



Duke Ellington
Live in 1947 !
The Hollywood Bowl

With apologies to George Gershwin, Duke Ellington must be considered the top American composer of the 20th Century. Perhaps if Gershwin had not died early in his career, there would have been a debate on both quality and quantity of the respective bodies of work by these two giants, but Ellington's abilities and endurance insure his icon status at the top of the list.

From the start of his recording career in 1927, Ellington set the standard for quality of recorded music. No amount of racism could keep Ellington from his mission - the best music for the masses. His high energy performances on network radio and legendary venues such as the Cotton Club only served to compliment his marvelous recording career.

It is that live feeling that Unique originally tried to capture with this 1947 Hollywood Bowl recording. This was an attempt to get the live feel of the "uptown" sophisticated sounds that were the Ellington trademark. It is a concert in the true sense of the word, with something for every type of music lover to enjoy.

He had some pretty good help at this Hollywood event, too. Oscar Pettiford was there on bass. Ray Nance added vocals, trumpet and violin. Trumpets, trombones, and reed were capably handled by a bevy of stars. It was the best of the best at the mecca of Hollywood entertainment, the legendary Hollywood Bowl.

It must have been a bittersweet victory for Ellington in this post war setting. Most of the Hollywood venues were still denied to a black artist, even one of the stature of the Duke. And while the Club Alabam was a jumpin' joint in the 40's it wasn't Mogambo's or Ciro's on the Coconut Grove. How odd as we look back that Ellington probably stayed at a black only hotel for this concert for his white fans. Of course, all black performers (and other workers) at a club in Harlem playing to all white audience had to be equally strange.

In any event, the music is the message and this message is quintessential Ellington. Standard Ellington fare such as Blutoptia and Crescendo in Blue are flavored with a medley of W.C. Handy tunes. All in all it's a perfect compliment to the studio renditions.

Sit back and savor this moment in time as Duke Ellington comes alive as you would have heard him if you would have been there on that August night in 1947.

Trumpet and Violin

Ray Nance

Trumpets

Shorty Baker
Shelton Hemphill
Dud Bascomb
Francis Williams

Trombones

Lawrence Brown
Tyree Glenn
Claude Jones

Reeds

Russel Procope
Johnny Hodges
Al Sears
Jimmy Hamilton
Harry Carney

Piano

Duke Ellington

Guitar

Fred Guy

Bass

Oscar Pettiford

Drums

Sonny Greer

Vocals

Kay Davis
Ray Nance

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Overture To A Jam Session
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Jumpin' Punks
Ring Dem Bells
Handy Medley
 Beale Street Blues
 Memphis Blues
 St. Louis Blues
The Golden Feather
Air Conditioned Jungle
Golden Cress
Diminuendo in Blues
Translucency
Crescendo in Blue



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