

DUKE ELLINGTON LIVE AT THE BLUE NOTE



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CD ONE

1. **Take The A Train**
Strayhorn
 2. **Newport Up**
Ellington/Strayhorn
 3. **Haupe (Polly's Theme)**
Ellington
 4. **Flirtibird**
Ellington
 5. **Pie Eye's Blues**
Ellington
 6. **Almost Cried**
Ellington
 7. **Dual Fuel (Dual Filter)**
Ellington/Terry
 8. **Sophisticated Lady**
Ellington/Parish
 9. **Mr Gentle And Mr Cool**
Ellington/Rembert
 10. **El Gato**
Anderson
 11. **C Jam Blues**
Ellington
 12. **Tenderly**
Lawrence/Gross
 13. **Honeysuckle Rose**
Waller
 14. **Drawing Room Blues**
Ellington/Strayhorn
 15. **Tonk**
Ellington/Strayhorn
- All tracks copyright control

CD TWO

1. **In A Mellotone**
Ellington
 2. **All Of Me**
Marks/Simons
 3. **Things Ain't What They Used To Be**
M. Ellington/T. Person
 4. **Jeep's Blues**
Ellington/Hodges
 5. **Mood Indigo**
Ellington/Bigard
 6. **Perdido**
Tizol
 7. **Satin Doll**
Ellington/Strayhorn
 8. **A Disarming Visit By June Christy & Stan Kenton**
 9. **Newport Up**
Ellington/Strayhorn
 10. **Medley**
 - a. **Black And Tan Fantasy**
Ellington/Miley
 - b. **Creole Love Call**
Ellington
 - c. **The Mooche**
Ellington
 11. **Passion Flower**
Strayhorn
 12. **On The Sunny Side Of The Street**
McHugh/Fields
 13. **El Gato**
Anderson
- All tracks copyright control

DUKE ELLINGTON LIVE AT THE BLUE NOTE

Of all the places in which Duke Ellington played during his long career, the Blue Note in Chicago was unquestionably his favourite, and its owner, Frank Holzfeind, was just as unquestionably one of his favourite people. Beginning with a fortnight in 1949, Ellington played the club seventeen times for a total of forty-five weeks while it was open in 1947-60. He sometimes took the band in during the summer months, and often for December through Christmas and New Year's.

"The Metropolitan Opera House of Jazz", as Ellington liked to describe the Blue Note, was first situated on Madison Street, downstairs below the street level, and it reputedly held about five hundred customers. In November 1953, when the lease expired, it closed for several months and then reopened in premises on North Clark Street that would seat over seven hundred. It was one of the few clubs with a bandstand large enough for bands like Ellington's, Basie's and Kenton's, but the big-band scene deteriorated and by June 1960 financial problems forced Holzfeind to close the club. Many of the artists he had presented, and who had made their reputations in it, were now demanding prices that made continued operation impossible. Ellington had dutifully been there for the last time over the Christmas holiday season, on the same terms as before.

Holzfeind died in 1975, leaving a memory among musicians scarcely rivalled by any other club owner. For a long time he had hired only those whose music he liked, but he gave all musicians kindly consideration such as they seldom encountered elsewhere. And he was usually present, martini in hand, to enjoy what they were putting down. The atmosphere that prevailed in the club is well caught in this collection, which was recorded on 9 August 1959 with microphones tactically positioned above the band. Apart from a few songs not recorded, everything played during three sets is here, most of it never previously issued.

The night before, Ellington had appeared at the first Playboy Jazz Festival in Chicago Stadium, and had scored a considerable success. As the personnel shows, he had fielded a strong team, with a particularly powerful five-piece trumpet section. There were also two drummers. Because Sam Woodyard had been ill and was not yet fully restored to good health, he was supplemented by Jimmy Johnson, but where

a single drummer is heard it is Woodyard.

The program opens with *Take The "A" Train*, the band's theme, and with, unusually, its composer, Billy Strayhorn, featured at length on the piano. This is followed by the up-tempo flagwaver, *Newport Up*. There are enterprising solos by Jimmy Hamilton (clarinet), Clark Terry (trumpet) and Paul Gonsalves (tenor saxophone), whose early-evening virtuosity signals that the band itself is definitely up.

Among those in the audience was Michigan Supreme Court Justice John D. Voelker who, as Robert Traver, had written *Anatomy of a Murder*. The movie derived from his book, which Otto Preminger directed and for which Ellington wrote the music, had been premiered in Detroit the month before. So, in acknowledgement of the author's presence, Ellington next plays four numbers from the movie's soundtrack. *Haupé* (Polly's Theme) and the catchy *Flirtibird* both feature Johnny Hodges, the nonpareil of the alto saxophone. *Pie Eye's Blues* was the music played in the film when James Stewart sat in with Pie Eye (Ellington) and a small group at a roadhouse. Besides Pie Eye, Ray Nance, Jimmy Hamilton and Clark Terry solo happily. *Almost Cried* relates to *Flirtibird*, too, but its slower tempo evokes a different mood appropriate to its position in the film and to Shorty Baker's trumpet.

Anatomy of a Murder enjoyed great success, but although the soundtrack won three Grammys that year, the critics gave it a mixed reception. Movie critics, of course, were more accustomed to symphonic and semi-symphonic noises cushioning the action and were not ready for such an uncompromising jazz background as Ellington provided. Jazz devotees, on the other hand, were familiar with the language employed and found the movie enormously enhanced by the music's tensions and sobering implications.

Dual Fuel (or *Dual Filter* as Ellington announces it here!) had been premiered the day before at the Playboy Festival. It is an extended showcase for the two drummers, and between the percussionistic jousting there are several attractive orchestral passages devised by Ellington and Clark Terry. These perhaps deserved a better fate, although it is well to remember that drum solos have always been immensely popular, primarily because of their visual appeal, a fact that made a double feature like this a winner in a spacious outdoor setting.

Sophisticated Lady, already a venerable standard, illustrates Ellington's appreciative understanding of the value of contrasts in programming. Harry Carney's baritone does the composition justice, as always.

Mr. Gentle and Mr. Cool is a hip and humorous vehicle for Shorty Baker's trumpet and Ray Nance's violin. Who was supposed to be gentle and who cool, they both professed not to know. The listener must therefore decide for his or herself. (Some electrical noises occurred on the original three-track master that could not, unfortunately, be entirely eradicated.)

Cat Anderson's *El Gato* was introduced at the previous year's Newport Festival. It contrasts his high-flying style with those of Clark Terry, Shorty Baker and Ray Nance. The performance makes a boisterously virtuosic finale to the night's first set, with Cat metaphorically having the first and last high word.

C Jam Blues opens with Ellington and Strayhorn together on the keyboard. The sequence of solos which follows is by Shorty Baker, Harry Carney, Quentin Jackson (with plunger mute) and Jimmy Hamilton on clarinet. Hamilton returns for an impeccable performance of *Tenderly* on the same instrument, and as an encore plays another of his specialties, *Honeysuckle Rose*. In honour of the number's composer, Fats Waller, Ellington strides vigorously in the first chorus.

Next, after calling for Strayhorn and a little delay, Ellington is again joined at the piano by his writing partner for two of their party pieces: the decorous but quietly moving *Drawing Room Blues* and the dashing *Tonk*. In all probability, these answered requests from Holzfeind, for they were seldom thus performed publicly.

In a Mellotone, one of Ellington's most popular foundations for improvisation, presents Ray Nance and Johnny Hodge, and is followed by no less than three of the latter's best-known showcases: *All of Me*, *Things Ain't What They Used To Be* and *Jeep's Blues*. Hodges had a lot of friends in Chicago and their hospitality did not always have beneficial results, but on blues like the last two numbers he was always a master, high or cold sober. His famous *Jeep's Blues* certainly draws the second set to a satisfying conclusion.

Ellington is heard summoning his men back to the stand with peremptory excerpts from his regular band call before an unusually long *Mood Indigo* gets under way. Then the muted horns sound the theme smoothly before Russell Procope steps out

with New Orleans clarinet. Shorty Baker takes over with a bold statement that at times deviates amusingly from indigo. So does his leader's piano solo. Indeed, a considerable degree of informality pervades this last set!

Perdido is a sumptuously swinging showcase for Clark Terry, whose surpassing technical ability is displayed to great advantage against the enthusiastic, energising backgrounds.

Satin Doll, then six years old and beginning to grow in popularity, is played with the customarily effective, dynamic contrasts, and introduces Johnny Pate as guest bassist.

Among the visitors during this set were Stan Kenton, June Christy and friends. Vocally in good spirits all evening, Ellington pays them extravagant compliments and then, perhaps to impress his fellow bandleader, calls for the brassy *Newport Up* again. CDs enable listeners to make quick and easy comparisons between solos. Isn't Paul Gonsalves better in this version? And so on. But note that there is only one second difference in the length of the two performances, which speaks well for the rhythm section.

The traditional medley of Ellington's early hits - *Black and Tan Fantasy*, *Creole Love Call* and *The Mooche* - is a welcome reminder of a glorious past, one that Ellington was never in a hurry to forget. The soloists are Procope (clarinet), Nance (cornet) and Jackson (trombone).

Then it is Johnny Hodges again, first commandingly on Strayhorn's exotic *Passion Flower*, and then almost playfully on *On the Sunny Side of the Street*, to rapturous applause.

For the grand finale, in answer to a request, there is *El Gato* one more time. Yes, you heard it in the first set, but if you had been there that night, wouldn't you have stayed for all three sets?

STANLEY DANCE
author of *The World of Duke Ellington* (Da Capo Press).

7243 8 28637 2 4
STEREO

CD ONE

THE FIRST SET

1. Take The A Train
2. Newport Up
3. Haupe (Polly's Theme)
4. Flirtibird
5. Pie Eye's Blues
6. Almost Cried
7. Duael Fuel (Dual Filter)
8. Sophisticated Lady
9. Mr Gentle And Mr Cool
10. El Gato

THE SECOND SET

11. C Jam Blues
12. Tenderly
13. Honeysuckle Rose
14. Drawing Room Blues
15. Tonk

CD TWO

1. In A Mellotone

2. All Of Me

3. Things Ain't What They Used To Be

4. Jeep's Blues

THE THIRD SET

5. Mood Indigo

6. Perdido

7. Satin Doll

**8. A Disarming Visit By June Christy &
Stan Kenton**

9. Newport Up

10. Medley

a. Black And Tan Fantasy

b. Creole Love Call

c. The Mooche

11. Passion Flower

12. On The Sunny Side Of The Street

13. El Gato

Digital Remasters

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CD ONE

1. Take The A Train 2. Newport Up
3. Haupe (Polly's Theme) 4. Flirtibird
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STEREO
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COMPACT
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CD TWO

1. In A Mellotone 2. All Of Me 3. Things Ain't What They Used To Be
4. Jeep's Blues 5. Mood Indigo 6. Perdido
7. Satin Doll 8. A Disarming Visit By June Christy & Stan Kenton
9. Newport Up 10. Medley a. Black And Tan Fantasy
b. Creole Love Call c. The Mooche
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CD ONE

THE FIRST SET

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THE SECOND SET

11. C Jam Blues*
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CD TWO

1. In A Mellotone
2. All Of Me
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THE THIRD SET

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13. El Gato*

*PREVIOUS UNISSUED



STEREO

Total time: 71:26 (CD one) and 63:31 (CD two)

PERSONNEL:

CLARK TERRY, SHORTY BAKER, WILLIE COOK, CAT ANDERSON, RAY NANCE - trumpets
 QUENTIN JACKSON, BRITT WOODMAN, JOHN SANDERS - trombones
 JOHNNY HODGES, RUSSELL PROCOPE, JIMMY HAMILTON, PAUL GONSALVES, HARRY CARNEY - reeds
 DUKE ELLINGTON - piano
 JIMMY WOODE - bass
 SAM WOODYARD, JIMMY JOHNSON - drums

On "Take The A Train", BILLY STRAYHORN replaces ELLINGTON.
 On "Drawing Room Blues" & "Tonk", ELLINGTON and STRAYHORN both play piano and the brass and reeds play out.

On "Satin Doll", JOHNNY PATE replaces JIMMY WOODE.
 On selections with only one drummer, it is SAM WOODYARD.

Recorded live at The Blue Note Club in Chicago on August 9, 1959.

Produced for release by MICHAEL CUSCUNA

All selection except the first four selections on CD two were digitally remixed from the original three-track tapes.

Remix and editing: MALCOLM ADDEY

Photo: DAVID REDFERN

note: this set contains the complete recorded performance of the Ellington Orchestra during its three sets (6pm, 10pm and Midnight) at The Blue Note on August 9, 1959.

There were a handful of tunes performed but not captured on tape. The unusual sound of this set is due to the miking, which is essentially several overhead microphones tactically positioned over the band.

Digital Remasters

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