

RCA Vol 16 and 17

content of first and second editions compare with New Desor pages 1402+1403

Vol 16 first edition

RCA

Side 1

DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

1. **Just a-settin' and a-rockin'**
(D. Ellington - B. Strayhorn) (BS 061.285-1) 3'34
2. **The giddybug gallop**
(D. Ellington) (BS 061.286-1) 3'30
3. **Chocolate shake**
(D. Ellington - P. Webster) (BS 061.318-1) 2'51
4. **I got it bad**
(D. Ellington - P. Webster) (BS 061.319-1) 3'17
5. **I got it bad**
(D. Ellington-P. Webster) Unissued take (BS 061.319-2) 3'22
6. **Clementine**
(B. Strayhorn) (BS 061.338-1) 2'56
7. **The brown-skin gal**
(D. Ellington) Unissued on 33 T (BS 061.339-1) 3'09

Side 2

DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

8. **Jump for joy**
(D. Ellington - P. Webster - S. Kuller) (BS 061.340-1) 1'50
Unissued on 33 T
9. **Jump for joy**
(D. Ellington - P. Webster - S. Kuller) (BS 061.340-2) 2'53
10. **Moon over Cuba**
(D. Ellington - J. Tizol) (BS 061.341-1) 3'10

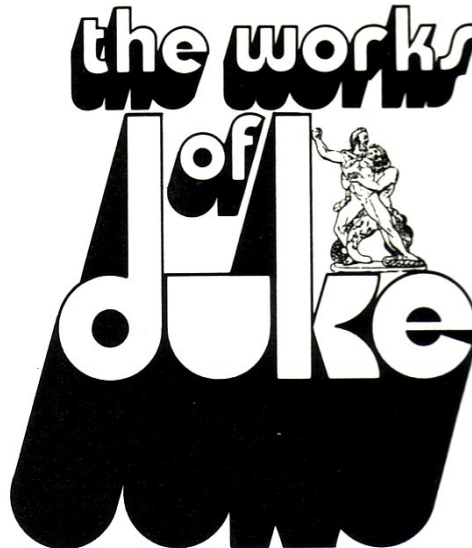
REX STEWART AND HIS ORCHESTRA

11. **Some Saturday**
(R. Stewart) (BS 061.342-1) 3'00
12. **Subtle slough**
(D. Ellington) (BS 061.343-1) 3'17
13. **Menelik - The lion of Judah**
(R. Stewart) (BS 061.344-1) 3'18
14. **Poor bubber**
(R. Stewart) (BS 061.345-1) 3'18

This sixteenth volume in the series "The Works of Duke Ellington" presents Ellington's recorded output from a period of less than one month in the summer of 1941. One of the agreeable privileges of this complete reissue project is the way it allows us to identify the outstanding moments within the mainstream of Ellington's activity over a period of more than half a century. Such moments are easily distinguishable as we follow Duke and his men, step by step, in the recording studios, something we have now already done over the space of fifteen volumes. The evolution of Ellingtonian music becomes more clearly defined, right up to its entry into the period of relative calm that is covered by the present volume. This is a period marked by an event of which the importance has not always been sufficiently stressed, one which was to have profound repercussions on Ellington's work in the years to come the musical revue, **Jump for Joy**.

As the summer of 1941 approached, the Ellington orchestra was once again on tour in the western states. At this same time a group of Hollywood writers and actors was preparing to launch a show destined to destroy the stereotyped, pejorative image of the American negro portrayed by the cinema and theatre. Duke Ellington without hesitation agreed to take part, thus revealing his full support for the show's basic intention. With **Jump for Joy** came the final condemnation of the old Uncle Tom; but, instead of using violent or objectionable means, it was decided to wield a much more subtle, yet often more effective arm—satire.

Jump for Joy, announced as "a sun-tanned revue-sical", had Duke Ellington and Hal Borne as principal composers. Paul Webster was the main lyric writer, but Sid Kuller also made an important contribution. However, the show was a remarkable example of teamwork, constantly evolving according to the ideas and criticisms of all its writers and artists. Thus, Langston Hughes, immortal author of "The ways of the white folks", had the opportunity to provide some of the words; and Mickey Rooney was added to the list of composers. The Ellington musicians were well featured, with each soloist given ample opportunity to display his talent. Rex Stewart was notable on **Concerto for klunkers**, his half-valve technique much in evidence. Herb Jeffries sang **The brownskin gal in the calico gown** and **Jump for Joy**, and Ivie Anderson **I got it bad** and **Rocks in my bed**. But the show featured a wealth of artists: amongst them were Dorothy Dandridge; Joe Turner shouting the blues on **Shhhh she's on the beat**; Marie Bryant performing **Bl blp**, **Chocolate shake** and a parody of Katherine Hepburn; Wonderful Smith; the dance trio



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Pot, Skiller and Pan; another remarkable dancer by the name of Garbo; and many, many others who went to make up an outstandingly brilliant cast.

With this show Duke Ellington discovered a justification of his life as composer and itinerant black musician, as well as an opening to provide a more positive affirmation of the originality of negro-American art. An interesting detail is that, as was usual for him, he composed a large part of this revue with incredible speed. Within the space of a single night's journey from Salt Lake City to Los Angeles he wrote **The brownskin gal**, **Jump for Joy** and **I got it bad**.

But the impact of the show was due as much to its social potential as to the quality of its music, and it left a lasting impression upon all those who saw it. The most widely held opinion was that it was twenty-five years ahead of its time, and now, thirty-five years later, its theme is still totally topical. Amongst the most corrosive numbers are **Sun tanned tenth of the Nation**, **I've got a passport from Georgia (and I'm going to the USA)** and **Uncle Tom's cabin is a drive-in now**. One of the aims of the authors was to do justice to all minorities, even beyond the immediate context of the American negro; thus, one scene featured three young blacks singing Jewish songs in a tailor's shop.

Jump for Joy played for about three months at the Mayan Theater in Los Angeles, but scarcely moved beyond the frontiers of California. America's involvement in the second World War brought a premature end to this particularly heart-warming and useful experiment. Revived in Miami in 1958, but for a mere three weeks due to differences between its financial backers, **Jump for Joy** deserves a renewed revival, for its topicality is still keen and its credibility intact.

Unlike **Beggar's holiday**, produced five years later and of which most of the music has disappeared into almost impenetrable obscurity, a part of this Ellington musical has managed to survive on records. Hence, the present album features Ivie Anderson singing **Chocolate shake** and **I got it bad**, the latter title having since become a standard. Herb Jeffries is vocalist on **The brownskin gal**, whereas the title number, **Jump for Joy**, appears in two different versions, enabling us to compare the respective talents of Herb Jeffries and Ivie Anderson. Ivie renders the words with intelligence and brings out their irony, whereas Jeffries seems impervious to all subtlety and seems merely intent on showing off the prowess of his own voice. The orches-

DISCOGRAPHY

Ray Nance is playing the trumpet solos in **Just a-settin' and a-rockin'** and **Chocolate shake** while Rex Stewart is heard in **Clementine** - except for the four bars preceding his solo which are played by Ray Nance. Rex Stewart if of course the soloist in the four titles issued under his name.

The trombone solos of **Just a-settin' and a-rockin'**, the **Giddybug gallop** and **Jump for joy** are by "Tricky Sam" Nanton. Juan Tizol is the soloist in **Moon over Cuba** and Lawrence Brown in **Some Saturday** and **Poor bubber**.

Johnny Hodges, Ben Webster, Harry Carney and Barney Bigard play respectively all solos of alto-saxophone, tenor-saxophone, baritone-saxophone and clarinet.

Ivie Anderson is the vocalist in **Chocolate shake**, **I got it bad** and **Jump for joy** take two, while Herb Jeffries is heard in **The brown skin gal** and **Jump for joy** take one.

Acknowledgement : our thanks to Russel Connor, Jerry Valburn (USA); Georges Debroe, L.D. (Belgium); Dr C. Clavié, Charles Delaunay, Daniel Nevers, Jean Portier (France); John R.T. Davies (England).

DISCOGRAPHICAL NOTES

1) - 2) : Wallace Jones, Ray Nance, Rex Stewart (tp); Lawrence Brown, Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton (tb), Juna Tizol (vtb); Otto Hardwicke, Johnny Hodges (as), Ben Webster (ts), Harry Carney (bs, as, cl), Barney Bigard (cl, ts); Edward "Duke" Ellington (p); Fred Guy (g); Jimmy Blanton (b); William "Sonny" Greer (dr); Hollywood, June 5th, 1941.

3) - 4) - 5) : Same as 1, except "Duke" Ellington plays p. and celesta and Ivie Anderson (voc) is added. Hollywood, June 26, 1941.

6) - 7) - 8) - 9) - 10) : same as 1, with Anderson (voc) and Herb Jeffries (voc) added. Hollywood, July 2, 1941.

11) - 12) - 13) - 14) : Rex Stewart (tp), Lawrence Brown (tb), Ben Webster (ts), Harry Carney (bs), Edward "Duke" Ellington (p), Jimmy Blanton (b), William "Sonny" Greer (dr). Hollywood, July 3, 1941.

ALREADY ISSUED : in separate LPS and in BOXES

Vol. 1 731043
Vol. 2 741028
Vol. 3 741029
Vol. 4 741039
Vol. 5 741048

Duke 1 Box of 5LPS

Vol. 6 741068
Vol. 7 741095
Vol. 8 741114
Vol. 9 FPM1 7002
Vol. 10 FPM1 7047

Duke 2 Box of 5LPS

Vol. 11 FXM1 7072
Vol. 12 FXM1 7094
Vol. 13 FXM1 7133
Vol. 14 FXM1 7134
Vol. 15 FXM1 7135

Duke 3 Box of 5LPS

tra is remarkably present on these recordings, with Harry Carney, Johnny Hodges and Tricky Sam Nanton as main soloists, and a powerful rhythm section led by Jimmy Blanton and Sonny Greer.

Of the other titles here, **Just a-sittin' and a-rockin'** features the stylish Ben Webster in a thoroughly appropriate setting, further soloists being Ray Nance, Tricky Sam Nanton and Barney Bigard. **Clementine**, which has nothing to do with the Creamer and Layton hit, is a Billy Strayhorn composition which swings intensely as the different sections of the orchestra respond to each other's call; it reveals Johnny Hodges and Rex Stewart at their best. **The giddybug gallop** is one of those up-tempo pieces which Duke occasionally liked to feature, as, in the past, he did **Tiger rag** or **Merry-go-round**; it provides the opportunity to set the musicians loose, with shouting brass work, and solos by Tricky Sam, Johnny Hodges and that specialist in the matter, Barney Bigard. **Moon over Cuba** is a Puerto Rican fantasy by Juan Tizol which, unfortunately, is a far cry from the vein of **Caravan**, **Perdido** or **Conga brava**; only Ben Webster manages to salvage something from this piece of such doubtful taste, happily a rare aberration in the Ellington repertoire.

This album, abounding in contrasts of all sorts, closes with four small-band tracks which were made under the name of Rex Stewart, whose personality is so distinctively stamped on all of them. **Some Saturday** is imbued with romanticism, and **Subtle slough** with gaiety. The latter title, under the name **Just squeeze me**, was to become a personal hit for Ray Nance as a vocalist. **Menelik**, an unexpected evocation of a king of Abyssinia, provides the opportunity for Rex to descend into the lowest registers of his instrument, whereas **Poor bubber**, a moving homage to the great trumpeter of the twenties, proves that the memory of James Miley, without whom the Ellingtonian world would never have been what it became, remained very much alive in the minds of this successors.

Alexandre Rado

Photo J.P. Leloir

Translation by Don Waterhouse

Reissue produced by Jean-Paul Guiter.

Vol 16 second edition

RCA

Side 1

DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

1. **Jump for Joy**
(D. Ellington - P. Webster - S. Kuller) (BS 961.340-2) 2'50
2. **Moon over Cuba**
(D. Ellington - J. Tizol) (BS 961.341-1) 3'10

REX STEWART AND HIS ORCHESTRA

3. **Some saturday**
(R. Stewart) (BS 961.342-1) 3'00
4. **Subtle slough**
(D. Ellington) (BS 061.343-1) 3'17
5. **Menelik - The lion of Judah**
(R. Stewart) (BS 061.344-1) 3'18
6. **Poor bubber**
(R. Stewart) (BS 061.345-1) 3'18

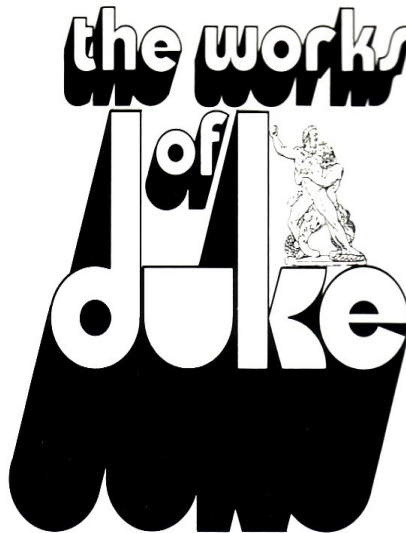
Side 2

JOHNNY HODGES AND HIS ORCHESTRA

7. **Squaty roo**
(J. Hodges) (BS 061.346-1) 2'24
8. **Passion flower**
(B. Strayhorn) (BS 061.347-1) 3'06
9. **Things ain't what they used to be**
(M. Ellington) (BS 061.348-1) 3'37
10. **Goin'out the back way**
(J. Hodges) (BS 061.349-1) 2'41

DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

11. **Five o'clock drag**
(D. Ellington) (BS 061.684-1) 3'10
12. **Rocks in my bed**
(D. Ellington) (BS 061.685-1) 3'05



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This sixteenth volume in the series "THE WORKS OF DUKE ELLINGTON" is composed principally of recordings made during the summer of 1941, the very time that the full orchestra was taking part in the Los Angeles production of "Jump For Joy". It provides an interesting change from the band's regular output, featuring the choice morsels of two small-group sessions led by Rex Stewart and Johnny Hodges.

Stanley Dance's comments are of great interest in this context: "The small band dates under the leadership of Johnny Hodges, Rex Stewart and Barney Bigard permitted the expression of ideas for which the big orchestra was not always ready or appropriate. That this leadership was more than nominal is indicated by the distinctive character of each series of recordings, yet the Ellington presence is felt on nearly all of them. They have shape, finish and continuity, and only rarely are the rough edges of the "workshop" experiment audible. The sessions served, nevertheless, as valuable proving grounds for material that was often orchestrated later for the main organization."

The importance of Hodges' presence within the Ellington ranks cannot be overstressed. Probably only Cootie Williams has managed to the same extent, through an unmistakably personal style, to symbolise so entire a slice of the Ellingtonian art. Hodges' role of alto-saxophonist placed him in the middle of the saxophone section, the centre-spot of the orchestra as seen by the audience: from this strategic position he became the band's undisputed number-one soloist. Despite this he has at times been taken for something of a sham, his highly impassive approach causing him to appear indifferent to the proceedings in which he was taking part. This reputation was further amplified by his lack of enthusiasm for interviews, during which he all too willingly tended to purvey an air of detachment bordering on the cynical. Certainly, his straight-faced retorts did nothing to dispel the opinions of those who were the butt of his ridicule.

This affectation, surely a defence mechanism against intrusions into his private life, evaporated as soon as he began to play, every single note he produced irradiating an undeniable warmth. In truth, this

apparent contradiction between the man and his music was both superficial and misleading. Away from the crowd, in the midst of friends, Johnny Hodges revealed a rare level of kindness and generosity, liking not only to joke but also to hold forth on music and life in general. Perhaps Harry Carney came close to the truth in depicting him as a shy man, forced reluctantly into the spotlight by the demands of his profession.

Within the orchestra, admiration for Hodges was totally unreserved. For his peers he was the typical jazzman. He worshipped Bechet, and, as Coleman Hawkins with the tenor-sax, he gave the alto-sax a very specifically jazz-inspired sonority, far removed from the realms of classicism—a sonority which, like Bechet's, was striking for its almost overwhelming, yet always perfectly controlled power. On the other hand, his lyricism was much gentler than Bechet's and permeated by sensuality of every hue. By 1940 he was reaching the peak of his expressive powers, of which the whole romantic dimension is revealed here on **Passion Flower**, a ballad written by Billy Strayhorn and which Hodges played frequently throughout his subsequent career. In another vein, he always showed a great fondness for compositions of simple structure, taken at medium tempo, which enabled him to make full use of his rich tone and to display the easy flexibility of his phrasing, the subtle elegance of his style and the totally characteristic lightness of his swing. That above all was, for him, jazz and his two compositions **Squaty Roo** and **Goin' Out The Back Way** provide the perfect illustration. Comparing them with the recordings he made at the head of his own band some ten years later, you will notice the consistency of his approach, a firmness in his conception of jazz that has not always been acknowledged. On both these titles, corner-stones of the Hodges chapter within the Ellington story: the support provided by Jimmy Blanton's bass is of exciting precision and presence; and as an added bonus on **Goin' Out The Back Way**, the great Harry Carney on baritone takes a solo which shows evidence of his daily musical contact with the celebrated Hodges alto. The importance of this same July session is further underlined by the first recording of the Mercer Ellington classic,

DISCOGRAPHICAL NOTES

1) - 2) : Wallace Jones, Ray Nance, Rex Stewart (tp), Lawrence Brown, Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton (tb), Juna Tizol (vtb); Otto Hardwicke, Johnny Hodges (as), Ben Webster (ts), Harry Carney (bs, as, cl), Barney Bigard (cl, ts); Edward "Duke" Ellington (p); Fred Guy (g); Jimmy Blanton (b); William "Sonny" Greer (dr); with Anderson (voc) and Herb Jeffries (voc) added, Hollywood, July 2nd, 1941.

3) - 4) - 5) - 6) : Rex Stewart (tp), Lawrence Brown (tb), Ben Webster (ts), Harry Carney (bs), Edward "Duke" Ellington (p), Jimmy Blanton (b), William "Sonny" Greer (dr), Hollywood, July 3rd, 1941.
7) - 8) - 9) - 10) : Ray Nance (tp); Lawrence Brown (tb); Johnny Hodges (as); Harry Carney (bs); Edward "Duke" Ellington (p); Jimmy Blanton (b); William "Sonny" Greer (dr), Hollywood, July 3rd, 1941.

11) - 12) : Wallace Jones, Rex Stewart (tp), Ray Nance (tp and voc), Lawrence Brown, Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton (tb), Juan Tizol (vtb), Otto Hardwicke, Johnny Hodges (as), Ben Webster (ts), Harry Carney (bs, as, cl), Barney Bigard (cl, ts), Edward "Duke" Ellington (p), Fred Guy (g), Jimmy Blanton (b), William "Sonny" Greer (dr), Ivie Anderson (voc), Hollywood, Sept. 26th, 1941.

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Vol. 1 731043
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Vol. 5 741048

Duke 1 Box of 5 LPS

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Vol. 8 741114
Vol. 9 FPM1 7002
Vol. 10 FPM1 7047

Duke 2 Box of 5 LPS

Vol. 11 FXM1 7072
Vol. 12 FXM1 7094
Vol. 13 FXM1 7133
Vol. 14 FXM1 7134
Vol. 15 FXM1 7135

Duke 3 Box of 5 LPS

Vol. 16 FXM1 7201

Vol. 17 FXM1 7274

Things Ain't What They Used To Be, taken at a tempo which to us today seems abnormally slow, but on which the complete ease of Hodges' playing is already so much in evidence; this particular track finds Ellington in a very light-hearted mood and Ray Nance sporting his Armstrong hat.

Mention of Armstrong brings us to one of his major disciples. Musician of many facets, instrumentalist of startling virtuosity in the handling and transformation of sound, Rex Stewart here stamps his very distinctive personality on the four small-band tracks under his leadership. **Some Saturday** is imbued with romanticism, **Subtle Slough** with gaiety. The latter piece, under the title **Just Squeeze Me**, was subsequently to become a personal hit for Ray Nance in the role of vocalist. **Menelik**, an unexpected evocation of a king of Abyssinia, provides the opportunity for Rex to descend into the lowest registers of his instrument. As for **Poor Bubber**, a moving homage to the great trumpeter of the twenties, it proves that the memory of James Miley, without whom the Ellingtonian world would never have been what it became, always remained very much alive in the minds of his successors.

The eight small-group tracks are sandwiched between four contrasting titles. The opening two pick up chronologically from Volume 15. **Jump For Joy** was covered in the notes to that album, whereas **Moon Over Cuba** is a Puerto Rican fantasy by Juan Tizol. Unfortunately, it is a far cry from the vein of **Caravan**, **Perdido** or **Conga Brava**; only Ben Webster manages to salvage something from this piece of such doubtful taste, which, happily, remains one of the rare aberrations in the Ellington repertoire. The closing titles are the first two from another Hollywood session, on September 26th, 1941. **Five o'Clock Drag**, taken at an easy medium tempo, is beautifully relaxed; **Rocks In My Bed** is a feature for Ivie Anderson with highly appropriate support from Barney Bigard and Johnny Hodges. This session will be completed in Volume 17.

Translation by Don Waterhouse

Re-issue produced by Jean-Paul GUITER

Photo : J.-P. Leloir

Vol 17 first edition

RCA

Side 1

JOHNNY HODGES AND HIS ORCHESTRA

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(J. Hodges) (BS 061.346.1) 2'24
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4. **Goin' out the back way**
(J. Hodges) (BS 061.349.1) 2'41

DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

5. **Bli-Blip**
(D. Ellington - S. Kuller) Unissued (4904) 2'46
6. **Flamingo**
(T. Grouya - E. Anderson) Unissued (4907) 2'52
7. **Raincheck**
(B. Strayhorn) Unissued 2'48
8. **Clementine**
(B. Strayhorn) Unissued (BS 061.661.1) 3'16

Side 2

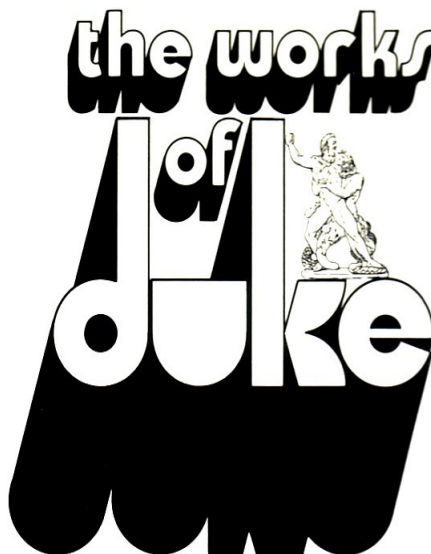
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

9. **Chelsea bridge**
(B. Strayhorn) Unissued (BS 061.661.1) 3'03
10. **Love Like this can't last**
(B. Strayhorn) Unissued (BS 061.661.1) 2'27
11. **After all**
(B. Strayhorn) Unissued (BS 061.661.1) 3'03
12. **The Girl in my dreams**
(M. Ellington) Unissued (BS 061.661.1) 3'33
13. **Jumpin' Punkins**
(M. Ellington) Unissued (BS 061.662.1) 3'25
14. **Frankie and Johnny**
(traditional) Unissued (BS 061.662.1) 3'05
15. **Flamingo**
(T. Grouya - E. Anderson) Unissued (BS 061.662.1) 3'15
16. **Bakiff**
(J. Tizol) Unissued (BS 061.662.1) 4'19

This seventeenth volume in the series "THE WORKS OF DUKE ELLINGTON" is composed of recordings made during the summer of 1941, the very time that the full orchestra was taking part in the Los Angeles production of **Jump for Joy**. It provides an interesting change from the band's regular repertoire, as well as offering the choice morsel of a Johnny Hodges small-group session.

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Within the orchestra, admiration for Hodges was totally unreserved. For his peers he was the typical jazzman. He worshipped Bechet; and similarly to Coleman Hawkins with the tenor-sax, he gave the alto-sax a very specifically jazz-inspired sonority, far removed from the realms of classicism—a sonority which, like Bechet's, was striking for its almost overwhelming, yet always perfectly controlled power. On the other hand, his lyricism was much gentler than Bechet's and permeated by sensuality of every hue. By 1940 he was reaching the peak of his expressive powers, of which the whole romantic dimension is revealed here on **Passion Flower**, a ballad



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written by Billy Strayhorn and which Hodges played frequently throughout his subsequent career. In another vein, he always showed a great fondness for compositions of simple structure, taken at medium tempo, which enabled him to make full use of his rich tone and to display the easy flexibility of his phrasing, the subtle elegance of his style and the totally characteristic lightness of his swing. That above all was, for him, jazz and his two compositions **Squaty Roo** and **Goin' out the Back Way** provide the perfect illustration. Comparing them with the recordings he made at the head of his own band some ten years later, you will notice the consistency of his approach, a firmness in his conception of jazz that has not always been acknowledged. On both these titles, cornerstones of the Hodges chapter within the Ellington story, the support provided by Jimmy Blanton's bass is of exciting precision and presence; and as an added bonus on **Goin' out the Back Way**, the great Harry Carney on baritone takes a solo which shows evidence of his daily musical contact with the celebrated Hodges alto. The importance of this same July session is further underlined by the first recording of the Mercer Ellington classic, **Things ain't what they used to be**, taken at a tempo which to us today seems abnormally slow, but on which the complete ease of Hodges' playing is already so much in evidence; this particular track finds Ellington in very light-hearted mood and Ray Nance sporting his Armstrong hat.

Amongst the titles by the full orchestra, the Billy Strayhorn compositions **Clementine** and **After all** again reveal the stylish Hodges on his best form, ably supported by Rex Stewart, with a typical half-valve solo, and Lawrence Brown, another of the orchestra's ballad specialists. This little Strayhorn festival is crowned by a first version of his masterpiece **Chelsea Bridge**, an evocation of the mists of London, a Ravel-like reminiscence in which Ben Webster's short tenor solo, Jimmy Blanton's dialogue with the reeds and Juan Tizol's trombone stand out. It is naturally Tizol's valve-trombone which takes pride of place on his own composition, **Bakiff**, to which Ray Nance contributes a violin solo of an unusually contoured lyricism. It will be noticed that Duke Ellington was to recall the background of **Bakiff** when he later worked on **La plus belle Africaine**.

Vocalists have a fair share of the cake in this volume. Ivie Anderson joins forces with Duke and the band on **Love like this can't last** to give a demonstration of how to swing even the most outrageously commercial material. Herb Jeffries gets two shots at **Flamingo** and one at **The girl in my dreams**, tracks which also offer solos



DISCOGRAPHY

1) - 2) - 3) - 4) : Ray Nance (tp); Lawrence Brown (tb); Johnny Hodges (as); Harry Carney (bs); Edward "Duke" Ellington (p); Jimmy Blanton (b); William "Sonny" Greer (dr). Hollywood, July 3, 1941.

5) - 6) : Wallace Jones, Rex Stewart (tp); Ray Nance (tp, v); Lawrence Brown, Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton (tb); Juan Tizol (vtb); Otto Hardwicke; Johnny Hodges (as); Ben Webster (ts); Harry Carney (bs, as, cl); Barney Bigard (cl, ts); Edward "Duke" Ellington (p); Fred Guy (g); Jimmy Blanton (b); William "Sonny" Greer (dr); Marie Bryant; Herb Jeffries; Paul White (voc). Hollywood, Summer 1941.

7) : Ray Nance, Rex Stewart, Wallace Jones (tp); Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton, Juan Tizol, Lawrence Brown (tb); Ben Webster (ts); Barney Bigard (cl); Otto Hardwicke, Johnny Hodges (as); Harry Carney (bs); Duke Ellington (p); Fred Guy (g); Jimmy Blanton (b); William "Sonny Greer" (dr). Trianon Ballroom, Southgate, Cal. July 5n, 1941.

8) - 9) - 10) - 11) - 12) - 13) - 14) - 15) - 16) : Same except Marie Bryant and Paul White (voc) out and Ivie Anderson (voc) added. Hollywood, September 17, 1941.

DISCOGRAPHICAL NOTES

On the titles by the big band, Rex Stewart takes all trumpet solos, but Ray Nance precedes him for four bars on **Clementine** and is also heard on **Bli-Blip** and, briefly, on **Frankie and Johnny**. It is Nance who features on violin on **Bakiff**.

Juan Tizol plays the trombone solos on **Chelsea Bridge** and **Bakiff**. Lawrence Brown is soloist on **After all** and **Flamingo**, and "Tricky Sam" Nanton on **Frankie and Johnny**.

Johnny Hodges, Ben Webster, Harry Carney and Barney Bigard play all alto-saxophone, tenor-saxophone, baritone-saxophone and clarinet solos respectively. Ivie Anderson is the vocalist on **Love like this can't last**, Herb Jeffries on **The Girl in my Dreams** and **Flamingo**, and both Marie Bryant and Paul White on **Bli-Blip**.

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by Lawrence Brown, Johnny Hodges, Ben Webster and Rex Stewart. **Bli-Blip** provides a brief direct contact with the revue **Jump for Joy**, since it features the singers from the show, Marie Bryant and Paul White.

The more robust sources of ducal art are here represented by **Frankie and Johnny**, where the pianist is abundantly heard in one of his personal successes, and **Jumpin' Punkins**. This latter title features an eloquently vehement Harry Carney and, a rare privilege, the orchestra's rhythm section: Duke Ellington and Jimmy Blanton exchange ideas with great inspiration, and Sonny Greer siezes at this rare opportunity to show off his brilliant talents. But it is only justice that this particular rhythm section should be spotlighted, for its role within the 1941 big band was of capital importance. Even if Ellington's art is essentially that of composer and arranger, it is nevertheless also that of swingman—as he himself did not hesitate to point out.

On the subject of the rhythm section, it has often been claimed that Duke for long put up with the presence of Sonny Greer simply because he was a childhood friend. It is certain that "Little Willie from Long Branch" (as he was called during his young days) has had some eminent successors who have had a lasting influence on the orchestra. From the front rank of these, mention must be made of two men in particular: Louie Bellson, whose considerable technical prowess added a touch of the spectacular and gave the band a rather different sound; and Sam Woodyard, who injected new power and generated a regular rhythmic base beyond comparison. But this should in no way detract from Sonny Greer's great talents which, although not always recognised by the critics, drew frequent favourable comments from his peers. Jo Jones has even claimed that much of the jazz drumming technique of the last half century originated with Greer. It is certain that, even if rhythmic steadiness was not his strong point, his percussion backing deserves the highest praise for the way in which it complemented the orchestra's statements with such a wide variety of subtle sound effects. To this extent, he made an indispensable contribution to the world of Ellingtonia, and **Jumpin' Punkins** provides yet further proof of this.

We should like to thank Georges Debroe and Luigi Sanfilippo for their help in the compilation of this album.

Translation by Don Waterhouse

Re-issue produced by J.-P. GUITER

Photo : J. P. LELOIR

Vol 17 second edition

RCA

Side 1

DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

1. **Bli blip**
(D. Ellington - S. Kihler) (BS 061.686-1) 3'03
2. **Chelsea bridge**
(B. Strayhorn) (BS 061.687-1) 2'58

BARNEY BIGARD AND HIS ORCHESTRA

3. **Brown Suede**
(D. Ellington) (BS 061.688-1) 3'06
4. **Noir bleu**
(B. Strayhorn) (BS 061.689-1) 3'13
5. **"C" blues**
(D. Ellington) (BS 061.690-1) 2'52
6. **June**
(B. Bigard) (BS 061.691-1) 3'15

Side 2

DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

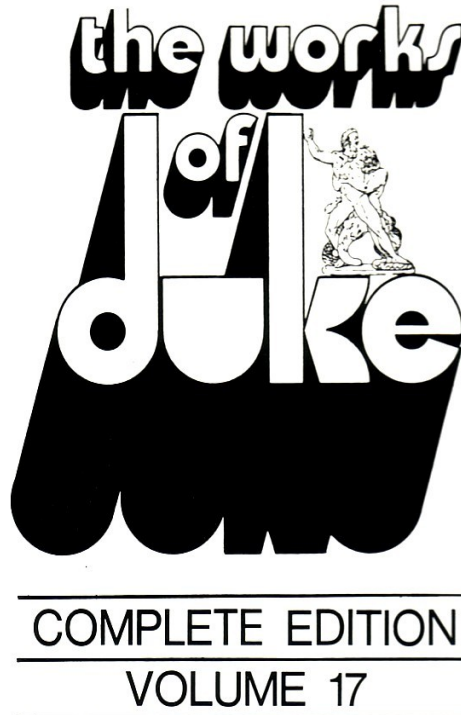
7. **Raincheck**
(B. Strayhorn) (BS 061.941-1) 2'28
8. **What good would it do**
(B. Pepper - I. James) (BS 061.942-1) 2'44
9. **I don't know what kind of blues I got**
(D. Ellington) (BS 061.943-1) 3'13
10. **Chelsea bridge**
(B. Strayhorn) (BS 061.687-2) 2'52
11. **Perdido**
(J. Tizol) (BS 070.682-1) 3'08
12. **The "C" jam blues**
(D. Ellington) (BS 070.683-1) 2'38

This seventeenth volume in the series "THE WORKS OF DUKE ELLINGTON" covers the period September 1941 to January 1942. For most of this time the orchestra was still down in California, but the January 1942 session finds it in Chicago and heading back towards New York.

In the notes to Volume 15 we emphasized the importance of the musical "Jump For Joy" in Duke Ellington's career and how much he himself kept referring back to it. It is thus hardly surprising that we should here find a further echo in the form of **Bli Blip**, which features Ray Nance's debut as vocalist with the orchestra. But Nance's trumpet comes equally to the fore, its tone full of the poignant accents that were to remain such a distinctive part of his style. Moreover, it is remarkable how Jimmy Blanton's dynamic bass sets the whole orchestra alight.

However, it is difficult, within this Californian context, to avoid returning to the theme of Hollywood's flagrant under-utilisation of black artists, whose talents were nevertheless so familiar to the producers of the cinema world. Ellington, for his part, was used only incidentally—as, for example, a very short passage in the mediocre "Cabin in the Sky". We had to wait until 1959 to see him join the ranks of film-music composers with "Anatomy of a Murder"; even then, this was to remain his only opportunity, except for "Paris Blues" which was filmed mainly in Europe. How sad it is, when we look back at this forties period, to realise that, with the exception "Stormy Weather", black showmen were largely ignored. It is all the more striking now that so many Hollywood musicals are being granted a screen revival: they afford a few brief glimpses of Lena Horne or the Nicholas Brothers, and that's about all. Yet, innumerable were the available black artists who could with ease have shown up their white counterparts: stereotyped white dancers are amongst those who would have been sent back to school to learn their trade—although Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly are of course excluded from these harsh remarks. In the famous "Helzapoppin", made in 1941, the most dynamic sequence showed a wonderfully uninhibited Harlem Ballet, accompanied by a bunch of jazz musicians including Rex Stewart. Olsen and Johnson made the comment that they should all be included in the show they were putting together as part of the plot of the film; unfortunately we're still waiting!

Despite this, the Ellington 1941 trip to California was a tremendous success, with the Ellington-Strayhorn collaboration maturing remarkably. We heard the relaxed **Five o'Clock Drag** in Volume 16, whereas here **I Don't Know What Kind Of Blues I've Got** opens in almost bewitching fashion with a Barney Bigard-Lawrence



Brown duet: following Ben Webster's solo there is a further duet, this time with Harry Carney on clarinet, which shifts the mood of the piece to a less dramatic vein. On **What Good Would It Do** we witness a fine entry by the trumpets after Herb Jeffries' vocal, whilst on **Raincheck**, where the hand of Strayhorn is particularly evident, Ben Webster is all vehemence and Juan Tizol much inspired.

But it is **Chelas Bridge**, of which two versions are presented here, that highlights Strayhorn's incomparable talent as a composer. We have previously referred to the influence of Ravel, an influence which seems undeniable when one listens to the harmonic conception of this composition. However, the resemblance to any specific work of Ravel's is surely fortuitous: just as is the precise souvenir of Chelsea Bridge, for at this time Strayhorn had never even set foot in London, the title of the composition having been borrowed from a Whistler painting. With **Chelsea Bridge** Strayhorn demonstrates, above all, that he had attained a mastery of that blending of sounds which so characterised the Ellington genius. His powers of evocation are all the more evident in that the solo work—here by Juan Tizol and Ben Webster, the latter playing with a lyricism that subsequently only Paul Gonsalves would match—slots into the overall composition with such perfect ease and logic. A comparison of the two takes, recorded just over two months apart, reveals that genius does not exist without a lot of graft. In the space of those two months the character of the work underwent changes, and Tizol's first solo had disappeared by the time of the second take. As was the way with Ellington, a lengthy period was spent adapting and perfecting a composition before the definitive version emerged—when indeed such a version existed, for some pieces never ceased to be modified over the years.

Chelsea Bridge underlines another, sad fact. Jimmy Blanton, so present on the first take, is absent from the second. Illness had meantime got the better of him: and the man who in the space of two years had revolutionised bass-playing in jazz, and brought a new rhythmic approach to the Ellington orchestra, died a few months later, in July 1942, leaving the entire band disconsolate. But his message was quickly taken up by a whole new generation of bassists, and in that sense Blanton lived on. His successor with Duke, Alvin "Junior" Raglin, is a musician from the same lineage: less well-known than Blanton and a little overawed by his heritage, he quickly settled down and stayed with the orchestra for the next four years.

We nevertheless have the pleasure of hearing Blanton for a last time in this album, contributing to the small group headed by Barney

DISCOGRAPHY

- 1) : Wallace Jones, Rex Stewart (tp), Ray Nance (tp and voc), Lawrence Brown, Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton (tb), Juan Tizol (vtb), Otto Hardwicke, Johnny Hodges (as), Ben Webster (ts), Harry Carney (bs, as, cl), Barney Bigard (cl, ts), Edward "Duke" Ellington (p), Fred Guy (g), Jimmy Blanton (b), William "Sonny" Greer (dr), Ivie Anderson (voc), Hollywood, Sept 26th 1941.
- 2) : Same except Billy Strayhorn (p) instead of D. Ellington, same date.
- 3) - 4) - 5) - 6) : Ray Nance (tp), Juan Tizol (vtb), Barney Bigard (cl), Harry Carney (bs), Billy Strayhorn (p), Jimmy Blanton (b), William "Sonny" Greer (dr), same date.
- 7) - 8) - 10) : Same as 1) except Billy Strayhorn (p), Alvin "Junior" Raglin (b) and Herb Jeffries (voc) instead of D. Ellington, J. Blanton and I. Anderson, Hollywood Dec. 2nd, 1941.
- 9) : Same as 7) except Edward "Duke" Ellington instead of B. Strayhorn, same date.
- 11) - 12) : Same as 7) except H. Jeffries out, Chicago, January 21st, 1942.

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| Vol. 16 FXM1 7201 | | Vol. 17 FXM1 7274 |

Bigard. On **"C" Blues** he is once again the driving force of a rhythm section which propels Ray Nance, Barney Bigard and Harry Carney to splendid heights, this interpretation being the first of a long series of **"C" Jam Blues**. The other three titles from this same session are bathed in a melancholy which typifies a whole slice of Strayhorn's work. Bigard adds a romantic touch which contrasts with his undulating style at faster tempo. The magic of Strayhorn's sound-textures is particularly striking on **Noir Bleu**, where the subtle use of valve trombone in the ensemble passages adds so much to the overall sonority. In contrast, Tizol's insipid solo on **June** is eminently forgettable, but is more than compensated by Bigard's beautifully graceful contribution which follows it. Barney reminds us that, like Hodges, he is a master of inflexion, the mobility of his style making him a thoroughly distinguished and distinguishable musician.

With the final two tracks of this album we move into January 1942 and eastwards to Chicago. They provide us with a couple of fine specimens of easy, freely swinging numbers launched by Ellington and subsequently adopted by a multitude of orchestras: **"C" Jam Blues** and **Perdido**. Swing was still very much in vogue at this time and it is almost as if Ellington, whose reputation as an arranger was based upon elaboration and complexity, wanted to demonstrate that he was equally capable of producing compositions of great melodic and harmonic simplicity. What is certainly true is that these two numbers remained a part of the Ellington repertoire right until the end, and Ellington's versions were always the most renowned.

We have just witnessed the start of the **"C" Jam Blues** career at the hands of the Barney Bigard group. Here it provides a framework for the violin of Ray Nance, the controlled power of Rex Stewart, the full, broad tone of Ben Webster, the "wa-wa" style of Tricky Sam and the light, airy clarinet of Barney Bigard. If you listen carefully, you will also hear the ever-faithful guitar of Fred Guy. **Perdido** has been the springboard for numerous illustrious Ellington soloists. As with many of the orchestra's tunes, it has been played faster and faster with the passage of time. Here, it opens with a powerful, inspired contribution by Harry Carney, who is followed by Ray Nance, Rex Stewart and Ben Webster, all admirably supported by a propulsive rhythm section led by Sonny Greer.

Alexandre RADO

Translation by Don Waterhouse

Re-issue produced by Jean-Paul GUITER

Photo : J.-P. Leloir