

TOAST TO



THE DUKE



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Side 1.

1. **Rockin' in rhythm**
(Ellington, Carney, Mills) (f)
2. **Black and tan fantasy**
(Ellington, Mills) (c)
3. **Stompin' at the Savoy**
(Sampson, Goodman, Webb, Raza) (b)
4. **In the mood**
(Garland, Raza) (d)

Side 2.

1. **One o'clock jump**
(Basie) (c)
2. **Honeysuckle rose**
(Waller, Raza) (a)
3. **Happy-go-lucky local**
(Ellington, Strayhorn) (f)
4. **Flying home**
(Goodman, Hampton, Robin, a)

DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS FAMOUS ORCHESTRA: (a)—Ray Nance, Clark Terry, Willie Cook, Cat Anderson (*trumpets*); Quentin Jackson, Britt Woodman, Alfred Cobbs (*trombones*); Jimmy Hamilton (*clarinet and tenor-saxophone*); Russell Procope (*alto-saxophone and clarinet*); Paul Gonsalves (*tenor-saxophone*); Rick Henderson (*alto-saxophone*); Harry Carney (*baritone-saxophone, alto-saxophone and clarinet*); Duke Ellington (*piano*); Wendell Marshall (*bass*); Dave Black (*drums*)—New York, 21 December, 1953. (b)—same personnel without Alfred Cobbs—Chicago, 28 December, 1953. (c)—same as (b)—Chicago, 29 December, 1953. (d)—same personnel with George Jean (*trombone*) added—Chicago, 1 January, 1954. (e)—same as (d)—Chicago, 2 January, 1954. (f)—same as (d)—Chicago, 17 January, 1954.

Looking once more with incredulous admiration at the unique history and achievement of Duke Ellington and his orchestra, it seems that the best comparison would be with a soccer team that has managed to stay at or near the top of the league since 1927, outright championships more often than not and many times winner of the cup. Guided by a genius of a player-captain-manager-coach, loaded with goal-scoring stars, a team with hardly a weakness. They may have slipped a few places in the table occasionally—with the critics quick to pounce in and predict the end; they may have played better on some grounds than others; their collective style may have changed a little; but they have always come back to the top and they're still there 35 years later!

Within the unpredictable and ever-changing field of popular music and jazz, this achievement is doubly remarkable. Duke Ellington was recording when the Charleston was just becoming popular, while the Goodman orchestra was still only an idea, before Chris Barber was even born. The idea of a team of musicians who not only played but also contributed to the creation of the music was one that could only be fulfilled within the jazz idiom—and it is this organic growth and development of the band that has ensured its survival.

The range of expression of which the band is capable is also remarkable; from the introverted musings of a small group centred round the composer to the extroverted high spirits of powerful, swinging music played with the relaxed ease of faultless professionalism.

The material used on this record was partly classic compositions by Ellington and partly numbers that had become closely associated with other great bands. Ellington's desire to pay tribute to Count Basie, Glenn Miller, Fats Waller, Benny Goodman and Lionel Hampton doubles the interest in a way, because it is fascinating to compare his version of these tunes with the originals—giving an insight into the Ellington transformation process that was to find a peak in later adaptations of Tchaikovsky and Grieg.

Rockin' in rhythm, with Carney credited as co-composer, was first recorded in 1930 and again in 1931. The character is maintained in this much expanded version. Ellington plays a longer introduction in place of the original few bars, against a sort of rehearsal room atmosphere. The first part uses the whole band, then, after employing the original style of rhythmic break, the middle section features Russell Procope playing the old Bigard solo on clarinet. A few bars from Quentin Jackson lead into a collective finale built around Carney's active baritone.

Black and tan fantasy was one of the first Ellington classics conceived with Bubber Mile in 1927. Again the old jungle style is retained. Russell Procope has the first solo, this time on alto and then Ray Nance plunges in on a high glissando as Mile used to. A lazy solo from Ellington leads to Quentin Jackson taking Nanton's old part on trombone. Procope solos again on clarinet, in

addition to the old routine, before Nance once more pays tribute to Bubber Mile to round off this well-shaped composition.

In *Stompin' at the Savoy*, a number which both Chick Webb and Benny Goodman regularly featured when Edgar Sampson came up with the original idea in 1935, the Ellington band indulges in a little parody. Hamilton nicely hits off certain elements of the Goodman style; but the highpoint of the track is an effortless and impressive solo by Clark Terry. Harry Carney and Paul Gonsalves both have effective solos offering a fine contrast in timbres and Rick Henderson has a few notes before the exciting ending.

In *the mood* was not exactly introduced by Glenn Miller but it was his version that made Joe Garland's riff tune popular. Again the Ellington band manages some of the atmosphere of the other band. Clark Terry has a few superb bars and Russell Procope a few very odd ones, Jimmy Hamilton a smooth solo and Ray Nance a meditative one; before the band riffs out à la Miller. *Stompin' at the Savoy*, this number, and *Flying Home* were arranged by Dick Vance.

In *One o'clock jump* Ellington puts things in motion with an affectionate copy of Basie's inimitable piano style in the Basie band's signature tune, and elsewhere they get very close to the right sound with Jimmy Hamilton on tenor emulating Lester Young. Britt Woodman, Paul Gonsalves and Cat Anderson are the other featured soloists. The arrangement was made by an old Basie man, Buck Clayton.

Honeysuckle Rose came, of course, from the mind of the great jazz personality Fats Waller. He and the Duke were struggling pianists together. Waller's own interpretation of this tune never rose to the splendour of an orchestra like Ellington's. The main featured soloist is Jimmy Hamilton who made the orchestral arrangement.

The real masterpiece of this disc, and for which it is worth the money alone, is Ellington's own *Happy-go-lucky local* which he arranged with Billy Strayhorn. The band previously recorded this trailroad of happily inebriated locals in 1946 in a fine but not quite so high rendering. Many composers, of which Honnegger and Villa-Lobos are the most notable, have tried impressions of trains in music but nobody has ever surpassed Ellington's essay. It is both descriptive and impressionistic with the rollicking and propulsive rhythm that only a good jazz orchestra could supply—and Cat Anderson's unrolled squeaks are put to effective use. Other soloists who lend colour are Procope, Marshall, Gonsalves and Hamilton, but it is definitely the total effect that matters here.

The band finish in dashing style with the Hampton-Goodman speciality *Flying Home*, which Hampton must have played hundreds of times. Lacking any substitute for his genius the band employs as soloists Jimmy Hamilton, Clark Terry and Cat Anderson, with plenty of full-band excitement in true Hampton style.

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