

DUKE ELLINGTON in LONDON 1958

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DUKE ELLINGTON
CONCERT

2nd Performance at 8.45

Saturday October 11

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Thursday 26—Monday 30 May

ELLINGTON '88

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THE MUSIC:

TAKE THE A TRAIN: The curtains opened just after the start of this number. Ray Nance played the original trumpet solo when they recorded this in 1941. He does this now, playing better than ever. Hodges makes his own contribution to the few bars Duke came onstage at the end of this number and everybody immediately tightened up.

RED CARTER and RED CARET: These were part of the Toot Suite, also known as the Jazz Festival Suite and were first to come on the market. They were recorded during the summer but it was years before those versions were issued, so this was new music to just about everybody. At the start of RED CARTER, the stage lights went bright red which cannot have made the girls smile (isn't that what you do with your hair in music?) but everybody coped gallantly. On the first number Britt Woodman and Shorty Baker solo. RED CARET has an excellent clarinet solo from Russell Procope followed by fine choruses from the piano player.

MY FUNNY VALENTINE follows the Bethlehem recording of two and a half years earlier in overall structure. It is a pleasant performance with Jimmy Hamilton and Quentin Jackson playing well but the finest moments come from Ray Nance.

JUNELIP: One of the very few tunes that Duke wrote for Clark Terry, the band had been playing this since the start of the year. It features Terry's warm toned, bop influenced flugelhorn.

FRUSTRATION: Duke had written this for Harry Carney as long ago as 1944 but the first commercial studio recording by the Ellington Band was not until 1956, for Bethlehem. On stage, Harry conducted himself with professional dignity. The depth of his tone was truly awe-inspiring when he wanted to roar. Harry never really had any competition on baritone because nobody knew how he was able to get that sound. Standing back from the microphone, he managed to fill the Gaumont with his marvellous warm and deep tone.

ON THE SUNNY SIDE OF THE STREET: Like Harry, Johnny Hodges did not need to rely much on microphones. He appeared to play with the minimum of physical effort and appeared to be totally unflappable, to such an extent that he gave the impression that he was uninvolved and playing automatically. I thought that this was something which he probably did entirely through his variations on this tune which is taken at a perfectly judged tempo. Did any saxophonist ever play with such perfect intonation as Hodges?

THINGS AREN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE: This was what we wanted to hear! As with many musicians of his generation, Rob could play the blues impressively easy and does this for no less than seven choruses. He builds his solo with real feeling, letting it flow well and using the pause in his playing. This has become a lost art in these days, this technically brilliant musician with nothing to say. Thirty years later, this arrangement still sounds a bit familiar. At Kilburn, however, the whole thing sounded spontaneous the way good jazz should.

EL GATO: Written by Cat Anderson and premiered at the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival, this featured the little trumpet section. What a collection of individuals they were - Clark fatal and wise, Shorty: beautiful tone with little vibrato - a very understatements man. Ray: pure golden tone. Cat: astonishing high note facility.

NEWPORT UP: This was played at just about every concert on the tour, often being programmed to follow THE MOOCHE. It was the first experience that the band had of the brass section in full cry and the effect was electrifying as the volume of sound shot through the hall. Clark, Jimmy and Paul all had great facilities for playing at this speed. Paul's unusual playing stance often led to him being off mike although, on these recordings, the balance is reasonable.

TENDERLY:

Many people found Jimmy Hamilton's clarinet playing rather cold. True, he did not play with the warmth of Barney Bigard, but he fulfilled his role within the band extremely well. He was a shrewd and rather wistful set of variations on a well known song which never really gets to sing like an Ellington composition. He gets excellent backing from the other reeds who know how to play quietly behind a soloist.

BOO-BAH:

There is no piano to be heard on this. It opened the second half of the first concert and Duke came onstage as they finished the number. Written by Billy Strayhorn, it was recorded first of all for Capitol in 1953. It is a fast tempo suitable for dancing. Ray Nance and Jimmy Hamilton share in their solo responsibilities and there is excellent work from Jimmy Woode.

BLACK AND TAN FANTASY/CREOLE LOVE CALL/THE MOOCHE:

This medley opened the first concert. The stage lights went down and Ray and Quentin were out front in a spotlight. The effect was magical! The sound of clarinets playing in the dark was something the Duke had used and continued to use. The clarinet duet at the start of THE MOOCHE is also pure Ellington. It works so well because these two players had such different approaches to the instrument and such contrasting tones. Duke was the only bandleader at that time who really knew how to use a musicians personal sound.

As Duke suggests at the end of this medley, Jimmy Woode had not been on stage for TAKE THE A TRAIN. He does not start playing until Russell Procope's TAKE THE BLACK AND TAN FANTASY.

WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO WITH A DRUM:

Ozzie Bailey sings a number from A DRUM IS A WOMAN, which was disliked by some critics who made the mistake of taking the whole thing seriously. It is a pleasant light weight song and Ozzie gets excellent backing from the band.

AUTUMN LEAVES:

Ozzie sings the first chorus in french and does it very well too but he is totally overwhelmed by Ray Nance whose violin playing really had to be seen to be appreciated. At one of the London concerts he managed to do the splits while playing!

SUMMERTIME:

This is recommended to fans of high note trumpet playing rather than lovers of the George Gershwin song. Cat Anderson was a very versatile soloist and his role on this concert tour was almost entirely confined to high note cornet solos. He starts with a slow introduction, a section with a Latin beat, and finally straight swing. Tremendous veratility and physical stamina but it would have been nice to hear Cat in one of his more subdued roles.

PASSION FLOWERS:

Johnny Hodges played this beautiful Billy Strayhorn tune with superb control of dynamics. A minority of fans disliked his use of glissandi and found the whole thing a bit sugary. Most people loved it.

From the medley CARAVAN/I GOT IT BAD.../JUST SQUEEZE ME/IT DON'T MEAN A THING/GATSBY DOLL. This extract gives the opportunity to hear John Sanders' valve trombone on CARAVAN. Johnny Hodges plays I GOT IT BAD... Ray Nance sings JUST SQUEEZE ME and IT DON'T MEAN A THING.. Finally SATIN DOLL played slower than in later years. Jimmy Woode solos.

MR GENTLE AND MY COOL was first played at Newport the previous July. This version has a longer piano introduction, is generally a more extrovert affair and ends with a short solo for Ray Nance on piano, a duet between Ray Nance on violin (digging in ferociously) and the muted rustle of Shorty Baker. The trombones play an effective swinging background.

TAKE THE A TRAIN: Ray Nance sings with vocal interjections by the band, very much in the pattern set by the 1952 recording where Betty Roche was the vocalist. The performance then moves into ballad tempo for a very personal set of variations by Paul Gonsalves. This is a particularly fine solo from this most original of musicians. With his unique tone and harmonic conception, he creates his own personal statement from the very first bar. After one chorus, the performance moves into fast tempo and the solo becomes more predictable but it is still uniquely Paul.

JONES: At the time Duke's finger snapping routine was a recent introduction. The E.P. record had recently been issued although it is unlikely that many of the audience had listened to it. This was the most swinging part of the programme and it is followed by an Ellington first recording! The performance of GOD SAVE THE QUEEN is, without a doubt, interesting.

I am sorry to all over. Two more concerts at Kilburn the following day and then the band were off to Liverpool to return home in early 1963. If you listen again to JONES with Paul and the band grooving behind him, you will understand why a lot of people went home happy that night thirty years ago.

Ian Celnick

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ELLINGTON'88



Special Release
Commemorating
Ellington '88

MONO
Side One

Duke Ellington In London - 1958
London - Saturday, 11 October 1958
RECORD ONE

1. Take the "A" Train
2. Red Garter
3. Red Garter (continued)
4. My Funny Valentine
5. Junifsp

ELLINGTON'88



Special Release
Commemorating
Ellington '88

MONO
Side Two

Duke Ellington In London - 1958
London - Saturday, 11 October 1958
RECORD ONE

1. Frustration
2. On The Sunny Side Of The Street*
3. Things Ain't What They Used To Be*
4. El Gato*
5. Newport Up*
6. Tenderly*

*from the 1st performance

ELLINGTON '88



Special Release
Commemorating
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Duke Ellington in London - 1958
London - Saturday, 11 October 1958
RECORD TWO

MONO
Side Three

1. Boo-dah*
 2. Medley: *
 - a) Black & Tan Fantasy
 - b) Creole Love Call
 - c) The Mooche
 3. What Else Can You Do With A Drum?* - vocal: Ozzie Bailey
 4. Autumn Leaves - vocal Ozzie Bailey*
 5. Summertime
 6. Passion Flower
- * from the 1st performance

ELLINGTON '88



Special Release
Commemorating
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Duke Ellington in London - 1958
London - Saturday, 11 October 1958
RECORD TWO

MONO
Side Four

1. Medley:
a) Caravan - I Got It Bad
Just Squeeze Me - It Don't Mean A Thing
Satin Doll
2. Mr. Gentle & Mr. Cool
3. Take The "A" Train - vocal Ray Nance
4. Jones
5. God Save The Queen.

Duke Ellington in London 1958

In the middle 1950's, the young jazz enthusiast in Britain had to rely almost exclusively for records. In 1958 saw the end of twenty years has been American musicians performing for British audiences. A senior official of the musicians union in this country, wrote seriously that there was no point in Art Tatum playing here when we had a lot of Ellington. I think this country would have liked him to play just as well. Someone (Humey Lyttleton I think) pointed him to the name of the Ellington album. Early in 1958 the Stan Kenton orchestra played the Albert Hall, and the sound of that very many bands was lost in the famous echo. We thought it must surely have lacked something important. We were wrong! The same year they had Louis playing on a revolving stage in the Empress Hall - a dreadful barn of a place in West London better suited to the staging of prize fights and long since demolished. Lionel Hampton followed, and the band was received enthusiastically. The critics and the promoters had little experience of jazz concerts. A large number of letters from irate fans sent to the Harold Davidson office appeared to prove that the following year the Basie band toured (twice) and played on concerts at London's Royal Festival Hall, a far more suitable venue. But what about Duke?

It was not until the autumn of 1958 that Duke and the band started their first concert tour here for twenty five years. They opened at the Royal Festival Hall on October 18th with a programme which seemed designed to please everybody. At that time the band's U.S. Columbia records were being issued in Europe by Philips and were well distributed. Much of the programme content was based on these records with a heavy emphasis on featured soloists.

Several critics took the view that there was not enough opportunity to hear Duke's band. Duke was underestimating the audience. My own feeling at the time was that it was impossible to do everything in a concert lasting less than two hours. I would have preferred more swingers, but thought the band and soloists were superb.

All Duke's bands were good but the 1958 aggregation was something special. Duke's stamp was there. The band had an awesome power and depth that was only hinted at on records. His piano was heavily featured as soloist and was in magnificent form. His exquisite sound with its unique vibrato was a delight throughout the tour.

And the saxes.... With Johnny Hodges back after a three month absence at the start of the year, the finest and longest lived reed section in the history of jazz was once more complete. And the sound was marvellously vibrant and human blend of five such totally individual tones.

The rhythm section provided stirring support. Jimmy Wood was the latest in a line of superb bass players that Duke had employed and in Sam Woodyard, Ellington had one of the finest of big band drummers. He used the full dynamic range of his drums from the merest whisper of cymbal to a thunderous bass drum. He had a special way of hitting the drums that recording engineers as did his unconscious singing. This was just about the most unselfish drumming I had ever heard. Without showing off. Sam was always there listening, anticipating and reacting to the band and soloists, driving them to great heights. He gave the impression of putting everything into a performance. This is drumming of distinction and power.

As the tour progressed, the programme changed. They played selections from "BLACK BROWN AND BEIGE" at Liverpool, and elsewhere Shorty Baker played a super "MOD INDIGO" on open trumpet.

The band's stay concluded with four concerts at Kilburn. These were reckoned to be among the best of the tour, the band being particularly on on these nights. The Gaumont State was a cinema, one of the largest in Europe, sitting about 3,000 people of high taste. There was a lot of atmosphere at those concerts and the sound was good. Duke sounded relaxed, and the band were clearly enjoying themselves.

In recent years a large number of Ellington recordings have been issued, many of which present music previously unknown to us. Collections such as the present one, which consist mainly of familiar titles, are much more satisfying. The reason is that each recording is a different title, the band sound is different at each performance. Not only do solos vary but so do the sound of the sections. Any recordings which increase our understanding of this extraordinary man and his music are of inestimable value.

These liner notes continue on the record-divider inside this jacket.

RECORD ONE

TAKE THE "A" TRAIN	[Billy Strayhorn]
RED GARTER	(Ellington - Strayhorn)
MY FUNNY VALENTINE	(Rodgers - Hart)
JUNIFLIP	(Duke Ellington)
FRUSTRATION	(Duke Ellington)
ON THE SUNNY SIDE OF THE STREET	(McHugh - Fields)
THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE	(M.Ellington - T.Persons)
EL GATO	(William Anderson)
NEWPORT UP	(Ellington - Strayhorn)
TENDERLY	(J.Lawrence - Gross)

RECORD TWO

BOO-DAH	[Billy Strayhorn]
MEDLEY : BLACK & TAN FANTASY CREOLE LOVE CALL THE MOOCHE	(Miley - Ellington) (Ellington - Miley - Jackson) (Ellington - Mills)
WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO WITH A DRUM ?	(Ellington - Strayhorn)
AUTUMN LEAVES	(J.Mercer - Prevert - Kosma)
SUMMERTIME	(Heyward - Gershwin)
PASSION FLOWER	(Billy Strayhorn)
MEDLEY : CARAVAN I GOT IT BAD JUST SQUEEZE ME IT DON'T MEAN A THING SATIN DOLL	(Ellington - Tizol) (P.Webster - D.Ellington) (Gaines - Ellington) (Ellington - Mills) (Duke Ellington)
MR. GENTLE & MR. COOL	(Ellington - Rembert)
TAKE THE "A" TRAIN	(Billy Strayhorn)
JONES	(Clark Terry - Duke Ellington)
GOD SAVE THE QUEEN	(National Anthem)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Album Cover Photograph - Jerry Valburn
 Source Material - Jerry Valburn
 Tape Re-Mastering - Jack Towers
 Lacquering & Disc Master - John R.T. Davies
 Liner Notes - Ian Celnick

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