



- 1 **CHOO CHOO** 3'14
(Ringle - Shafer - Ellington)
- 2 **EAST ST. LOUIS TOODLE-OO** 2'51
(D. Ellington - J. Miley)
- 3 **BIRMINGHAM BREAKDOWN** 2'45
(D. Ellington)
- 4 **IMMIGRATION BLUES** 2'57
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- 21 **MISTY MORNIN'** 3'17
(D. Ellington - A. Whetsol)
- 22 **DOIN' THE VOOM VOOM** 3'08
(D. Ellington - J. Miley)
- 23 **COTTON CLUB STOMP** 2'53
(D. Ellington - J. Hodges - H. Carney)
- 24 **THE DUKES STEP OUT** 3'15
(D. Ellington - J. Hodges - C. Williams)

- (1) **The Washingtonians** : James W. "Bubber" Miley (tp), Charlie Irvis (tb), Otto "Toby" Hardwicke (as, C-m sax), Edward K. "Duke" Ellington (p, arr, lead), Fred Guy (bjo), William "Sonny" Greer (dm) NYC, 11/1924.
- (2-3) **Duke Ellington & His Kentucky Club Orchestra** : Louis Metcalfe, Bubber Miley (tp), Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton (tb), Otto Hardwicke (as, C-m sax, ss, bs), Rudy Jackson (ts, cl), Harry Carney (bs, cl, as), Duke Ellington (p, arr), Fred Guy (bjo), Mack Shaw (tu), Sonny Greer (dm). NYC, 26/11/1926.
- (4) Same. NYC, 29/12/1926.
- (5) Same. NYC, 22/03/1927.
- (6-9) Same but Wellman Braud (b) replaces Shaw ; Adelaide Hall (vo on 6,7). NYC, 26/10/1927.
- (10-11) Same but Adelaide Hall out. NYC, 19/12/1927.
- (12) **The Washingtonians** : Louis Metcalfe, Bubber Miley (tp), Joe Nanton (tb), Otto Hardwicke (as, C-m sax, ss, bs), Albany "Barney" Bigard (ts, cl), Harry Carney (bs, cl, as), Duke Ellington (p, arr, lead), Fred Guy (bjo), Wellman Braud (b), Sonny Greer (dm). NYC, 19/01/1928.
- (13-15) **Duke Ellington & His Orchestra** : Same but Arthur Whetsol (tp), replaces Metcalfe. NYC, 26/03/1928.
- (16) Duke Ellington (p solo). NYC, 01/10/1928.
- (17-18) **Duke Ellington & His Orchestra** : Arthur Whetsol, Bubber Miley (tp), Joe Nanton (tb), Johnny Hodges (as, ss, cl), Barney Bigard (ts, cl), Harry Carney (bs, as, cl), Duke Ellington (p, arr), Lonnie Johnson (g), Fred Guy (bjo), Wellman Braud (b), Sonny Greer (dm), Baby Cox (vo). NYC, 01/10/1928.
- (19) Same but Johnson and Cox out. NYC, 17/10/1928.
- (20) Same as for (19) but Freddy Jenkins (tp), Otto Hardwicke (as, bs), Ozie Ware and Irving Mills (vo) added. NYC, 15/11/1928.
- (21) Same but Hardwicke, Ware and Mills out. NYC, 22/11/1928.
- (22) Same as for (21). NYC, 16/01/1929.
- (23) **Duke Ellington & His Cotton Club Orchestra** : Arthur Whetsol, Freddy Jenkins, Charles M. "Cootie" Williams (tp), Joe Nanton (tb), Barney Bigard (ts, cl), Johnny Hodges (as, ss), Harry Carney (bs, as, cl), Duke Ellington (p, arr), Fred Guy (bjo), Wellman Braud (b), Sonny Greer (dm). NYC, 03/05/1929.
- (24) Same but Juan Tizol (vtb) and Teddy Bunn (g) added ; Jenkins out. NYC, 16/09/1929.

La haute technologie des "compacts", de la lecture "laser" et des enregistrements actuels en "numérique" ne doit pas faire oublier l'incalculable valeur de certains enregistrements des années vingt, trente, quarante et cinquante, tant par leur aspect "témoignage" que par la valeur des participants.

Le but de la collection JAZZ ARCHIVES est de vous permettre de retrouver sur "compacts", à un prix abordable, certains enregistrements "historiques" qui ont marqué l'évolution du JAZZ.

Ces bandes ont été travaillées afin d'éliminer les distorsions, certains défauts et bruits de surface, mais il est bien entendu que la qualité du personnel, de la séance et le côté "témoignage" et "événementiel" comptent dans ce cas plus que la qualité du son.

New York aime toujours le gigantisme, en musique comme ailleurs. Dès l'époque du ragtime, au début de ce siècle, il n'était pas rare d'y entendre des formations d'une centaine d'instrumentistes donner des concerts en des lieux aussi réputés que Carnegie Hall. Quand le jazz des Dixielanders débarqua en ville vers 1917, tout parut remis en question, puisque cette musique nouvelle se pratiquait à cinq ou six seulement, capables de faire autant de bruit qu'une quarantaine de larrons! Et puis, une fois l'effet de surprise dissipé, le naturel revint au galop! On se mit à chercher des trucs pour adapter la musique féroce des Dixielanders aux structures du grand orchestre. Les vétérans n'y arrivèrent pas vraiment, mais les plus jeunes finirent, au bout de quelques années de tâtonnements, par trouver des solutions. Du côté blanc, Paul Whiteman, parti sur la base du petit orchestre en 1920, déboucha vers 1924 sur le "jazz symphonique", interprété par une trentaine d'exécutants. Du côté noir on fut plus humble, et Fletcher Henderson se contenta de mettre au point une formule réunissant trois trompettistes, deux trombones, trois saxophones et la section rythmique habituelle (piano, banjo/guitare, basse, batterie). Les arrangements se firent plus complexes qui eurent tendance, sous l'impulsion de Don Redman et d'Henderson, à opposer la section des cuivres à celle des anches dans des suites de demandes-réponses. En 1924-25, Louis Armstrong vint jouer chez Henderson à New York, apportant la splendide lumière de ses solos et, par là, la révélation de la puissance... C'est justement à ce moment-là que Duke Ellington prit la direction des "Washingtonians", un groupe aux proportions encore modestes récemment arrivé de la capitale fédérale. Le terrain était déjà bien préparé.

C'est à Washington qu'est né Edward Kennedy Ellington le 29 avril 1899, dans une famille appartenant à la petite bourgeoisie de couleur. Il semble que son surnom lui ait été donné dans son enfance par ses petits camarades. Le jazz a

son aristocratie : à la Nouvelle Orléans, le meilleur est démocratiquement sacré Roi et l'un des ces derniers monarques, Joe Oliver - "King" Oliver -, faillit bien, fin 1927, devenir le Roi du "Cotton Club" de Harlem. Mais l'offre lui parut insuffisante et il la déclina. Il eut tort. A sa place, on engagea un petit jeune moins connu et moins gourmand, qui jouait au "Barron Wilkin's" avec un petit orchestre comptant dans ses rangs au moins un grand soliste, le trompettiste James "Bubber" Miley (1903-1932). Le Cotton Club n'eut pas pas de Roi, mais il eut un Duc qui lui demeura fidèle jusqu'à la fermeture définitive de l'établissement en 1940. Ellington était venu à New York étudier l'architecture et, de fait, toute sa vie durant, il construisit de la musique. A Washington, il avait joué dans plusieurs orchestres locaux ; à New York, la première fois, il ne parvint pas à s'imposer.

De retour en 1924 avec le groupe du banjoïste Elmer Snowden (qui comprenait aussi le saxophoniste Otto Hardwicke et le batteur Sonny Greer), il prit la direction de celui-ci en fin d'année (Snowden étant remplacé par Fred Guy) et fit ses premiers disques, parmi lesquels *Choo Choo*. Les résultats semblent encore bien hésitants, mais déjà l'autorité dont font preuve le tromboniste Charlie Irviss et surtout son complice Bubber Miley à la trompette, laissent présager des lendemains meilleurs. L'apport de Miley, le plus génial sans doute des utilisateurs de la sourdine "Oua oua", sera capital pour un jeune Duc en quête de style. Pourtant Miley restera absent près de deux ans (1925-26). Ellington lui trouva des remplaçants, fit d'autres disques et se fit repérer par l'impresario Irving Mills, lequel lui dénicha de nouveaux engagements, de nouvelles séances (dont sont issus *East St. Louis Toodle-Do* et *Birmingham Breakdown*) et parvint finalement à lui décrocher le Cotton Club, ouvert en 1925 et jusque là un peu terne. Le retour de Miley fin 1926 fut décisif, d'autant qu'il amena avec lui son disciple, le tromboniste Joe

"Tricky Sam" Nanton. Leur jeu farouche, consistant à boucher et à déboucher en alternance la pavillon de l'instrument avec une énorme sourdine en caoutchouc (genre "débouche-lavabo"), permit d'inventer de nouvelles sonorités profondes, angossantes, rauques, noires et fauves. Le plus beau des morceaux imaginés à l'époque dans ce style terriblement expressionniste est sans conteste *Black And Tan Fantasy*, co-signé en 1927 par Miley et Ellington. c'est l'une des grandes oeuvres musicales du siècle, mais il y en eut d'autres presque aussi fortes : *East St. Louis Toodle-Do*, *Immigration Blues*, *The Mooche*... Les autres faisaient danser. Duke Ellington, lui, fait rêver et, souvent, le rêve tourne au cauchemar... A côté de ce style baptisé "jungle" (une jungle hostile, étouffante, tragique, comme pouvaient l'imaginer les Noirs américains) qui permit à l'orchestre de se distinguer radicalement des autres, Ellington continua à jouer pour la danse en composant des airs plus simples, enlevés et vigoureux, où l'opposition entre les cuivres et les anches instituée par ses prédécesseurs eut tendance à s'estomper. A cette catégorie appartiennent des morceaux comme *Hop Head*, *Washington Wobble*, *Blue Bubbles*, *Doin' The Voom Voom*, *Cotton Club Stomp*, *The Duke Steps Out*, *Jubilee Stomp*, ou encore l'extraordinaire *Hot And Bothered*. A cette liste, il convient d'ajouter les airs composés sur mesure par des spécialistes - le plus souvent Jimmy McHugh et Dorothy Fields - pour les revues du Cotton Club : *Harlem River Quiver*, *Got Everything But You*, *Diga Diga Doo*...

A partir de 1928, Ellington développa en parallèle un genre moins dur, où la couleur sonore se fait plus chatoyante, et que l'on baptisa "mood". Cette manière nouvelle trouva son épanouissement aux cours des décennies suivantes, mais on peut dès à présent en apprécier les premiers essais dans des oeuvres comme les très délicats *Black Beauty* et *Misty Morning*, sans oublier les beaux *Creole Love Call* et *Blues I Love To Sing*, où le Duke se plait à traiter la voix humaine

(celle de la merveilleuse chanteuse Adelaïde Hall) comme un instrument. Peu à peu, Ellington attrira chez lui quelques uns des meilleurs musiciens : le clarinetriste Barney Bigard de la Nouvelle Orléans, Johnny Hodges, le plus grand, avec Benny Carter, des saxophonistes alto avant l'arrivée de Charlie Parker; le trompettiste "Cootie" Williams, remplaçant en 1929 de Bubber Miley... Le plus bel orchestre de l'histoire du jazz est désormais sur ses rails et, malgré les coups durs, il ne s'arrêtera pas. Trente-six ouvrages ne suffiraient pas à raconter Duke Ellington, ni même les premières années de sa carrière. Et ce n'est pas l'autobiographie du Duke qui nous fera dire le contraire!... Dès 1929, comme Louis Armstrong, il est immortel. Il lui faut encore devenir célèbre. Il s'y emploiera sans relâche au cours des années à venir...

D.N.

New York has always liked to do things big, in music as in everything else. Even back in the ragtime era at the dawn of the century, it was not rare to be able to hear orchestras of up to a hundred musicians giving concerts in such reputed venues as Carnegie Hall.

When Dixieland jazz arrived in town in 1917, things changed, for these new outfits were only five or six men strong — and they could make as much noise as an orchestra of forty! But once the effect of novelty and surprise had worn off, the situation returned to normal, which meant that large orchestras began to seek ways of orchestrating the music of the Dixielanders to suit their own, more sophisticated needs. The veterans of the trade never really succeeded, but the more talented newcomers eventually found the solutions they had long been seeking.

Among white groups, the one led by Paul Whiteman, which had started out in 1920 as a small band, had by 1924 developed into a 30-strong "symphonic jazz" orchestra. Black outfits took a more humble approach, and Fletcher Henderson made do with three trumpets, two trombones, three saxophones and the usual rhythm section of piano, banjo/guitar, bass and drums. The Henderson arrangements, in the hands of Don Redman and Fletcher himself, grew more complex, generally setting up the brass in opposition to the reeds in a call-and-response format. In 1924-25, Louis Armstrong joined the Henderson ranks, bringing with him all the splendour of his illuminating solos, plus the breathtaking revelation of sheer power. And it was at this very time that Duke Ellington assumed leadership of the Washingtonians, a group of still modest proportions recently arrived in town from the federal capital. He would find the ground had been well prepared. Edward Kennedy Ellington was born into a respectable, black middle-class family in Washington D.C. on 29 April 1899. The nickname of Duke was said to have been bestowed upon him by his school-mates. Jazz has always

had its aristocrats, and in New Orleans the top man has traditionally been designated "King". One of that city's most famous monarchs was trumpeter Joe "King" Oliver, who in late 1927 had the chance also to become King of New York's Cotton Club, situated in the heart of Harlem. But, judging his worth was being grossly undervalued, Oliver spurned the offer, leaving the way open for a new young bandleader then officiating at a nightclub called Barron Wilkin's, his star trumpeter a certain James "Bubber" Miley (1903-1932). Hence, the Cotton Club never landed its "King", but it did get its "Duke". And that very special Duke would remain faithful to the establishment until it finally closed its doors in 1940.

Duke Ellington had first come to New York to study architecture, and for the remainder of his life he would find himself an architect of music. In Washington, he had played with a number of local outfits, but his initial efforts in New York had ended in failure. Undaunted, in 1924 back he came, this time as member of banjoist Elmer Snowden's group, two of his closest cohorts being saxophonist Otto Hardwick and drummer Sonny Greer. By the year-end, Duke felt confident enough to take over leadership of the group when Snowden, yielding his place to Fred Guy, abandoned ship. Soon, this ambitious little outfit was cutting its first records, among them *Choo Choo*. The results are still somewhat hesitant, but the unmistakable authority of trombonist Charlie Ivris and, especially, trumpeter Bubber Miley is a sure sign of better days to come.

Miley, the undisputed genius of the plunger mute, was the vital ingredient of a recipe Ellington was still in the process of formulating. And yet, when the trumpeter went absent for two years in 1925-26, the astute leader nevertheless succeeded in replacing him, going on to cut further records and even to impress Irving Mills sufficiently for the impresario to go to the trouble of finding him new

engagements. Yet more records followed (*East St. Louis Toodle-oo* and *Birmingham Breakdown* among them), and then Mills hooked him the all-important Cotton Club job.

The return of Bubber Miley in 1926 proved of capital importance, all the more so since he brought with him a talented disciple, trombonist Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton. Their ferocious playing, based on the use of household rubber plungers as mutes, enabled them to concoct completely new, rivetingly dramatic sounds, so wild, growling and unmistakably black that the style became known as the "jungle style". The most beautiful piece from this crucially innovative, thoroughly impressionist period is undoubtedly *Black And Tan Fantasy*, a 1927 co-composition of Duke and Bubber's. Although this must be considered one of the major musical works of the entire 20th century, there were several others by Ellington very nearly as good: *East St. Louis Toodle-oo*, *Immigration Blues* and *The Mooche*, for instance.

Most bands made people dance. Duke's made them dream. But the young Ellington did know how to get them dancing, too, using more straightforward, up-tempo material which already relied less on the opposition of brass and reeds than did the music of his predecessors and rivals. To this category belong such pieces as *Hop Head*, *Washington Wobble*, *Blue Bubbles*, *Doin' The Voom Voom*, *Cotton Club Stomp*, *The Duke Steps Out*, *Jubilee Stomp* and even the extraordinary *Hot And Bothered*. To which list can also be added the show numbers, generally penned by Jimmy McHugh and Dorothy Fields, from the Cotton Club revue: pieces such as *Harlem River Quiver*, *Got Everything But You* and *Diga Diga Doo*.

By 1928, Ellington, in parallel to the rest of the repertoire, was developing a gentler, more shimmeringly colourful style that has been referred to as "mood" music. This new approach would blossom over the ensuing decades, but its buds are already detectable in such works as *Black Beauty*

and *Misty Mornin'*; not to mention the extremely beautiful *Creole Love Call* and *Blues I Love To Sing* on which Duke uses the human voice (of the wonderful Adelaide Hall) in purely instrumental fashion.

Gradually, Ellington was beginning to attract all the best musicians: New Orleans clarinetist Barney Bigard; the man who, along with Benny Carter, ranks as the greatest of all pre-Charlie Parker alto-saxophonists, Johnny Hodges; and Bubber Miley's remarkable successor, trumpeter Cootie Williams. The finest big band in the history of jazz was now launched upon a highly distinguished career that — despite the occasional hiccup — would not come to a halt until Duke's death in 1974.

No amount of literature would suffice to recount *everything* of Duke Ellington, nor even just these early years of his career. Duke's autobiography, "Music Is My Mistress", for all it reveals, leaves so much untold. What we do know is that, by 1929, Duke, like Louis Armstrong, had already achieved immortality. All that now remained was for him to achieve fame. And that is something he would work away at during the years to come.

Adapted from the French by Don Waterhouse

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