



# DUKE ELLINGTON LIVE IN WARSAW 1971



Dating back to 1971, this concert (appearing here on CD for the first time ever) features the Duke Ellington Orchestra still in prime form. The program alternates between old favorites such as "Satin Doll" or "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" and the usual Medley with newer and lesser known tunes like "Goof" or "Addi". At 72, Ellington proved that he was still a masterful pianist and a genial host to an enthusiastic European audience. The 1971 Duke Ellington big band features such classic players as clarinetist Russell Procope, baritone saxophonist Harry Carney and tenor saxophonists Paul Gonsalves, Harold Ashby and Norris Turney (Johnny Hodges had died on May 11, 1970). Around the time of the Warsaw concert, Carney spoke about the band without Hodges: "Things are going very well with the band, I'm glad to say. As regards not having Johnny Hodges with us—to tell you the truth, I still haven't gotten over it. As a matter of fact I still sort of expect to see him and hear him every time we take our instruments out. He's greatly missed, of course. But Norris Turney is doing a tremendous job. He's quite a wonderful

musician, and extremely talented on all of his instruments. So all of us are very happy with Norris. And also we have another very wonderful altoist—"Geezil" Minerve. We seem to fall into a sort of a pattern of just travelling, most of the time. Fortunately, before leaving for our Russian tour, we did spend four weeks at the Rainbow Grill in New York—which enabled us to be at home for a spell prior to our departure. It was with a small group out of the band. The Rainbow Grill is a very fabulous place, up on the sixty-fifth floor of Rockefeller Centre. So that was very nice."

As strong as the soloists are, Duke Ellington is never overshadowed and is heard here in top form. Remaining active until the very end, he would die on May 24, 1974, at the age of 75. During an interview made during those years, Norris Turney talked about his work in the Ellington band: "I was first in the band while Johnny Hodges was still alive, and during that I played a lot of roles, all around the sections. I've handled just about every part in this band, except for Harry Carney's baritone

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part. What happened, to begin with: we were to leave for Europe in '69, and one of our trombone players wasn't able to make it. So I went back into the trombone section to fill the sound out there. And I read trumpet parts; I played Willie Cook's part on clarinet. On the Japanese tour [in January 1972], I had to take care of Paul Gonsalves' tenor part. I've been through the whole thing. I'm like a policeman—trouble-shooting here and there. I don't have any parts; so I have to read from this part and that, and do the best I can. But I'm a part of the family—an Ellingtonian."

Trumpeter Johnny Coles (1926-1996) was a modern jazz player (he spent time with Charles Mingus, Eric Dolphy and Herbie Hancock) with a strong R&B influence. He was also a featured musician of the Duke's band during this period (he is heard here soloing on "Goof", a tune Ellington wrote especially for him). In an interview from early 1972, Cole stated that: "I've been with the Duke Ellington band about three months now. It's an experience in itself, and I'm very happy here. There's no comparison

with anything else. Duke Ellington has his own music, that he's recognised for, and his own style which no one that I know of today can imitate. I'm playing Cootie Williams' book; he doesn't have a lot of music to play. A lot of spots are just left out for him; so I have a lot of rests sometimes. It's enjoyable, though. This band is restricting in that I don't have much solo space. I'm the newest member of the band; so it takes a little time. The composition 'Goof' is a new piece Duke has written for me. I solo on the trumpet as well as the flugelhorn. For section work I use the trumpet mainly, although there are some ensembles where I use the flugel. In a solo sense, I'd say the flugelhorn is the more satisfying instrument, for me. It has a very warm, mellow sound; because of this quality I love to play solos on it. That's the reason it's being used more and more. As a leader, Duke is the best. No restrictions. That's about all I could say. Certainly he's electrifying; as soon as he walks on stage, you know, all eyes are on him. He creates his own atmosphere, and you just sort of feel it. The band comes to life—immediately.

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I guess I'll be staying with the band. I don't have any particular plans, but you never know what can happen."

Another newcomer was Harold Minerve, who solos here on "Addi". "This job is far more than just work", he stated. "I love what I do. I'm a newcomer, but I can say I'm an oldcomer too, because I used to moonlight with Mercer, and occasionally I would work with the band. Yes, I have a good time here —among all my friends. Especially my good friend, Harry Carney. Even though this is a big band, I have a little freedom —which I enjoy. As a new man, I'm going to have to be woven into the situation. I play the double reeds. Clarinet was my first instrument, to which I added saxophone, flute; also I play oboe, so that's the same difference as the English horn or the bassoon. I'm a woodwind player, actually."

While some of the tunes from the program, like Money Johnson's impersonation of Louis Armstrong singing and playing "Hello Dolly" or "Everybody Wants to Know" seem to be

commercial crowd pleasers, Ellington's talent and style are clearly seen on his more serious performances here. Some examples include "La Plus Belle Africaine", the rarely heard pieces "Addi" and "Goof" and the poignant encore by Billy Strayhorn, "Lotus Blossom", played here as a duet with bassist Joe Benjamin (although the main voice heard here is Ellington's piano). Duke was highly affected by Strayhorn's death on March 31, 1967. He recorded an album that same year which paid homage to his longtime co-composer, titled *And His Mother Called Him Bill*. Ellington's piano shines here, playing unusual variations on the weathered standard "Satin Doll" as well as an exquisite and unexpected ragtime style piano solo intro to "Hello Dolly".

As a bonus to this performance, we have added a set recorded during a long dance engagement by the Ellington band in 1958. Several hours of music were recorded during Ellington's extended dance dates of March 4 and March 5, 1958. Many of the tunes from these engagements have circulated here and

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there on CD editions (most of them as part of two volumes of the 10-CD edition titled *Private Collection*). However, with the sole exception of "Caravan" and "Blues in Orbit", none of the selections heard here have previously appeared on CD. The aforementioned collection also included a version of "Juniflip", but this is an alternate version that was probably played during a different set that same night. A final note: this seems to be the only appearance of the popular "Beer Barrel Polka" in Ellington's entire discography!

**Mike Lewis (2009)**



- 01 I'M BEGINNING TO SEE THE LIGHT (Duke Ellington-Don George-Harry James-Johnny Hodges) 1:10  
02 ADDI (Duke Ellington) 3:19  
03 THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE (Mercer Ellington-Ted Parsons) 3:32  
04 HELLO DOLLY (Jerry Herman) 3:31  
05 LA PLUS BELLE AFRICAINE (Duke Ellington) 8:12  
06 EVERYBODY WANTS TO KNOW (J. B. Lenoir) 2:09  
07 MEDLEY: SOPHISTICATED LADY/CARAVAN (Duke Ellington-Irving Mills-Mitchell Parish/Juan Tizol-Irving Mills-Duke Ellington) 5:34  
08 SATIN DOLL (Duke Ellington-Billy Strayhorn-Johnny Mercer) 3:27  
09 GOOF (Duke Ellington) 4:43  
10 LOTUS BLOSSOM (Billy Strayhorn) 2:43  
11 SMADA (Duke Ellington-Billy Strayhorn) 2:22\*  
12 VIVI (Duke Ellington) 2:56\*  
13 FRIVOLOUS BANTA (Duke Ellington) 2:29\*  
14 JUST SCRATCHIN' THE SURFACE 4:56\*  
15 BLUES IN ORBIT (Billy Strayhorn) 5:02\*  
16 JUNIFLIP (Duke Ellington) 5:26\*  
17 BEER BARREL POLKA (Traditional) 2:09\*  
18 DISCONTENTED (Duke Ellington) 4:26\*  
19 CARAVAN (Juan Tizol-Irving Mills-Duke Ellington) 7:44\*

TOTAL TIME: 76:00

#### DUKE ELLINGTON & His Orchestra

Cootie Williams (tp, vcl), Mercer Ellington, Johnny Coles, Eddie Preston (tp), Harold "Money" Johnson (tp, vcl on 4 only), Malcolm Taylor, Chuck Connors, Booty Wood (tb), Russell Procope (as, cl), Harold "Geezil" Minerve (as, fl, pic), Norris Turney (as, ts, cl, fl), Harold Ashby (ts, cl), Paul Gonsalves (ts), Harry Carney (bar, cl, b-cl), Duke Ellington (p), Joe Benjamin (b), Rufus Jones (d), Nell Brookshire (vcl on 6 only).

Congress Hall, Warsaw, Poland, October 30, 1971.

#### \*BONUS TRACKS (11-19):

Harold "Shorty" Baker, Clark Terry (tp), Ray Nance (tp, vin, vcl), Quentin Jackson, Britt Woodman, John Sanders (tb), Jimmy Hamilton (cl, ts), Bill Graham (as, ts, bar), Russell Procope (as, cl), Paul Gonsalves (ts), Harry Carney (bar, cl, b-cl), Duke Ellington (p), Jimmy Woode (b), Sam Woodyard (d).  
Travis Air Force Base, Suisun City, California, March 4, 1958.

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This release presents Ellington's 1971 performance in Warsaw for the first time ever on CD. The program was typical of Duke, including new tunes as well as all-time favourites, and ending with a marvellous duet by Duke and bassist Joe Benjamin on Billy Strayhorn's "Lotus Blossom". As a bonus, we have included a 1958 live set by the Duke at an Air Force dance date. With the exception of "Blues in Orbit" and "Caravan", all of these tunes also appear here on CD for the first time ever.

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OCTOBER 30, 1971

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Travis Air Force Base, Suisun City, California, March 4, 1958.

See inside booklet for complete information.

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