



**THE DUKE ELLINGTON
SMALL BANDS**

THE INTIMACY OF THE BLUES

COMBO SUITE (Selections #1-6)

1. THE INTIMACY OF THE BLUES 3:58
2. OUT SOUTH 2:37
3. TELL ME 'BOUT MY BABY 3:17
4. KENTUCKY AVENUE, A.C. 4:00

5. NEAR NORTH 2:32
6. SOUL COUNTRY 2:07
7. NOON MOONING 6:02
8. ROCKOCHET 4:19
9. TIPPY-TOEING THROUGH THE JUNGLE GARDEN 5:51
10. JUST A-SITTIN' AND A-ROCKIN' 2:57
11. ALL TOO SOON 3:52

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1. THE INTIMACY OF
THE BLUES 3:58
(Billy Strayhorn) Tempo Music-ASCAP
2. OUT SOUTH 2:37
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9. TIPPY-TOEING THROUGH
THE JUNGLE GARDEN 5:51
(Ellington-Strayhorn-Gaines) EMI Robbins
Catalog-ASCAP
11. ALL TOO SOON 3:52
(Duke Ellington) EMI Robbins-ASCAP

All selections composed by Duke Ellington
(Famous Music Corp.-ASCAP), except as indicated.

Selections #1-6:

DUKE ELLINGTON—piano
CAT ANDERSON—trumpet
LAWRENCE BROWN—trombone
JOHNNY HODGES—alto saxophone
PAUL GONSALVES—tenor saxophone
HARRY CARNEY—baritone saxophone
JOHN LAMB—bass
RUFUS JONES—drums

Recorded in New York City; March 15, 1967.

On "Noon Mooning":
DUKE ELLINGTON—piano
WILD BILL DAVIS—organ
WILLIE COOK—trumpet
LAWRENCE BROWN—trombone
PAUL GONSALVES—tenor saxophone
VICTOR GASKIN, PAUL KONDZIELA—bass
RUFUS JONES—drums
Recorded in Las Vegas; January 7, 1970.

"Rockochet":
DUKE ELLINGTON—piano
PAUL GONSALVES—tenor saxophone
VICTOR GASKIN, PAUL KONDZIELA—bass
RUFUS JONES—drums
Recorded in Las Vegas; January 7, 1970.

"Tippy-Toeing":
WILD BILL DAVIS—organ
WILLIE COOK—trumpet
LAWRENCE BROWN—trombone
PAUL GONSALVES—tenor saxophone
VICTOR GASKIN, PAUL KONDZIELA—bass
RUFUS JONES—drums
Recorded in Las Vegas; January 7, 1970.

"Just A-Sittin' and A-Rockin'":
DUKE ELLINGTON—piano
WILD BILL DAVIS—organ
PAUL GONSALVES—tenor saxophone
NORRIS TURNEY—flute
JOE BENJAMIN—bass
RUFUS JONES—drums
Recorded in New York City; June 15, 1970.

"All Too Soon":
DUKE ELLINGTON—piano
CAT ANDERSON—trumpet
HAROLD ASHBY—tenor saxophone
JOE BENJAMIN—bass
RUFUS JONES—drums
*Recorded in New York City;
June 15, 1970.*

Digital remastering, 1991—Phil De Lancie
(Fantasy Studios, Berkeley)

Art direction—Phil Carroll
Photography—Phil Bray

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For private reference purposes, Duke Ellington referred to the six performances on Side 1 as *The Combo Suite or Hi Fi Fo Fum*. In his mind, they formed a group with a unity of its own. No doubt he would have come up with a more imaginative or significant title for their release as such.

As so often with his own recording ventures, the session took place at a time when the band was experiencing a brief lay-off. The musicians on regular salary were seldom permitted to “enjoy” such periods entirely, to get rusty and discontented while relaxing at home. Some, indeed, preferred the opportunity to get out from under the domestic chores that had accumulated while they were on the road. As it happened, nearly all the members of the octet heard here, including the leader, arrived on time in RCA’s Studio B in New York on March 15, 1967. Some sketches had even been prepared beforehand and they were now to be tried out under decidedly relaxed circumstances, so that the leader could hear how they sounded and consider the possibility of their translation upwards to the full band. That is what happened to Billy Strayhorn’s well-titled *“The Intimacy of the Blues,”* which was used to good effect at the Rainbow Grill that season and recorded by the band later in the year in San Francisco.

The instrumentation didn’t permit the subtlety of dynamics on this version that were possible with the full brass of the later one, but it has its own refreshing buoyancy. The tempo is brisker and there are confident solo statements by Johnny Hodges and Lawrence Brown. Although by this time he had

become famous for his treatment of languishing, exotic ballads, the blues was the territory with which Hodges was most intimately familiar and in which he truly excelled. His replies to the ensemble in the last chorus have, to use a fashionable adjective, an *awesome* authority. Strayhorn always wrote for him with especially sympathetic understanding, but *“The Intimacy of the Blues”* is a catchy number that should live on its own merits and certainly be performed by other musicians more often. The blues in one sense are universal, in another personal and intimate, since they are, as Ellington always maintained, so frequently the result of “fractured romances.”

“Out South” is an odd title, at least until one remembers that Ellington and Strayhorn were both opposed to looking *down* from heights of any imagined superiority. Brown and Hodges are again the soloists, the latter effortlessly demonstrating the compatibility of blues and gospel idioms in his responses.

“Tell Me ‘Bout My Baby” is a fierce tale of passion in which Hodges and Cat Anderson are the protagonists, the latter with plunger mute. Ellington wanted an exciting rhythmic background and got it from his drummer after explaining his requirements thus: “Rufus, give me some ching-chang and sticks on the wood. Mix ‘em all up—not just that plain boom-boom.”

“Kentucky Avenue, A.C.” has nothing to do with athletics, but all to do with a lively thoroughfare in Atlantic City where the blues were often shuffled away till dawn, and later. Hodges, Brown, and

Anderson have their say, Paul Gonsalves steps in, and then Hodges returns to take it out in his best *“Things Ain’t”* fashion.

“Near North,” another oblique title, has reference to Chicago, Ellington told me. Musically, it is later than the Golden Age of the Sunset Cafe, the Apex Club, and the Grand Terrace. It features Paul Gonsalves over the leader’s hypnotically insistent piano.

“Soul Country” on the other hand, goes back to old-time religion. Hodges “sings” and Brown “preaches” over soulful backgrounds as the pianist directs very forcefully.

“Noon Mooning,” which opens Side 2, came from a very different kind of session in Las Vegas. It began at 5 o’clock in the morning, after the band’s nightly performances were over, and it is a good example of how Ellington liked to turn night into day. The chosen group was unusual—organ, two basses, drums, three horns, and himself—and the impression prevailed that he had called the session more for his own pleasure than any other reason. He always enjoyed recording without the supervision of a “producer.”

The presence of Wild Bill Davis on organ meant that this octet could assume the body and depth of the full band, but in *“Noon Mooning”* Ellington was apparently sounding out the rhythmic potential of organ and piano in combination, or perhaps the function of the organ as a solo instrument and as part of both the rhythm section and the ensemble. In any event, Davis is to the fore here, while the horns are used for backgrounds.

“Rockochet,” on which the organist sits out, is

taken at a fast tempo. Besides being an excellent example of Paul Gonsalves's imagination and virtuosity, it has particularly exciting accompaniment by the piano player.

Ellington doesn't play on "Tippy-Toeing Through the Jungle Garden." Part of the time he conducted, but mostly he listened in the control room. Wild Bill Davis is soloist and orchestra here, accompanying and effectively introducing Gonsalves, Brown, and Cook as soloists, in that order. When the session ended at 8 a. m., a total of nine numbers had been successfully recorded in three hours, which justified Ellington's conclusion that early in the morning was the right time. He then adjourned to the hotel for breakfast and Keno.

"Just A-Sittin' and A-Rockin'" and "All Too Soon" were made five months later in New York. On the first, Paul Gonsalves and Norris Turney duet on tenor sax and flute respectively. The latter is a showcase for Harold Ashby, who follows so ably in the footsteps of his mentor, Ben Webster. Cat Anderson is responsible for the felicitous figures that were played by the trumpet section on the original version 30 years before.

—Stanley Dance

author of *The World of Duke Ellington* (Da Capo Press).

Notes reproduced from the original album liner.



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ADD = analog tape recorder used during session recording; digital tape recorder used during subsequent mixing and/or editing and during mastering (transcription).

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OJCCD-624-2
(F-9640)

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DUKE ELLINGTON with
CAT ANDERSON, HAROLD ASHBY,
JOE BENJAMIN, LAWRENCE BROWN,
HARRY CARNEY, WILLIE COOK, WILD BILL DAVIS,
VICTOR GASKIN, PAUL GONSALVES,
JOHNNY HODGES, RUFUS JONES,
PAUL KONZIELLA, JOHN LAMB, NORRIS TURNEY

Selection #1-6 recorded March 15, 1967 (New York City);
#7, 8, 9 recorded January 7, 1970 (Las Vegas);
#10, 11 recorded June 15, 1970 (New York City).
Digital remastering, 1991—Phil De Lancie
(Fantasy Studios, Berkeley)

TOTAL TIME 42:00

Total time has been rounded off to the nearest minute.

AAD

STEREO

COMPACT
DISC
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CLASSICS

Fantasy

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THE DUKE ELLINGTON SMALL BANDS

The Intimacy of the Blues

Duke Ellington did not begin his career as the proprietor of a big band. The group called the Washingtonians was a quintet when Ellington took it to New York in 1923, and it wasn't until he had been there a few years that it expanded to ten pieces and, eventually, 15 or more. Throughout his career, he returned to the small band, for recording purposes often designating sidemen as leaders. Thus were born such classics as "Day Dream," "Good Queen Bess," and "Subtle Slough." In these pieces from 1967 and 1979, Ellington was revisiting his long tradition of creating in smaller formats. Some of them, notably Billy Strayhorn's "The Intimacy of the Blues," would later be transformed for the orchestra. The sidemen are stalwarts of Ellingtonia.

FANTASY
OJCCD-624-2 (F-9640)

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