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BLACK AND WHITE SERIES

the works of

DUKE



INTEGRALE

VOLUME 14



DUKE ELLINGTON and his Orchestra

Face 1

FXM1 7134

FXM1 7134 A

Duke Ellington

« THE WORKS OF DUKE » Vol. 14

1. THE SIDEWALKS OF NEW YORK
(C.B. Lawler-J.V. Blake) 3'15
2. FLAMINGO
(T. Grouya-E. Anderson) 3'22



3. THE GIRL IN MY DREAMS TRIES TO LOOK LIKE
(M. Ellington) 3'17
4. THE GIRL IN MY DREAMS TRIES
TO LOOK LIKE ME
(M. Ellington) 3'21
5. TAKE THE 'A' TRAIN
(B. Strayhorn) 2'54
6. JUMPIN' PUNKINS
(M. Ellington) 3'37
7. JUMPIN' PUNKINS
(M. Ellington) 3'32

MARKÉ (S) DÉPOSÉ (S) & REGISTERED TRADEMARK (S) USED BY AUTHORITY AND UNDER CONTROL OF
CORPORATION MADE IN FRANCE FROM MASTER RECORDS

Face 2

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FXM1 7134 B

Duke Ellington

« THE WORKS OF DUKE » Vol. 14

8. JOHN HARDY WIFE
(M. Ellington) 3'28



9. BLUE SERGE (M. Ellington) 3'21
10. AFTER ALL (B. Strayhorn) 3'21
11. DEAR OLD SOUTHLAND
(H. Creamer-T. Layton) 3'15
12. DEAR OLD SOUTHLAND
(H. Creamer-T. Layton) 3'25
13. SOLITUDE
(D. Ellington-E. De Lange-I. Mills) 3'27

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DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

Side 1

1. **The sidewalks of New York**
(C.B. Lawlor - J.W. Blake) (BS 053.780-1) 3'15
2. **Flamingo**
(T. Brown - E. Anderson) (BS 053.781-1) 3'22
3. **The girl in my dreams tries to look like me**
(M. Ellington) (BS 053.782-1) 3'17
4. **The girl in my dreams tries to look like me**
(M. Ellington) (BS 053.782-2) 3'21
5. **Take the "A" train**
(B. Strayhorn) (BS 055.283-1) 2'56
6. **Jumpin' punkins**
(M. Ellington) (BS 055.284-1) 3'37
7. **Jumpin' punkins**
(M. Ellington) (BS 055.284-2) 3'32

DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

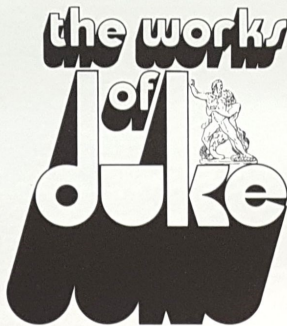
Side 2

8. **John Hardy's wife**
(M. Ellington) (BS 055.285-1) 3'28
9. **Blue serge**
(M. Ellington) (BS 055.286-1) 3'21
10. **After all**
(B. Strayhorn) (BS 055.287-1) 3'21
11. **Dear old Southland**
(H. Creamer - T. Layton) (BS 065.504-1) 3'16
12. **Dear old Southland**
(H. Creamer - T. Layton) (BS 065.504-2) 3'25
13. **Solitude**
(D. Ellington - E. De Lange - I. Mills) (BS 065.505-1) 3'27

This fourteenth volume in the series "THE WORKS OF DUKE ELLINGTON" covers the end of 1940 and the better part of the first half of 1941. That the recording venues should be not only New York but also Chicago and Hollywood need not be surprising, for at the beginning of the 1940s Ellington's appearances in the Central and Western States were far more prolific than those in New York. But in spite of much that has been said, Duke was very fond of New York. It was at one and the same time his operational base, the source of much of his inspiration, the centre of his closest human ties, and the city which he felt the need to reconquer at each important stage of his career. And yet Duke was an impatient traveller with an insatiable fascination for big cities in general, amongst those he visited with faithful regularity was Chicago, where he was always assured of the acclaim of an aware public and where he recorded fairly frequently.

Hollywood was another of the Ellington Orchestra's habitual stopping-off points and it made frequent appearances in Los Angeles and its surrounding areas. Furthermore, this particular location reflects Ellington's activity in the world of cinema, where he collaborated on films such as "Cabin in the Sky" and "Anatomy of a Murder". Despite this, it seems regrettable that his talent was never more fully harnessed by cinema producers and directors; for the wealth of his invention as a composer and arranger, allied to his amazing versatility, made him the ideal potential film music composer. Notwithstanding this sad under-utilisation of his talents, it was Hollywood which, in the summer of 1941, staged his musical comedy "Jump For Joy", and although the show's success scarcely went beyond the frontiers of California, it is a known fact that Duke considered it one of the landmarks of his musical career.

Before leaving Chicago for the West Coast the orchestra had taken on another top-class musician in the person of Ray Nance. Having already featured in the Earl Hines and Hooper Henderson Orchestras, Nance was appearing in his native city at Joe's de Luxe as trumpeter, violinist, singer and dancer when Ellington spotted him, thus offering him new scope for his many-sided talents. Ray Nance's heart here on "Take the 'A' Train". Instead originally for "Cootie" Williams, his solo, delicate and powerful in turn, integrates perfectly with the orchestra's dynamic, inspired playing. "Take the 'A' Train" which



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earned composer Billy Strayhorn such enduring fame, was subsequently played by almost every jazz group in existence and, of course, became the Ellington Orchestra's signature tune. It is the piece which set an eternal seal upon an Ellington-Strayhorn collaboration which was to achieve such heights of perfection and reveal a degree of such total affinity.

The importance of Billy Strayhorn's role with the Ellington band cannot be overemphasized. Quite beyond the fact of his immense talent, Sweets Pea (as she was nicknamed by Otto Hardwick), as well as somehow being the ultimate arbiter on matters of taste, was Duke's reply to the nagging doubts that sooner or later assailed all true creators.

Billy Strayhorn, whilst becoming totally absorbed into the world of Ellington, introduced a new note of awareness, which stemmed from a musical horizon extending from the most down-to-earth negro-american music right through to contemporary European music, with a marked predilection for Debussy and Ravel. It is surely to this, particularly original, powerful fusion of the Ellington and Strayhorn personalities that we owe so many remarkable recording sessions, and especially that of February 15th, 1941.

On that day, led in turn by these two dynamic minds, the orchestra played a series of first-class compositions besides the already mentioned "Take the 'A' Train". After all, another composition from the Strayhorn film, is savoured in masterly solo by Lawrence Brown and Johnny Hodges serve to lighten the mood, whilst the composer's piano adds an original touch to the accompaniment. The other three titles from this same session are signed by Duke's son, Mercer Ellington, and mark his debut in the world of jazz: "Jumpin' Punkins" and "John Hardy's Wife" both put the emphasis on the rhythmic strength of the orchestra, with Jimmy Blanton the dominating presence. On "Jumpin' Punkins" we can also savour the rare experience of hearing Sonny Greer in the role of soloist; usually, this resourceful percussionist was content to remain in the role accompanist. Sharing the spotlight on this same track is Harry Carney with a forthright yet delicately shaded solo against a background of trombones.

Carney is again in the forefront of events on "John Hardy's Wife", together with Lawrence Brown. But on this particular title—which

DISCOGRAPHICAL NOTES

All trumpet solos are by Rex Stewart except for "Take the 'A' Train" where Ray Nance is heard.

In **Sidewalks of New York** and **Blue Serge** the trombone solos are by "Tricky Sam" Nanton. (Note: Juan Tizol (vib.) on "John Hardy's Wife, After All and Flamingo". In the latter title Juan Tizol is heard during the introduction.)

Johnny Hodges; Ben Webster, Harry Carney and Barney Bigard play all alto-sax, tenor-sax, bariton-sax and clarinet solos respectively. All piano solos are by Duke Ellington except for **After All** where the pianist is Billy Strayhorn.

The vocalist in **Flamingo** and **The Girl in my Dreams** is Herb Jeffries.

For all other instruments the above discography should provide adequate information.

- 1) - 3) - 4): Wallace Jones, Ray Nance, Rex Stewart (tp); Lawrence Brown; Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton; (10); Juan Tizol (vib.); Otto Hardwick, Johnny Hodges (as), Ben Webster (ts), Harry Carney (bs, as, cl); Barney Bigard (d); Ed. Edward "Duke" Ellington (p), Fred Guy (g); Jimmy Blanton (b); William "Sonny" Greer (dr), Herb Jeffries (voc). Chicago, December 28th, 1940.
- 2): Same except Billy Strayhorn (p) instead of "Duke" Ellington, same date.
- 5) - 6) - 7) - 8) - 9): Same as 1) except Herb Jeffries (voc) out, Hollywood, February 1941.
- 10): Same as 5) except Billy Strayhorn (p) instead of "Duke" Ellington, same date.
- 11) - 12) - 13): Edward "Duke" Ellington, piano-solo, New York, May 14th, 1941.

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quite comprehensibly never became a standard—the highlight is undoubtedly Rex Stewart's solo, which demonstrates such masterful use of the plunger mute: it is a solo which is both imbued with humour and bursting with vitality.

With **Blue Serge**, there is a return to a level of dramatic intensity which, within the realms of jazz music, Ellington alone was capable of creating. Rex Stewart's low-register solo establishes a mood of deep despair which is further amplified by the muted trumpet accents of "Tricky Sam" Nanton, the lament of the muffled trumpets and the wailing tenor-sax of Ben Webster.

The 28th December 1940 session features singer Herb Jeffries on **Flamingo** and **The Girl in my Dreams**, a ready indication to wonder yet again at Duke's frequent peculiar choice of vocalists, but we cannot but admire the skill with which Duke and Billy Strayhorn are able to embrace upon even the most banal melodies.

In contrast, **Sidewalks of New York** provides a fine demonstration of the orchestra at its most cohesive, fully illustrating the impressive impact of soloists Barney Bigard, "Tricky Sam" Nanton, Ben Webster, Johnny Hodges and Harry Carney.

However, it would be wrong to overlook another impressive soloist on some of the above-mentioned titles. Ellington himself, on piano. It has often gone unrecorded that Ellington's true instrument was the orchestra, as a result his talents as a pianist have often been overshadowed. But the dual piano emerges in no uncertain fashion on **Jumpin' Punkins**, **John Hardy's Wife** and **Blue Serge**. The consciousness of his phrasing, the care for essentials and the conspicuous retreat from the stride influence of his youth are all most striking. The same is again true of the piano-solo tracks, **Dear Old Southland** and **Solitude**; both are twice featured, an unusual tack of each appearing alongside the known version (volume 15 will begin with take 2 of **Solitude**). Here, Duke is deliberately introspective, content to convey his original theme, his seeking to create multiple variations or to embellish the original themes.

Alexandre Rado
Photo: J.-P. Leloir Translation by Don Westhouse
Re-issue produced by Jean-Paul GUITER

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