



PREMIER COLLECTION

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DELLA REESE WITH DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS ORCHESTRA



On The Radio: The 1962 'Live' Guard Sessions



1. **Introduction**
(Non-musical work)
2. **Comes Once In A Lifetime**
(Jule Styne, Betty Comden, Adolph Green)
3. **Sophisticated Lady**
(Duke Ellington, Irving Mills, Mitchell Parish)
4. **Chopin's Etude in E**
(Frederic Chopin)
5. **Take The A Train**
(Billy Strayhorn)
6. **Bye Bye Blackbird**
(Ray Henderson, Mort Dixon)
7. **Satin Doll**
(Duke Ellington, Billy Strayhorn, Johnny Mercer)
8. **Don't You Know I Care (Or Don't You Care I Know)**
(Duke Ellington, Mack David)
9. **Things Ain't What They Used To Be**
(Mercer Ellington, Ted Persons)
10. **A Foggy Day In London Town**
(George Gershwin, Ira Gershwin)

11. **Mood Indigo**
(Duke Ellington, Barney Bigard, Irving Mills)
12. **And That Reminds Me**
(Camillo Bargoni, Danpa, Al Stillman)
13. **Taffy Twist**
(Mercer Ellington)
14. **Bill Bailey Won't You Please Come Home**
(Hughie Cannon)
15. **Do Nothing Til You Hear From Me**
(Duke Ellington)
16. **You're Nobody Til Somebody Loves You**
(Larry Stock, Russ Morgan, Jimmy Cavanaugh)
17. **Jam With Sam**
(Duke Ellington)



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This unique live concert broadcast featuring Della Reese and The Duke Ellington Orchestra was recorded on February 13th 1962 in New York City as part of a radio series specifically designed to promote a National Guard recruiting effort. Other shows in the same series featured Sarah Vaughan with The Woody Herman Band and other great jazz combinations.

The series was hosted by Martin Block, generally acknowledged as being the first radio disc jockey to become a star. Born in Los Angeles he began his radio career at a station in Tijuana, Mexico. Returning to Los Angeles he worked at station KFWB where an on air personality, Al Jarvis, hosted a show called 'Make Believe Ballroom'. In 1934 Block was hired by WNEW in New York and in 1935 appropriated Jarvis' show. His version of "**Make Believe Ballroom**", which featured the illusion that the discs he played were all live performances in his 'ballroom', was an instant hit. Famed newspaper columnist Walter Winchell is credited with coining the phrase, 'Disc Jockey' in tribute to Block. The show was syndicated from 1940 and Block eventually left the show in 1954 to present "**The Martin Block Show**" for ABC Radio. Martin Block died in 1967.

Della Reese is perhaps better known today as the star of the hit TV series, "**Touched By An Angel**", which ran for nine seasons between 1994 and 2003. However, long before that success, she was renowned as a superlative interpreter of jazz, blues and R&B.



Della Reese was born Deloreese Patricia Early on July 6th 1931 in Detroit, Michigan and began singing in her local church from an early age. By 1945 her talent was brought to the attention of leading gospel singer Mahalia Jackson who invited her to join her travelling choir. She toured with Jackson for four years before entering University to study psychology. While at Detroit's Wayne State University she joined the gospel group The Meditation Singers in 1947 alongside her sister Marie, founder Earnestine Rundless and Lillian Mitchell.

During the early fifties the group was the City's premier female gospel group recording initially for local entrepreneur, Joe Von Battle, and eventually for the California based Specialty Records. However shortly after their first session Della departed for a pop career. Her replacement was Rundless's daughter Laura who eventually enjoyed secular success of her own as soul singer Laura Lee.

In late 1953 Della signed on with The Erskine Hawkins Orchestra and moved to New York and soon had a recording contract with Jubilee Records. Her first major hit came in 1957 with "**And That Reminds Me**" which peaked at No.12 on Billboard's pop chart. The song was a lyrical version of an Italian instrumental called "**Autumn Concerto**". In 1959 she signed to the major RCA label and enjoyed the biggest hit of her career with "**Don't You Know**", an adaptation of "**Musetta's Waltz**" from the Puccini opera "**La Boheme**", which went to No.2 on the pop chart and topped the R&B listings. In 1962 she released the album, "**The Classical Della**", which featured various classical themes with added pop lyrics. Her concert performance here of "**Chopin's Etude in E**" was featured on that



album. This success led not only to plentiful appearances on TV variety shows, but successful nightclub tours of the country and eventually nine years of performances in Las Vegas, as well as recording contracts with a variety of labels over the next few decades.

By 1969 she became the first black woman to host her own variety show, the syndicated "**Della**", which ran until 1970. Despite its swift cancellation she continued to concentrate on TV work putting in guest appearances on many early 70s shows like "**The Mod Squad**", "**Sanford and Son**", and "**Chico and the Man**". Throughout the 80s she kept up her singing career and appeared on more television shows like "**Designing Women**", "**L.A. Law**", and "**Pickel Fences**", as well as the Eddie Murphy movies, "**Harlem Nights**" and "**The Distinguished Gentleman**". All of this led to her starring role in "**Touched By An Angel**". Since the series ended she has concentrated on her religious activities and further TV and movie roles.

Duke Ellington really needs no introduction, being considered by many as one of the greatest American composers of the 20th Century. Over their 50-plus years of performing and recording his orchestra launched the careers of many of jazz's



greatest stars. The line-up for this 1962 performance still featured such respected alumni as Ray Nance, Johnny Hodges and Paul Gonsalves.

This is the only known recording of Della with The Ellington Orchestra, but there may have been others, because the Duke's son Mercer Ellington, who for so long was submerged by his father's shadow, was Della's musical director from 1960 until 1962.

Della and The Ellington Orchestra's performances on this set are effectively a selection of their greatest hits.

"Comes Once In A Lifetime" was one of the staples of Della's live shows and had been featured on her RCA album "**On Stage**".

"Sophisticated Lady" was actually a musical sketch of three of Ellington's grade school teachers who, he once said, "**taught all winter and toured Europe all summer; to me that spelled sophistication**". Originally written by Ellington as an instrumental piece in 1932, it had lyrics added later by Mitchell Parish. Ellington approved of his lyrics calling them "**wonderful, but not entirely fitted to my original conception**". This performance is purely instrumental.

"Chopin's Etude In E" was a title from Della's then current RCA LP, "**The Classical Della**", which was a collection of songs based upon classical pieces.

Perhaps the most famous of Ellington's recordings, "**Take The A Train**", was a Billboard Top 20 hit in two separate years for the Duke. It was written by Ellington's protégé Billy Strayhorn, and first charted in the Summer of 1941

when it reached No.11, and then, following its inclusion in the film "**Reveille With Beverly**", it climbed the charts again to No.19 two years later. Lee Gaines of the Delta Rhythm Boys fitted lyrics to the riffs and horn solos and the group recorded a vocalese arrangement of the song which Ellington himself recorded with his new singer Betty Roche. This version returns to its instrumental roots.

"**Bye, Bye Blackbird**" is another of the numbers that Della regularly performed at live shows during this period.

"**Satin Doll**" was written by Ellington along with Billy Strayhorn and Johnny Mercer. As with many of his instrumental hits lyrics were added later, in this case giving the song a second lease of life in 1953 when Johnny Mercer added the famous words. This performance is instrumental.

"**Don't You Know I Care (Or Don't You Care I Know)**" is nothing to do with Della's big pop hit from 1959 called "**Don't You Know**". This is a version of the Ellington hit, written by lyricist Mack David to Duke's music, and is a tender ballad which was well presented by blind Mississippi-born vocalist Al Hibbler, who had joined Ellington from Jay McShann's Orchestra. It became a deserved hit on the Harlem Hit Parade, reaching No.10 in January 1945.

"**Things Ain't What They Used To Be**" is an Ellington standard which was composed by his son Mercer, who was at the time of this recording still working as Della's musical director.

The pop standard "**A Foggy Day In London Town**" was written by George & Ira Gershwin and made famous by Fred Astaire when he performed it in

the 1937 movie, "**A Damsel In Distress**". The song was revived by Sinatra in 1953 for his "**Songs For Young Lovers**" album, and has subsequently been recorded countless times, most recently by Michael Buble.

"**Mood Indigo**" is an Ellington standard which was co-written with clarinetist Barney Bigard, who had originally heard the tune via his music teacher in New Orleans who called it "**Mexican Blues**". Ellington first recorded it in 1930 and it has been recorded countless times since. Like so many of the Duke's songs it later had lyrics added.

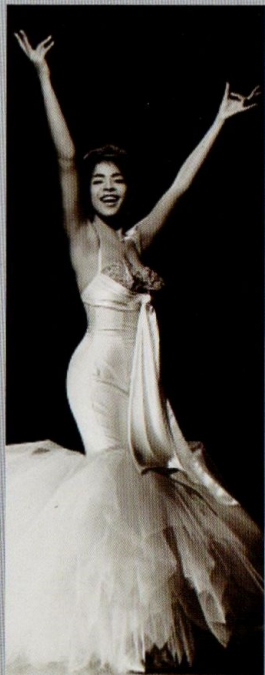
"**And That Reminds Me**" was Della's first major pop hit and obviously still an important part of her performing repertoire. The Ellington arrangement sticks as close as it can to the original 1957 recording.

"**Taffy Twist**" is a rare collaboration between the Duke and Mercer and probably celebrates the dance that had taken the world by storm and was still very popular.

"**Bill Bailey Won't You Please Come Home**" Della had been performing this old traditional song for some time but this version had been a minor hit for her in 1961 on RCA entering the Billboard chart at No. 98 for one week.

"**Do Nothin' 'Til You Hear From me**" was originally recorded in 1940 and issued under the title Concerto for Cootie after trumpeter Cootie Williams. This re-titled version appeared in 1944 after Bob Russell added the now classic lyrics. Although this is an instrumental version, by this time Duke never reverted to the original title.

"**You're Nobody 'Til Somebody Loves You**" was first recorded in 1944 by



co-composer Russ Morgan, but is best known via The Mills Brothers and Dean Martin versions. Della did it for her RCA long player, "**Swing Slow**".

"**Jam With Sam**" was first recorded by Ellington in 1959 for an album entitled "**Festival Session**" and became a regular set closer for some years.

Della Reese with Duke Ellington & His Orchestra: Ray Nance, **c**; Cat Anderson, Shorty Baker, Bill Berry, Ed Mullens, **t**; Lawrence Brown, Lyle Cox, **tb**; Chuck Connors **btb**; Jimmy Hamilton, **cl**, **ts**; Johnny Hodges, **as**; Russell Procope, **as**, **cl**; Paul Gonsalves, **ts**; Harry Carney, **bs**; Duke Ellington, **p**; Aaron Bell, **b**; Sam Woodyard, **d**; accompanied by a studio orchestra lead by Martin Block.

February 13, 1962. New York.



AMA CD024



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