

P-12281

Recorded Live In Concert

# DUKE ELLINGTON'S GREATEST HITS

DO NOTHING TILL YOU HEAR FROM ME / SATIN DOLL / BLACK AND TAN FANTASY / PYRAMID / ECHOES OF HARLEM  
THE MOOCH / THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE / CREOLE LOVE CALL / DON'T GET AROUND MUCH ANYMORE



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DUKE ELLINGTON'S  
GREATEST HITS  
Recorded Live

P 13291  
STEREO

SIDE 1  
MC 30308

1. DON'T GET AROUND MUCH ANYMORE
2. DO NOTHING TILL YOU HEAR FROM ME  
Vocal by Bill Grayson
3. BLACK AND TAN FANTASY
4. CREOLE LOVE CALL
5. LITTE WOODEN

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STEREO

SIDE 2  
MC 30309

1. THINGS AREN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE
2. STEAMBOAT
3. EDWARDS BY HEART
4. SATIN BALL

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# DUKE ELLINGTON'S GREATEST HITS Recorded Live In Concert

Side 1  
DON'T GET AROUND MUCH ANYMORE  
DO NOTHING 'TILL YOU HEAR FROM ME  
VOICED BY MISS GRAYSON  
BLACK AND TAN FANTASY  
CREOLE LOVE CALL  
THE MOONCH

Side 2  
THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE  
PYRAMID  
ECHOES OF HARLEM  
SATIN DOLL

The selections are ASCAP

Courtesy of Regency Records

Ellington. What hasn't he accomplished? What artistic expression remains beyond his grasp? What corner has started him? Ellington. His name alone is enough to boggle the mind. That's the way it is with genius recognized in its own time. Along with the genius are the legends (Ellington stories abound in the music world) and, in the last few years, gaffs, which is no mean achievement while one is still among the living. Ellington undoubtedly delights in his unique position as America's reigning legendary genius god-in-reddress. Still, he has to make a living, for even a genius must eat. And he makes his livelihood by composing (and collecting royalties) and leading the of one-night stands (touching every rock and cranny on earth from Florida to Dakar). It probably makes little difference that one is a genius legend god when one is trying to sleep in an auto while speeding across the night-skewed expanse of North Dakota in mid-winter.

Shed by the way, plays an important part in the Ellington legend. One apocryphal story has it that after sleeping upright in

a car for so many years, he can sleep in no other position, even if encased in the Ritz. It is like, however, that Ellington often stays awake for days when the composer's mind is hot upon him, though he may do so occasionally. (I remember calling him once, and he answered the phone in a sleep-tinged voice. I apologized for waking him, but he said he had merely been contemplating a CD chord, wondering where to resolve it. I suggested resolving it to C, but he said he thought D flat would be happier.)

Despite the halo that surrounds him, Ellington is a realistic and, in his way, down-to-earth man. For example, a few years ago, it leaked out that he had been nominated for but denied the Pulitzer Prize for music. Several Pulitzer Prize music committee members resigned in the general stink that arose. (He later won the award.) During the furor, I asked him how he felt about the snub. After the usual we live everybody muddy and I don't bother a bit and offering his then favorite reaction that he was too young for such things, he dropped his mask, and disappointment clouded his voice. He said something like:

"Sure, I'd like to have it, but I don't give a goddam for all the awards in the world. The only thing that's important to me is that I can hear my music played as soon as I write it. There are composers all over the country who never get to hear their music played so long as I can do what I've been doing all these years."

And what he's been doing is handsomely displayed on this record-leading performances of Ellington music played by the Ellington orchestra for people living (not legendary) music: he living, breathing, sweating people, all colors, all sizes, all ages.

The music in this album was recorded during a European concert tour, probably in 1963. (It was first issued in 1967 on Regency.) During part of the tour, the band boarded two of the most articulate purveyors of plunger muted trumpet: the master, Cootie Williams, and his pupil, Ray Nance (who was Williams' replacement when he left in 1949). In addition to these veterans, the band included such other stalwarts as saxophonists Johnny Hodges, Harry Carney and Paul Gonsky, trumpeter Lawrence Brown, clarinetists Jimmy Hamilton and Russell Procope, bassist Fudge Wells, drummer Sam Woodyard and singer Miss Fantasy.

The compositions range in age from Black and Tan Fantasy (written in the late '20s) to Satin Doll (late '50s). But it's not the age of the material that is important—it's the content of the

music and the life imparted to it by the orchestra and, especially, the soloists.

Among the soloists are Johnny Hodges, the original Mr. Cool, strutting gloriously through Things Ain't What They Used to Be; Lawrence Brown, striding across Pyramid and Lawrence Brown, bawling the ballads out of Do Nothing 'Till You Hear From Me; Ray Nance, pouring his heart on Black and Tan; Harry Carney, leaping large buildings with a single bound in Pyramid; Miss Grayson, giving voice to Do Nothing; and blues-drenched Russell Procope, filling the traditional curtain role in Creole Love Call before adding his own low-register comments (with asides from Jimmy Hamilton).

Then there is Cootie Williams, recently returned to the fold at the time of this recording. His moving solo on The Moonch is starkly beautiful—there is no waste, no phantasies, only deep, melancholy howling on rage, ancient in a dark, almost timeless tone. The Williams four-de-force (if that be the proper term) is Echoes of Harlem, written for him in 1936 by Ellington, and for ever associated with his name. The original recording was a masterpiece; it had a buoyancy and a vigor that only youth brings to music. This album's Echoes, made almost thirty years later, is also a masterpiece, one that is much more touching than the original. As he comes to the microphone, Williams says in some body: "... old man, me, can't play those fast numbers now. Out of air." Then he plays this unique of his youth, very slowly, as if it would be the last time he would play it on this earth. The misery and weight of fact knows how many one-nighters, the sad news and anger that must be deep within him, comes riding to the surface of this utterly and staggeringly beautiful performance.

Most of all, though, there is Ellington.

As the band's piano player, he gives the music unexpected twists and turns, drops a chord in here, inserting a jagged run there, setting the mood with a brush or a melancholy introduction. As the music's composer and arranger, he shapes the melodic contours, weaves the harmonic fabric, condenses instrumental voices in a way no other person can to create the sound that is the essence of Ellington. As the leader, he pulls everything together—music, players, audience—into what can be described as the Ellington Experience.

Now, could anybody ask more of one man, even if he is a genius, a legend and a god?

—Don DeMichael