

BILLY STRAYHORN



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La collection Masters of Jazz tient à exprimer sa reconnaissance à Cabu pour la réussite éclatante avec laquelle il a su marier talent et passion pour le jazz.

BILLY STRAYHORN (1915 - 1967)

Pianiste, compositeur, arrangeur

Il fut de 1939 à 1967 l'« aide de camp », le double, l'alter ego de Duke Ellington. Celui-ci trouvait l'expression « alter ego » peu appropriée : « Billy Strayhorn était mon bras droit, et mon gauche, et mes yeux derrière la tête... ». Engagé par Duke comme parolier, il se révéla très vite un compositeur et arrangeur capable de créer à l'image de son maître, au point qu'il est pratiquement impossible de faire la part de l'un et de l'autre dans les œuvres qu'ils ont écrites ensemble. Les trente-cinq premières plages de notre sélection font entendre des œuvres composées par le seul Strayhorn. On y relèvera une expression de la mélancolie qui lui était propre (*Chelsea Bridge*, *Passion Flower*), une écriture inspirée de celle de Fletcher Henderson dans le dialogue des sections instrumentales (*Take The A Train*), de superbes ensembles de saxophones (*Midriff*, *Raincheck*), et d'un bout à l'autre, toutes les qualités d'un grand jazzman avec, cerise sur le gâteau, un sens de la forme rare chez la plupart de ses collègues. Trois plages présentent Billy Strayhorn pianiste, plus proche de Nat King Cole que d'Ellington. Les deux dernières, arrangées par Strayhorn, concluent une collection de grandes œuvres que le temps n'est pas près d'altérer.

Pianist, composer, arranger

From 1939 to 1967 he was the aide de camp, double, and alter ego of Duke Ellington. Duke found the expression "alter ego" to be scarcely appropriate: "Billy Strayhorn was my right arm, and my left, and all the eyes in the back of my head." Hired by Duke as a lyricist, Strayhorn quickly showed himself to be a composer and arranger capable of creating in his master's own image, so much so that it is practically impossible to distinguish the share of each in the works they wrote together. The first 35 tracks in our selection let you hear pieces written independently by Billy Strayhorn. Here you can find a melancholy that was Strayhorn's alone (*Chelsea Bridge*, *Passion Flower*), writing in the instrumental-section dialogues that was inspired by Fletcher Henderson (*Take The A Train*), superb saxophone ensembles (*Midriff*, *Raincheck*) and, throughout, all the qualities of a great jazzman, qualities crowned, like the icing on a cake, by a sense of form that was rare in most of his colleagues. Three tracks feature Billy Strayhorn as a pianist, closer to Nat "King" Cole than to Duke Ellington. The last two, arranged by Strayhorn, conclude a collection of great works that time is not about to change.

Claude Carrière

1. TAKE THE A TRAIN (B. Strayhorn) • 15 Feb. 1941
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS FAMOUS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: D. Ellington (p intro) – Ray Nance (tp).*
2. SOMETHING TO LIVE FOR (B. Strayhorn) • 21 March 1939
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS FAMOUS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Wallace Jones (tp) – Jean Eldridge (voc) / Billy Strayhorn (p obbligato).*
3. I'M CHECKING OUT, GO'OM BYE (D. Ellington, B. Strayhorn) • 12 June 1939
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS FAMOUS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Duke Ellington (p intro) – Joe Nanton (tb) – Ivie Anderson (voc) – Barney Bigard (cl).*
4. GRIEVIN' (B. Strayhorn, D. Ellington) • 14 Oct. 1939
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS FAMOUS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Johnny Hodges (as) – Cootie Williams (tp) – Lawrence Brown (tb).*
5. YOUR LOVE HAS FADED (B. Strayhorn, D. Ellington) • 16 Oct. 1939
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS FAMOUS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Cootie Williams (tp) – Ivie Anderson (voc) / Billy Strayhorn (p obbligato).*
6. LOST IN TWO FLATS (B. Strayhorn) • 22 Nov. 1939
BARNEY BIGARD AND HIS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Billy Strayhorn (p intro) – Barney Bigard (cl) – Harry Carney (bar) – Rex Stewart (cnt).*
7. TAPIOCA (B. Strayhorn) • 14 Feb. 1940
BARNEY BIGARD AND HIS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Barney Bigard (cl) – Rex Stewart (cnt) – Harry Carney (bar).*
8. DAY DREAM (D. Ellington, B. Strayhorn) • 2 Nov. 1940
JOHNNY HODGES AND HIS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Duke Ellington (p intro) – Johnny Hodges (as).*
9. AFTER ALL (B. Strayhorn) • 15 Feb. 1941
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS FAMOUS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Lawrence Brown (tb) – Billy Strayhorn (p) – Johnny Hodges (as).*
10. JUST A-SITTIN' AND A-ROCKIN' (D. Ellington, B. Strayhorn) • 5 June 1941
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS FAMOUS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Duke Ellington (p) / Jimmy Blanton (b) – Ben Webster (ts) – Ray Nance (tp) – Joe Nanton (tb) – Barney Bigard (cl).*
11. CLEMENTINE (B. Strayhorn) • 2 July 1941
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS FAMOUS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Duke Ellington (p intro) – Johnny Hodges (as) – Ray Nance (tp) – Rex Stewart (cnt).*
12. PASSION FLOWER (B. Strayhorn) • 3 July 1941
JOHNNY HODGES AND HIS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Duke Ellington (p intro) – Johnny Hodges (as).*
13. CHELSEA BRIDGE (B. Strayhorn) • 17 Sep. 1941
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS FAMOUS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Duke Ellington (p) – Ben Webster (ts) – Jimmy Blanton (b) – Juan Tizol (v-tb).*
14. LOVE LIKE THIS CAN'T LAST (B. Strayhorn) • 17 Sep. 1941
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS FAMOUS ORCHESTRA • *Soloist: Ivie Anderson (voc).*
15. NOIR BLEU (B. Strayhorn) • 29 Sep. 1941
BARNEY BIGARD AND HIS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Billy Strayhorn (p intro) – Barney Bigard (cl).*
16. RAINCHECK (B. Strayhorn) • 2 Dec. 1941
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS FAMOUS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Juan Tizol (v-tb) – Ben Webster (ts) – Billy Strayhorn (p) – Ray Nance (tp).*
17. MY LITTLE BROWN BOOK (B. Strayhorn) • 26 June 1942
Soloists: Lawrence Brown (tb) – Herb Jeffries (voc) / Billy Strayhorn (celesta) – Ben Webster (ts).
18. JOHNNY COME LATELY (B. Strayhorn) • 26 June 1942
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS FAMOUS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Billy Strayhorn (p intro) – Lawrence Brown (tb) – Joe Nanton (tb) – Billy Strayhorn (p).*
19. BALCONY SERENADE (B. Strayhorn) • 24 July 1945
From the "Perfume Suite"
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS FAMOUS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Ray Nance (tp) – Cat Anderson (tp) – Lawrence Brown (tb) – prob. Billy Strayhorn (p).*
20. TONK (D. Ellington, B. Strayhorn) • 10 Jan. 1946
Piano duet: Duke Ellington & Billy Strayhorn.
21. DRAWING ROOM BLUES (B. Strayhorn) • 10 Jan. 1946
Piano duet: Duke Ellington & Billy Strayhorn.
22. DOUBLE RUFF (B. Strayhorn) • 17 July 1946
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Taft Jordan (tp) – Oscar Pettiford (b) – Ray Nance (tp) – Jimmy Hamilton (ts).*
23. A FLOWER IS A LOVESOME THING (B. Strayhorn) • 17 July 1946
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Billy Strayhorn (p intro) – Johnny Hodges (as).*

CD 2

1. MIDRIF (B. Strayhorn) • 3 Sep. 1946
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Lawrence Brown (tb) – Duke Ellington (p).*
2. FLIPPANT FLURRY (B. Strayhorn) • 25 Nov. 1946
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Duke Ellington (p intro) – Jimmy Hamilton (cl).*
3. OUVERTURE TO A JAM SESSION (Parts 1 & 2) (B. Strayhorn) • 18 Dec. 1946
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Jimmy Hamilton (cl) – Oscar Pettiford (b) – Harold Baker (tp) – Ray Nance (v).*
4. CHARLOTTE RUSSE (Lotus Blossom) (B. Strayhorn) • June 1947
JOHNNY HODGES ALL-STARS • *Soloists: Johnny Hodges (as) – Billy Strayhorn (p).*
5. VIOLET BLUE (B. Strayhorn) • 9 June 1947
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Duke Ellington (p) – Johnny Hodges (as).*
6. PROGRESSIVE GAVOTTE (B. Strayhorn) • 11 Nov. 1947
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Billy Strayhorn (p intro) – Jimmy Hamilton (cl) – Harry Carney (bar) – Harold Baker (tp) – Johnny Hodges (as).*
7. ONCE UPON A DREAM (B. Strayhorn, T. Hee, B. Coltrane, D. Ellington) • 20 Nov. 1947
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Billy Strayhorn (p) – Lawrence Brown (tb) – Dolores Parker (voc) – Johnny Hodges (as).*
8. THE NEW LOOK (Snibor) (B. Strayhorn) • 27 Dec. 1947
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Johnny Hodges (as) – Ray Nance (tp).*
9. TRIPLE PLAY (B. Strayhorn) • 27 Dec. 1947
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Harry Carney (bar) – Johnny Hodges (as) – Lawrence Brown (tb).*

10. PARADISE (B. Strayhorn) • 13 Nov. 1948
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA • *Soloist: Harry Carney (bar).*
11. LUSH LIFE (B. Strayhorn) • 13 Nov. 1948
Kay Davis (voc) acc. by Billy Strayhorn (p).
12. BROWN BETTY (B. Strayhorn) • 25 Nov. 1948
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Duke Ellington (p intro) – Johnny Hodges (as).*
13. HALFWAY TO DAWN (B. Strayhorn) • 1947
Billy Strayhorn (p).
14. TAILSPIN (B. Strayhorn) • 1947
Billy Strayhorn (p).
15. GONE WITH THE WIND (A. Wrubel, H. Magidson) • 1946
Soloists: Billy Strayhorn (p) – Don Byas (ts) – Johnny Hodges (as).
16. CHLO-E (N. Moret, G. Kahn) • 28 Oct. 1940
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS FAMOUS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Joe Nanton (tb) – Barney Bigard (cl) – Lawrence Brown (tb) – Cootie Williams (tp) – Jimmy Blanton (b) – Ben Webster (ts).*
17. MAYBE I SHOULD CHANGE MY WAYS (D. Ellington) • 6 Oct. 1947
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA • *Soloists: Billy Strayhorn (p) – Harry Carney (bar) – Lawrence Brown (tb) – Ray Nance (tp).*

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CD 2

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TOTAL TIME: 69'00

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CD 2

1. MIDRIFF
2. FLIPPANT FLURRY
3. OUVERTURE TO A JAM SESSION (Part 1 & 2)
4. CHARLOTTE RUSSE (LOTUS BLOSSOM)
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