



## DUKE ELLINGTON *Vol. 9* 'Black, Brown and Beige' Original Recordings 1943-1945

In Duke Ellington's life, 1943 would be best remembered for his debut at Carnegie Hall. The 23 January concert was highlighted by Ellington's fifty-minute three-part work *Black, Brown and Beige*, which sought to musically sum up the black experience in the United States. For most musicians, such an auspicious occasion could be the highpoint of their career, followed by a gradual decline and regular revisits to past glories. But for Duke Ellington, it was just another stepping stone in a long musical journey.

Edward Kennedy Ellington was born 29 April 1899 in Washington D.C. Although he thought of becoming an artist, after the youth experienced the music and the lifestyle of local piano 'professors', he knew that music was going to be his calling. Ellington (who gained his lifelong nickname 'Duke' due to the classy way that he handled himself) actually started his professional career before he was really ready and when he only knew a few songs on piano. He took out the largest ad possible in the local *Yellow Pages*, one which extolled the virtues of his orchestra even though it did not exist. When many calls came in, Ellington organized several bands, appearing with each one playing the few songs he knew before heading out to make an appearance at the next job.

Obviously that situation could not last for long, so Ellington worked hard to develop his playing, greatly broadening his repertoire and

writing songs of his own, starting with the 1917 "Soda Fountain Rag". He was making a comfortable living when in 1922 he accepted an offer to join clarinetist Wilbur Sweatman's band in New York. After that group's breakup, Duke returned home but came back to New York in 1923 as a member of Elmer Snowden's Washingtonians. The band caught on and, when a money dispute resulted in Snowden departing, Ellington became its leader. During a three-year stint at the Kentucky Club (1924-27), the Washingtonians developed their own musical personality (featuring the remarkable sounds of trumpeter Bubber Miley and trombonist Tricky Sam Nanton), the band made its first recordings and Ellington became an important arranger-composer. After being hired as the house band at the Cotton Club in December 1927, Duke Ellington's orchestra through its radio broadcasts became nationally famous while its many unique recordings made it a household name overseas by the early 1930s.

Duke Ellington's prime years both preceded and long outlasted the swing era. As a pianist, he began as a stride player yet always remained modern. His wide range of compositions included three-minute instrumental gems, songs that caught on as standards, impressionistic pieces and extended works. Ellington's arranging ability was particularly original and allowed him to blend together unique solo talents to form a unified

ensemble sound. And as a bandleader, his orchestra was always near the top of its field and in its own category, whether it was 1927 or 1967.

With the exception of the *Black, Brown and Beige* excerpts, the music on Vol. 9 in this series is comprised of radio transcriptions, performances recorded specifically to be played on the radio as opposed to commercially available records. In November 1943, the 44-year old bandleader, despite the recent losses of tenor-saxophonist Ben Webster and clarinetist Barney Bigard, still featured ten major soloists: trumpeters Taft Jordan, Ray Nance and Shorty Baker, cornetist Rex Stewart, the very different trombone styles of Tricky Sam Nanton and Lawrence Brown, clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton, altoist Johnny Hodges, baritonist Harry Carney and Duke himself on piano.

The 8 November session is a bit unusual in that 26-year old Dizzy Gillespie was subbing in the trumpet section (Nance and Baker were absent), but unfortunately the bop innovator was given no solo space. **Rockin' In Rhythm**, first recorded by Duke in 1930, was used as a set opener for decades and served as an excellent way to introduce the Ellington Orchestra. Lawrence Brown is heard early on and Tricky Sam Nanton takes a chorus later in the performance.

**Boy Meets Horn**, first recorded in 1938, was always a feature for cornetist Rex Stewart's unusual half-valve technique. By using alternate fingerings, Stewart's bent notes had their own particular flavour and his lengthy solo on the transcription date differs quite a bit from the original popular recording. Altoist Johnny Hodges, whose tone has never been surpassed, is

in the spotlight throughout **Hop, Skip And Jump**, a song that was renamed "Rockabye River" when it was commercially recorded in 1946.

**Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me** was originally an instrumental showcase for trumpeter Cootie Williams in 1940 when it was known as "Concerto For Cootie". After being given words by Bob Russell and a new title, it became a standard; singer Al Hibbler and trombonist Brown are the stars of this version. Mary Lou Williams, who at the time was the wife of trumpeter Harold 'Shorty' Baker (who ironically was not present that day), arranged **Blue Skies** for the Ellington band. It would later be renamed "Trumpets No End" and have more of a focus on the trumpeters. For this early rendition, Ellington, Taft Jordan, Lawrence Brown, the obscure tenor-saxophonist Elbert 'Skippy' Williams (who fares well), Rex Stewart, Johnny Hodges and Jimmy Hamilton get their spots. **Mood Indigo**, one of Ellington's most famous compositions, was recorded many times after its 1930 debut. This five-minute version, with lead trumpeter Wallace Jones, Harry Carney (on clarinet) and the pianist in prominent roles, is definitive.

**Three Cent Stomp**, which is similar to the earlier "Stomp Jones," has brief but hot moments from the likes of Harold 'Shorty' Baker, Tricky Sam Nanton, Ray Nance, bassist Junior Raglin, Rex Stewart and Skippy Williams. **Caravan**, which became a standard shortly after its 1936 debut, is still one of the most exotic pieces in jazz. Valve trombonist Juan Tizol, who composed the classic, is featured in the melody statement and followed by clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton (already the most modern musician in



the band next to the leader), Nance on violin and trumpeter Baker, all of whom are accompanied by inspired backing from Ellington.

It **Don't Mean A Thing**, which predicted the swing era back in 1932, went through a great deal of evolution through the years. This runthrough has Ray Nance and Taft Jordan sharing the opening vocal and later trading off on violin and trumpet before Skippy Williams helps bring the piece to a climax. However Tricky Sam Nanton steals the show in the second chorus. No one ever sounded quite like him. **Creole Love Call**, an Ellington favourite from 1927, revives the original 'jungle style' of the early band. Wallace Jones is quite effective on trumpet, and there are spots for Nanton, Carney (on clarinet) and a trombone duet by Brown and Tizol. Finishing the 1943 portion of this compilation is **Rose Room**. Originally a feature for Duke's former clarinettist Barney Bigard, Jimmy Hamilton starts out in Bigard's role before Brown and Hodges get their say.

The remainder of the collection features

1. **Rockin' In Rhythm** 3:54  
(Duke Ellington-Harry Carney-Irving Mills)  
World Program Service 200-6049/50,  
mx BB 37652-B  
Recorded 8 November 1943
2. **Boy Meets Horn** 4:45  
(Duke Ellington-Rex Stewart)  
Featuring Rex Stewart, cornet  
World Program Service 200-6022/23,  
mx BB 37652-C  
Recorded 8 November 1943

Duke Ellington's orchestra during December 1944 and January 1945 playing excerpts from his **Black, Brown And Beige**. Highlights of the fifty-minute work, which was never recorded in complete form in the studio by Ellington (although the Carnegie Hall version was released decades later), is heard here in six parts totalling 18 minutes plus **Carnegie Blues** which is an extension of **Come Sunday**. These portions give listeners the essence of the work which includes the atmospheric **Work Song**, the beautiful hymn **Come Sunday** (featuring altoist Hodges and Nance's violin) and Joya Sherrill singing **The Blues**.

The music throughout this collection is consistently remarkable, but only a small sampling of the enormous output of Duke Ellington, a true musical genius.

*Scott Yanow*

— author of nine jazz books including *Jazz On Film, Swing, Bebop, Trumpet Kings, Jazz On Record 1917-76* and *Duke Ellington, a picture book on Ellington*

3. **Hop, Skip And Jump** 2:39  
(Duke Ellington)  
World Program Service 200-6019,  
mx BB 37653-A  
Recorded 8 November 1943
4. **Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me** 3:22  
(Duke Ellington-Bob Russell)  
Al Hibbler, vocal  
World Program Service 200-6502,  
mx BB 37652-D  
Recorded 8 November 1943

5. **Blue Skies** 3:12  
(Irving Berlin, arr. Mary Lou Williams)  
World Program Service 200-6052,  
mx BB 37653-B  
Recorded 8 November 1943
6. **Mood Indigo** 5:01  
(Duke Ellington-Barney Bigard-Irving Mills)  
World Program Service 200-6032/3,  
mx BB 37653-B  
Recorded 8 November 1943
7. **Three Cent Stomp** 3:25  
(Duke Ellington)  
World Program Service 200-6499/500,  
mx BB 37667-B  
Recorded 9 November 1943
8. **Caravan** 4:41  
(Juan Tizol-Duke Ellington-Irving Mills)  
World Program Service 200-7700/01,  
mx BB 37668-B  
Recorded 9 November 1943
9. **It Don't Mean A Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)** 2:45  
(Duke Ellington-Irving Mills)  
Ray Nance & Taft Jordan, vocals  
World Program Service 200-6692,  
mx N-1055-3  
Recorded 1 December 1943

10. **Creole Love Call** 4:27  
(Duke Ellington-Irving Mills)  
World Program Service 200-6689/90,  
mx N-1057-3  
Recorded 1 December 1943

11. **Rose Room** 3:48  
(Art Hickman-Harry Williams)  
World Program Service 200-6691,  
mx N-1062-2  
Recorded 1 December 1943

**BLACK, BROWN AND BEIGE** - Highlights  
(Duke Ellington)

12. **Work Song** 4:37
13. **Come Sunday** 4:32  
Featuring Ray Nance, violin
14. **The Blues** 4:35  
Joya Sherrill, vocal
15. **West Indian Dance** 1:43
16. **Emancipation Celebration** 1:43
17. **Sugar Hill Penthouse (Beige!)** 1:09  
Victor 28-0400/1, mx D4-VC-560-1, 561-2,  
562-3, 563-1  
Recorded 11 & 12 December 1944
18. **Carnegie Blues** 2:49  
(Duke Ellington)  
Victor 20-1644, mx D5-VB-12-3  
Recorded 4 January 1945

Duke Ellington And His Famous Orchestra  
All selections recorded in New York

Transfers & Production: David Lennick · Digital Restoration: Graham Newton  
Original monochrome photo of Duke Ellington from Michael Ochs Archives / Redferns

## Personnel

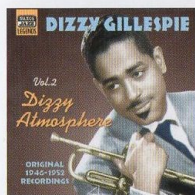
*Tracks 1–6:* Duke Ellington, piano; Wallace Jones, Taft Jordan, Dizzy Gillespie, trumpets; Rex Stewart, cornet; Tricky Sam Nanton, Lawrence Brown, Claude Jones, trombones; Jimmy Hamilton, clarinet, tenor; Johnny Hodges, Otto Hardwicke, altos; Skippy Williams, tenor; Harry Carney, baritone, clarinet, alto; Fred Guy, guitar; Wilson Myers, bass; Sonny Greer, drums; Al Hibbler, vocals

*Tracks 7–11:* Duke Ellington, piano; Wallace Jones, Taft Jordan, Ray Nance, Harold 'Shorty' Baker, trumpets; Rex Stewart, cornet; Tricky Sam Nanton, Lawrence Brown, Claude Jones, trombones; Jimmy Hamilton, clarinet, tenor;

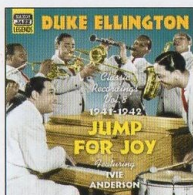
Johnny Hodges, Otto Hardwicke, altos; Skippy Williams, tenor; Harry Carney, baritone, clarinet, alto; Fred Guy, guitar; Junior Raglin, bass; Sonny Greer, drums

*Tracks 12–18:* Duke Ellington, piano; Cat Anderson, Shelton Hemphill, Taft Jordan, trumpets; Rex Stewart, cornet; Ray Nance, trumpet, violin, vocals; Tricky Sam Nanton, Claude Jones, Lawrence Brown, trombones; Jimmy Hamilton, clarinet, tenor; Johnny Hodges, Otto Hardwick, altos; Al Sears, tenor; Harry Carney, baritone, clarinet, alto; Fred Guy, guitar; Junior Raglin, bass; Hillard Brown, drums; Joya Sherrill, vocals

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NOTES AND FULL RECORDING DETAILS INCLUDED

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