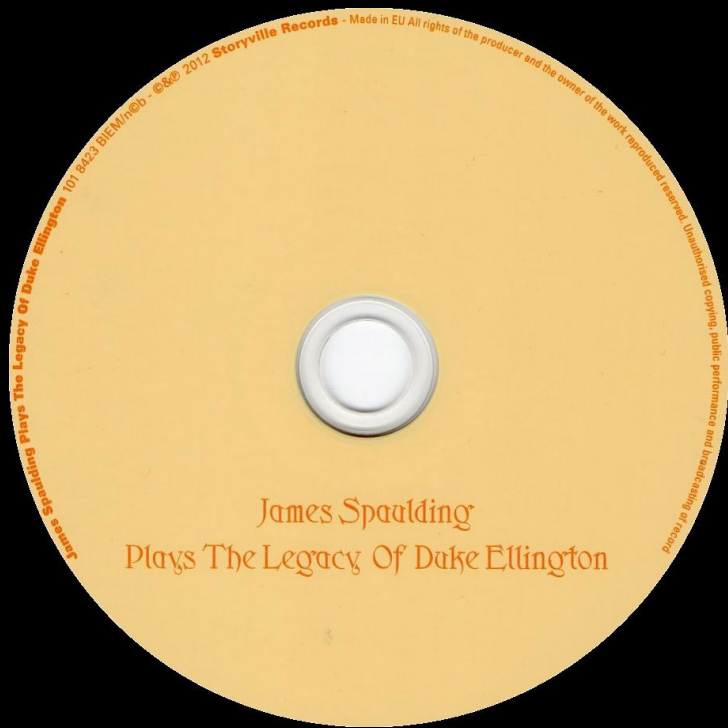


James Spaulding Plays The Legacy Of Duke Ellington



STORYVILLE



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Duke Ellington was one of the greatest composers ever lived. He will be recognized in American history for his contribution as a black man and as an artist. It is my fortune to be able to express musically the love and respect that my colleagues and I share for the stature and magnificence of Duke's musical genius.

Duke has left his legacy of cultural enrichment to all mankind. An enrichment which will continue to be a source of inspiration and influence in the evolution of Black American music. Music transcends all boundaries. From the shadows an image appeared that cast rays of light over the entire universe.

James Spaulding

**STORYVILLE**

Duke occupies a unique place in the history of American Twentieth Century music and James Spaulding is one of many jazz musicians sufficiently moved by Duke's death (on May 24, 1974) to want to place on record his own tribute.

Ellington was already 38 years of age when Spaulding was born (on July 30, 1937) an established band leader with a very successful trip to Europe behind him, a portfolio of hit songs to his credit and a band which contained some of the most individual soloists in jazz. Spaulding is a 'Hoosier', the name given to residents of the State of Louisiana; he was born in the State capital, Indianapolis, and his father was a professional guitarist. (Indianapolis is better known for the quality than the quantity of its native jazzmen; it has produced Jay Jay Johnson, Reunald Jones, the late Carl Perkins, Leroy Vinnegar and the Montgomery brothers, the most famous of whom was, of course, Wes. A contemporary of Spaulding's was also to achieve considerable international fame, trumpeter Freddie Hubbard.) James studied saxophone, flute and clarinet in Grade School and continued his musical education at the Chicago Cosmopolitan School of Music after his army service. While in Chicago he worked on occasions in pianist Sun Ra's orchestra (he appeared on Sun Ra's albums) and in 1959 was a member of pianist Sonny Thompson's rhythm-and-blues band. He formed his own quintet the following year and in 1962 left for New York to join Freddie Hubbard. He and Hubbard (along with pianist Ronnie Matthews and bass player Jymie Merritt) were later to become members of drummer Max Roach's quintet and it was Roach that Spaulding came to Europe to tour. His tribute to Duke Ellington comprises material from 1932 up to 1950 and James gives the group a variety of tone colours by his wide range of instruments. On alto he has a big, broad tone (listen to the opening chorus of Take the A Train for example) while his soprano recalls the sound of the late Johnny Hodges. Anyone looking for statistical links between Spaulding and the Ellington entourage may care to note that

shared birthday with that fine Ducal alto saxophonist, Hilton Jefferson (although Jefferson was 34 years his senior) while Jimmy Blanton died on Spaulding's fifth birth. The rhythm section is outstanding, as indeed it should be in the light of the calibre of the men involved. On some tracks Steve Nelson's vibraharp comes to the fore while saxophonist Jimmy Heath's son, Mtume, augments the rhythm section. Billy Strayhorn's Take the A Train gets the show on the road and contains one of those magnificent bass solos from big Sam Jones as an additional bonus. This tune was named for the subway ride on the Eight Avenue line which makes no stops between Columbus Circle and 125th Street. From 1941 onwards it was Duke's signature tune (prior to that he had used East St. Louis toodle-oo. In a sentimental mood introduces a change of pace in the framing choruses and features the graceful, soaring work of Spaulding's soprano. This tune was one of the first Ellington songs to make an impression on Tin Pan Alley, back in 1935, with a lyric by Emanuel Kurtz. Avery Brooks's strong voice intones the lyric of Come Sunday, the second section of the "Black" movement of Duke's Black, brown and beige, an extended work written for a Carnegie Hall premiere on January 23, 1943. (The purpose of that Carnegie Hall concert, incidentally, was to raise funds for the Russian War Relief). Spaulding doubles on flute and alto here. Caravan dates from 1936 and was composed by trombonist Juan Tizol; Duke developed Tizol's theme and orchestrated it, adding exotic rhythms which have become so much a part of this work. Spaulding plays piccolo on this track.

The second side of the album opens with the "youngest" tune of the set, a song which takes its title from one of Duke's best known expressions. Love you madly. Yvonne Lanauze sang this on Duke's 1950 recording; here Avery Brooks takes the opening chorus with Spaulding playing a flue obligato before taking a chorus on the same instrument. One can imagine Duke remarking "and James Spaulding would

like you to know that he too loves you madly” as a back announcement! I’ m just a lucky so and so, with a lyric by Mack David, was recorded by Duke in 1945 originally. Spaulding’s soprano is outstanding here.

Sophisticated Lady turns out to be a tour de force for Spaulding’s flawless flute playing. This finds him accompanied only by the dependable and driving Sam Jones and Billy Higgins for over six minutes; at no time does the pace, or the interest flag for this is a magnificent example of James Spaulding, instrumental master. This famous Ellington work started out as a joint composition by Duke and Toby Hardwick in 1933 with Mitchell Parish adding words later. The final It don’t mean a thing if it ain’t got that swing is the oldest tune of the set and probably the most historic, in the sense that its title has been credited with giving an identity to an entire era of music. Spaulding was born at the height of the Swing period but this tune was written back in 1932; the horn here is the alto saxophone (chosen perhaps as a salute to so many fine alto saxophonists of the period, including Benny Carter, Count Basie’s Earl Warren, Benny Goodman’s Toots Mondello etc.). Steve Nelson sings to himself as he plays, a trick which one tends to associate with Lionel Hampton. The coda is so long that it almost becomes a composition in its own right. Miles Davis once remarked that all musicians should, on one day of the year, get on their knees and give thanks to Duke Ellington. James Spaulding has done something more constructive than simply offering thanks, he has produced a splendid album of Ellington’s music to be enjoyed by all who profess an interest in jazz.

*Alun Morgan*

(these notes originally appeared on Storyville LP SLP1019 from 1977)

**STORYVILLE**

Cedar Walton appears through the courtesy of R.C.A. Records.

Produced by Marty Cann. Engineering by Bob Blank

Black and white photography by Robert Johnson Jr.

Special thanks to Howie Gabriel for his assistance in this **production**.

Recorded and mixed at Blank Studios, New York City, December 1 and 2, 1976.



## JAMES SPAULDING PLAYS THE LEGACY OF DUKE ELLINGTON

1. Take The "A" Train (4:33)  
(Duke Ellington-Billy Strayhorn)
2. In A Sentimental Mood (5:56)  
(Duke Ellington)
3. Come Sunday (5:31)  
(Duke Ellington)
4. Caravan (5:30)  
(Juan Tizol - Duke Ellington)
5. I Love You Madly (2:13)  
(Duke Ellington)
6. Lucky So And So 4:37  
(Duke Ellington, Hack David)
7. Sophisticated Lady (6:23)  
(Duke Ellington)
8. It Don't Mean A Thing  
If It Ain't Got That Swing (7:05)  
(Duke Ellington)

### Personnel:

James Spaulding - piccolo, tenor-flute, bass-flute, soprano and alto saxophones  
Cedar Walton - piano  
Steve Nelson - vibra-harp  
Sam Jones - bass  
Billy Higgins - drums  
Mtume - percussion

### Layout:

Notes: Alun Morgan  
Produced for CD by Anders Stefansen  
Engineer: Jørgen Vad, Vadlyd



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