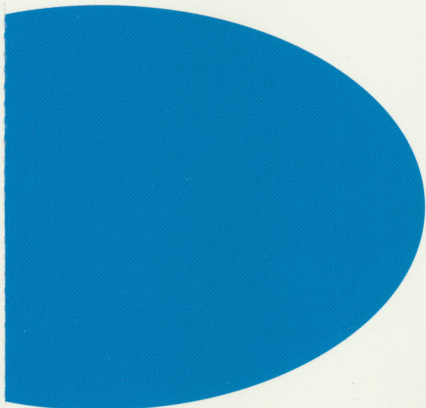


AZURE

BLUE NOTE PLAYS THE DUKE

ELLINGTON





THE FIRST OF JAZZ SINCE 1939
BLUE NOTE

AZURE ELLINGTON

BLUE NOTE PLAYS THE DUKE

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Compiled by Dean Rudland and Tony Harlow. Sleeve notes by Tony Harlow
 Cover Design/Illustration: Graham Marsh Series Co-ordinator: Wendy Furness
 Special Thanks: Emma Harper

Welcome to Duke's place. As we sat & considered this long overdue addition to the Blue Series song-writers editions, it seem appropriate to mull on the significance of Duke's place in the annals of the 20th Century's most sustainably creative musical form.

To say Duke was, & remains in spirit, jazz itself may be slightly overstating things, but it couldn't be far from the truth. If New York is still the home & heartbeat of jazz (a crown it has retained against worthy challengers), then Duke & his orchestra were the ones who paced it on the map. As the orchestra emerged as the featured stars of The Cotton Club, so Harlem emerged as the home of jazz beating off the claims of New Orleans & Chicago. So Duke's role in shaping the history of jazz goes right back to the day.

And if location is just one of Duke's claims to fame then a more central spirited one is to claim the spirit of the music itself. The Ellington ethos is that of jazz - never stopping, never stagnating, always evolving. This is the spirit that constantly moved the orchestra forward from the early exotica of the jungle jazz ensemble, through the mature sophisticated palates of the Blanton-Webster group and on into the incorporation of modal overtones in the 50's & 60's orchestras (as typified by Paul Gonsalves' amazingly modern - & amazingly famous - Solo at Newport' in '56). Always a willingness to change & integrate fresh ideas.

And consequently, the challenges set brought great results from the players involved. Ellington's sidemen may not always get the recognition they deserve in the lists of all time great players, but without doubt they deserve the plaudits. The long time names represented the heights of sophistication; a roll call of greatness. Consider the alto of Johnny 'Jeep' Hodges - it has a distinctive sound recognised by peers as great & as quietly influential as more feted players like Charlie 'Bird' Parker. Without Hodges, no Paul Desmond? Similar accolades could be directed at the baritone of Harry Carney & also to the likes of trumpeter/cornettist Rex Stewart, trumpeter Bubber Miley, trombonist (Duke's favourite instrument) "Tricky Sam" Nanton, trumpeter Ray Nance, clarinetist Barney Bigard, trumpeter Cootie Williams, trombonist Lawrence Brown & orchestra co-founder and drummer Sonny Greer. All were master soloists and telling accompanists. Many of the part timers (at least in relative longevity terms) also gave their best in their orchestra days. Consider both Ben Webster (think about the great solo on 'Cottontail') & Paul Gonsalves who remained great tenor players outside the orchestra. But ever surpassing their Ellington days? Maybe not.

Also consider the writing achievements. When Ellington launched the ensemble, jazz was in its early days & had few standards of its own. The Ellington team produced song after song (one hesitates to use the phrase hit after hit) that have become the book of jazz itself. From the early days of 'The Mooche' and 'Take The A Train', through the middle phase of 'Chelsea Bridge', 'Cottontail' & 'Caravan' and on into the sacred suites & mood of tone poems for the later years. Classic standards like "In A Sentimental Mood", "Mood Indigo" and "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" to name but a few others. The

orchestra always had the best material to work with and not all of it was Duke's, although much benefited from his masterful arranging. And when Duke's pen ran dry, the orchestra also had the benefit of master writers like pianist Billy Strayhorn and the Cuban twists of Juan Tizol (amongst several others including co-writers like Mills and Miley) - all of who's contributions added their separate dimensions to the overall direction and soundscape. Duke always sounded like himself they say, but himself represents the combined magic of many writers and many soloists.

This is what gives the catalogue it's vitality & diversity, & permits the variety of interpretations we see here. Alongside the orchestra itself (in a later incarnation) rolling its way through 'Rockin' In Rhythm', other big bands have always visited Ellington classics to test themselves and provide alternative approaches for contrast. Listen here to Stan Kenton's 'Don't Get Around Much Anymore'. Also look at the variety allowed between two big tenors - the texan twang of Booker Ervin with the windy city howl of Clifford Jordan - or two under-rated pianists - Phineas Newborn & Billy Strayhorn - or the unlikely organists showdown between Richard 'Groove' Holmes (accompanied by the breathy tenor of ex-Ellingtonian Ben Webster) & Jimmy McGriff. And whilst the Ellington band is sometimes seen as less rhythmic & more aesthetic than Count Basie's orchestra, here are real blues vocals from Joe Williams, Nina 'High Priestess Of Soul' Simone & Lou Rawls. These tunes can sustain a wide variety of interpretations, & (although this compilation doesn't reflect it) continues to do so. Joe Lovano, Kevin Eubanks, Dianne Reeves, Michel Petrucciani are amongst those from the current roster who've used Duke's material themselves recently. Many others have also paid tribute.

Finally, a reflection on Duke himself. Everything we've said above reflects back to the man. He was jazz - in look (the sharp suits & hats), language & in style. Similarly the ability to evolve & marshal change. Duke not only led the orchestra, arranging & composing, he was also an unsung hero as a pianist with a minimalist style that influenced many. Never afraid to test himself he led small bands (as here in a fascinating Roulette session with Louis Armstrong), jostled thrillingly with modernist John Coltrane & pushed himself against the freshest of rhythm sections in Max Roach & Charles Mingus for Blue Note's 'Money Jungle' session. No other figure in jazz has stayed contemporary in so many eras. But besides this always a temperament that allowed him to do what was best for the whole - to take a step back & let the music flourish and grow.

So that's Duke's place & we've been remiss in taking so long to pay Blue Note's tribute to him. One last mystery to solve then. Why Azure Ellington? Well Duke always tried to avoid mentioning blue & in his own mind consequently avoided the blues too. Hence the titles like 'Mood Indigo' & hence his own favourite appellation, & ours, Azure Elegant & Ellington as always. We still love him madly.

Tony Harlow

DUKE ELLINGTON
Rockin' In Rhythm

(Ellington / Mills / Carney)

© 1970 EMI Music Publishing Ltd

Cat Anderson / Cootie Williams /
Rolf Ericson / Mercer Ellington (trumpets)
Laurence Brown /

Chuck Connors (trombones)

Johnny Hodges (alto sax)

Norris Turney (alto sax, tenor sax,
flute, clarinet)

Harold Ashby (tenor sax, flute)

Paul Gonsalves (tenor sax)

Harold Carney (baritone sax, clarinet,
bass clarinet)

Duke Ellington (piano)

Wild Bill Davis (organ)

Victor Gaskin (bass)

Rufus 'Speedy' Jones (drums)

taken from the album 'Duke Ellington's
70th Birthday Concert'

NINA SIMONE
It Don't Mean A Thing

(Ellington / Mills)

© 1962 EMI Music Publishing

Nina Simone /
Malcolm Dodd Singers (vocals)

taken from the album 'The Colpix Years'

KENNY BURRELL
Caravan

(Ellington / Tizol / Mills)

© 1958 Lafleur Music Ltd

Louis Smith (trumpet)

Junior Cook / Tina Brooks (tenor sax)

Kenny Burrell (guitar)

Duke Jordan / Bobby Timmons (piano)

Sam Jones (bass)

Art Blakey (drums)

taken from the album 'Blue Lights
Volumes 1 & 2'

BOOKER ERVIN
Take The A Train

(Strayhorn)

© 1969 Copyright Control

RICHARD 'GROOVE' HOLMES
& **LES MCCANN**
Satin Doll

(Ellington / Strayhorn / Mercer)

© 1961 Copyright Control

Ben Webster (tenor sax)

Lawrence 'Tricky' Lofton (trombone)

Richard 'Groove' Holmes (organ)

Les McCann (piano)

George Freeman (guitar)

Ron Jefferson (drums)

taken from the album
'Somethin' Special'

NAT KING COLE
Mood Indigo

(Ellington / Biggard)

© 1995 EMI Music Publishing Ltd

Nat King Cole (vocals)

featuring the Count Basie Orchestra

taken from the album

'Spotlight On Nat King Cole'

STAN KENTON
Don't Get Around Much
Anymore

(Ellington / Russell)

© 1959 EMI United Partnership Ltd /
Chelsea MusicPublishing Co. Ltd

Frank Huggins / Bud Brisbois /

Jack Sheldon / Joe Burnett /

Roger Middleton (trumpet)

Archi Lecoque / Kent Larsen /

Jim Amolette (trombone)

Bob Olson / Bill Smiley (bass trombone)

Lennie Niehaus (alto sax)

Richie Kamuca / Bill Trujillo (tenor sax)

Billy Root / Sture Swenson (baritone sax)

Stan Kenton (piano)

Red Kelly (bass)

Jerry McKenzie (drums)

taken from the album 'Kenton Live
From Las Vegas Tropicana'

JAMES NEWTON
Cottontail

(Ellington)

© 1986 EMI United Partnership Ltd
Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp (ASCAP)

John Blake (violin)

Arthur Blythe (alto sax)

Anthony Brown (maracas & finger
cymbals)

Olu Dara (cornet)

Sir Roland Hanna (piano)

Jay Hoggards (vibraphone)

Pheeron Aklaff (drums)

Rick Rozie (bass)

James Newton (flute & arrangements)

taken from the album 'African Flower'

LOU RAWLS
Just Squeeze Me

(Gaines / Ellington)

© 1969 EMI United Partnership Ltd

taken from the album 'Your Good Thing'

**LOUIS ARMSTRONG &
DUKE ELLINGTON**
Duke's Place

(Ellington)

© 1986 EMI United Partnership Ltd
Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp (ASCAP)

taken from the album

'The Complete Sessions'

JIMMY MCGRUFF
In A Mellow Tone

(Ellington)

© 1971 Copyright Control

Ronald White (trumpet)

Joseph Morris (alto sax)

Arthur 'Fats' Theus (tenor sax)

William Thorpe (baritone sax)

Jimmy McGriff (organ)

O'Donel 'Butch' Levy (guitar)

Willie Jenkins (drums)

taken from the album 'Black Pearl'

CLIFFORD JORDAN
Sophisticated Lady

(Ellington / Parish)

© 1958 ATV Music

Art Farmer (trumpet)

Clifford Jordan (tenor sax)

Sonny Clark (piano)

George Tucker (bass)

Louis Hayes (drums)

taken from the album 'Cliff Craft'

PHINEAS NEWBORN
Chelsea Bridge

(Strayhorn)

© 1962 Copyright Control

BILLY STRAYHORN
Passion Flower

(Strayhorn)

© 1961 Campbell Connelley Co. Ltd

Billy Strayhorn (piano)

Michel Goudret (bass)

taken from the album

'The Peaceful Side Of Billy Strayhorn'

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THE FIRST 75 JAZZ SINCE 1939

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Made in EU

THE GREAT PLAZA ONE-STEP
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