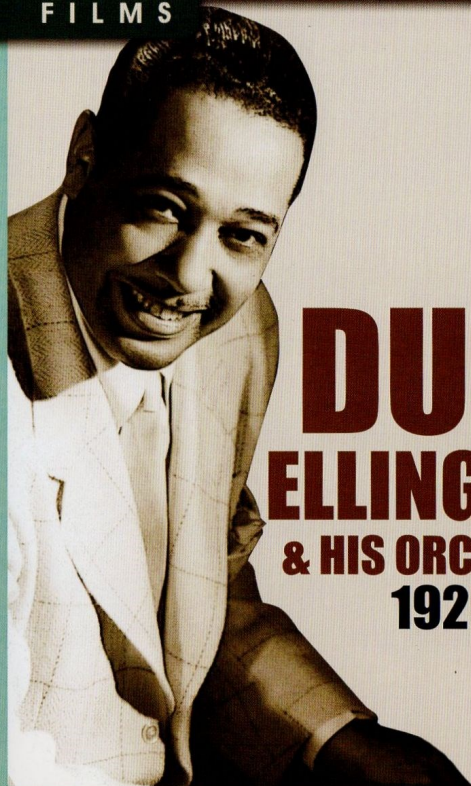


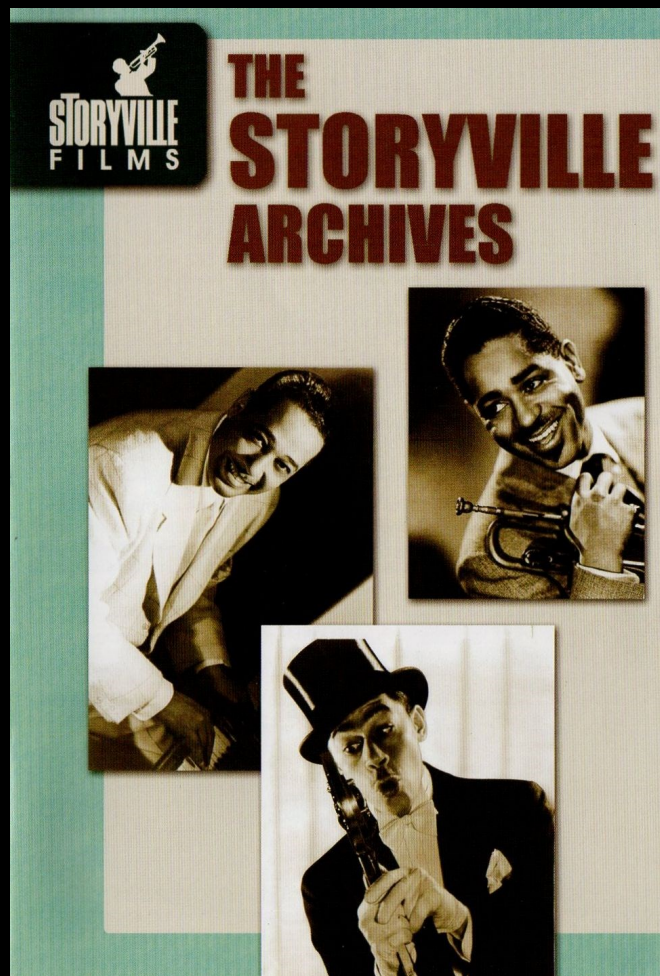


**STORYVILLE**  
FILMS

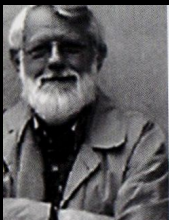
JAZZ LEGENDS



**DUKE**  
**ELLINGTON**  
**& HIS ORCHESTRA**  
**1929-1943**







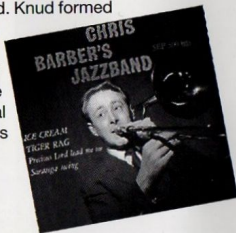
## A Brief History of Storyville Films



In 1950 Danish jazz fan and record collector Karl Emil Knudsen (pictured above left) founded Storyville Records to document the rich history of Jazz and Blues and to make the music he loved more widely available to other jazz aficionados in his native Denmark. Karl, or “Dr. in Jazz Archeology” as he liked to be called, initially licensed recordings from labels such as Tempo in the UK. As the company grew, Storyville began recording new material by players such as Chris Barber, Ken Colyer & Papa Bue, Big Bill Broonzy, Champion Jack Dupree, Big Joe Williams, Lonnie Johnson, Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee, Memphis Slim, Sonny Boy Williamson, Bud Powell, Archie Shepp and many others.

As Karl traveled the world in search of music, he also acquired the rights to many jazz films from such companies as Official Films (Soundies) and Pathe Pictures. By 1998 there were more than 60 titles in the Storyville catalog. In the mid-1980’s Storyville also became active in the production of documentary films featuring such artists as Spike Jones, Chris Barber and The Mills Brothers.

Prior to Karl’s passing in 2003, he sold his film archive to his good friend Knud Thormod. Knud formed Storyville Films to carry on the tradition of Karl Emil Knudsen’s preservation of the legacy of many of the most important musical performances in the fields of Jazz & Blues.



# DUKE ELLINGTON

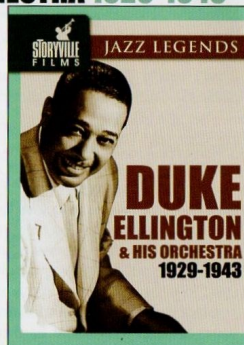
Born in Washington, pianist/composer Edward Kennedy Ellington was a fixture in New York jazz clubs like the Cotton Club by the late-1920’s. In the 1930’s and 1940’s he and his band toured, recorded and appeared in several feature films including *Black and Tan* (1929) and *A Cabin in the Sky* (1943). In 1939 he was joined by the great songwriter/lyricist from Pittsburgh, Billy Strayhorn who in 1941 wrote “Take The A Train.” After World War II the band began to decline, reaching it’s lowest point in the early 1950’s after altoist Johnny Hodges, drummer Sonny Greer and trombonist Lawrence Brown all left to pursue solo ventures. The band had a triumphant comeback at the 1956 Newport Jazz Festival and over time members like Cootie Williams who’d moved on in 1940, decided to return to the band. Ellington recorded with younger jazz players like Charles Mingus and John Coltrane and concentrated on longer compositional forms before dying from lung cancer at age 75 in 1974.



## DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS ORCHESTRA 1929-1943

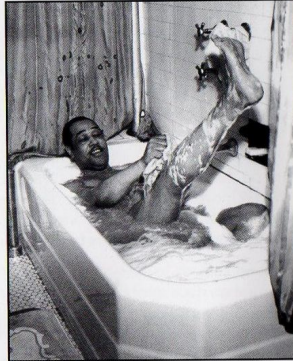
While his most famous and well known appearance on film is most likely as *Pie Eye* in Otto Preminger’s 1959 film *Anatomy of a Murder*, and his soundtrack contributions continue to this day in such recent films as *Oceans 13* and *Divine Secrets of the Ya Ya Sisterhood*—not to mention three episodes of the Mob drama *The Sopranos*—this DVD focuses on some of Ellington’s lesser known film appearances, all with his band and including the first time he stepped in front of a camera in 1929’s *Black and Tan*.

Written and directed by Dudley Murphy, who also directed something called *Abercrombie Had A Zombie* and was a writer on the original 1931 *Dracula* film starring Bela Lugosi, it’s not exactly *Gone With The Wind*, yet for Ellington fans it’s still his film debut.



Opening with a scene where trumpeter Artie Whetsol and Ellington are playing "Black and Tan Fantasy", the film moves on to a scene with two piano movers that typifies the racism present in films of the time. One of the movers does get off a great line however when he tells the Duke who's sitting at the piano to "remove your anatomy from that mahogany." Other interesting touches here include tall stage curtains decorated with nude women, the use of a kaleidoscopic effect to simulate what a sick girl sees, and a dancer shot from below through a glass floor.

In the next segment, an excerpt from the 1930 Amos 'n' Andy film, Check and Double Check, Duke leads an 11 piece orchestra—considerably smaller than the one he'd go on to lead in the 1940's—through two numbers, "Three Little Words" (Kalmar/Ruby) and his own tune, "Old Man Blues." The band seems to be having quite a time here with the trumpet section of Freddie Jenkins, Arthur Whetsol and Cootie Williams bouncing their horns on their knee and even their normally regal leader playing piano with wildly exaggerated motions.



In the 1935 Adolph Zukor short Symphony In Black, billed on this short film's title card as A Rhapsody of Negro Life, Duke and the band wend their way through Ellington's "Symphony of Negro Moods" which has a number of sections, the best being a stretch highlighted by Sam Nanton's trombone, which is informally known as "The Saddest Tale" where a very young Billie Holiday (in her first film appearance) and an equally youthful Scatman Crothers are involved in a love triangle.

Perhaps the most interesting short here is the 1937 documentary, Record Making with Duke Ellington and His Orchestra, in which Ellington and the band are shown cutting a record or as the classic, overly serious narration puts it, "electronically engraved with the world's finest entertainment," which makes it "an expression of modern day invention worth looking into." Duke, clearly acting every bit the bandleader for the camera tells his men at one point that the song they're playing requires "an express train not a freight train." Shots of the original lacquer discs being cut then being slowly plated and made into a stamper, which then is used to press records is, in the age of music downloads, fast becoming a lost art. The fact that singer Ivie Anderson's name is misspelled (Ivy) on the label of the disc being created shows that despite all the technology deployed and money spent, the music business has always had a special talent for tripping over its own best intentions.

After the very brief "I've Got to be a Rug Cutter," from the 1937 picture, The Hit Parade of 1937, in which the band is decked out all in white, and several classic angled shots of Ellington, shot through his white baby grand piano appear, there's the final installment on this DVD, the RKO Jamboree No. 7. Filmed in New York, with the band miming to pre-recorded music like most of what's on this DVD, (which was standard operating procedure in those days) this is almost an Ellington greatest hits (up to that time) program, with Ray Nance playing violin and singing "It Don't Mean A Thing" a tune where it's a treat to see the great Ben Webster even though he does a bad job of faking his solo. The band plays in an unusual, bowl-like set that's lined with piano keys. Ellington's immortal altoist Johnny Hodges is highlighted in a tune that was always a showcase for his instantly recognizable tone and attack.



Although he was born in Cheraw, South Carolina John Birks "Dizzy" Gillespie is most famous as one of the founders of Bebop in the forties and later Afro-Cuban jazz. After early stints in the bands of Earl Hines and Billy Eckstine, Gillespie, often accompanied by alto sax genius Charlie Parker began to jam up a style in clubs along New York's 52nd Street that would come to be called bebop. Usually played at a breakneck pace, contained freely improvised solos not based on a tune's melody, and made use of flatted fifths and other musical unconventionalities unheard of in swing music which was the popular music at the time. He wrote the genre's one bona fide hit, "A Night in Tunisia."

After World War II, Gillespie eventually moved from playing in small groups to leading his own big band, later rechristened the Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra which he led in some form almost until his death in 1993. While he eventually became best known for his billowing cheeks, the upturned bell of his trumpet and his genial personality, Gillespie remains one of the towering figures in the jazz world, in terms of being a landmark player, songwriter and ambassador for the music.



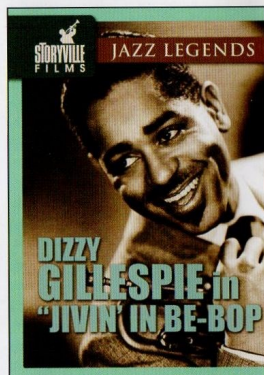
## JIVIN' in BE-BOP with DIZZY GILLESPIE & His Orchestra

The overall idea here was to stage and film a sort of bebop hipster version of a vaudeville show, complete with a goofy MC, singing, dancing and yes, even a little real music.

Gillespie is a willing participant here, dancing, twirling, even singing the song, "He Beeped When He Should Have Bopped."

Between each song here cornball, faux jive talker, Freddie Carter, chomps cigars, quotes Shakespeare and rhymes nearly every one of his sometimes painfully unhip couplets: "Stand in the balcony with your cigarette butts/or sit in the orchestra with Dizzy and "Salt Peanuts." Dizzy gamely plays along with his goofy routines. After Dizzy's vocalizing on the jive scat number, "Oop Bop She Bam" he does get off this one: "As hard as lard and twice as greasy."

Shown here at age 30, Gillespie is spry and less the beret wearing, horn-rimmed bopper that he was just a few short years earlier. Even though he is badly miming his parts here, his cheeks are not cartoonishly bloated as they would be later and his trumpet's bend is yet to come.



The most famous moment in the film is when Dizzy "dies" and goes to heaven, the "Elysian Fields" where he meets the great omnipotence of Johann Sebastian Bop.

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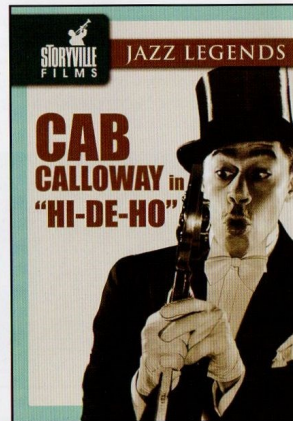


## CAB CALLOWAY

Born in Rochester NY, but raised in Baltimore, MD., Cabell Calloway first found show business fame in Chicago before moving to New York, becoming leader of the big band the Missourians, and finally earning a spot, along with Duke Ellington's band, as one of the featured attractions at Harlem's famed Cotton Club. In 1931 he recorded his signature hit, "Minnie The Moocher," which led to lasting fame and whose chorus of "Hi De Ho" gave him his nickname. Calloway continued as an active performer both on stage and fronting a band well into his seventies. A late career highlight came in 1980 when he starred with John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd in the film, *The Blues Brothers*. He died in 1994 after a stroke at the age of 86.

## HI-DE-HO CAB CALLOWAY & HIS ORCHESTRA

The second Calloway film by this title (the first, with a plot about Cab's mom, was in 1937), this film has more plot than most musician-centric films. Centering on Cab's rejection of his floozy singer girlfriend Minnie (as in the *Moocher*), and her efforts to retaliate, to "fix him," by turning a local "boss," Boss Mason, against him, it's a thin tale but it provides enough structure for the film's many musical numbers which of course are the real attraction here.



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After an opening scene in Cab's apartment where we hear that Minnie's "a solid jitterbug/when she starts to cut a rug," he slaps the jealous Minnie, consults with his manager Nettie (the object of Minnie's objections) before playing the swinging "Dawn Time" with a small group, for a club owner interested in booking him. Some of the more famous jazz players in Calloway's band at the time that are seen in the film include tenor saxophone player Sam "The Man" Taylor, bassist Milt Hinton and alto saxophonist Hilton Jefferson.



Meanwhile Minnie's gone to Mason to have Calloway bumped off spitting out perhaps the film's most classic line. As she pats Mason's enforcer's chest where he has a gun she says with a snarl, "What he's got there ain't no tumor." A predictable standoff occurs with Minnie taking a bullet for Cab and after one more chorus of "her song" "Minnie's a Hepcat Now" she expires.

The film then switches to shots of cities and clubs all over the world, from Athens to Moscow, eventually returning to a New York stage where a variety show breaks out. After Calloway performs, waving his oversized baton and allowing his hair to swing wildly—both classic Calloway gestures - the rotund Peters Sisters, Virginia, Anne and Mattie perform a pair of songs before tap dancing takes over.



Finally, in "St. James Infirmary," Calloway the actor gives way to the genuine musician who, dressed in down-on-his-luck style, does a splendid job of both dancing and singing this justly famous number. A segment when he and one of his trumpet players trade licks, one on his horn and other with his dancing skills, is the film's performance highlight.

The proceedings close when Calloway falls in love and marries his manager Nettie who has lost her thick glasses and fussy hairstyle and mysteriously bloomed into a beautiful woman. After his band

bashfully mimes their way through singing "Don't Falter At The Altar," Calloway launches into the film's closing number, "I Got A Gal Named Nettie," where he grins and confidently sings, "New York City's got it's Subways/California's got warm days/Monte Carlo's got cafes/I got a girl named Nettie." All in all, despite the tissue thin plot, this film's a very convincing document showing just how potent Calloway was at the height of his powers, being perhaps swing music's most intoxicating front man.

Booklet by Robert Baird.

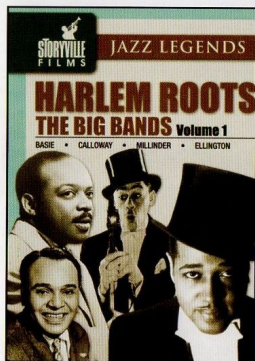
Mr. Baird is Music Editor of *Stereophile Magazine* and has written for a variety of publications including *Rolling Stone*, *No Depression*, *Details* and *USA Today*.

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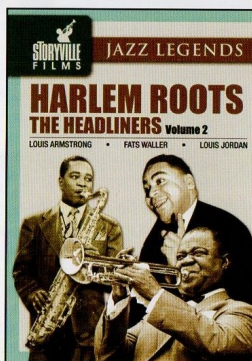
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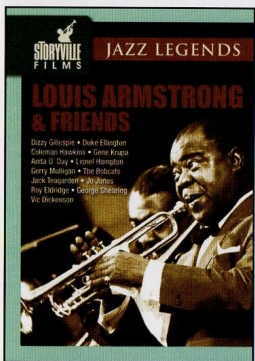
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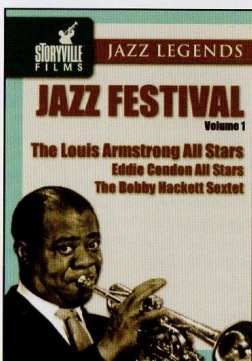
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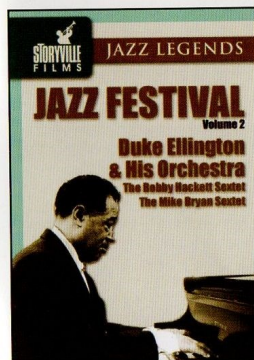
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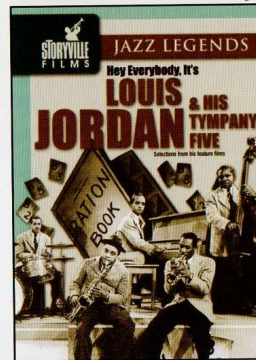
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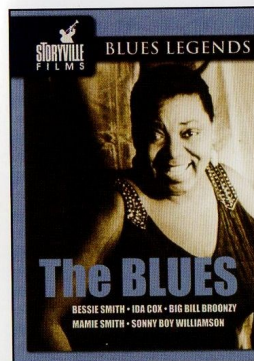


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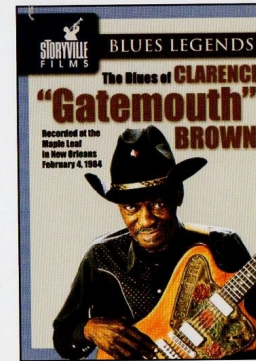


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# DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS ORCHESTRA

STORYVILLE  
FILMS

Duke Ellington became a nationwide sensation because of his radio broadcasts from the Cotton Club in Harlem. Shortly thereafter, Ellington made his first film appearance in the Douglas Murphy production "Black And Tan". Though not actually shot in the Cotton Club, it remains the most vivid visual document we have of the special aura and mythology surrounding that landmark club.

The relationship with Hollywood continued throughout his career. Duke was often enlisted to appear in short subjects and as musical relief in feature films. "Check And Double Check" featured the enormously popular radio stars Amos & Andy. The band plays background music throughout dialogue scenes that take place at a swank party. The filmmakers allowed Duke Ellington two complete numbers.

The short subject films continued throughout the 1930's and 1940's. "Symphony In Black" is particularly interesting because the music was specially written for the film. It was one of Ellington's early suites, in this case a portrait of black America. "Record Making With Duke Ellington" is a fascinating explanation of how a record was recorded and duplicated in the 1930's, based around an Ellington recording date. In "The Hit Parade Of 1937", we see one of Ellington's most lively and amusing screen performances. "I've Got To Be A Rug Cutter" shows the tuxedoed band in a playful mood, bolstered by Anderson's wonderful vocal. "RKO Jamboree (Number 7)" is a mini-concert of great Ellington standards.

#### BLACK AND TAN (1929)

RKO Productions Inc. • Directed by Dudley Murphy  
Black and Tan Fantasy (Miley/ Ellington)  
The Duke Steps Out (Ellington) • Black Beauty (Ellington)  
Cotton Club Stomp (Ellington) • Flaming Youth (Ellington)  
Same Train (Ellington) • Black and Tan Fantasy (Miley/ Ellington)

#### CHECK AND DOUBLE CHECK (1930)

RKO Productions Inc. • Directed by Melville Brown  
Three Little Words (Kalmar/Ruby) • Old Man Blues (Ellington)

#### SYMPHONY IN BLACK (1934)

Paramount Pictures  
Directed by Fred Waller. • Composed by Duke Ellington  
The Laborers • A Triangle (Dance, Jealousy, Blues)  
A Hymn of Sorrow • Harlem Rhythm

#### Paramount Pictorial No. 889 (1937)

Record Making With Duke Ellington And His Orchestra  
Daybreak Express (Ellington) • Oh Babel Maybe Someday (Ellington)

#### The Hit Parade Of 1937 (1937)

Republic Pictures  
I've Got To Be A Rug Cutter (Ellington)

#### RKO Jamboree No. 7 (1943)

Directed by Jay Bonafield  
Mood Indigo (Ellington/ Mills/ Bigard)  
Sophisticated Lady (Ellington/ Mills/ Parish)  
It Don't Mean A Thing (Ellington/ Mills)  
Don't Get Around Much Anymore (Ellington)

Compilation editor: Don McGlynn

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