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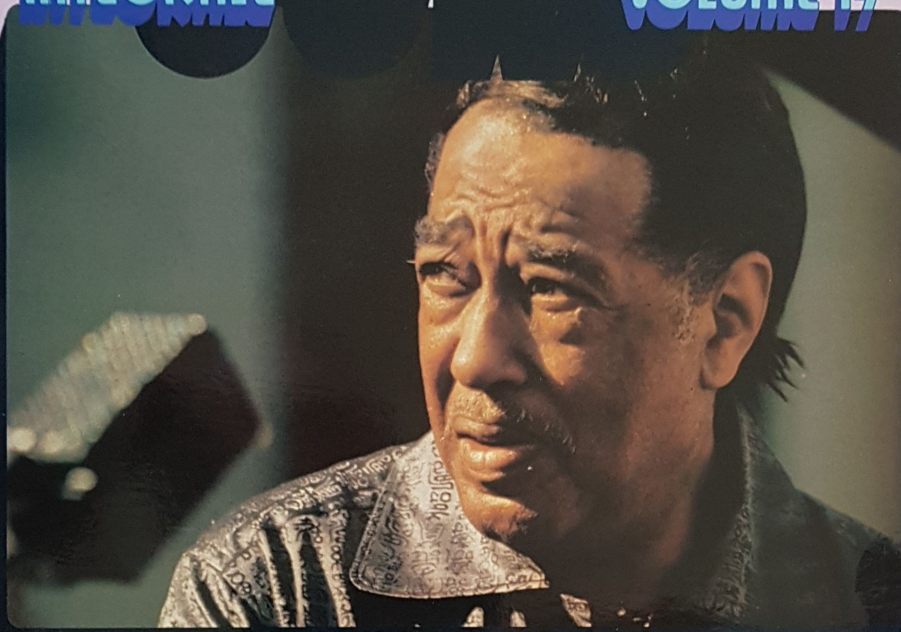
FXM1 7274



the works of  
**DUKE**

**INTEGRALE**

**VOLUME 17**



**DUKE ELLINGTON and his Orchestra**

# Face 1

FXM1 7274

FXM1 7274 A

Duke Ellington

« THE WORKS OF DUKE » Vol. 17

1. BLI BLIP  
(D. Ellington S. Kihler) 3'03
2. CHELSEA BRIDGE (B. Strayhorn) 2'58



3. BROWN SUEDE (D. Ellington) 3'06
4. NOIR BLEU (B. Strayhorn) 3'13
5. C BLUES (D. Ellington) 2'52
6. JUNE (B. Bigard) 3'15

1,2 : D. Ellington and His Orchestra  
3,4,5,6 : B. Bigard  
and His Orchestra

# Face 2

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FXM1 7274 B

Duke Ellington

« THE WORKS OF DUKE » Vol. 17

7. RAINCHECK (B. Strayhorn) 2'28
8. WHAT GOOD WOULD IT DO  
(B. Pepper-L. James) 2'44



9. I DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF BLUES I GOT  
(D. Ellington) 3'13
10. CHELSEA BRIDGE  
(B. Strayhorn) 2'52
11. PERDIDO  
(J. Tizol) 3'08
12. THE C JAM BLUES  
(D. Ellington) 2'38

7,12 : D. Ellington and His Orchestra

## Side 1

## DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

1. **Bill blip**  
(D. Ellington - S. Kahler) (BS 061.686-1) 3:03
2. **Chelsea bridge**  
(B. Strayhorn) (BS 061.687-1) 2:58

## BARNEY BIGARD AND HIS ORCHESTRA

3. **Brown Suede**  
(D. Ellington) (BS 061.688-1) 3:06
4. **Noir bleu**  
(B. Strayhorn) (BS 061.689-1) 3:13
5. **"C" blues**  
(D. Ellington) (BS 061.690-1) 2:52
6. **June**  
(B. Bigard) (BS 061.691-1) 3:15

## Side 2

## DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

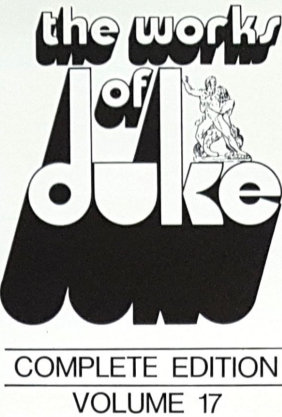
7. **Raincheck**  
(B. Strayhorn) (BS 061.941-1) 2:28
8. **What good would it do**  
(B. Pepper - J. James) (BS 061.942-1) 2:44
9. **I don't know what kind of blues I got**  
(D. Ellington) (BS 061.943-1) 3:13
10. **Chelsea bridge**  
(B. Strayhorn) (BS 061.687-2) 2:52
11. **Perdido**  
(J. Tizol) (BS 070.682-1) 3:08
12. **The "C" jam blues**  
(B. Bigard) (BS 070.683-1) 2:38

This seventeenth volume in the series "THE WORKS OF DUKE ELLINGTON" covers the period September 1941 to January 1942. For most of this time the orchestra was still down in California, but the January 1942 session finds it in Chicago and heading back towards New York.

In the notes to Volume 15 we emphasized the importance of the musical "Jump For Joy" in Duke Ellington's career and how much he himself kept referring back to it. It is in a hardly surprising way that we should here find a further echo in the form of **Bill Blip**, which features Ray Nance's debut as vocalist with the orchestra. But Nance's trumpet comes equal to the fore, its tone full of the poignant accents that were to remain such a distinctive part of his style.

Moreover, it is remarkable how Jimmy Blanton's dynamic bass sets the whole orchestra alight. However, it is difficult, within the Californian context, to avoid returning to the theme of Hollywood's flagrant under-utilisation of black artists, whose talents were nevertheless so familiar to the producers of the cinema world. Ellington, for his part, was used only incidentally—as, for example, a very short passage in the medleys "Cabin in the Sky". We had to wait until 1959 to see him join the ranks of film-music composers with "Anatomy of a Murder", even then, this was to remain his only opportunity, except for "Paris Blues" which was filmed mainly in Europe. How sad it is, when we look back at this forties period, to realise that, with the exception "Stormy Weather", black showmen were largely ignored. It is all the more striking now that so many Hollywood musicals are being granted a screen revival: they afford a few brief glimpses of Lena Horne or the Nicholas Brothers, and that's about all. Yet, innumerable were the available black artists who could with ease have shown up their white counterparts; stereotyped white dancers are amongst those who would have been sent back to school to learn their trade—although Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly are of course excluded from these harsh remarks. In the famous "Helzapoppin'", made in 1941, the most dynamic sequence showed a wonderfully uninhibited Harlem Ballet, accompanied by a bunch of jazz musicians including Rex Stewart. Otten and Johnson made the comment that they should all be included in the show; they were putting together as part of the plot of the film: unfortunately we still wait!

Despite this, the Ellington 1941 trip to California was a tremendous success, with the Ellington-Strayhorn collaboration maturing remarkably. We heard the relaxed **Five o'Clock Draw** in Volume 16, whereas here **I Don't Know What Kind of Blues I've Got** opens in almost bewitching fashion with a Barney Bigard-Lawrence



Brown duet; following Ben Webster's solo there is a further duet, this time with Harry Carney on clarinet, which shifts the mood of the piece to a less dramatic vein. On **What Good Would It Do** we witness a fine entry by the trumpets after Herb Jefferis' vocal; whilst on **Raincheck**, where the hand of Strayhorn is particularly evident, Ben Webster is all ebullience and Juan Tizol most inspired. But it is **Chelsea Bridge**, of which two versions are presented here, that highlights Strayhorn's incomparable talent as a composer. We have previously referred to the influence of Ravel, an influence which seems undeniable when one listens to the harmonic conception of this composition. However, the resemblance to any specific work of Ravel's is surely fortuitous; just as is the precise souvenir of **Chelsea Bridge**, for at this time Strayhorn had never even set foot in London, the title of the composition having been borrowed from a Whistler painting. With **Chelsea Bridge** Strayhorn demonstrates, above all that he had attained a mastery of that blending of sounds which so characterised the Ellington genius. His powers of evocation are all the more evident in that the solo work—here by Juan Tizol and Ben Webster, the latter playing with a lyricism that is subsequently only Paul Gonzales would match—slots into the overall composition with such perfect ease and logic. A comparison of the two takes, recorded just over two months apart, reveals that genius does not exist without a lot of graft: in the space of those two months the character of the work underwent changes, and Tizol's first solo had disappeared by the time of the second take. As was the way with Ellington, a lengthy period was spent adapting and perfecting a composition before the definitive version emerged—when indeed such a version existed, for some pieces never ceased to be modified over the years.

**Chelsea Bridge** underlines another, sad fact: Jimmy Blanton, so present on the first take, is absent from the second. Illness had meantime got the better of him, and the man who in the space of two years had revolutionised bass playing in jazz, and brought a new rhythmic approach to the Ellington orchestra, died a few months later, in July 1942, leaving the entire band disconsolate. But his message was quickly taken up by a whole new generation of bassists, and in that sense Blanton lived on. His successor with Duke, Alvin "Junior" Raglin, is a musician from the same lineage; less well-known than Blanton and a little overcast by his heritage, he quickly settled down and stayed with the orchestra for the next four years.

We nevertheless have the pleasure of hearing Blanton for a last time in this album, contributing to the small group headed by Barney

## DISCOGRAPHY

- 1) Wallace Jones, Rex Stewart (tp), Ray Nance (tr and voc), Lawrence Brown, Joe "Tricky Sam"anton (bb), Juan Tizol (vb), Otto Hardwick, Johnny Hodges (as), Ben Webster (cl), Harry Carney (as cl), Barney Bigard (cl), Edward "Duke" Ellington (p), Fred Guy (g), Jimmy Blanton (b), William "Sonny" Greer (dr).
- 2) Same except Billy Strayhorn (p) instead of D. Ellington, same date.
- 3) 4) 5) 6) Ray Nance (tp), Juan Tizol (vb), Barney Bigard (cl), Harry Carney (bb), Billy Strayhorn (tr), Jimmy Blanton (b), William "Sonny" Greer (dr), same date.
- 7) 8) 10) Same as 1) except Billy Strayhorn (p), Alvin "Junior" Raglin (bb) and Herb Jefferis (voc) instead of D. Ellington, J. Blanton and I. Anderson, Hollywood Desc Dec 1941.
- 9) Same as 7) except Edward "Duke" Ellington instead of B. Strayhorn, same date.
- 11) 12) Same as 7) except H. Jefferis out, Chicago, January 21st, 1942.

ALREADY ISSUED: In separate LPS and in BOXES					
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Bigard. On "**C" Blues** he is once again the driving force of a rhythmic section which propels Ray Nance, Barney Bigard and Harry Carney to splendid heights, this interpretation being the first of a long series of "**C" Jam Blues**". The other three titles from this same session are batted in a melancholy which typifies a whole side of Strayhorn's work. Bigard adds a romantic touch which contrasts with his undulating style at faster times. The magic of Strayhorn's sound-structures is particularly striking on **Noir Bleu**, where the subtle use of valve trombone in the ensemble passages reminds us so much of the overall sonority. In Harry Carney's solo on **June** is eminently forgettable, but is more than compensated by Bigard's beautifully graceful contribution which follows it. Barney reminds us that, like Hodges, he is a master of inflexion, the mobility of his style making him a thoroughly distinguished and distinguishable musician.

With the final two tracks of this album we move into January 1942 and eastwards to Chicago. They provide us with a couple of fine specimens of easy, freely swinging numbers launched by Ellington and subsequently adopted by a multitude of orchestras: "**C" Jam Blues** and **Perdido**. Swing was still very much in vogue at this time and it is almost as if Ellington, whose reputation as an arranger was based upon elaboration and complexity, wanted to demonstrate that he was equally capable of producing compositions of great melodic and harmonic simplicity. What is certainly true is that the two numbers remain, as part of the Ellington repertoire right until the end, and Ellington's versions were always the most renowned.

We have just witnessed the start of the "**C" Jam Blues** career at the hands of the Barney Bigard group. Here it provides a framework for the violin of Ray Nance, the controlled power of Rex Stewart, the full, broad tone of Ben Webster, the "wa-wa" style of Tricky Sam and the light, airy clarinet of Barney Bigard. If you listen carefully, you will also hear the ever-faithful guitar of Fred Guy. **Perdido** has been the springboard for numerous illustrious Ellington soloists. As with many of the orchestral tunes, it has been played faster and faster with the passage of time. Here, it opens with a powerful, inspired contribution by Harry Carney, who is followed by Ray Nance, Rex Stewart and Ben Webster, all admirably supported by a propulsive rhythm section led by Sonny Greer.

Alexandre RADO

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