



1. **Satin Doll**
(Ellington-Strayhorn-Mercer) Tempo Music,
Inc. - ASCAP 5:46
2. **I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart**
(Ellington-Nemo-Mills-Redmond) Mills Music,
Inc. - ASCAP 5:32
3. **Sophisticated Lady**
(Ellington-Parish-Mills) Mills Music-
ASCAP 3:40
4. **I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good)**
(Ellington-Webster) SBK Robbins Catalog-
ASCAP 3:41
5. **In a Mellow Tone**
(Duke Ellington) SBK Robbins-ASCAP 6:20
6. **Solitude**
(Ellington-DeLange-Mills) Mills Music/
Scarsdale Music Corp. - ASCAP 5:06
7. **Don't Get Around Much Anymore**
(Ellington-Russell) SBK Robbins Catalog/
Harrison Music Corp. - ASCAP 6:31
8. **Do Nothin' 'till You Hear from Me**
(Ellington-Russell) SBK Robbins Catalog/
Harrison Music Corp. - ASCAP 5:53
9. **Caravan**
(Ellington-Tizol-Mills) Mills Music-
ASCAP 6:10

Personnel:

Joe Pass, guitar
Ray Brown, bass
Bobby Durham, drums

Produced by Norman Granz

Photo by Phil Stern

Mastering—Joe Tarantino
(Fantasy Studios, Berkeley)

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Duke Ellington's status as a songwriter is poised curiously in the limbo which separates the jazz world from Tin Pan Alley and the concert hall. (The absence of Broadway from that list is an omission which Broadway might one day care to explain). It appears that Duke's songs were a mere casual by-product of his fecundity as a composer-musician-band-leader, sparks which sometimes flew off the anvil of his professional endeavours to maintain, repair and improve that unique instrument which exercised him all his working life, his orchestra. "I Let a Song Go Out of my Heart," for instance, composed for the 1938 Cotton Club revue and dropped in favour of a Hawaiian speciality, is said to have been scribbled down in a fifteen minute hiatus in a recording studio, and many other successful Ellington themes have origins just as casual.

It is also generally known that several of the most famous Ellington songs were first conceived in strictly instrumental terms for the

various soloists in the orchestra, and that these themes only reached a wider audience later with the addition of lyrics. The best-known example is, of course, "Do Nothing Till You Hear from Me," which began life as an exquisitely orchestrated piece of trumpet bravura called "Concert for Cootie." Some of the other selections in this album have even odder beginnings. "In a Mellowtone" is one of the most ingenious of all those jazz themes which are a paraphrase of some existing song, in this case "Rose Room," whose melodic ghost turns up in the last chorus of the Pass-Brown-Durham version, and whose inclusion is especially fitting because it is a song remembered for a solo of genius by one of Joe Pass's greatest inspirations, the late Charlie Christian. This instrumental origin of so many of Duke's popular songs is a very important factor in arriving at any judgement of them, for while, say, the middle passage of "Sophisticated Lady" might sound a bit too sophisticated for any lady to sing

in tune, the same passage becomes ideal for the ruminations of gifted instrumentalists like Pass. It is also interesting that judging from the evidence, Duke could write any type of tune at any time in his long career, and that the period covered by these selections shows no discernible decline or change of direction. As a footnote to the history of these songs, "Solitude" received the ASCAP award for the best song of the year in 1934, which is rather like a horse winning the Kentucky Derby without bothering to enter.

As to the musical approach, it is the classic jazz trio approach, with Joe Pass on guitar demonstrating once more his wonderful instrumental command, his romantic out-of-tempo ballad style, his surging sequences of quavers at the faster tempos, his loving appreciation of the patterns into which Duke's harmonies are forming themselves. There is even a nod in the direction of one of the great Ellington songs not included in the album, when towards the end of

"Solitude" there is a brief quote from "In A Sentimental Mood," that melody which begins in identical fashion to Gershwin's "Someone to Watch Over Me" and then deviates dramatically in its second bar. In various passages there are numerous other quotes, as when Ray Brown's sudden recollection of "My Sweetie Went Away," towards the end of a marvelously witty solo, is followed by Pass's use of one of Charlie Parker's most famous opening statements for the blues. There are other junctures when it is hard to say who is accompanying whom, as in the delightful bass-guitar dialogue in the first chorus of "In a Mellowtone," and then later in the same track, when Brown's phrase to wind up the first half of the song is immediately thrown back at him by Pass at the opening of the second half of the same chorus. Apart from the impeccable steadiness of his tempos and the thoughtfulness of his dynamics, Bobby Durham, the drummer who will be associated in the minds of

so many people with the old Oscar Peterson Trio, takes an extended solo on the fastest track "Caravan." There remain the three tracks where the guitar plays ballads unaccompanied. These three songs rank among the best Duke ever wrote, "I Got it Bad" being unusual in the context because it was composed for the musical theatre, a 1941 West Coast production called "Jump for Joy." Without the other two instrumental voices to help him sustain interest, Pass resorts to other stratagems, like slipping into tempo for the second bridge of "Sophisticated Lady," or, more unorthodox, changing key at one or two unexpected moments in "Solitude." On the whole though, the three unaccompanied ballads are treated plainly. If that is the right word for such brilliant technical expositions, and demonstrates Pass's ability, extremely rare among guitarists of any era, of indulging his slightest instrumental whims and fancies without ever working himself into awkward technical predicaments.

As in previous Pass albums, it is noticeable that he is one of the most traditional musicians, in the sense that with every step he reveals the origins of his instrument's development. In the modern sense, the guitar was reborn when Charlie Christian demonstrated the effective use of electric power. But although like all contemporary guitarists Joe is deeply in Christian's debt, one suspects from familiarity with his style that earlier players than Christian have touched his arm a few times. At the other end of the historical scale there is a moment or two on this album when the memory of Wes Montgomery is evoked. It is also interesting that Ray Brown, on the other hand, evokes recollections of nobody but himself, personifying as always the complete history of modern jazz bass playing, and remaining as ever the most gifted musician on his instrument that jazz has so far produced.

Benny Green.



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JOE PASS

PORTRAITS OF DUKE ELLINGTON

PABLO
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- 2 I LET A SONG GO OUT
OF MY HEART 5:32
- 3 SOPHISTICATED LADY 3:40
- 4 I GOT IT BAD
(AND THAT AIN'T GOOD) 3:41
- 5 IN A MELLOW TONE 6:20
- 6 SOLITUDE 5:06
- 7 DON'T GET AROUND MUCH
ANYMORE 6:31
- 8 DO NOTHIN' 'TILL YOU HEAR
FROM ME 5:53
- 9 CARAVAN 6:10

TOTAL TIME 49:26



STEREO

JOE PASS—guitar
RAY BROWN—bass
BOBBY DURHAM—drums

Produced by NORMAN GRANZ

Mastering—Joe Tarantino
(Fantasy Studios, Berkeley)

Recorded June 21, 1974.

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