



NAXOS
JAZZ
LEGENDS

DUKE ELLINGTON



COTTON CLUB STOMP • 1927-1931

DUKE ELLINGTON

Cotton Club Stomp: Classic Recordings, 1927-1931

By general agreement the single most influential composer in jazz history, the Duke, along with Louis Armstrong and very few others, shall remain atop the list of its all-time greatest commercial practitioners. From the late 1920s, his burgeoning fame and commercial recordings were synonymous among enthusiasts while in later years he also became a major protagonist of big band jazz. As for his marketability, as early as 1933 *Fortune*, an up-market recording industry trade magazine, was already introducing Duke Ellington “who grosses \$250,000 a year with *Mood Indigo* and *Cotton Club Stomp*”.

Born in Washington DC on 29th April, 1899, butler's son Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington was intended by his father for bigger and better things. Ellington senior hoped his son would be an artist but instead, from the age of seven, he played ragtime piano in imitation of Joplin and the other keyboard greats. The die was cast and at seventeen he made his solo debut and played piano with various groups in and around Washington. By 1922, he had made a personally successful – if financially disastrous – first appearance in New York. Acting on the advice of Fats Waller, Ellington transferred with Elmer Snowden's Washingtonians to the Big Apple in 1923. Recorded first in 1924, the original group included Ellington (piano), Snowden (banjo), Otto Hardwick (sax), Arthur Whetsol (trumpet), and Sonny Greer (drums) and this ensemble, resident at Broadway's Kentucky Club, had evolved by 1927 into the ten-piece band we hear on *Creole Love Call* and *Black And Tan Fantasie*. Its other personnel comprised Bubber Miley (trumpet), Tricky Sam Nanton (trombone), Harry Carney (baritone sax), Rudy Jackson (clarinet and tenor sax), Wellman Braud (bass) and Fred Guy (replacing Snowden – banjo).

1927 proved the watershed in Ellington's career. That year first saw his band, a black group entertaining the upper echelons of “civilised” white high society, at Harlem's Cotton Club where he would remain until 1933 and where, with the addition of Barney Bigard (clarinet) replacing Jackson, Johnny Hodges (sax) and trumpeters Freddie Jenkins and Cootie Williams (this last replacing Miley), the “jungle” band was increased to twelve members. It was also the year of his fortuitous teaming with Irving Mills, the music publisher, astute entrepreneur and fixer who was responsible for Ellington's publicity and marketing, for the band's first broadcasts and also for the prolific array of pseudonyms the orchestra used for recording. Billed as the Harlem Footwarmers, Mills's Ten Blackberries, the Harlem Hot Chocolates and the Memphis Hot Shots they recorded variously during these years for Victor, Columbia and Brunswick, appearing also on those companies' subsidiary labels (Okeh, Cameo, Perfect, Velvetone, etc.) pressed for chain stores.

Notwithstanding the stock exchange crisis of 1929, the band went – with offstage assistance from Mills – from strength to strength following its appearance in *Show Girl*, a Florenz Ziegfeld Broadway musical with a Gershwin score and Maurice Chevalier as its star. By the end of 1930 they had already made over 200 recordings and appeared in Hollywood in the RKO *Amos and Andy* comedy talkie *Check And Double Check*, while the success of his 1930 song *Mood Indigo* brought Duke world recognition. Ellington always claimed that he wrote this tune, originally entitled “Dreamy Blues”, while his mother was cooking his dinner.

In terms of originality Ellington has often been singled out as a major jazz composer. His highly-polished style was however consciously formed, self-contained and essentially non-improvisational, and while universally admired it has had only a peripheral influence on mainstream jazz history. The compositions of this formative Cotton Club period (this includes most of the items in this collection) have long been so familiar as to have the ring of jazz classics; by 1933 (the year he left the Cotton Club

to be replaced by Cab Calloway) they had already won him an enormous Transatlantic following. Despite the “Jungle Band” label (applied tongue-in-cheek for publicity purposes) the Ellington outfit was a class, sophisticated act which eschewed all hokum – on these records, at least – on which an elegant, seamlessly instrumental ensemble and a seemingly inexhaustible variety of tonal coloration combine into what Strayhorn aptly defined as the “Ellington Effect”. While this can best be appreciated in the Ellington arrangements (*Mood Indigo*, *Misty Mornin’*, *The Mooche* and *Black And Tan Fantasie* are outstanding examples), it also extends to such vocal items as *Hot Feet* (a Dorothy Fields - Jimmy McHugh Cotton Club revue number), *Creole Love Call* (in which Adelaide Hall’s voice is employed instrumentally) and even to Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby’s *Three Little Words* (with an “integrated” offering from the Rhythm Boys).

Peter Dempsey, 2000

Transfers: David Lennick

Digital Noise Reduction: Graham Newton

Design: Ron Hoares

1. COTTON CLUB STOMP (Rodgers-Carney-Ellington)
Duke Ellington & His Cotton Club Orchestra
(Victor V-38079, mx BVE 59171-2) Rec. 3rd May, 1929, New York 2:53
2. MOOD INDIGO (Ellington-Mills-Bigard)
The Jungle Band
(Brunswick 4952, mx E 34928-A) Rec. 17th October, 1930, New York 2:53
3. ROCKIN’ IN RHYTHM (Ellington-Carney-Mills)
The Jungle Band
(Brunswick 6038, mx E 35801-A) Rec. 14th January, 1931, New York 3:01
4. MISTY MORNIN’ (Whetsol-Ellington)
Duke Ellington & His Cotton Club Orchestra; featuring Lonnie Johnson, guitar
(Okeh 8662, mx W 401352-D) Rec. 22nd November, 1928, New York 3:16
5. THE MOOCHE (Ellington-Mills)
Duke Ellington & His Cotton Club Orchestra
(Victor V-38034, mx BVE 47799-2) Rec. 30th October, 1928, New York 3:32
6. RING DEM BELLS (Ellington-Mills)
Duke Ellington & His Orchestra; featuring Cootie Williams, vocal
(Victor 22528, mx PBVE 61011-6) Rec. 26th August, 1930, Hollywood 2:57
7. THREE LITTLE WORDS (Kalmar-Ruby)
Duke Ellington & His Orchestra; featuring The Rhythm Boys, vocal
(Victor 22528, mx PBVE 61013-5) Rec. 26th August, 1930, Hollywood 3:05
8. DOUBLE CHECK STOMP (Bigard)
The Jungle Band; featuring Cornell Smelser, accordion
(Brunswick 4783, mx E 32612-A) Rec. 22nd April, 1930, New York 2:53
9. THE BLUES WITH A FEELIN’ (Ellington)
Duke Ellington & His Cotton Club Orchestra
(Okeh 8662, mx W 401350-D) Rec. 22nd November, 1928, New York 3:15

10. JUBILEE STOMP (Ellington)
Duke Ellington & His Orchestra
(Victor 21580, mx BVE 43503-2) Rec. 26th March, 1928, New York 2:35
11. CREOLE LOVE CALL (Ellington-Miley-Jackson)
Duke Ellington & His Orchestra; featuring Adelaide Hall, vocal
(Victor 21137, mx BVE 39370-1) Rec. 26th October, 1927, Camden, NJ 3:15
12. HARLEM RIVER QUIVER (BROWN BERRIES) (Fields-McHugh-Healy)
Duke Ellington & His Orchestra
(Victor 21284, mx BVE 41244-1) Rec. 19th December, 1927, New York 2:48
13. BLACK BEAUTY (Ellington)
Duke Ellington & His Orchestra
(Victor 21580, mx BVE 43502-2) Rec. 26th March, 1928, New York 2:52
14. HOT FEET (Fields-McHugh)
Duke Ellington & His Cotton Club Orchestra; featuring Cootie Williams, vocal
(Victor V-38065, mx BVE 49768-2) Rec. 7th March, 1929, New York 2:36
15. SARATOGA SWING (Bigard)
Duke Ellington & His Cotton Club Orchestra
(Victor V-38058, mx BVE 59174-2) Rec. 3rd May, 1929, New York 2:49
16. SHOUT 'EM AUNT TILLIE (Ellington-Mills)
Duke Ellington & His Cotton Club Orchestra
(Victor 23041, mx BVE 62195-2) Rec. 4th June, 1930, New York 2:56
17. BLACK AND TAN FANTASIE (Ellington-Miley)
Duke Ellington & His Orchestra
(Victor 21137, mx BVE 40155-4) Rec. 26th October, 1927, Camden, NJ 3:09
18. IT'S A GLORY (Ellington)
Duke Ellington & His Orchestra
(Victor 22791, mx BVE 68239-1) Rec. 16th June, 1931, Camden, NJ 3:11

Personnel

26th October, 1927 · 19th December, 1927 · 26th March, 1928

Duke Ellington, piano; **Bubber Miley**, **Louis Metcalf**, trumpets; **Joe Nanton**, trombone; **Otto Hardwick**, soprano/alto/baritone sax; **Harry Carney**, clarinet/alto/baritone sax; **Rudy Jackson**, clarinet/tenor sax; **Fred Guy**, banjo; **Wellman Braud**, bass; **Sonny Greer**, drums
30th October, 1928

Duke Ellington, piano; **Freddy Jenkins**, **Arthur Whetsol**, trumpets; **Joe Nanton**, trombone; **Johnny Hodges**, clarinet/soprano/alto sax; **Harry Carney**, clarinet/alto/baritone sax; **Barnet Bigard**, clarinet/tenor sax; **Fred Guy**, banjo; **Wellman Braud**, bass; **Sonny Greer**, drums

22nd November, 1928

Duke Ellington, piano; **Bubber Miley**, **Arthur Whetsol**, **Freddy Jenkins**, trumpets; **Joe Nanton**, trombone; **Johnny Hodges**, clarinet/soprano/alto sax; **Otto Hardwick**, alto/baritone sax; **Harry Carney**, clarinet/alto/baritone sax; **Barnet Bigard**, clarinet/tenor sax; **Fred Guy**, banjo; **Wellman Braud**, bass; **Sonny Greer**, drums

7th March, 1929 · 3rd May, 1929

Duke Ellington, piano; **Arthur Whetsol**, **Freddy Jenkins**, **Cootie Williams**, trumpets; **Joe Nanton**, trombone; **Johnny Hodges**, clarinet/soprano/alto sax; **Harry Carney**, clarinet/alto/baritone sax; **Barnet Bigard**, clarinet/tenor sax; **Fred Guy**, banjo; **Wellman Braud**, bass; **Sonny Greer**, drums

22nd April, 1930 · 17th October, 1930 · 14th January, 1931 · 16th June, 1931

Duke Ellington, piano; **Arthur Whetsol**, **Freddy Jenkins**, **Cootie Williams**, trumpets; **Joe Nanton**, trombone; **Juan Tizol**, valve trombone; **Johnny Hodges**, clarinet/soprano/alto sax; **Harry Carney**, clarinet/alto/baritone sax; **Barnet Bigard**, clarinet/tenor sax; **Fred Guy**, banjo; **Wellman Braud**, bass; **Sonny Greer**, drums

4th June, 1930

As 22nd April, except **Freddy Jenkins** not present

26th August, 1930

As 22nd April, plus **Charlie Barnet**, chimes, on "RING DEM BELLS"; also **Bing Crosby**, **Harry Barris** and **Al Rinker**, vocals, on "THREE LITTLE WORDS"

The Naxos Historical labels aim to make available the greatest recordings of the history of recorded music, in the best and truest sound that contemporary technology can provide. To achieve this aim, Naxos has engaged a number of respected restorers who have the dedication, skill and experience to produce restorations that have set new standards in the field of historical recordings.

David Lennick

As a producer of CD reissues, David Lennick's work in this field grew directly from his own needs as a broadcaster specializing in vintage material and the need to make it listenable while being transmitted through equalizers, compressors and the inherent limitations of A.M. radio. Equally at home in classical, pop, jazz and nostalgia, Lennick describes himself as exercising as much control as possible on the final product, in conjunction with CEDAR noise reduction applied by Graham Newton in Toronto. As both broadcaster and re-issue producer, he relies on his own extensive collection as well as those made available to him by private collectors, the University of Toronto, the International Piano Archives at Maryland, Syracuse University and others.

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1. Cotton Club Stomp 2:53
2. Mood Indigo 2:53
3. Rockin' In Rhythm 3:01
4. Misty Mornin' 3:16
5. The Mooche 3:32
6. Ring Dem Bells 2:57
7. Three Little Words 3:05
8. Double Check Stomp 2:53
9. The Blues With A Feelin' 3:15
10. Jubilee Stomp 2:35
11. Creole Love Call 3:15
12. Harlem River Quiver (Brown Berries) 2:48
13. Black Beauty 2:52
14. Hot Feet 2:36
15. Saratoga Swing 2:49
16. Shoot 'Em Aunt Tillie 2:56
17. Black And Tan Fantasie 3:09
18. It's A Glory 3:11

Total Time 55:00

Transfers and Production by David Lennick

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