

# DUKE ELLINGTON

IN GRÖNA LUND

1963



STORYVILLE 2cds

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# Vi Vill Stanna I Sverige!

"We Want to Stay in Sweden!" read the "distress cry from Duke Ellington's musicians" in jazz magazine *Estrad*. It was June of 1963, and *Midnattssolen*, a special time of year savored by Swedes when the sun barely dips below the horizon and there's light in the sky all night. Duke Ellington and his Orchestra were on a four-week tour of the country's *Folkparkerna* – delightful summer folk parks with outdoor bandstands. For a band that had been on the road for 32 years, Sweden offered a relaxed pace, artistic respect, and none of the Jim Crow conditions that persisted back home. Little wonder they didn't want to leave.

"This will be Duke's greatest success in this country since his legendary tour of 1939," predicted Leif Anderson in *Orkester Journalen*, recalling Ellington's first visit. Ellington later counted the all-day celebration day of his fortieth birthday on April 29 in Stockholm as a top-ten career highlight. "I was awakened by a 16-piece band from the local radio station which marched into my hotel serenading me with *Happy Birthday*. All day long, at the hotel and at the Concert House [Stockholm's prestigious *Konserthuset*], huge bouquets of flowers kept arriving and hundreds of people flocked to the dressing room." At that evening's concert, future Ellingtonian fifteen-year-old Alice Babs was in the choir of school

girls that sang on stage. Ellington responded in kind with his *Serenade to Sweden*, premiered in a national broadcast over *Sveriges Radio*. (The broadcast is included in *Duke Ellington at the Cotton Club*, Storyville 1038415).

Ellington would return to Sweden about thirteen times in the Post-War Era. 1963 proved to be "a Swedish Year," with the addition of Swedish trumpeter Roffe "Rolf" Ericson to the band in April, who joined in time for the tour of the folk parks, the year's second tour of Sweden.

The 40-year-old Ericson was the band's first foreign-born full-time member and one of its youngest. Most were in the late forties or fifties. The reed section - Johnny Hodges, Jimmy Hamilton, Paul Gonsalves, Russell Procope, and Harry Carney - had been together as a group almost eight years consecutively. The brass had been bolstered by the return of Charles "Cootie" Williams and Lawrence Brown. Ellington led a veteran orchestra that could read his every gesture. They had been almost everywhere and seen everything.

Ericson learned that he was going to have to find his own way. The band's "book" consisted of two file folders of "bits and pieces...small pieces of paper without numbers." Ericson recalled a time when he looked to his

section-mates for help. "I asked Cootie Williams but he turned away from me and just grunted. So I asked Ray Nance what I was supposed to play for the last tone. He said, 'anything, you will hear what it is supposed to be.' Then I asked Cat Anderson who gave me a big smile and said, 'B-flat.' Then Cootie Williams said, 'Don't listen to that asshole. It should be E-sharp.'" The evidence here is that Ericson figured it out by the time the band opened at Gröna Lund amusement park on June 3. Ericson would stay with the band for twelve months, and later joined them on three separate occasions for European tours.

*Duke Ellington at Gröna Lund* gives us a peek into another window: bassist Ernie Shepherd's short eighteen-month tenure with the band. "Ernie Shepherd" was the last name on a list Patricia Willard provided Duke for an emergency replacement when Aaron Bell gave short notice in November of 1962. "[T]he minute he played the first number I knew I had hit the jackpot," recalled Ellington. "He reminded me of [Jimmie] Blanton with an added bop flair." Shepherd suffered a heart attack in March of 1964, and passed away a year and a half later at the age of 49. The drive of the rhythm section of Shepherd, drummer Sam Woodyard, ("He just wants to be in there," wrote Duke), and Duke's brilliant playing, leading the band at the piano, is a highlight of this session.

Working six days in Stockholm offered the band the rare leisure of staying in the same

place. Evenings at Gröna Lund began with an outdoor half-hour concert. (The June 8 concert will be issued in an upcoming 8-CD Duke Ellington box on Storyville.) The proceedings then moved indoors to the intimate *Dance Inn*. On this CD we hear the band playing in a relaxed setting for dancing. Just like in the jitterbug days, a throng of listeners crowded around the bandstand. "The atmosphere was at a peak level both on the scene and on the dance floor," observed Leif Anderson. "One gets to really hear THE BAND in action rather than a featured soloist."

Ellington devotees in the audience were in for a treat: the chance to hear a few seldom-heard numbers. With Ellington backstage, the band begins the evening at Dance Inn with Billy Strayhorn's 1953 *Boo-Dah*. Nance and Hamilton are the soloists. *Laura*, based on the theme of the 1944 movie, was a hit song the following year when Ellington broadcasted it for one of the Treasury Shows. (*Duke Ellington – The Treasury Shows, Volume 4* on DETS 9039004). Arranging film tunes for the band was one of Billy Strayhorn's skills. Ellington's *Main Stem* is another treat for the cognoscenti. Soloists are Nance, Hodges, Nance again, Hamilton, Cooper, Gonsalves, and Brown. For today's listener, accustomed to the precision and dynamics of the original 1942 recording, consider that we are not observing a recording session, but a musical experience, the joy of hearing and feeling the sound of the great orchestra up close and in the moment.

Ellington calls out "Monterey!" as he moves to the piano for Billy Strayhorn's *Take The A Train*, and then Ray Nance reprises his original solo. After thousands of performances, *A Train* sounds as fresh as it did when introduced as the band's new radio theme in January of 1941 at the Casa Mañana.

Upon audience request, Duke gets the band to dust off *Suite Thursday* from the 1960 Monterey Jazz Festival. *Suite Thursday* is based on John Steinbeck's novel of the same name about life in a California fishing village. Strayhorn scholar Walter van de Leur wrote that Strayhorn's role in writing the suite itself "is unclear," but Strayhorn did write a synopsis of the book with character sketches for Ellington. *Suite Thursday's* four movements are connected by a recurring motif. Duke leads the way at the piano with *Mistfit Blues* featuring Brown and himself. *Schwiphti* again features Ellington, then Nance. The exquisite beauty of *Zweet Zursday* follows, with Hamilton's clarinet against a backwash of color. "Sometimes I almost cried because the band sounded so good," recalled Rolf Ericson. Duke's piano again leads into the fourth and final movement, *Lay-by*. Nance's violin brings it home with extended time from the studio recording.

Next come the spotlights for soloists. Clarinet virtuoso Jimmy Hamilton, in his twentieth year with the band, is featured on a Strayhorn arrangement of Peter De Rose and Mitchell Parish's *Deep Purple*, then Ellington's *Silk Lace*, from the recent Afro-Bossa LP.

Charles "Cootie" Williams had just returned to the band the previous fall after a 22 year hiatus. *New Concerto For Cootie* and *Tootie For Cootie* reveal the trumpeter's mature style, less reliant on power than when he first joined Ellington back in 1929. Johnny Hodges's alto is featured on a ballad and a blues: Strayhorn's heart-breaking *The Star Crossed Lovers* from 1957's Shakespearean suite, *Such Sweet Thunder*, then *Things Ain't What They Used To Be*. The band heads to a break.

Ellington stalls as the band is slow to return for the second set with six minutes of extemporaneous *Intermission Music*. "A guy can come in five minutes or ten minutes late, then blow so much in the next five minutes to make you forget everything he's done wrong in the last year. It's possible," explained Ellington of his leadership philosophy to Sven Lindahl in a Swedish television broadcast. The trio becomes a quartet as Hodges enters on Ellington's *I Didn't Know About You*. The band returns for the ending chorus of *All Of Me*, like many popular tunes played by Ellington, arranged by Strayhorn. Hodges, credited with Ellington as co-composer, stays at the mike for the luscious *Jeep's Blues*.

*Rose Of The Rio Grande* is a crowd-pleasing feature for the dependable, teetotalling Lawrence Brown. It had been two years since Brown returned to Ellington's orchestra, in June of 1961, after an eleven-year absence.

Early classics receive updated performances at the Dance Inn and are not reduced to a medley

or perfunctory reading. Sweden first fell under Ellington's spell through 78 rpm records like *Black And Tan Fantasy*, recorded in April of 1927. Nance, Procope, and Brown take the roles of Bubber Miley, Otto Hardwick, and Joseph "Tricky Sam" Nanton in this timeless drama. Ellington show he's one of the band's best soloists on his *Kinda Of Dukish*, an intro to *Rockin' in Rhythm*, gone way up-tempo from the 1930 original.

The tardy Paul Gonsalves returns for *In A Sentimental Mood* (1935), then gets his number called again along with Ray Nance for *Mr. Gentle And Mr. Cool*. Rolf Ericson finally gets his chance for a Boston in front of his countrymen on Strayhorn's arrangement of George Shearing's *Lullaby Of Birdland*, one of several Clark Terry solos Ericson would inherit.

The plaintive melody of 1930's *Mood Indigo* was originally colored with a blend of trumpet, trombone, clarinet, and according to Ellington, a sub-tone produced by a microphone. Here it's a blend of Harry Carney on bass clarinet, Russell Procope on clarinet, and Lawrence Brown. *Sophisticated Lady* from 1933 had long since become a showcase for Carney's baritone sax. Carney is featured with Ray Nance on *I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart* (1938) and *Don't Get Around Much Anymore*. The "unbelievable" Nance ends the evening shortly before midnight, "knocking out the audience in a pure and honest down-to-earth swing" with *One More Once*. As described in *Orkester Journalen*. "You almost had to take a shower afterwards."

The band closed the next evening at *Gröna Lund*, then departed in a private bus, criss-crossing southern and central Sweden for a series of fifteen one-nighters. Duke travelled separately in a white Volvo Amazon Sport driven by 21-year-old Hans Löfgren. The car rides, mostly short hops of around three hours, gave Ellington a chance to dream – and write. Löfgren recalled Ellington constantly composing while helping keep an eye out for policemen. At hotel rooms furnished with a piano, Ellington played his latest ideas over the telephone to Billy Strayhorn back in the United States. *My People*, scheduled to open at the Century of Negro Progress Exposition in Chicago in two months, was written in the front seat of Löfgren's Volvo.

Duke Ellington and his Orchestra concluded their tour of Sweden's *Folkparkerna* on June 25, and returned to the United States in time for their annual Fourth of July weekend appearance at Newport. A busy schedule of summer music fairs, dances, state fairs, and club appearances followed. *My People* (with Jimmy Jones at the piano and an orchestra including Ellingtonians past, present, and future) opened on August 16. Ellington and Strayhorn had reworked portions of *Black Brown And Beige* in writing *My People*. New material such as *King Fit The Battle Of Alabam* brought it up-to-date. During *My People's* 18-day run, on August 28, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., gave his "I Have a Dream" speech at the March on Washington. (The CD *My People: The Complete Show* is available on Storyville 1018430).

The band soon departed for their next adventure – a tour of Syria, Jordan, Afghanistan, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon; cut short by the assassination of U.S. President John F. Kennedy. Ellington, who consistently stated throughout his career that his ambition was to tell the African American story, would take the music of his people to every continent, touring South America, Africa, and Australia before passing on in 1974. Sweden would always be special for the global traveler: "I see skies in Sweden I see nowhere else."

**Ken Steiner**  
April 29, 2014

Thanks to Bo Hafman, Jan Bruér, Carl Hällström, David Palmquist, and Steven Lasker.

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Notes Dedicated to Ms. Alice Babs (1924 - 2014).

At the Ellington 2004 Conference in Stockholm, I had the privilege of interviewing Alice Babs. I wondered, "What is the one thing you would like people to know about Duke Ellington?" She replied: "He is as great as Ravel, Debussy, and Stravinsky. He is Duke Ellington and nobody else. He stands there, high on top of the music world." KS

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Produced for CD by Anders Stefansen.  
Sleeves Notes: Ken Steiner.  
Photos: Front cover: Gröna Lund archive.  
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# DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

Dance Inn at Gröna Lund, Tivoli, Stockholm June 8, 1963.

## CD 1

1. **Boo-Dah** Billy Strayhorn **1:53**
2. **Laura** David Raskin-Johnny Mercer **4:16**
3. **Main Stem** Duke Ellington **3:57**
4. **Take The A Train** Billy Strayhorn **7:42**
5. **SUITE THURSDAY: Misfit Blues-Schwiphti-Zweet Zurstay-Lay-by** Duke Ellington **20:23**
6. **Deep Purple** Peter De Rose-Mitchell Parish **4:08**
7. **Silk Lace** Duke Ellington **6:05**
8. **New Concerto For Cootie** Duke Ellington **3:01**
9. **Tootie For Cootie** Duke Ellington **3:01**
10. **The Star Crossed Lovers** Duke Ellington-Billy Strayhorn **4:06**
11. **Things Ain't What They Used To Be** Duke Ellington **3:19**

**Total time: 64:50**

DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA: Cootie Williams, Eddie Preston, Roll Ericson (tp), Ray Nance (tp,vln,vo), Lawrence Brown, Chuck Connors, Buster Cooper (tb), Jimmy Hamilton (ts,cl), Russell Procope (as,cl), Johnny Hodges (as), Paul Gonsalves (ts), Harry Carney (bs,cl,cl), Duke Ellington (p), Ernie Shepard (b) Sam Woodyard (dr)

Produced for CD by Anders Stefansen

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Photos:

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All others by Jan Persson.

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## CD 2

1. **Intermission music by Duke Ellington** Duke Ellington **6:20**
2. **I Didn't Know About You** Duke Ellington-Don George **3:43**
3. **All Of Me** Seymour B. Simons-Gerald Marks **2:33**
4. **Jeep's Blues** Duke Ellington-Johnny Hodges **5:01**
5. **Rose Of The Rio Grande**  
Harry Warren-Ross Gorman-Edgar Leslie **3:30**
6. **Black And Tan Fantasy** Duke Ellington **7:30**
7. **Kinda Of Dukish & Rockin' In Rhythm** Duke Ellington **7:35**
8. **In A Sentimental Mood** Duke Ellington **4:00**
9. **Mr. Gentle And Mr. Cool** Duke Ellington **8:05**
10. **Lullaby Of Birdland** B.Y. Forster-George Shearing **7:14**
11. **Mood Indigo** Duke Ellington **5:39**
12. **Sophisticated Lady** Duke Ellington **3:56**
13. **I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart & Don't Get Around Much Anymore** Duke Ellington **3:57**
14. **One More Once or One More Bossa Nova**  
Duke Ellington **4:12**
15. **One More Once Or One More Twist** Duke Ellington **1:01**

**Total time: 74:20**

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