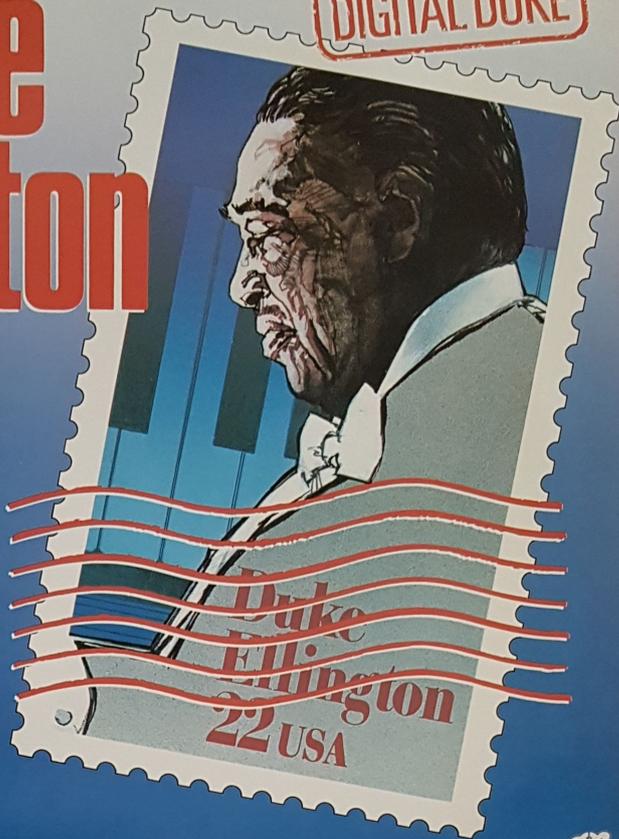


THE **Duke**
Ellington
ORCHESTRA

DIGITAL DUKE



FULL DIGITAL
32 TRACK
RECORDING

DIGITAL MASTER



SOLOISTS

SIDE ONE

Satin Doll

Roland Hanna — Piano
Herman Riley — Tenor Saxophone

Cottontail

Lew Soloff — Trumpet
Branford Marsalis — Tenor Saxophone

Prelude To A Kiss

Gerry Wiggins — Piano
Norris Turney — Alto Saxophone

Perdido

Louie Bellson — Drums
Clark Terry — Trumpet
Herman Riley — Tenor Saxophone
Britt Woodman — Trombone
Eddie Daniels — Clarinet

MUSICIANS

Lew Soloff — Trumpet and Flugelhorn
Barry Lee Hall — Trumpet and Flugelhorn
Ron Tooley — Trumpet and Flugelhorn
Clark Terry — Trumpet and Flugelhorn
Kamau Adilifu — Trumpet and Flugelhorn on
"Satin Doll" and "Prelude To A Kiss"
Norris Turney — Alto Saxophone
Jerry Dodgion — Alto Saxophone and Clarinet

Recorded by Ed Rak at Clinton Recording Studios, NYC
on the Mitsubishi X-850 32-track digital recorder
Assisted by Rebecca Everett

Digitally mixed and edited by Josiah Gluck at The
Review Room, NYC on the Sony PCM 1630 Digital
Audio System

Assisted by Jim Singer
Digitally mastered by Ted Jensen at Sterling
Sound, NYC

Album Cover Design: Dan Serrano
Back Cover Art: Dave Kunze
Album Graphics: Dan Serrano, David Gibb, Dave Kunze
& Ivan Salgado

GRP Records Creative Director: Andy Baltimore

Louie Bellson plays PBS Drums

Branford Marsalis appears courtesy of CBS Records

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Gretchen Hoffmann Abene who not only assisted in
the production, but was in charge of music copying
and also oversaw the budget.

DIGITAL DUKE

Orchestra Conducted by Mercer Ellington

Produced by Michael Abene and Mercer Ellington

Executive Producers: Dave Grusin and Larry Rosen

Herman Riley — Tenor Saxophone and Clarinet
Eddie Daniels — Tenor Saxophone and Clarinet
Charles Owens — Baritone Saxophone, Clarinet
and Bass Clarinet
Branford Marsalis — Tenor Saxophone on
"Cottontail" and "Take The A Train"
Britt Woodman — Trombone
Al Grey — Trombone
Chuck Connors — Bass Trombone

Michael Abene: THE PRODUCER SPEAKS ABOUT DIGITAL DUKE

When Larry Rosen asked me to work on this project I was absolutely knocked out. I was weaned on Ellington's music. Working with Mercer Ellington was a history lesson and doing the research on the tunes was tremendously interesting. He was a sweetheart from the beginning and I felt we had a great rapport.

It was nice to see Norris Turney, Clark Terry, Al Grey and Louie Bellson. I hadn't seen them for a long time so this recording was a party. It was interesting having guys like Chuck Connors, Britt Woodman, Norris, Clark, and Louie on the dates since they were part of Duke's orchestra and part of that sound; and there was Barry Lee Hall, who did such a wonderful job transcribing a lot of the Ellington music we used.

I think we captured the sound of the band. One of the problems of trying to recreate a sound—especially with Ellington, where the music is so personal—is when you try to make it slick, you lose the essence of the man's music.

Everybody involved in the project gave 200% to make it happen right. I am very proud of this project.

Raymond Harris and Scott Braker Abene for Library
work and general assistance.

Phil Vachon, Mitsubishi Pro Audio

SOLOISTS

SIDE TWO

22 Cent Stomp

Roland Hanna — Piano
Clark Terry — Trumpet
Al Grey — Trombone
Barry Lee Hall — Trumpet

Do Nothin' 'Till You Hear From Me

Roland Hanna — Piano
Britt Woodman — Trombone
Barry Lee Hall — Trumpet
Clark Terry — Trumpet

In A Mellotone

Roland Hanna — Piano
J. J. Wiggins — Bass
Clark Terry — Trumpet
Norris Turney — Alto Saxophone

Take The A Train

Branford Marsalis — Tenor Saxophone
Gerry Wiggins — Piano

Roland Hanna — Piano
Gerry Wiggins — Piano on "Prelude To A Kiss"
and "Take The A Train"
Bucky Pizzarelli — Guitar on "Prelude To A Kiss"
J. J. Wiggins — Bass
Rocky White — Drums
Louie Bellson — Drums on "In A Mellotone,"
"Take The A Train," "Cottontail" and "Perdido"



Michael Abene & Mercer Ellington

A very special thank you to Lou Levy for all your help
in making this very special project come to life.

Bud, this one's for you!



THE IMPERIOUS PRESENCE of Edward Kennedy Ellington has never been more palpably felt, in all the years since his physical existence left us, than in this impassioned reminder of some of the best of his work.

There is an old tale of a hot date separating what Duke Ellington means to the seasoned listener long familiar with his special music, and what his name signifies to someone whose only association with him may be "Satin Doll" (and who probably thinks he's compressed "Take the A Train").

Digital Duke will play a significant role in bridging the separation. From the date of the recording (quality, the compact disc format, and the presence of such formidable artists as Branford Marsalis and Eddie Daniels along with jazz and new-jazz Ellington enthusiasts, the music, etc.) during these three days in a New York studio, brought to mind an interview with Mercer Ellington that took place just five days after his father had died.

"We were in Bermuda. Dad had just arrived as part of a jazz festival cruise. Mercer and the band had arrived the night before to play at an IBM convention. Because Duke had given his word that the orchestra would be on hand for this date regardless of his own condition, Mercer had honored that pledge, even though he and the entire band were still in shock. Sitting by the bar, I was asked over lunch that day in Hamilton, Mercer talked about the role he had fulfilled. Suddenly, after nine years of relative obscurity as a member of the trumpet section and highly capable manager of the band's affairs, the amiable, greatly respected younger Ellington (already well liked then at 55, in contrast to his father's perennial burnt-earno) found himself catapulted into a position he had never sought but must have contemplated when he knew that Duke's death was inevitable.

"Several things are certain," he said. "We are going to stay together, we're going to be true to the personal, and the music of Ellington will live on like any of the classics, like the works of Debussy or Schumann. What's most important for us now is that his contributions be authentically represented."

"We need some new blood. We need the continuity to pass the rhythm section information along from one man to another, because there is no one to look to for the rhythm section. So the men I need to recruit must have an art and a craft, but they also have to be Ellington fans, who have been listening to the records for years and won't need to be told. In order to maintain the Ellington prestige, we need specific people in specific places."

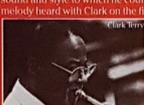
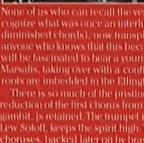
"I want to have a band that Pop would be proud of. I think I can make it."

"These thoughts and that aspiration remained in my mind as I listened to **Digital Duke**. Thanks to Mercer's firmness of purpose, thanks also to the initiative of Dave Grusin, Jerry Rosen and Lou Lewy (the legendary music publisher, who conceived the idea of a digital compact disc Ellington set), Mercer's ambition was more fully realized on this occasion than at any other time since he took the control. Thanks to Mike Abene, the gifted pianist and composer who, like Larry Rosen and Eddie Daniels, played in the Newport Youth Band in the late 1950s, and who co-produced the **Digital Duke** sessions.

"The credit must also be shared by Barry Lee Hall, who joined the band's trumpet section not long before Duke died, and who has developed into a kee figure as arranger and transcriber of early Ellington works. The question confronting Mercer and Abene was a complex one: to what extent should the new versions of these works conform to the originals, and how far should they go in the process of innovation?"

"With the help of Barry Lee Hall and others, an ideal compromise was reached. Elements of the old versions were often retained, but with change in routine and, of course, allowing full freedom for the soloists to express their own personalities, since that was always a central fact of the Ellington mystique.

"Satin Doll" is one of the many compositions that sound right only when the spirit and letter of the Ellington version can be adhered to. First recorded in June 1953, it opens with the long familiar piano introduction; the saxes play the theme at exactly the right tempo, the brass comes in halfway through the bridge,



and so on, through the solos by Roland Hanna and Herman Riley. Even that final moment heard but piano could be retained unimpaired.

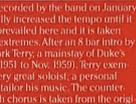
Nowhere is this distillation of ancient and modern concepts more to be made than in the tradition that is "Cottontail." Now is it who can recall the very first "Cottontail" will fall to recognize what was once an innovation in the saxes play arrangement (diminished chords), now transplanted to the front of the band. And anyone who knows that this has become Ben Webster's chance to glory will be fascinated to hear a young tenor player of the 1980s, Branford Marsalis, taking over with a confidence that shows how firmly his roots are imbedded in the Ellington legacy.

There is so much of the pristine "Cottontail" spirit that even the reduction of the first chorus from 32 to 24 bars, an effective 1910 number, is retained. The trumpet in the bridge of the first chorus, by Lew Soloff, keeps the spirit high. When Marsalis takes over for his choruses, backed later up by brass shorts and other passages

from the original arrangement, the creativity and continuity of his work has the same youthful abandon that informed Ben Webster's solo. (Ben was just 30 when he recorded it. Branford was 26 at the time of this session.) The four-year age difference seems no more or less significant than the span of almost a half century separating these two extraordinary solos.

The famous sax solo choruses follows, leading to a slight change in the final out chorus with its wild, polytonal sounding bridge. But tradition is not followed at this point, where once the arrangement went into Marsalis takes over with an additional full chorus and cadence.

"Prelude To A Kiss" was originally recorded in 1938, with the full Ellington Orchestra and by Johnny Hodges' small group. The band recorded it again in 1945 and 1957. For the new version it was orchestrated by Frankie Westbrook and not surprisingly for treatment is a showcase for Norris



Turner, who played alongside Johnny Hodges when he first joined Duke in 1938, but on Hodges' death in 1970 took over his role as the alto sax ballad specialist. He would turn back his masterful hand and style has never been better illustrated than on this sublime performance.

Juan Tizol's "Perdido" was first recorded by the band on January 21, 1942. In later years Duke gradually increased the tempo until it had almost doubled, heavy heads prevailed here and there, and the band took to a pace between these two extremes. After an 8-bar intro by Louie Bellson the first soloist is Clark Terry, a mainstay of Duke's brass section for eight years (Nov. 1951 to Nov. 1959). Terry exemplifies what Ellington sought in every great soloist: a personal sound and style with which he could tailor his music. The counter-melody heard with Clark on the fifth chorus is taken from the original routine. Herman Riley's "Biddy" began out of two solo choruses before Britt Woodman's trombone is teamed with Bill Backus' saxophone.

Terry, Riley and Woodman trade fours, then lead to the phenomenal Eddie Daniels, who in the past year has generated more excitement than any other clarinetist since the Swing Era. His third chorus becomes the famous out chorus, in the sort of controlled pandemonium of which Duke was a master distiller.

"The title '22 Cent Stamp' will evoke memories for students of Ellington. Though the title was inspired by the postage stamp issued in Duke's honor on the 18th anniversary of his birth, there was another piece, recorded in 1947, called "Three Cent Stamp."

This, however, is not a new version added for inflation. As Mercer explains, "As a time to be recorded under the title 'Salutary in D Flat' on a session that was never released. The form, as on count less other Ellington pieces is the 12 bar blues, opening with 24

bars of piano by Roland Hanna and leading to an engaging dialogue between Clark Terry and Al Grey. Later, Barry Lee Hall takes over from Clark. The music filling and provides a splendid middle era Ellington feeling, thanks to an arrangement diligently transcribed from the original by Frankie Westbrook.

"Do Nothing 'Til You Hear From Me" had a dual life as an instrumental designed for the Charlie Williams and Al Grey "Concerts for Goetz" then, with its melody transcribed out to the more conventional 32 bars and with lyrics by Bob Fosse, under the title by which it has since been known. Duke recorded three versions in March 1940 and November 1947 respectively. This time features Clark Terry, Britt Woodman, and Barry Lee Hall. All assumes Goetz's role, and with modification, after Goetz plays in the band for the last time before retiring, he presided Barry with his horn and male.

The redoubtable J.J. Wiggins, like Mercer, is the younger half of a father and son team. The son of Gerald Wiggins, he joined the Ellington orchestra for the first time at the age of 18, a few months after Duke's death. He is in many respects a *latter day* counterpart of Jimmy Hamilton, who played bass on the first version of "In A Mellow Tone" in September 1940. Here again the theme is not heard until the third chorus, following solos by Roland Hanna and J.J. Wiggins. Clark Terry's trumpet in choppy rhythm is right in the spirit called for, and Norris Turner's Johnny Hodges inspired alto takes over for the last record.

Another tune that was much abused in terms of the right tempo was "Take The A Train." The cover pace here is exactly right. The famous piano intro, which has become almost a part of the tune, is heard twice (played by Gerry Wiggins), each time leading to another impeccable example of Branford Marsalis' adaptability. After the fourth chorus a long familiar upward modulation, lead to an exchange of roles by the orchestra and Branford with the trombones taking over for the bridge, another return to the time honored tradition. Billy Strayhorn composed this solo to the Bar Tom concert, but the band recorded it in Hollywood on February 15, 1931. It was soon to become Duke's trademark and perennial theme, played in a hundred different ways.

Finally, a word about the rhythm section. Always the backbone of every great jazz ensemble, the team here benefits from recording quality and balance of unprecedented excellence. Rocky White, the band's percussive pulse since the final Duke days is in splendid form, as is special guest Louie Bellson, who was Duke's drummer in the early 1950s and again on many reunion occasions. Duke did not feature a guitar in the band after Freddie Gow left in 1947, but the presence of fiery, big-brained listener to the rhythm band on "Prelude To A Kiss" was a valuable asset.

By Roland Hanna in the demanding piano chair replaced most effectively on "Prelude To A Kiss" and "Take The A Train" by Gerry Wiggins) and with Wiggins' brilliant son on bass, this was a consistently powerful rhythm team.

The unimpaired sessions during the creation of this disc was unlike anything most of the participants could recall. As Mercer Ellington said: "The guys were walking around in absolute awe of each other. It was phenomenal."

Gerald Wiggins said: "I would have paid to be a part of this." Herman Riley observed: "I was a great thrill when Mercer called me for the date. I was so proud to be included." Branford Marsalis said: "As a young punk, I was awed even to be called for this album. In fact, I felt intimidated. I knew all the great Ellington records, and the contributions of men like Ben Webster, Johnny Hodges, and Harry Carey. I even carried a lot of Ben's Genevieve solos years ago. I was very lucky to be on this date and all I could hope forward to do a credible job by adapting myself to the setting. This was really a wonderful experience."

Charles Owens summed it up best: "This will do a tremendous amount to reestablish the prestige of the band. We were all simply in heaven when we made these dates. It was the greatest recording session I've ever been involved in. Some to think of it, it's the best thing I've been a part of in my whole life." Pop would indeed have been proud.

LEONARD FEATHER



THE DUKE ELLINGTON ORCHESTRA
Digital Duke

SIDE ONE
33 1/3 RPM
STEREO

GR-1038

- | | |
|---|------|
| 1. SATIN DOLL | 4:28 |
| Edward Kennedy Ellington (Duke Ellington Music/ASCAP) | |
| 2. COTTONTAIL | 4:14 |
| Edward Kennedy Ellington (CBS-Robbins Music Corporation/ASCAP) | |
| 3. PRELUDE TO A KISS | 4:24 |
| Edward Kennedy Ellington, Irving Gordon & Irving Mills
(Mills Music, Inc./ASCAP) | |
| 4. PERDIDO (edited) | 7:00 |
| Ervin M. Drake, Hans Langsfelder & Juan Tizol
(Tempo Music, Inc./ASCAP) | |

Produced by Michael Abene & Mercer Ellington
Executive Producers: Dave Grusin and Larry Rosen
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THE DUKE ELLINGTON ORCHESTRA
Digital Duke

SIDE TWO
33 1/3 RPM
STEREO

GR-1038

- | | |
|---|------|
| 1. 22 CENT STOMP | 6:56 |
| Edward Kennedy Ellington (Duke Ellington Music/ASCAP) | |
| 2. DO NOTHIN' TILL YOU HEAR FROM ME | 3:25 |
| Edward Kennedy Ellington & Sidney Keith Russell
(Harrison Music Corporation & CBS-Robbins Music Corporation/ASCAP) | |
| 3. IN A MELLOTONE | 7:13 |
| Edward Kennedy Ellington & Milton Gabler
(CBS-Robbins Music Corporation/ASCAP) | |
| 4. TAKE THE A TRAIN | 5:36 |
| Billy Strayhorn (Tempo Music, Inc./ASCAP) | |

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DIGITAL DUKE



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SIDE ONE

Satin Doll
Cottontail
Prelude To A Kiss
Perdido

SIDE TWO

22 Cent Stomp
Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me
In A Mellotone
Take The A Train

SPECIAL GUEST PERFORMERS:

Branford Marsalis
Eddie Daniels
Clark Terry
Louie Bellson
Norris Turney
Britt Woodman
Roland Hanna

Orchestra Conducted by Mercer Ellington
Produced by Michael Abene and Mercer Ellington
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THE
DIGITAL MASTER
COMPANY

Also available on compact disc (GRP-9548)

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