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# 1968

was an especially active and productive year in Duke Ellington's career. Despite the loss of Billy Strayhorn in 1967, there was no slackening in the output of new compositions and arrangements for the band to perform.

The year had begun with the premiere of the Second Sacred Concert at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. As befitted the world's largest cathedral, Ellington now wrote the best and largest of the three different sacred concerts he gave the world, and for this one he used two choirs, two sets of dancers and the beautiful soprano voice of Sweden's Alice Babs. After engagements all around the U.S. and Canada, he set off on his first tour of Latin America on September 1st. Concerts were played with such enormous success in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile and Mexico that Ellington termed the tour a "virtual summit" in his career. There was no respite on his return, however. THE LATIN AMERICAN SUITE, written to celebrate the tour and premiered in Mexico City, had first to be recorded. He then immediately began extensive work on the music for Sam Shaw's film project, RACING WORLD. Although the film never materialized, the remarkable music did, and it is available in the first volumes of this series as THE DEGAS SUITE. While finishing off the soundtrack, the recordings in this set were made, at three different sessions within a period of ten days.

The band had suffered a serious loss in July 1968 when Jimmy Hamilton left it after twenty-five years. He had been an important part of a peerless reed section that was together longer than any other in jazz history. In addition to his work in the section on tenor saxophone, he was also the band's clarinet virtuoso. Although his style was very different from that of his illustrious predecessor, Barney Bigard, his technical facility was such that he was able to meet the many

demands made on him.

The clarinet had a very significant place in Ellington's music. Bigard made an extremely personal contribution in a style that always reflected his New Orleans background, whereas Hamilton's at first stemmed quite as clearly from Benny Goodman's. It became more personalized as the years passed, and under his leader's direction he even learned to ornament the ensembles effectively in a kind of updated New Orleans fashion. Without him, Ellington now turned increasingly to Russell Procope, who gave him a sound and a style attuned to Bigard's. Harry Carney continued to play clarinet in a few numbers, such as ROCKING IN RHYTHM, and bass clarinet in occasional specialties. Paul Gonsalves was encouraged to brush up his technique on what Ellington called his "auxiliary instrument", as was newcomer Harold Ashby, who suddenly found himself entrusted with a long clarinet part in HARLEM when the band was in Chile—in anticipation of a performance of that extended work in Buenos Aires the next day! But for none of these four was the clarinet his primary instrument.

Ashby had taken Hamilton's place in the reed section in July 1968 as a tenor saxophonist. He had subbed in the band several times and had also worked in Mercer Ellington's at Birdland. A close friend of Ben Webster's, his style bore a marked resemblance to that veteran's, although he attributed an alto-like quality in the upper register to an early interest in Charlie Parker. He was, however, in no sense a be-bopper, but essentially a swinging musician in the best tradition of Kansas City, where he was born.

It is Ashby, with just the rhythm section behind him, who is featured in the opening selection, I CAN'T GET STARTED. He had played this with much success in South America. From the delicate, subtle opening through to the imaginative coda, his great talent and sensitivity are very well displayed. As this is written, nearly twenty years later, it seems astonishing that he has not had more recognition in this country.

WAITING FOR YOU was also entitled WAITING



FOR THE CHART, but "you" is more accurate, because although there was no chart (as was not uncommon on these sessions), Harry Carney was late arriving. Usually the most dependable of the dependables, this was so extraordinary that it had to be commemorated, even though he came with an adequate explanation. The minor fall from grace put everyone in a good humor "As you were saying, Paul," Ellington said to Gonsalves, a more frequent offender, "it just doesn't pay to come on time." So this blues became a happy, warm-up exercise without Carney, Johnny Hodges setting the simple, nudging riff for the saxes. After the piano player gets things rolling, Procope leads off on clarinet. Followed by Gonsalves, Hodges, Cook and Ashby, he returns to take it out over an amusingly old-fashioned jammed ensemble.

KNUIF is "funk" spelled backwards. Jeff Castleman switches to electric bass in support of the rock rhythm laid down by Rufus Jones. (It should be remembered that the enormity of Woodstock still hung over jazz like an atomic cloud in 1968.) Hodges and Buster Cooper are given the solo responsibility, the former wailing in his upper register, the latter protesting brusquely. Cooper's abrupt, ejaculatory style was and is unique. To Ellington, it was like having a new color on his palette, one that could profitably be used to unusual emphasis or contrast.

GIGL contains the theme Ellington used a year-and-a-half later as *THE GIGGLING RAPIDS* in his suite, *THE RIVER*, but here there is also a surprising eight-bar resolution for the ensemble that seems both to reply affirmatively to Hodges' effervescent statements and to urge him on. In the last chorus, Ashby steps in to talk that talk with Hodges, and a commendably fluid instrumental conversation ensues.

MEDITATION is a moving piano solo (one chorus and a coda) that Ellington had begun to play occasionally in 1957. He included it in the Second Sacred Concert and this led to requests and its more frequent performance, usually with bowed bass backing, as by Jeff Castleman here.

SOPHISTICATED LADY, played by just Hodges and the rhythm section, is surely one of the most

artistically satisfying interpretations of this famous number ever made. Hodges brings out wonderfully a regretful kind of melancholy that perhaps existed behind the sophisticated facade of the well-traveled school teachers who were said to have inspired it. Because the studio repartee which preceded this recording was an unlikely prelude to such a tenderly nostalgic masterpiece, it seems worth noting here, as follows:

"Johnny Hodges!" Ellington yelled from the control room.

"He ain't here no more, man," Hodges replied from a corner of the studio where, out of sight, he was taking refreshment.

"Come on, Rabbit, play SOPHISTICATED LADY!"

Rabbit did so, and there was only this one superb take.

JUST SQUEEZE ME is another showcase for Ashby's inventive, Webster-like tenor in a crisp band framework.

MOOD INDIGO had been played and recorded many times since its origin in 1930, but Ellington could always manage to give the old favorite a new twist. Here Carney and Hodges invest it with the confident authority of long familiarity, and in between there are two improvised choruses of cup-muted trumpet by Willie Cook. His solo offers an interesting comparison with Sherry Baker's on the same number in the second volume of this series, the 1958 *CALIFORNIA DANCE DATES*.

IN A SENTIMENTAL MOOD, another quartet performance, is played by Paul Gonsalves and the rhythm section. His tenor saxophone makes an intriguing contrast with Ashby's, although both had similar roots. An admirable vehicle for his warm ballad style, the number had by this time become a Gonsalves specialty.

I LET A SONG GO OUT OF MY HEART and DON'T GET AROUND MUCH ANYMORE were usually played in tandem in this fashion at concerts to satisfy requests and to give audiences more of the inimitable Hodges and Carney in comfortable contexts.

REVA is a mysteriously atmospheric piece that creates a tense mood without attempting to resolve it. Individual contributions are by Ellington, Jones, Carney and Hodges, the latter playing the melody in the upper register. The whole, in this case, is greater than the parts.

ORTSEAM, written and arranged by Louie Bellson, is a first-class showcase for drummer Rufus Jones and it is well played by the full band. Bellson was the first of Ellington's musicians to begin calling him "maestro", and that is the number's title-spelled backwards.

COOL AND GROOVY, a catchy song with hip lyrics, is engagingly sung and swung by Trish Turner. There is typical support from Cootie Williams, and special support from bassist Jeff Castleman, who had become engaged to the singer during the Latin American tour.

ELOS was inspired by paintings of Western artists which producer Sam Shaw showed Ellington at the time when they were working on the *RACING WORLD* project. Had that film materialized, the

intention was to proceed to others, possibly one with pictures by Matisse and another with scenes from the American West. One of the latter that particularly moved Ellington pictured a family of Indians on horses traveling across a bleak landscape. To him, it was full of soul and the music he wrote with it in mind bore several titles, all of them roughly spelling "soul" backwards, until it was copyrighted as ELOS. Unfortunately, the film was never made, so he later used the music in his *THREE BLACK KINGS*, where its three-four time suited the gospel character of the section devoted to Martin Luther King. The chief solo participants in this version are Cooper, Gonsalves in dialog with Ashby, and then Hodges and Procope.

For the finale, there is another sequence of improvisations on *C JAM BLUES*, the lively soloists being Ellington, Cooper, Gonsalves, Ashby, Gonsalves and Ashby dialoguing, Cooper again, and last, Procope. It's a happy blues that says goodbye with a smile.

STANLEY DANCE  
author of *THE WORLD OF DUKE ELLINGTON*  
(Da Capo Press)

1 **I CAN'T GET STARTED** (4:27)

(Vernon Duke / Ira Gershwin)  
Chappel & Co

2 **WAITING FOR YOU** (4:10)

(Duke Ellington)  
Duke Ellington Music Co.

3 **KNUF** (2:32)

(Duke Ellington)  
Tempo Music Inc.

4 **GIGL** (5:01)

(Duke Ellington)  
Tempo Music Inc.

5 **MEDITATION** (2:34)

(Duke Ellington) Inc.  
Tempo Music Inc.

6 **SOPHISTICATED LADY** (2:53)

(Duke Ellington / Mitchel Parish / I. Mills)  
Mills Music, Duke Ellington Music Co.

7 **JUST SQUEEZE ME** (4:14)

(Duke Ellington)  
SBK Robbins Catalog

8 **MOOD INDIGO** (4:43)

(Duke Ellington / I. Mills / A. Bigard)  
Mills Music, Albany Bigard Music

9 **IN A SENTIMENTAL MOOD** (2:52)

(Duke Ellington / Manny Kurtz / Irving Mills)  
Duke Ellington Music Co., Mills Music Co.

10 **I LET A SONG (GO OUT OF MY HEART)**

(Henry Nemo / Irving Mills / Duke Ellington / John Redmond)  
Mills Music Co.

11 **DON'T GET AROUND MUCH ANY MORE**

(Duke Ellington / Bob Russell)  
SBK Robbins Catalog

12 **REVA** (4:14)

(Duke Ellington)  
Tempo Music Inc.

13 **ORTSEAM** (2:04)

(Duke Ellington)  
Duke Ellington Music Co.

14 **COOL AND GROOVY** (2:29)

(Duke Ellington / Cootie Williams)  
Tempo Music Inc.

15 **ELOS** (5:39)

(Duke Ellington)  
Tempo Music Inc.

17 **C-JAM BLUES** (9:03)

(Duke Ellington)  
S.B.K. Robbins Catalog

PRODUCER: DUKE ELLINGTON

Executives in Charge of Production: Mercer  
Ellington / Mel Fuhrman / Stanley Dance / Herb  
Moelis. Produced for Compact Disc by Harry Hirsch  
Special Thanks to: Samuel J. Lefrak  
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Personnel:

**DUKE ELLINGTON** Piano  
**HAROLD ASHBY / PAUL GONSALVES /**

**JOHNNY HODGES** Tenor Saxophone

**WILLIE COOK / CAT ANDERSON /**

**COOTIE WILLIAMS / MONEY**

**JOHNSON** Trumpets

**RUSSELL PROCOPE / JOHNNY**

**HODGES** Alto Saxophone

**HARRY CARNEY** Baritone Saxophone

**BUSTER COOPER / LAWRENCE**

**BROWN / CHUCK CONNERS** Trombones

**RUSSELL PROCOPE / JOHNNY**

**HODGES / PAUL GONSALVES /**

**HAROLD ASHBY / HARRY**

**CARNEY** Reeds

**JEFF CASTLEMAN** Bass

**RUFUS JONES** Drums

**TRISH TURNER** Vocal



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|---|--|
| 1. <b>I CAN'T GET STARTED</b> (4:27)<br>November 23, 1968 | 9. <b>IN A SENTIMENTAL MOOD</b> (2:52)<br>November 29, 1968              |
| 2. <b>WAITING FOR YOU</b> (4:10)<br>November 29, 1968     | 10. <b>I LET A SONG (GO OUT OF MY HEART)</b> (4:02)<br>November 29, 1968 |
| 3. <b>KNUF</b> (2:32)<br>November 29, 1968                | 11. <b>DON'T GET AROUND MUCH ANY MORE</b> (4:02)<br>November 29, 1968    |
| 4. <b>GIGL</b> (5:01)<br>November 29, 1968                | 12. <b>REVA</b> (4:14)<br>November 29, 1968                              |
| 5. <b>MEDITATION</b> (2:34)<br>November 29, 1968          | 13. <b>ORTSEAM</b> (2:04)<br>December 3, 1968                            |
| 6. <b>SOPHISTICATED LADY</b> (2:53)<br>November 29, 1968  | 14. <b>COOL AND GROOVY</b> (2:29)<br>December 3, 1968                    |
| 7. <b>JUST SQUEEZE ME</b> (4:14)<br>November 29, 1968     | 15. <b>ELOS</b> (5:39)<br>December 3, 1968                               |
| 8. <b>MOOD INDIGO</b> (4:43)<br>November 29, 1968         | 17. <b>C-JAM BLUES</b> (9:03)<br>December 3, 1968                        |

PRODUCER: DUKE ELLINGTON

This is one in a series of ten albums that, taken together, is the definitive collection of the significant compositions written by Duke Ellington and some other songs long associated with his body of work. These recordings were personally produced by Duke Ellington himself and have remained in his private collection since their completion. Documenting a large portion of his musical work, some of which had never been commercially released, these private recordings are being made available to the public by Ellington's family for the first time.

These classic recordings have been transferred to digital from their original analog form. To keep as close to the original sound as possible, the best equipment has been utilized.

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