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|----|---|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | More Money Jungle (2:42) | Brantley/Gluck | Arr. Richardson |
| 2 | Money Jungle (7:37) | Ellington | Arr. Shuhan |
| 3 | Fleurlette Africaine (African Flower) (5:19) | Ellington | Arr. Richardson |
| 4 | A Little Max (Parfait) (2:57) | Ellington/Strayhorn | Arr. Brantley |
| 5 | Amad (6:41) | Hodges/Carney/Ellington | Arr. Domek |
| 6 | Cotton Club Stomp (3:05) | Ellington | Arr. Brantley |
| 7 | Concerto for Cootie (3:25) | Ellington | Arr. Domek |
| 8 | Jungle Nights in Harlem (2:56) | Ellington/Miley | Arr. Domek |
| 9 | East St. Louis Toodle-oo (6:15) | Shirley | |
| 10 | Ellington Indigos (4:18) | Ellington/Mills/Bigard | Arr. Brantley |
| 11 | Mood Indigo (6:44) | Tizol/Ellington/Mills | Arr. Gluck/R&B |
| 12 | Caravan (4:50) | Ellington | Arr. Richardson |
| 13 | Blue Pepper – Far East of the Blues (4:17) | Ellington | Arr. Richardson |
| 14 | Duke Ellington's Sound of Love (2:40) | Mingus | |

total time: 63:36

Solo Credits: Trumpet solos by Rex Richardson, except Wiff Rudd, Track 6 (flugelhorn), 7, 8 (plunger) and 9 (plunger); Steve McNally, Track 13 (Hammond C3 Organ).

Vocals: Kurt Elling, Track 10; Rex Richardson, Track 1, 11 and 12 (Ellington quote); Tom Brantley, Track 12 and 13.

Recommended: listening to this CD with headphones on and lights out (Dave) or really loud with all lights on (Alex's sons)

More Money Jungle .

Oh, I think the Maestro might have loved what Rhythm & Brass have wrought. In fact, I'd bet on it.

To begin with, *More Money Jungle* teems with inventive arrangements of his music, and Duke Ellington always appreciated the sort of restless imagination that inspires such writing. (During his long career, Ellington often went back to resculpt his own songs and classic arrangements – molding, shaping, adding innovative rhythms and melodic devices, subtracting sounds and textures that had become extraneous.) Ellington didn't live long enough to hear hip-hop or acid-jazz, but he did make telling use of the rock rhythms he heard in the 1960s; why *wouldn't* he like the way "Blue Pepper" borrows the sounds of the street, ca. 1998?

While Ellington never stopped composing new music – he wrote approximately 2,000 works – he retained a clear sense of his own history, and on a regular basis would dredge up buried treasures from years past. So does this album: relatively obscure tunes, like "A Little Max," "Blue Pepper," and "Jungle Nights In Harlem," share the program with more recognizable items like "Caravan" and "Concerto For Cootie." (You'll recognize the latter; when it gained lyrics, it also gained the new title, "Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me.")

And if you've ever heard Cat Anderson – the miraculous hornman who worked with Ellington off and on for a quarter-century – you know that the Maestro had a great fondness for the clarion klaxon of a high-note trumpet. Rex Richardson handles those chores for Rhythm & Brass, carrying the torch with blistering pride. Meanwhile, down below, Wiff Rudd's expert use of such ancient jazz-trumpet techniques as growl and smear evokes the early Ellingtonians Bubber Miley and Cootie Williams, whose horn work energized the original recordings of such tunes as "East St. Louis Toodle-oo" and "Jungle Nights In Harlem." And Tom Brantley's vibrant, virile trombone could have elbowed its way into just about any band led by Ellington, who placed unique demands on that instrument in every phase of his work.

So questions of lineage and authenticity don't enter into discussion here; Rhythm & Brass clearly have done their homework, and they have found their niche in the ongoing re-investigation of Ellington's music (a process that will escalate as we approach his centennial in 1999). But how is it that a brass choir – comfortable with everything from 16th-century motets to the repertoire of Miles Davis's nonets, yet virtually unknown in the jazz world – has given us one of the most authentic yet audacious examples of dual fealty?

For the answer, look to the classical backgrounds of the group's individual players and of the group itself – their first album (*Song & Dance*) offered suites by Aram Khachaturian and Leonard Bernstein – and to the boundless aspirations of Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington. Ellington led one of the great jazz bands in

Ellington Explorations

history, and he has come to embody the sleek, driving aesthetic of pre-war jazz. But he had even larger goals. He also sought (and often attained) the panoramic scale, the emotional theatricality, that define much of the classical repertoire from Beethoven to Shostakovich. Ellington managed this through a variety of techniques that pioneered the application of tonal color, the use of secondary melodies and rhythms, and the reliance on extended development – all of which provide plenty of grist for a classicist's mill.

The members of Rhythm & Brass all qualify as classicists: each has extensive experience in symphonic and/or chamber settings. But as you'll hear on such tracks as "Caravan" and "Money Jungle" (for starters), they also have mastered the jazz arts of swing and improvisation. Their background and versatility allows them to tangle and triumph with such lesser-played Ellingtonia as "Amad," originally heard as part of the *Far East Suite*, the best of Ellington's later extended works. "Amad" requires more than simple theme-and-variation to do it justice; its success here owes much to Rhythm & Brass's appreciation for the carefully voiced cogs of an intricate score – a sensibility honed by years of classical performance.

Then listen to the ease with which Rhythm & Brass re-creates the ensemble textures of an earlier era – the Roaring Twenties, when a 40-years-younger Ellington crafted such pieces as "Cotton Club Stomp" (1927) and the 1926 "East St. Louis Toodle-oo" (pronounced "Toad-low," by the way). Again, the classicist approach allows them to perform this ancient music with precision and conviction. This particular tune also becomes a showcase for tubaist Charles Villarrubia, who offers an elegant solo; but every other song on this album depends just as strongly on his exceptionally motile bass lines.

And long afternoons of Easter recital music pay off on the album's understated finale, which transports us 50 years forward from the Maestro's first recordings. "Duke Ellington's Sound Of Love," among the great threnodies in all of music, was composed in 1974 by Charles Mingus, the extraordinary bassist, bandleader, firebrand, and an outspoken proponent of Ellington's place in 20th-century culture. Rex Richardson has arranged the piece as a lovely brass chorale, at once tying together the jazz and classical traditions, Ellington and his brilliant student Mingus, dispassionate craftsmanship and smoldering emotion.

But the band comes up with another strategy altogether to put their own stamp on "Mood Indigo," one of the most beautiful, mysterious, and well-loved Ellington tunes. They introduce the track with a closely related prelude: the poem "Ellington Indigos," written by Aleda Shirley and read by the twice-Grammy-nominated Chicago vocalist Kurt Elling, against a background of improvised music derived from the tune that inspired it.

Jazz fans in general (Ellingtonians in particular) may be most impressed with the full-tilt adventurism that intensifies such tunes as "Money Jungle," "Amad," and "Blue Pepper." The first of these tunes (like

"Fleurette Africaine" and "A Little Max") comes from an unusual Ellington album, a trio date starring two giants of the generation that followed Ellington's own: bassist Mingus and drummer Max Roach. Since they come from a trio album, all three require a pianist who can conjure the bold attack and deep swing of Ellington himself. Alex Shuhan is more than up to the task.

The aforementioned *Far East Suite* gave us both "Amad" (described by Ellington chronicler Stanley Dance as a "surging damascene sketch") and the rockin' "Blue Pepper"; the latter was composed to the jazz-rock pulse of the late 60's, and on this version, guest Steve McNally pays homage to that period's soul-jazz organ giants. Each of these three pieces develops into a roisterous group improvisation of the sort that characterized the earliest jazz – spontaneous polyphony, for you classicists, but splintered through the Ellingtonian prism and further updated by Rhythm & Brass.

And what about "Caravan"? Composed by Ellington and his Puerto Rican trombonist of the 30s and 40s, Juan Tizol, this exercise in exotica has become an indelible standard, durable enough to withstand all sorts of experimentation – even this arrangement's bizarre denouement, which will have you racing for your turntable. But the Rhythm & Brass treatment of this tune should perk up the ears of every listener, even those who still dare to call themselves "purist" here in the cultural stewpot of fin-de-siecle USA. The band originally recorded "Caravan" on their second album in 1935, *Time In September*, and this version descends from that one; but the tempo is slower, David Gluck's rhythms come off much nastier, and the tune combines the urgent cool of hip-hop with Mardi Gras magic.

Explaining their philosophy, the members of Rhythm & Brass own up to a wide range of musical influences – from Ellington and Mingus, to the Beatles and alt-rock star Beck, to new-jazz trombone trickster Ray Anderson and the outrageous Red Hot Chili Peppers – and a determination to let all of them have a say in the music. Ellington – so strong an individualist that he could effortlessly entertain musical cues that spread from African rhythms to the music of Norway's patron composer, Edvard Grieg – might not have done it the same way. But do you think he'd have complained? In one of his most-quoted statements, he opined that there were "only two kinds of music – good and bad."

Does Rhythm & Brass understand the distinction? Based on the skill and imagination with which they invest *More Money Jungle*, you can bet on that, too.

NEIL TESSER
author, *The Playboy Guide To Jazz* (Dutton), September '98

Rhythm & Brass

Wiff Rudd, *trumpets and flugelhorn*
Rex Richardson, *trumpets and flugelhorn*
Alex Shuhan, *horn and piano*
Tom Brantley, *trombone*
Charles Villarrubia, *tuba*
David Gluck, *drums, percussion and mallets*

Produced by Rhythm & Brass
Engineer & Recording Sessions Producer — Fred Baker
Asst. Engineer — Jeff Corcoran
Mixing — Peter Karl & David Gluck
Cover Art — Christian Paniagua
Photography — R. Jerome
Graphics & Typography — Joshua Rudd & David Gluck

Recorded 24–27 August, 1997 in the studios of the Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester (except *Ellington Indigos* – Sound Post, Grand Rapids, MI).

Producer's Notes

The first track, *More Money Jungle*, was inspired by Duke Ellington's *Money Jungle* as well as our own experiences with Kool and the Gang's *Jungle Boogie*.

Tracks 6–9 were recorded live at Eastman School of Music. We invited an audience to create a Cotton Club-like atmosphere.

We found Aleda Shirley's poem, "Ellington Indigos," which forms the basis for Track 10, in *The Jazz Poetry Anthology*, edited by Sascha Feinstein and Yusef Komunyakaa and published by Indiana University Press. The background music is constructed on the chord changes from Ellington's *Mood Indigo*. Vocalist Kurt Elling appears courtesy of Blue Note and Capitol Records.

Track 12, *Caravan*, features Rex Richardson reading an excerpt from the original liner notes to Ellington's *Far East Suite*. The text follows: "The tour was a great adventure for us on what is indeed the other side of the world. Sometimes I felt it was this world upside down. The look of the natural country is so unlike ours and the very contours of the earth seem to be different. The smell, the vastness, the birds, and the exotic beauty of all these countries make a great inspiration." The quote originally appeared in the March 1964 issue of *Musical Journal* in the article "Orientations." A faux vinyl skip forms the segue between *Caravan* and *Blue Pepper*. Tom Brantley's comment to "put the other record on" is inspired by Beck's "Odelay."

R&B Discography

Song & Dance — d'Note Classics
Time in September — d'Note Jazz
Christmas Time is Here — d'Note Jazz

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The *Blue Pepper* track ends with another Ellington quote. On his CD *Live from London*, Ellington is introduced and says a few words. He begins his comments with the "love you madly" sentiment, so we decided to include it here, too.

Special Thanks...

...to the following Eastman School of Music administrators and faculty for their assistance with this project: James Undercofler, *Director*; Dr. Donna Fox, *Chair, Music Education Dept.*; David Dusman, *Recording Studio Manager*; John Beck, *Prof. of Percussion*; and special thanks to Dr. Richard Grunow, *Assoc. Prof. of Music Education*. Also to Fred Baker, Richard Domek, Aleda Shirley, Mark Kellogg and Joanna Bassett, Kurt Elling, Steve McNally, our Webmaster Erik Moore, everyone who attended the "live" recording session - especially the Witmeyer family for bringing Laurie's 50th BIRTHDAY party to the studio, Kurt Witt and the Yamaha Corporation of America, Peter Karl, our friends and loyal fans, our families for their incredible support, Duke Ellington, and once again, Bob...thanks!

Ellington Indigos by Aleda Shirley

It's the day of the penumbral eclipse and I'm driving home, through Brown County, Indiana, and thinking about how later we'll go outside and watch

the earth's transparent shadow cross the face of the harvest moon. I wonder if you'll be there when I get home: how is it I sometimes feel as if

I'm waiting for you, even when I'm the one who's late?

A kind of uneasy indolent longing, it's similar to the one evoked in me by Ellington's pastels, or fall.

Though the autumn colors haven't yet peaked, here and there I see a sweetgum edged in violet, a maple dying back to pale-yellow. The soft azure

of an alto sax, the jagged red of a growling trumpet, the raw gold of a clarinet — discussing Ellington's tone palette, a jazz critic perfectly described

this landscape. Though the wind's picking up, I stop to put down the top of the car. It's the story, Ellington explained, of a little girl who loves

a little boy. Everyday she sits at a window and waits for him to come by. One day he doesn't. "Mood Indigo" just tells how she feels. With its trio of clarinet and muted trumpet and trombone, "Mood Indigo" starts, each chord shaped by small movements in the line of a single instrument.

A slow tempo, a minimal melody. With the stealth of sunset it moves and, suddenly, is gone. No coda, just Duke picking out two notes on the piano.

What is it about the light of departure that reveals the essence of things? Your physical presence — the mere fact of your body — sometimes overwhelms me

as I hug you goodbye in the morning: I'm an hour from both dusk and home, but I've recovered that sense of wonder, possibilities, like a guitar's shimmering fills, move through my mind. We could walk along the reservoir and sip cognac from your flask. Arrange branches of sumac in every vase we own.

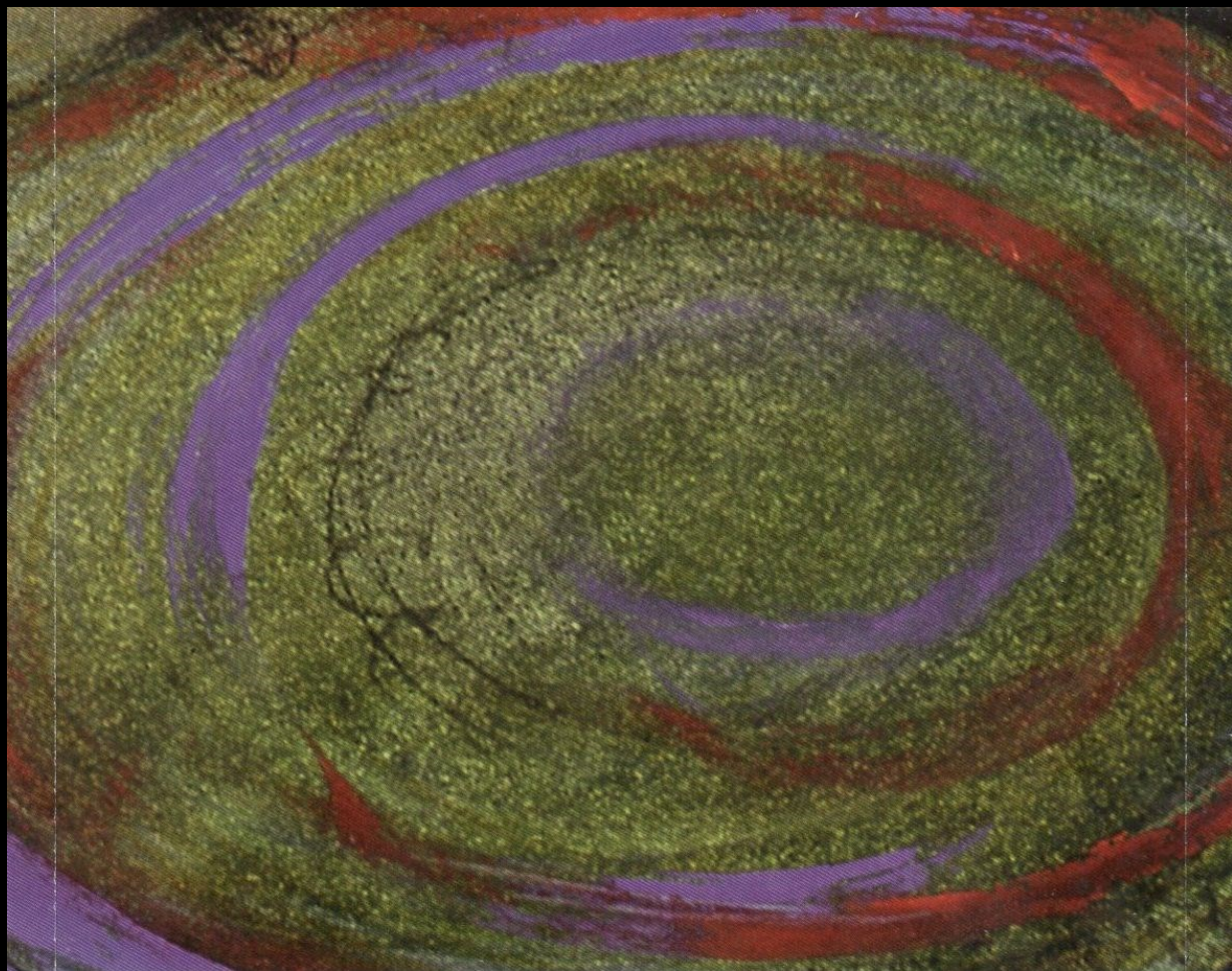
Or we could brew a pot of tea, bundle up in quilts, and sit on the terrace, awaiting the eclipse.



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- 2 Money Jungle
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(African Flower)
- 4 A Little Max
(Parfait)
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Far East of the Blues
- 14 Duke Ellington's
Sound of Love



Alex Shuhan • Wiff Rudd • Rex Richardson • David Gluck • Tom Brantley • Charles Villarrubia

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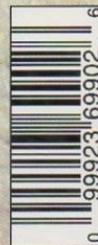
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