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Duke Ellington has been hailed as the greatest single talent to have emerged in the history of Jazz. His working life spanned half a century during which he was always at the forefront of the development of Big-Band Jazz. This Album traces his evolution from the Jazz Age to the Swing Era in a series of new digital stereo transfers from the original direct-cut 78 rpm masters, making possible a clearer insight into both the subtlety and force of his unique contribution to the development of Jazz.

Edward Kennedy 'Duke' Ellington (29/4/1899 - 24/5/1974) was, in his time, the subject of much controversy. For example, the puritanical pioneer Jazz critic, Rudi Blesh, dismissed him in **Shining Trumpets** (Da Capo, New York) in these curt terms: 'As for Jazz - he never played it'. And Blesh had a valid viewpoint, if you regard Jazz only in terms of the classic New Orleans polyphony of Oliver, Dodds and Morton. But why castigate Debussy for not being Bach or Mozart? Ellington chose to take Jazz in a new direction which embraced impressionism. His undoubted genius as a composer and arranger was given expression through a brilliant group of musicians - many of whom stayed with him for up to thirty years. Together they created works of great energy, charm and sheer emotional power.

The Musicians

PIANO ARRANGER AND DIRECTOR – Edward Kennedy 'Duke' Ellington.

TRUMPET – Louis Bacon, Frederick Douglas 'Freddie' 'Posey' Jenkins, Louis Metcalf, James Wesley 'Bubber' Miley, Clady 'Jabbo' Smith, Arthur Parker 'Artie' Whetsol and Charles Melvin 'Cootie' Williams.

TROMBONE – Lawrence Brown, Joe 'Tricky Sam' Nanton, and Vincente Martinez 'Juan' Tizol (valve trombone).

REEDS – Albany Leon 'Barney' Bigard, Harry Howell Carney, Otto 'Toby' Hardwick, Johnny 'Rabbit' Hodges, and Rudolf 'Rudy' Jackson.

BANJO AND GUITAR – Fred Guy and Alonzo 'Lonnie' Johnson.

BASS – Wellman Braud and Henry 'Bass' Edwards.

DRUMS – William Alexander 'Sonny' Greer.

VOCAL – Baby Cox and Adelaide Hall.

On December 4, 1927, Duke Ellington and his ten piece orchestra opened at Harlem's Cotton Club. It was a crucial event in his career. He had begun as a professional musician in his home town, Washington, D.C. In 1923 he went to New York, and by his twenty-fifth birthday was leading his own 'Washingtonians'. His principle venue was the Kentucky Club until his manager, Irving Mills, secured the Cotton Club engagement which had been turned down by King Oliver. Ellington provided the music for the club's glittering floor shows. There was growing public interest in so-called 'jungle music', which resulted in direct coast-to-coast radio broadcasts from the club, giving Ellington a national audience. The jungle motif also provided inspiration for atmospheric 'growl' effects which were brilliantly executed by Bubber Miley (trumpet), and Joe Nanton (trombone), a superb example being *The Blues With A Feelin'* (track 2), which also featured Johnny Hodges (soprano saxophone).

An example of the early band 'The Washingtonians' is to be heard in *Hop Head* (track 3) which featured the original reedmen, Toby Hardwick (baritone saxophone) and Rudy Jackson (clarinet). In another pre-Cotton Club recording session, Jabbo Smith, then only eighteen years of age, took Bubber Miley's place, and played the exceptional 'tortured' trumpet solo on *What Can A Poor Fellow Do?* (track 4).

The Cotton Club band attained its first 'classic' sound early in 1928, with the arrival in the reed section of Barney Bigard and Johnny Hodges who are both heard as soloists in *The Mooche* (track 9). Artie Whetsol (trumpet) was the soloist in *Misty*

Morning (track 8), together with Lonnie Johnson (guitar), and Barney Bigard (tenor saxophone). Bigard played the clarinet solo on *Hot And Bothered* (track 7), an excellent example of his flowing New Orleans style. Special mention should be made, too, of Wellman Braud, whose ability to bow, pluck or slap a bass fiddle unified the band rhythmically and gave great solidity and depth to the 'colouring' of the Duke's deceptively simple arrangements.

Cootie Williams was also only eighteen when he joined the Orchestra in January 1929 as Miley's permanent replacement – and one of his first solo efforts is to be heard in *Paducah* (track 10). The departure of Bubber Miley marked the end of an era. Swing was just around the corner and the public was demanding a sweeter, more sophisticated form of dance music. Ellington embarked on a smoother style, and the 1930 version of *East St. Louis Toodle-oo* (track 11) gives a good indication of this new direction (and makes an interesting comparison with the 1927 version featured in NEW YORK – REB 590). 1930 also saw the introduction of Juan Tizol on valve trombone. His smooth open horn is heard to good effect in comparison with Joe Nanton's plunger-muted trombone, and Whetsol's trumpet in *Creole Love Call* (track 12).

By 1934 the new style was firmly established and the orchestra had been enlarged to fourteen pieces through the addition of Lawrence Brown (trombone), who provided a characteristic lightly swinging solo in *Live And Love Tonight* (track 16), which also featured Johnny Hodges on soprano saxophone. Both *Live And Love Tonight* and *Stompy Jones* (track 15) demonstrate the dramatic transition of Duke Ellington from the Jazz Age to the Swing Era and the emergence of the modern Big Band.

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1. JUBILEE STOMP (Ellington/Belwin Mills Music)

43503-2 NEW YORK 26/3/1928 2 34

DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS ORCHESTRA

Miley and Whetsol – t: Nanton – tb: Hardwick – ss. as. bar and bsx: Carney – cl. as and bar: Bigard – cl and ts: Ellington – p: Guy – bj: Braud – sb: Greer – d

2. THE BLUES WITH A FEELIN' (*Ellington/Belwin Mills Music*)

401350-D NEW YORK 22/11/1928 3'13"
DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS ORCHESTRA
Miley, Whetsol and Jenkins - t; Nanton - tb; Hodges - cl, ss & as;
Carney - cl, as and bar; Bigard - cl and ts; Ellington - p; Guy - bj;
Braud - sb; Greer - d

3. HOP HEAD (*Ellington, Hardwick/Belwin Mills Music*)

143706-2 NEW YORK 22/3/1927 2'56"
THE WASHINGTONIANS
Miley and Metcalf - t; Nanton - tb; Jackson - cl, ts and bar;
Hardwick - ss, as and bar; Carney - cl, as and bar; Ellington - p;
Guy - bj; Edwards - bb; Greer - d

4. WHAT CAN A POOR FELLOW DO?
(*Billy, Meyers, Schoebel/Belwin Mills Music*)

81775-A NEW YORK 3/11/1927 3'10"
DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS ORCHESTRA
Smith and Metcalf - t; Nanton - tb; Hardwick - ss, as and bar;
Carney - cl, as and bar; Jackson - cl and ts; Ellington - p; Guy -
bj; Braud - sb; Greer - d

5. CHICAGO STOMPDOWN (*Creamer, Johnson/Belwin Mills Music*)

81777-C NEW YORK 3/11/1927 2'46"
THE CHICAGO FOOTWARMERS
Personnel as for *What Can A Poor Fellow Do?* - with Adelaide
Hall - vocal

6. BLACK BEAUTY (*Ellington/Belwin Mills Music*)

43502-2 NEW YORK 26/3/1928 2'52"
DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS ORCHESTRA
Personnel as for *Jubilee Stomp*

7. HOT AND BOTHERED (*Ellington/Belwin Mills Music*)

401177-A NEW YORK 1/10/1928 3'16"
DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS ORCHESTRA
Miley and Whetsol - t; Nanton - tb; Hodges - cl, ss and as;
Carney - cl, as and bar; Bigard - cl and ts; Ellington - p; Guy - bj;
Johnson - g; Braud - sb; Greer - d
With Baby Cox - vocal

8. MISTY MORNING (*Whetsol, Ellington/Belwin Mills Music*)

401352-D NEW YORK 20/11/1928 3'17"
DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS ORCHESTRA
Personnel as for *The Blues With A Feelin'*

9. THE MOOCHE (*Ellington/J.R. Lafleur*)

401175-A NEW YORK 1/10/1928 3'12"
DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS ORCHESTRA
Personnel as for *Hot And Bothered*

10. PADUCAH (*Redman/Belwin Mills Music*)

E29382-A NEW YORK 1/3/1929 2'28"
JUNGLE BAND
Whetsol, Jenkins, Williams - t; Nanton - tb; Hodges - cl, ss and
as; Carney - cl, as and bar; Bigard - cl and ts; Ellington - p; Guy -
bj; Braud - sb; Greer - d

11. EAST ST. LOUIS TODDLE-OO (*Ellington, Miley/Belwin Mills Music*)

150167-3 NEW YORK 3/4/1930 3'13"
MILLS' TEN BLACK BERRIES
Personnel as for *Paducah*, plus Juan Tizol - vtb

12. CREOLE LOVE CALL (*Ellington/Lawrence Wright Music*)

BX11264-A NEW YORK 11/2/1932 4'08"
DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS FAMOUS ORCHESTRA
Personnel as for *East St. Louis Toodle-oo*

13. FAST AND FURIOUS (*Ellington/Belwin Mills Music*)

B11851-A NEW YORK 17/5/1932 2'48"
DUKE ELLINGTON ACCOMPANIED BY
HIS FAMOUS ORCHESTRA
Whetsol, Jenkins and Williams - t; Nanton and Brown - tb; Tizol -
vtb; Hodges - cl, ss and as; Carney - cl, as and bar; Hardwick - as
and bxs; Bigard - cl and ts; Ellington - p; Guy - bj and g; Braud - sb;
Greer - d

14. SOLITUDE (*Ellington/J.R. Lafleur*)

80149-1 CHICAGO 10/1/1934 3'29"
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA
Whetsol, Jenkins, Williams and Bacon - t; Nanton and Brown - tb;

Hodges – cl, ss and as; Carney – cl, as and bar, Hardwick – cl, as and bsx; Bigard cl and ts; Ellington – p; Guy – g; Braud – sb; Greer – d

15. STOMPY JONES (*Ellington/J.R. Lafleur*)

80145-2 CHICAGO 9/1/1934 3'02"

DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS ORCHESTRA

Personnel as for *Solitude*

16. LIVE AND LOVE TONIGHT (*Johnston, Coslow/Chappell Music*)

79157-2 HOLLYWOOD 12/4/1934 3'18"

DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS ORCHESTRA

Personnel as for *Solitude*, omitting Bacon and Hardwick

Stereo re-creations: Robert Parker,
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GPO Box 135,
Sydney, Australia 2001

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Robert Parker is an Australian Sound Engineer and Broadcaster. Over the last thirty years he has developed a unique system for extracting high quality stereo sound from early mono 78 rpm records. He has been collecting records since the age of around twelve – and has now amassed one of the finest Vintage Jazz collections in the country. It has formed the basis for this Award Winning BBC Radio 2 series JAZZ CLASSICS IN STEREO – and the accompanying series of LP albums JAZZ CLASSICS IN DIGITAL STEREO – released by BBC Records and distributed by EMI.

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RECORDS AND TAPES



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As heard on BBC Radio Two

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