



**DUKE
ELLINGTON**

Vol. 7

‘COTTON TAIL’

Original 1940 Recordings

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**COMPACT
disc**
DIGITAL AUDIO

**NAXOS
JAZZ
LEGENDS**

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GEMA

ADD

1. Jack The Bear 2. Morning Glory 3. Ko-Ko 4. Concerto For Cootie
(Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me) 5. Me And You 6. Cotton Tail
7. Never No Lament (Don't Get Around Much Any More) 8. Dusk
9. Bojangles 10. A Portrait Of Bert Williams 11. Harlem Air-Shaft
12. Sepia Panorama 13. In A Mellotone 14. Five O'Clock Whistle
15. Warm Valley 16. Chlo-e 17. Across The Track Blues
18. The Sidewalks Of New York 19. Flamingo
20. Rumpus In Richmond

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**NAXOS
JAZZ
LEGENDS**

DUKE ELLINGTON

*Classic
Recordings
Vol. 7
1940*

**COTTON
TAIL**

Featuring
**IVIE
ANDERSON**



DUKE ELLINGTON *Vol. 7* 'Cotton Tail' Original Recordings 1940

By 1940, Duke Ellington had been a major bandleader for thirteen years, he had developed a personal style as a pianist, he was an innovative arranger and he had written a couple of dozen standards. A household name for a decade and widely recognized as a genius, Ellington led a unique orchestra that continued to thrive during the swing era despite the heavy competition. Amazingly enough in 1940, his big band actually improved from the high level it had attained in the late 1930s. In fact, music historians often consider Ellington's orchestra of 1940-42 to be his greatest.

Born 29 April 1899 in Washington D.C., Edward Kennedy Ellington early on had dreams of being an artist but instead he ended up painting music with unique tone colours. He enjoyed watching local ragtime and stride pianists perform and he emulated his musical heroes, even slowing down James P. Johnson piano rolls so he could learn stride piano. Due to his charming personality, Ellington was able to get off to a faster start in his hometown than his early abilities deserved. Before he had a regular band, he placed a large ad in the *Yellow Pages* and was soon sending out groups to parties and engagements. He only knew how to play a few songs initially, so his appearances with each of the orchestras was purposely brief.

Fortunately he was able to develop his musical talents quickly and in 1922 he went to New York for the first time to play with clarinetist Wilbur Sweatman's group. That gig did not last long and he soon went home, but the following year he returned to the Big Apple as a member of banjoist Elmer Snowden's Washingtonians. A money dispute the following year resulted in the sidemen having a mutiny and making Ellington the leader.

The Washingtonians were based at the Kentucky Club during 1924-27, developing their sound based on Ellington's writing and the inventive plunger mute work of trumpeter Bubber Miley and trombonist Tricky Sam Nanton. In December 1927 Ellington landed a job for his orchestra as the house band at the Cotton Club and the regular radio broadcasts resulted in the band soon being billed accurately as Duke Ellington's Famous Orchestra.

The Cotton Club position and the Harlem nightlife scene shielded Ellington and his musicians from the Depression and, years before the swing era began, Duke Ellington was a household name. His band's personnel was very stable throughout the 1930s and their recordings were quite consistent both in their quality and their quantity.

Even for Ellington, his lineup of musicians in

1940 was very impressive. Cootie Williams (Bubber Miley's successor) and Rex Stewart had very different but equally unique sounds on trumpet, and the same can be said for the smooth virtuosity of Lawrence Brown and the otherworldly sounds of his fellow trombonist Tricky Sam Nanton. Barney Bigard was one of the major clarinetists in jazz, Johnny Hodges was indisputably the top altoist and Harry Carney was virtually the only major soloist on baritone sax. Ben Webster, the newest member of the band having joined in March 1940, was Ellington's first important tenor soloist and he ranked just below Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young on his instrument. In addition to such fine section players as trumpeter Wallace Jones, valve trombonist Juan Tizol, altoist Otto Hardwicke, rhythm guitarist Fred Guy and drummer Sonny Greer, Ellington was himself a major player. And the year before he had added the first modern bass soloist in jazz, Jimmy Blanton.

Add to that the adventurous arrangements and compositions of Ellington and his new musical partner Billy Strayhorn, and one has an orchestra with unlimited potential. It is no wonder that so many of Duke's recordings during 1940 are memorable. Out of the twenty selections on this collection, four (*Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me*, *Cotton Tail*, *Don't Get Around Anymore* and *In A Mellotone*) became standards, *Flamingo* was a big hit and *Five O'Clock Whistle* and *Harlem Air Shaft* were popular.

The opener *Jack The Bear* has some prominent Blanton bass, which was unprecedented in jazz at the time when bassists were almost always restricted to simply playing four notes to the bar. There are also some fine spots for the unique voices of Bigard, Carney and Nanton but Blanton constantly commands one's attention. *Morning Glory* was one of the finest features for Rex Stewart, whose half-valve technique allowed him to utilize alternate fingering to achieve an unusual tone. *Ko-Ko*, although a simple minor blues, is completely unpredictable, mostly featuring the colors of the ensemble propelled by Blanton.

Concerto For Cootie, a showcase for Cootie Williams, would soon have its melody simplified, its alternate theme discarded and lyrics added, transforming it into *Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me*. Ivie Anderson, who had already been with Duke's band for eight years, sings on the forgotten but rather catchy *Me And You* which features Lawrence Brown and Johnny Hodges trading off. *Cotton Tail*, one of those rare instrumental performances where every single note fits, has long been renowned for its perfect Ben Webster tenor solo and the chorus by the saxophone section, both of which became integral parts of the song.

Never No Lament would, like *Concerto For Cootie*, have its name changed (to *Don't Get Around Much Anymore*) when lyrics were added but the song itself would be unchanged. Hodges plays beautifully, Williams shows why he was considered such a valuable member of the

orchestra and Brown plays with a great deal of authority. **Dusk** is a haunting ballad with an eerie harmony, a beautiful melody and an inventive utilization of the sounds of Stewart and Brown. **Bojangles** pays tribute to the very popular tap dancer Bill "Bojangles" Robinson while **A Portrait Of Bert Williams** remembers the pioneering black entertainer.

The plot behind **Harlem Air Shaft** was supposedly the depiction of the many musical sounds and moods that can be heard in an apartment house in Harlem although the results are uniformly swinging. Several Ellington soloists are heard from briefly on **Sepia Panorama** (including Webster and Carney) but Blanton steals the show. Blanton is also significant on **In A Mellotone** (Ellington's fresh melody over the chord changes of "Rose Room") but the stars are Hodges and especially Cootie.

Ivie Anderson returns to sing the sly lyrics of **Five O'Clock Whistle** while Johnny Hodges sounds quite sensuous on the slow ballad **Warm Valley**. **Chlo-e**, which was initially a sentimental ballad until being destroyed by Spike Jones in the mid-1940s, was an off-the-wall choice for Ellington to record. Billy Strayhorn's arrangement finds unexpected warmth in the tune, and features individual statements by Nanton, Blanton and Webster. **Across The Track Blues** has spots for Bigard, Stewart and Brown although it is the arranged ensembles behind the solos that really give this

tune its own personality.

In November 1940 it was major news in the swing world when Cootie Williams accepted a lucrative offer to join Benny Goodman's orchestra. Luckily for Ellington, he quickly ran across Ray Nance, a cornetist who not only could fill in expertly for Williams as a plunger mute specialist but was a top jazz violin soloist and a personable vocalist. His impact would be quite strong in 1941.

Nance was in the trumpet section when the band revived the old warhorse **The Sidewalks Of New York** in inspired fashion with spots for Bigard, Nanton (perfect for this song), Webster, Hodges and Carney. **Flamingo** was an oddity, an Ellington hit on a song that Duke and Strayhorn did not write. It made Herb Jeffries into a star and in 2004 the 92-year old singer (who sounds sixty) still happily answers requests for the ballad. This collection closes with **Rumpus In Richmond**, recorded a few months before Cootie Williams left Ellington, starring Cootie, Brown, Bigard and the glorious Ellington ensemble.

If Duke Ellington had done nothing but record the twenty selections on this set, he would be considered immortal. But for Duke, this was just one year out of a truly remarkable half-century career full of musical gems.

— Scott Yanow
author of seven jazz books including *Swing, Bebop, Trumpet Kings and Jazz On Record 1917-76*

1. **Jack The Bear** 3:18
(Duke Ellington)
Victor 26536, mx BS 044888-1
Recorded 6 March 1940, Chicago
2. **Morning Glory** 3:20
(Duke Ellington-Rex Stewart)
Victor 26536, mx BS 044890-1
Recorded 6 March 1940, Chicago
3. **Ko-Ko** 2:46
(Duke Ellington)
Victor 26577, mx BS 044889-2
Recorded 6 March 1940, Chicago
4. **Concerto For Cootie (Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me)** 3:23
(Duke Ellington-Bob Russell)
Victor 26598, mx BS 049016-1
Recorded 15 March 1940, Chicago (3:18)
5. **Me And You** 2:58
(Duke Ellington)
Ivie Anderson, vocal
Victor 26598, mx BS 049017-1
Recorded 15 March 1940, Chicago
6. **Cotton Tail** 3:14
(Duke Ellington)
Victor 26610, mx PBS 049655-1
Recorded 4 May 1940, Hollywood
7. **Never No Lament (Don't Get Around Much Any More)** 3:21
(Duke Ellington-Bob Russell)
Victor 26610, mx PBS 049656-1
Recorded 4 May 1940, Hollywood (3:16)
8. **Trump** 3:22
(Duke Ellington)
Victor 26677, mx BS 053020
Recorded 28 May 1940, Chicago
9. **Bojangles** 2:56
(Duke Ellington)
Victor 26644, mx BS 050321-1
Recorded 28 May 1940, Chicago
10. **A Portrait Of Bert Williams** 3:12
(Duke Ellington)
Victor 26644, mx BS 050322-1
Recorded 28 May 1940, Chicago
11. **Harlem Air-Shaft** 3:02
(Duke Ellington)
Victor 26731, mx BS 054606-1
Recorded 22 July 1940, New York
12. **Sepia Panorama** 3:27
(Duke Ellington)
Victor 26731, mx BS 054625-1
24 July 1940, New York
13. **In A Mellotone** 3:20
(Duke Ellington)
Victor 26788, mx BS 053428-1
Recorded 5 September 1940, New York
14. **Five O'Clock Whistle** 3:22
(Kim Gannon-Joe Myrow-Gene Irwin)
Ivie Anderson, vocal
Victor 26748, mx BS 053429-1
Recorded 5 September 1940, New York
15. **Warm Valley** 3:26
(Duke Ellington)
Victor 26796, mx BS 053430-3
Recorded 17 October 1940, Chicago
16. **Chlo-e** 3:29
(Gus Kahn-Neil Moret)
Victor 27235, mx BS 053580-1
Recorded 28 October 1940, Chicago

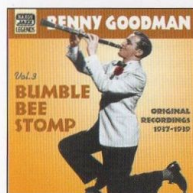
17. **Across The Track Blues** 3:03
 (Duke Ellington)
 Victor 27235, mx BS 053579-1
 Recorded 28 October 1940, Chicago
18. **The Sidewalks Of New York** 3:17
 (Chas. B. Lawlor-James W. Blake)
 Victor 27380, mx BS 053780-1
 Recorded 28 December 1940, Chicago
19. **Flamingo** 3:27
 (Ted Grouya-Edward Anderson)
 Herb Jeffries, vocal
 Victor 27326, mx BS 053781-1
 Recorded 28 December 1940, Chicago
20. **Rumpus In Richmond** 2:51
 (Duke Ellington)
 Victor 26788, mx BS 054609-1
 Recorded 22 July 1940, New York

Transfers & Production: David Lennick
 Digital Noise Reduction: K&A Productions Ltd.
 Original monochrome photo of Duke Ellington
 from Michael Ochs Archives / Redferns

Personnel

DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS FAMOUS ORCHESTRA
 Cootie Williams, Wallace Jones, trumpets; Rex
 Stewart, cornet; Tricky Sam Nanton, Lawrence
 Brown, trombones; Juan Tizol, valve trombone;
 Johnny Hodges, alto & soprano sax; Otto
 Hardwick, alto & bass sax; Ben Webster, tenor
 sax; Harry Carey, baritone sax, clarinet; Duke
 Ellington, piano; Fred Guy, guitar; Jimmy
 Blanton, bass; Sonny Greer, drums

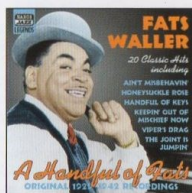
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NOTES AND FULL RECORDING DETAILS INCLUDED

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Design: Ron Hoares

Total
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64:33

ADD



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