

# DUKE ELLINGTON



HAMILTON, ONTARIO CANADA  
MONDAY, FEB. 8 ★ 1954

*\*\* A Previously Unissued Concert \*\**

# DUKE ELLINGTON

*\*\* The Forum, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada \*\**

**For** many Duke Ellington fans the years 1951 through 1955 form a black hole in the half-century career of the great composer/bandleader. The reasons are fairly obvious. At the end of January 1951, alto saxophonist Johnny Hodges, since 1928 one of the most distinctive voices in the Ellington orchestra, handed in his notice advising Ellington he was about to form his own small group. And to make matters worse he'd be taking with him two other long-time band veterans, drummer Sonny Greer, one of the original "Washingtonians", who'd been with Duke from the very beginning and trombonist Lawrence Brown, an Ellington sideman since 1932.

Many saw this as the end of Duke Ellington's bandleading career. How could the band survive without such key men? But Ellington, ever the optimist, reacted in typical Ducal fashion. "New men mean a new sound in my band and the creation of new music," he informed a Down Beat reporter. Probably

better than anyone else at the time Ellington realized that by the early 1950's his sidemen were often just going through the motions. The change that had been forced upon him offered a rare creative challenge.

Shortly after learning of the defection of Hodges, Greer and Brown, Duke asked Juan Tizol, a long-time friend and former sideman (Tizol had played valve trombone in Duke's band from 1929 to 1944) if he, drummer Louis Bellson, and alto saxophonist Willie Smith — all members of the Harry James orchestra at the time - would consider joining the Ellington organization for one year. Jazz writers tagged this "the great James robbery." But James, who was only working intermittently during this period, understood Duke's predicament and was happy to be of assistance at this difficult moment. As it turned out, only alto saxophonist Willie Smith would leave at the end of the agreed-upon one year. Louis Bellson, the man Duke Ellington enjoyed introducing as his "first



Photograph by James J. Kriegsmann



chair percussionist", stayed for two years, leaving in March of 1953 to become music director for his new wife, Pearl Bailey. Juan Tizol remained with Duke until December 1953.

The revamped Ellington orchestra made its first official recordings for Columbia Records in May of 1951. The results proved Ellington wasn't joking when he told *Down Beat* magazine that new men meant a new sound. More than a few listeners thought the new band sounded more like Woody Herman than Duke Ellington. At a September 1951 concert in Toronto's Massey Hall I found the band's power and precision impressive. And Duke acted like a man whose creative juices had been spiked. But this didn't mean that he'd turned his back on the music which had built his reputation over the previous quarter century. In fact he even revived such numbers as *Midriff*, *Harlem Air Shaft* and *Warm Valley*.

By the time the music contained in this set was recorded, the alto saxophone chair vacated by Johnny Hodges in 1951 was occupied by 26 year-old Rick Henderson, a native of Washington, D.C. This would be Henderson's first and only taste of national exposure. Prior to joining the Ellington band a year earlier he'd led small groups in his home town.

Two other altoists had filled the position between the departure of Hodges' first replacement Willie Smith and the arrival of Henderson: Porter Kilbert for about a month, and Hilton Jefferson for a year. When Louis Bellson left in 1953 he was replaced briefly by Butch Ballard then by Dave Black, the drummer heard here. Philadelphian Black, who'd been a member of the house band in that city's Blue Note club, joined Ellington in the summer of 1953 and would remain for two years. A permanent replacement for Juan Tizol was not found until town months after this concert took place. George Jean would fill the third trombone chair until John Sanders was able to join the band.

In April of 1953 Ellington had signed a contract with Capitol Records after asking Columbia for a release after five years. "I signed with Capitol because this firm is doing an excellent job of presenting all of its artists, particularly as it concerns exploitation", Duke told *Down Beat*. But as it turned out, the recordings he made during his two years with Capitol were not among his most memorable. While a handful of above average albums were issued — *Duke Ellington Presents*, *Ellington '55*, *Ellington Showcase*, and *Piano Reflections* ( the last a delightful

trio set) — more than the normal number of lightweight items were recorded. Of course Ellington was forced to be a businessman as well as an artist and he certainly wasn't above looking for a hit record. He knew only too well that it was the commercial numbers that subsidized his more ambitious efforts. Looking back now at this period it's more than a little ironic to note that one of the biggest hits of his entire career happened to be the very first piece recorded under his Capitol contract. There are many Ellington admirers who don't really care if they ever hear *Satin Doll* again, but it was popular material such as this that allowed Ellington to get his masterpieces recorded. The Capitol years also saw such "deathless classics" as *Blue Jean Beguine*, *Twelfth Street Rag*, *Mambo*, *Isle of Capri Mambo*, *The Bunny Hop Mambo*, *Echo Tango*, and *Chile Bowl*. While three of these pseudo-latin numbers turn up in the concert recording at hand there's really no cause for concern. They account for only twelve minutes of this two-hour plus concert and they do reflect Ellington's wry sense of humor.

It's hard to say whether it was the lack of really impressive recordings during the Capitol years or the simple fact that Johnny Hodges was still missing from the Ellington fold, but

this edition of the band never received the attention it deserved. The brass section, for example, was truly impressive. Clark Terry, Willie Cook, Cat Anderson and Ray Nance made up a powerhouse trumpet team, and Quentin Jackson and Britt Woodman were two of the finest trombonists ever to work with Ellington. The late Charles Mingus would have attested to that. He used one, or the other, or both players on his recordings whenever the budget allowed it. (John Sanders would be joining the Ellington trombones shortly, but George Jean fills in efficiently here.) The reed section included Jimmy Hamilton on clarinet and tenor, Russell Procope, alto and clarinet, Rick Henderson, alto, Paul Gonsalves, tenor, and the redoubtable Harry Carney on baritone saxophone, clarinet, and bass clarinet: in other words the classic mid-period Ellington reed team with the exception of the young Rick Henderson, who would take care of business until Johnny Hodges returned in the summer of 1955. And the rhythm section had the propulsive Wendell Marshall on bass (playing the very instrument his late cousin Jimmy Blanton had used on the classic RCA recordings in the 1940s). Dave Black was a more than capable drummer and the "piano player", as Duke liked to call himself, was certainly no slouch.

The band recorded the music heard here at the Forum in Hamilton, Ontario on February 8, 1954 following a week's stay at the Colonial Tavern in Toronto. Since it was quite common for jazz groups of the time to perform grueling series of one-nighters, week-long engagements were something of a luxury. Listeners in Hamilton had the good fortune of hearing a band that was relaxed and in good humor on this Monday evening. Following this concert there would be back-to-back week-long engagements at the Howard Theater in Washington, and the Apollo in New York City. Then, after a month's rest, it was back on the road again. There was a series of one-nighters down through Texas, then it was on to California where the band played a welcome two-weeker in San Francisco. Another series of one-nighters followed, first in the Pacific northwest, then back east again into Ohio, Ontario and Quebec. Life on the road was no picnic.

Following the playing of the Ellington theme, Duke introduces one of his "vintage things", The Mooche. (He's wrong about the year though: the piece dates from 1928. Using Duke's calculations I guess that would have made him six years-old at the time!) Nice solo work here from Russell Procope on

clarinet; Quentin Jackson, trombone, and Ray Nance, trumpet.

Without further ado the band charges into an up-tempo version of How High the Moon. What we actually hear though is Ornithology, an original based on the chord progressions of How High the Moon written in the mid-forties by trumpeter Little Benny Harris for Charlie Parker. Following Duke's piano intro, an athletic Paul Gonsalves charges in on tenor. Paul is followed by three of the trumpeters — Ray Nance, Clark Terry and Willie Cook — trading four-bar choruses in that order. Jimmy Hamilton's up next on clarinet followed by Britt Woodman on trombone. After Dave Black's drum break Paul Gonsalves picks up the baton once more and races to the finish line.

The next five selections are features for some of the band's star soloists. Serious Serenade is one of only a handful of solo showcases specifically written for "All-American baritone saxophonist" Harry Carney. It offers the long-time veteran a fine opportunity to display his majestic tone. (This is one of the earliest known performances of this piece. It would not be recorded for Capitol until May of 1955.)

Trombonist Britt Woodman is up next

with Theme For Trambane, a piece specially written for him by clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton. Hamilton's writing and arranging talents have never received the recognition they deserve. Woodman had been playing this piece at concerts since the summer of 1953, but, like the Carney feature we heard before it, this one was not officially recorded until 1955. Woodman's virtuoso calisthenic display must have sent countless trombonists back to the woodshed.

One of the pieces drummer Louis Bellson wrote and arranged shortly after joining the Ellington band in 1951 was a drum feature called Skin Deep. Dave Black is charged with the solo responsibility in this performance of Bellson's trademark showpiece and acquits himself well. About a month after Black joined the band Ellington and Billy Strayhorn wrote a piece for him called Gonna Tan Your Hide, but at the time of this concert it had not been commercially recorded. This may explain why Black was still playing Bellson's composition.

Trumpeter Willie Cook shows off his gorgeous tone in a tasteful interpretation of Tenderly. Cook, a former member of Dizzy Gillespie's big band, was right at home with what were then referred to as "modern sounds". But Duke loved his tone, and more often than not, featured him on ballads.

(Cook's chase choruses on How High the Moon let us hear his bebop chops.)

One of the highlights of the Ellington Uptown album issued by Columbia in 1952 was an extended version of Juan Tizol's Perdido featuring Clark Terry's puckish trumpet. As long as Terry was with the Ellington band Perdido would remain his special showcase and his solo never lost its appeal.

Monologue a.k.a. Pretty and the Wolf nearly always delighted concert audiences. As Duke explains it's a "tiny bit of interpretive music played by our music in the foreground trio". The "foreground trio" consists of Jimmy Hamilton, Russell Procope and Harry Carney - all playing clarinet. Duke's storytelling here is a little more arch than usual.

Ellington fans realized that "the dreaded medley" was every bit as certain as death and taxes. But to be fair to the composer, it was a clever way of dealing with many of the better known pieces he simply didn't have the time (or inclination) to play in full.

Written in 1941 by Duke's son Mercer for a Johnny Hodges small band date, Things Ain't What They Used To Be (or Time's A'Wastin' as it was originally called) became one of the Ellington band's most popular numbers. The first time Duke performed it with his full orches-



tra was in the 1942 Hollywood film *Cabin In The Sky*. Solos are by Russell Procope, Willie Cook, Britt Woodman and Paul Gonsalves.

*Satin Doll*, written by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn, was the first piece recorded by the band under its new Capitol Records contract in 1953. It took a while to catch on, but over the years became immensely popular. The tasty trumpet work is by Ray Nance.

*Stompin' at the Savoy*, one of the principal anthems of the swing era, is heard here in what sounds like a Billy Strayhorn arrangement. Solos are by Jimmy Hamilton, Clark Terry, Paul Gonsalves and, briefly at the close, Rick Henderson.

Caravan dates back to a 1936 Barney Bigard small band session. This version of the Ellington/Juan Tizol original features Quentin Jackson, Jimmy Hamilton and Ray Nance, the latter on violin.

The next two numbers, although novelties reflecting the mambo craze then sweeping America, do have their amusing moments. Duke takes the spotlight with some tongue-in-cheek Latin piano. There's a touch of Jimmy Hamilton's clarinet, and Cat Anderson's trumpet pyrotechnics are put to effective use.

Louis Bellson brought *The Hawk Talks* with him when he joined Ellington in 1951.

The drummer had actually written it for his former leader, Harry James, who'd been nicknamed "the Hawk" by his sidemen because of his aquiline features. Dave Black and Ray Nance are the featured soloists.

All *The Things You Are* is a showcase for altoist Rick Henderson, who demonstrates that he'd listened closely to Charlie Parker. A nice performance.

Clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton and bassist Wendell Marshall are up next with *Duet*. Like so many musicians of the time, Hamilton and Marshall were taken for granted by many listeners. But Hamilton had few peers on modern jazz clarinet, and Marshall's surging rhythmic pulse was reminiscent of two of his Ellington predecessors - Jimmy Blanton and Oscar Pettiford.

Trumpeter Cat Anderson is in the spotlight on his own composition, *Blue Jean Beguine*. Noted for his proficiency as a high-note specialist, Anderson tends to sound like Harry James when playing in the middle register. A brooding piece that seems to have been inspired by music heard in the bull ring.

The Ellington Uptown album referred to above also contained an extended version of Duke's theme, *Take the "A" Train*, featuring Betty Roche and Paul Gonsalves. When Ms.

Roche left the band, Ray Nance took over her part. His "high animated vocal" is followed by Paul Gonsalves' "rhapsodic extension" on tenor.

*Warm Valley*, first recorded in 1940, had been a feature for alto saxophonist Johnny Hodges. Paul Gonsalves, who was assigned the piece in 1954, turns it into a gorgeous tenor showcase. The trumpet is by Ray Nance.

One of the pieces Duke recorded at his first session with his revamped orchestra in 1951 was *Jam With Sam*. It remained a popular item and this version features Willie Cook, Paul Gonsalves, Britt Woodman, Russell Procope, Cat Anderson and Quentin Jackson.

The concert closes (as did all Canadian concerts in those days) with *God Save the Queen*. It was always fun to hear American groups struggle with the unfamiliar anthem. But to Ellington it presented no problem. As a long-time Anglophile, he considered it both an honor and a pleasure to play the piece.

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**PRODUCER'S NOTE:** Duke Ellington's Hamilton Concert was not broadcast, and its existence was unknown until its discovery in a private collection. It was recorded without benefit of advance microphone set-up or bal-

ance, and there are occasional moments of overmodulation or instruments being undermiked. You may even notice the engineer snapping his fingers in rhythm, as he runs necessary mike tests during the performance. The concert was recorded on tape and then transferred to high-quality microgroove acetate discs which do not appear to have been played; any faults (dropouts, an odd edit at the end of *Theme for Trambean*, occasional moments of distortion due to overloading) are in the originals. We hope these imperfections will not detract from your enjoyment of this historic concert.

**PRODUCER:** David Lennick, Radiex Music, Toronto Canada

**ORIGINAL RECORDING ENGINEER:** Les Smith

**LINER NOTES:** Don Brown

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**DESIGN:** Philip Krayna Design, SF

**VINTAGE POSTER TYPE:** Permanent Press, SF

# DUKE ELLINGTON

**\*\* The Forum, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada \*\***

**Personnel:** Clark Terry, Willie Cook, Cat Anderson (trumpets); Ray Nance (trumpet & violin); Quentin Jackson, Britt Woodman, George Jean (trombones); Jimmy Hamilton (clarinet & tenor saxophone); Rick Henderson (alto saxophone); Russell Procope (alto saxophone & clarinet); Paul Gonsalves (tenor saxophone); Harry Carney (baritone saxophone, clarinet & bass clarinet); Duke Ellington (piano); Wendell Marshall (bass); Dave Black (drums).

## **\*\* Disc One \*\***

- 1 Take The "A" Train/Introduction (Strayhorn) 1:06
- 2 The Mooche (Ellington - Mills) 5:45
- 3 How High The Moon (Lewis - N. Hamilton) 5:14
- 4 Serious Serenade (Ellington) 3:35
- 5 Theme For Trambean (J. Hamilton) 4:07
- 6 Skin Deep (Bellson) 14:32
- 7 Tenderly (Gross - Lawrence) 3:53
- 8 Perdido (Tizol - Lengsfelder - Drake) 5:28
- 9 Monologue (Pretty And The Wolf) (Ellington) 3:45

## **10 Ellington Medley 8:00**

Includes: Don't Get Around Much Anymore (Ellington - Russell); In A Sentimental Mood (Ellington - Kurtz - Mills); Mood Indigo (Ellington - Mills - Bigard); I'm Beginning To See The Light (Ellington - James - George); Sophisticated Lady (Ellington - Mills - Parish); Caravan (Ellington - Tizol - Mills); It Don't Mean A Thing (Ellington); Solitude (Ellington - Delange - Mills); C-Jam Blues (Ellington); I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart (Ellington - Mills - Nemo)

## **11 Intermission :28**

Total Time: 56:00

## **\*\* Disc Two \*\***

- 1 Things Ain't What They Used To Be (Mercer Ellington) 7:20
- 2 Satin Doll (Ellington - Strayhorn) 3:56
- 3 Stompin' At The Savoy (Sampson - Goodman - Webb) 6:13
- 4 I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart/Don't Get Around Much Anymore (Ellington - Mills - Nemo)/(Ellington - Russell) 3:56
- 5 Caravan (Ellington - Tizol - Mills) 4:05
- 6 The Bunny Hop Mambo (Anthony - Auletto) 4:18
- 7 Isle of Capri Mambo (Kennedy - Grosz) 3:39
- 8 The Hawk Talks (Bellson) 3:16
- 9 All The Things You Are (Kern - Hammerstein) 3:35
- 10 Duet (Ellington) 3:37
- 11 Blue Jean Beguine (Anderson) 4:10
- 12 Take The "A" Train (Strayhorn) 9:01
- 13 Warm Valley (Ellington) 4:05
- 14 Jam With Sam (Ellington) 4:20
- 15 Closing Remarks/ God Save The Queen 1:02

Total Time: 66:38

***\*\* Additional Jazz Classics on Music & Arts \*\****

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# DUKE ELLINGTON

*The Forum, Hamilton  
Ontario, Canada  
8 February, 1954*

CD 1061  
DISC 1 OF 2  
TOTAL TIME 80:08

AAD

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# DUKE ELLINGTON

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CD 1061  
DISC 2 OF 2  
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# DUKE ELLINGTON

*The Forum, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada (8 Feb. 1954)*

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- 10 Ellington Medley 8:00  
Includes: Don't Get Around Much  
Anymore, In A Sentimental Mood,  
Mood Indigo, I'm Beginning To See  
The Light, Sophisticated Lady, Caravan,  
It Don't Mean A Thing, Solitude, C-Jam  
Blues, I Let A song Go Out Of My Heart
- 11 Intermission :28

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**total time: 66:38**

## Personnel:

Clark Terry, Willie Cook,  
Cat Anderson, Ray Nance,  
Quentin Jackson, Britt  
Woodman, George Jean,  
Jimmy Hamilton, Rick  
Henderson, Russell  
Procopie, Paul Gonsalves,  
Harry Carney, Duke  
Ellington, Wendell  
Marshall, Dave Black

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