 movie of the same name, was originally intended to showcase melodic trombone of the kind in which Lawrence Brown and Murray McEachern excelled, but it was gradually infiltrated by Johnny Hodges and Paul under Ellington's guidance. The Gonsalves reconstruction clearly has to do with the final scene where the train pulled remorselessly out of the station, creating simultaneous waves of sadness and excitement.

"Ready, Go" is the final movement from Ellington's Toot Suite, sometimes known as The Red Carpet Suite. This is the one performance that follows the original conception fairly closely, inasmuch as it was devised to present Paul on a jumping blues at a tempo that would enable him to recapture the fire of his epic Newport ride in 1956. He was ready and, as one cannot but note, he certainly goes, right up to the big coda. Few players being better versed in foundation and changes than he (as a young man, he was an accomplished guitar player), he proves equal to all the challenges of this flagwaver and seems to overcome them effortlessly.

Ellington was well pleased with the afternoon's work and the session ended punctually at 6 o'clock. It was not often a whole album was made in four hours, and he valued its freshness and spontaneity. He always felt that something was lost when many takes were made, that a solo repeated with the same form and note values was an arrangement rather than an improvisation. At the piano and in directing the band he had, of course, made an enormous contribution throughout the whole session.

Like most jazz musicians in such circumstances, Paul Gonsalves felt that he could have done better, and this despite the admiration expressd by his colleagues "Mex, you were a bitch!" he was assured. Back in the same saloon where he had dallied briefly in the morning, his spirits rose. "Just sometimes," he said, "I think Duke knows better what I can do than I do myself."

– STANLEY DANCE

author of The World of Duke Ellington (Da Capo Press).

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