

# THE DUKE

Edward Kennedy  
**Ellington**

AND HIS ORCHESTRA



**In A Mellow Tone**

1946-1947



Edward Kennedy Ellington was born on the 29th April, 1889 in Washington. As Duke Ellington he was later to make music history, first and foremost as a band-leader.

His family were highly musical. Both his mother and father played the piano and Duke began to play piano around the age of 8 or 9, on the instructions of his mother. His real enthusiasm for music was first aroused at the age of 14 however, when he heard the pianist Harvey Brooks in Philadelphia. Brooks was scarcely older than Duke but had already been on tour with the female blues singer Mamie Smith. Duke started writing his own compositions a short time later: "Soda Fountain Rag" and "What You Gonna Do When The Bed Breaks Down". He made his first public performances, at parties and events at his high-school, with these songs in his repertoire.

Duke was also interested in painting, alongside his interest in music. He was so talented that he won 1st prize in a poster painting competition: first prize was a scholarship at the Pratts Institute in New York, a respected art college with the emphasis on commercial graphics. Ellington was not able to take up on this offer however as he failed his final exams at high-school. He also fell in love with a girl out of his class, Edna Thompson. The couple married in 1918 and their son Mercer, who was later to work in his father's big-band as arranger, trumpeter and road manager, was born on the 11th May, 1919.

At this point in time Duke had already gathered around him the musicians, with whom he was to go to New York at the beginning of the Twenties and start his professional career: the saxophone player Otto "Toby" Hardwick, the trumpeter Arthur "Artie" Whetsol, the drummer Sonny Greer and the banjo player Elmar Snowden. They celebrated their first successes in New York, at the beginning of the Twenties, as "The Washingtonians".

Ellington's rapid rise to fame began with an engagement at the New York club "Hollywood Inn", which was re-named the "Kentucky Club" following a fire. The first important changes of line-up took place in the band during this engagement and the whole of the New York music scene was soon talking about the group's "Jungle Style". Ellington took over as the musician's musical director during this period. Whilst he had previously concentrated on his piano playing and writing songs he was officially named in 1924 as the official band-leader of the formation at the Kentucky Club.

The Ellington band started an engagement in 1927 at the New York Cotton Club, one of the hottest spots of the day. Up until the beginning of the Thirties Ellington's orchestra was built up through several changes of line-up and new arrivals. Ellington and his musicians

became one of the most famous bands in America, through their successes in recording studios, participation in diverse films but above all through the regular evening national live broadcasting by C.B.S. of their performances at the Cotton Club. They also achieved international fame through their first European tour in 1933.

Ellington suffered under deep depressions in the middle of the Thirties. Following changes of personnel within the band, the death of his friend and fellow musician of many years Artie Whetsol and most of all the death of his beloved mother, the Duke withdrew more and more into himself. In spite of this his career was by no means over. The start of the Swing era and the sudden rise to fame of white band-leaders such as Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller and the Dorsey brothers Tommy and Jimmy was also not able to stop the Duke. He was once again acclaimed world-wide as a living jazz legend at the beginning of the Forties and enjoyed a second commercial and artistic peak with his big-band.

As of the middle of the Forties Duke Ellington concentrated on the composition of longer pieces, which in the Sixties were normally substantially longer than 10 minutes. His "Sacred Concerts" were also created during this period and he performed these works with his big-band in churches. Just how much his musicians contributed to these works is a matter of dispute. First and foremost Billy Strayhorn, who joined the band at the end of the Thirties and remained with Ellington for some 40 years up until his death, had a major influence on Duke's work.

Duke Ellington died on the 24th May, 1974 of cancer. He is regarded to this very day as being one of the most important jazz greats of America. He remains unforgotten first and foremost on account of his contribution to jazz as a band-leader, alongside his piano playing and his work as a composer. Musicians such as Johnny Hodges, Harry Carney, Ben Webster, Rex Stewart and Cootie Williams, amongst numerous others, developed into star soloists under his musical direction and have also gone down in the history of music as jazz legends.

Edward Kennedy Ellington wurde am 29. April 1889 in Washington geboren. Als Duke Ellington sollte er später vor allem als Band-Leader Musikgeschichte schreiben.

Seine Familie war sehr musikalisch. Sowohl sein Vater als auch seine Mutter spielten Piano und im Alter von sieben oder acht Jahren begann Duke auf Anweisung seiner Mutter ebenfalls mit dem Pianospiele. Zu dieser Zeit beschäftigte er sich jedoch in seiner Freizeit lieber mit Baseball. Seine Begeisterung für Musik wurde erst im Alter von 14 Jahren geweckt, als er in Philadelphia einen Pianisten namens Harvey Brooks hörte, der kaum älter als Duke und bereits mit der Bluessängerin Mamie Smith auf Tournee gewesen war. Kurz darauf begann Duke seine ersten Kompositionen zu schreiben: „Soda Fountain Rag“ und „What You Gonna Do When The Bed Breaks Down“. Mit diesen Songs im Repertoire hatte er seine ersten öffentlichen Auftritte auf kleinen Parties und Veranstaltungen seiner High-School.

Neben der Musik interessierte Duke sich vor allem für die Malerei. Er war so talentiert, daß er bei einem Plakatwettbewerb den ersten Preis gewann: ein Stipendium des Pratt's Institute in New York, einer angesehenen Kunsthochschule mit Schwerpunkt auf Werbegrafik. Ellington konnte diese Chance jedoch nie wahrnehmen, da er durch die Abschlußprüfung seiner High-School fiel. Außerdem verliebte er sich in seine Klassenkameradin Edna Thompson. 1918 heirateten die beiden und am 11. Mai 1919 kam ihr gemeinsamer Sohn Mercer zur Welt, der später als Arrangeur, Trompeter und Road-Manager in der Big-Band seines Vaters arbeitete.

Zu dieser Zeit hatten sich um Ellington bereits jene Musiker gesammelt, mit denen er Anfang der 20er Jahre nach New York ging und eine professionelle Karriere als Musiker startete. Der Saxophonist Otto „Toby“ Hardwick, der Trompeter Arthur „Artie“ Whetsol, der Schlagzeuger Sonny Greer und der Banjospieler Elma Snowdens. Als „The Washingtonians“ feierten sie Anfang der 20er Jahre erste Erfolge in New York.

Der steile Karriereaufstieg Ellingtons begann mit einem Engagement in dem New Yorker Club „Hollywood Inn“, nach einem Brand umbenannt in „Kentucky Club“. Während dieses Engagements kam es zu ersten bedeutenden Personalwechseln innerhalb der Band und bald darauf sprach die ganze New Yorker Musikszene über den „Dschungel-Style“ der Gruppe. In dieser Zeit übernahm Ellington die Führung der Musiker. Während er sich zuvor vor allem auf das Pianospiele konzentrierte und verstärkt Kompositionen schrieb, wurde er 1924 zum offiziellen Band-Leader der Formation im „Kentucky Club“ erklärt.

1927 bekam die Ellington-Band ein Engagement im New Yorker „Cotton Club“, einem der angesagtesten Hot Spots jener Zeit. Bis Anfang der 30er Jahre wurde das Orchester Ellingtons dort durch mehrere Personalwechsel und Neuzugänge ausgebaut. Erfolge im Aufnahmestudio, Beteiligungen an diversen Filmen und vor allem die allabendlichen überregionalen Radioubertragungen von CBS aus dem „Cotton Club“ machten Ellington und

seine Musiker zu einer der berühmtesten Bands in Amerika. Nach ihrer ersten Europatournee 1933 kamen sie zudem zu internationalem Ruhm.

Mitte der 30er Jahre fiel Ellington in schwere Depressionen. Nach personellen Wechseln innerhalb der Band, dem Tod seines langjährigen Freundes und Musikkollegen Artie Whetsol und vor allem dem Tod seiner geliebten Mutter zog sich Duke mehr und mehr in sich zurück. Trotzdem war seine Karriere noch lange nicht zu Ende. Auch der Beginn der Swing-Ära mit dem plötzlichen Aufstieg weißer Band-Leader wie Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller und den Dorsey Brüdern Tommy und Jimmy konnte den Duke nicht stoppen. Anfang der 40er Jahre wurde er erneut auf der ganzen Welt als Jazzlegende gefeiert und erlebte mit seiner Big Band einen zweiten kommerziellen und künstlerischen Höhepunkt.

Mitte der 40er Jahre begann Duke Ellington sich verstärkt der Komposition längerer Stücke zu widmen. Vor allem in den 60er Jahren waren diese Werke in der Regel weitaus länger als 10 Minuten. In dieser Zeit entstanden auch seine heiligen Konzerte, die er mit seiner Big Band in Kirchen aufführte. Welchen Anteil seine Musiker an diesen Kompositionen hatten, ist umstritten. Vor allem Billy Strayhorn, der Ende der 30er Jahre in die Band kam und fast 40 Jahre lang bis zu seinem Tod an Ellingtons Seite blieb, hatte großen Einfluß auf Dukes Arbeit.

Am 24. Mai 1974 starb Duke Ellington an den Folgen seiner Krebserkrankung. Bis heute gilt er als einer der wichtigsten Jazz-Größen Amerikas. Neben seinem Pianospiele und seiner Arbeit als Komponist bleibt er vor allem aufgrund seiner Leistungen als Band-Leader unvergessen. Unter zahlreichen anderen entwickelten sich unter seiner Führung Musiker wie Johnny Hodges, Harry Carney, Ben Webster, Rex Stewart und Cootie Williams zu Starsolisten und gingen später als Jazz-Legenden in die Musikgeschichte ein.

**Caravan**

**In A Mellow Tone**

**Solid Old Man**

**Spiritual (Come Sunday) /**

**Work Song**

**The Blues**

**Rugged Romeo**

**Sono**

**Air-Conditioned Jungle**

**Pitter Panther Patter**

New York City, January 4, 1946

Duke Ellington leader (p)(arr.), Taft

Jordan, Cat Anderson, Francis

Williams, Shelton Hemphill (tp),

Lawrence Brown, Claude Jones,

Wilbur De Paris (tb), Johnny Hod-

ges, Harry Carney, Otto Hardwick,

Al Sears, Jimmy Hamilton (reeds),

Al Lucas (g), Oscar Pettiford (b),

Sonny Greer (d), Joya Sherrill, Kay

Davis, Al Hibbler (vcl.), Billy

Strayhorn (arr.).

**The New Look (Snibor)**

**Blue Serge**

**Triple Play**

**Harlem Airshaft**

**Johnny Hodges Medley:**

**Wanderlust / Junior Hop**

**Jeep's Blues / Squatty Roo**

**The Mood To Be Wooed**

**Mella Brava**

**Kickapoo Joy Juice**

**On A Turquoise Cloud**

**Bakiff**

**Cotton Tail**

New York City, December 27, 1947

Duke Ellington (leader)(p),(arr.),

Harold Baker, Al Killian, Francis

Williams, Shelton Hemphill (tp), Ray

Nance (tp)(vln), Lawrence Brown,

Claude Jones (tb), Tyree Glenn

(tb)(vib.), Johnny Hodges, Harry

Carney, Russell Procope, Al Sears,

Jimmy Hamilton (reeds), Fred Guy

(g), Oscar Pettiford, Junior Raglin

(b), Sonny Greer (d), Kay Davis, Al

Hibbler (vcl.), Billy Strayhorn (arr.).

## In A Mellow Tone

### CD 1

1	Caravan (Ellington-Tizol-Mills) . . . . .	3:59
2	In A Mellow Tone (Ellington-Gabler) . . . . .	3:06
3	Solid Old Man (Ellington) . . . . .	3:42
4	Spiritual (Come Sunday) / Work Song (Ellington) . . . . .	12:57
5	The Blues (Ellington) . . . . .	5:55
6	Rugged Romeo (Ellington) . . . . .	4:12
7	Sono (Ellington) . . . . .	5:29
8	Air-Conditioned Jungle (Hamilton-Ellington) . . . . .	6:21
9	Pitter Panther Patter (Ellington) . . . . .	2:50

Total: 48:33

### CD 1

1	The New Look (Snibor) (Strayhorn) . . . . .	3:45
2	Blue Serge (Mercer-Ellington) . . . . .	3:55
3	Triple Play (Ellington) . . . . .	6:13
4	Harlem Airshaft (Ellington) . . . . .	3:44
5	Johnny Hodges Medley: Wanderlust (Ellington-Hodges) Junior Hop (Ellington) Jeep's Blues (Ellington-Hodges) Squatty Roo (Hodges) The Mood To Be Wooed (Ellington-Hodges) . . . . .	6:47
6	Mella Brava (Ellington) . . . . .	4:06
7	Kickapoo Joy Juice (Ellington) . . . . .	3:57
8	On A Turquoise Cloud (Ellington-Brown) . . . . .	4:11
9	Bakiff (Tizol-Gallet-Schwartz) . . . . .	6:11
10	Cotton Tail (Ellington) . . . . .	3:25

Total: 46:15

# Duke Ellington

AND HIS ORCHESTRA

In A Mellow  
Tone

CD 1

20.41591-302



STEREO

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- 6 Pitter Panther Patter 2:50

# Duke Ellington

AND HIS ORCHESTRA

In A Mellow  
Tone

CD 2

20.41592-302



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  - 1 Mella Brava 4:06
- 10 Kickapoo Joy Juice 3:57
- 11 On A Turquoise Cloud 4:11
  - 1 Bakiff 6:11
- 12 Cotton Tail 3:25

2 GD

"THE DUKE" Edward Kennedy ELLINGTON



20.4159-302

"THE DUKE" EDWARD KENNEDY ELLINGTON · In A Mellow Tone

**"THE DUKE" Edward Kennedy ELLINGTON****In A Mellow Tone****CD 1**

- 1 Caravan (Ellington-Tizol-Mills)..... 3:59  
 2 In A Mellow Tone (Ellington-Gabler) ..... 3:06  
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 4 Spiritual (Come Sunday) / Work Song  
 (Ellington)..... 12:57  
 5 The Blues (Ellington) ..... 5:55  
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 7 Sono (Ellington)..... 5:29  
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Total Time 48:33

**CD 2**

- 1 The New Look (Snibor) (Strayhorn)..... 3:45  
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 3 Triple Play (Ellington)..... 6:13  
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