



# BLUE LIGHT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY UK  
VOLUME 20 NUMBER 4 WINTER 2013



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# DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY UK

<http://dukeellington.org.uk>

## HONORARY MEMBERS OF DESUK

Alice Babs  
Art Baron  
Buster Cooper  
Herb Jeffries  
John Lamb  
Vincent Prudente  
Monsignor John Sanders  
Joe Temperley  
Clark Terry  
Derek Else

## HONORARY MEMBERS SADLY NO LONGER WITH US

Bill Berry (13 October 2002)  
Harold Ashby (13 June 2003)  
Jimmy Woode (23 April 2005)  
Humphrey Lyttelton (25 April 2008)  
Louie Bellson (14 February 2009)  
Joya Sherrill (28 June 2010)

**Membership of Duke Ellington Society UK costs £20 per year. Members receive quarterly a copy of the Society's journal *Blue Light*.**

### Payment may be made by:

**Cheque, payable to DESUK drawn on a Sterling bank account and sent to The Treasurer, 38 Thurlestone Avenue, London, N12 0LP, UK**

**Standing Order or Bank Transfer to DESUK at Santander Sort Code 09-01-55 Account number 15478709**

**PayPal (commission charges are paid by DESUK so you may wish to make a small donation to cover the cost)**

**Overseas members may send a Sterling International Money Order.**

**Membership fees for 2014 are due for payment by 31st December 2013.**

**- Victor Lawrence,  
Treasurer**

## DESUK COMMITTEE

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**COMMITTEE MEMBERS:** Ian Bradley, Quentin Bryar, Frank Harvey, Phil Mead

## SOCIETY NOTICES

### DESUK London Social Meetings:

Civil Service Club, 13-15 Great Scotland Yard, London SW1; off Whitehall, Trafalgar Square end. 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturdays of the month, 2pm. 12 Oct, 14 Dec. For details contact Antony Pepper.

Tel.: 01342 314053; email: [ap@antonypepper.com](mailto:ap@antonypepper.com)

### Manchester Jazz Society:

Meets Thursdays 7:45 pm for a prompt 8:00 pm start at the Unicorn, Church Street, off Oldham Street, M4 1PW  
Contact: Eddie Little: 0161 881 3995  
Email: [tmonk52@hotmail.com](mailto:tmonk52@hotmail.com)

### Sheffield Jazz Society:

Meets fortnightly at 1.45 pm on Mondays at Meersbrook Park United Reformed Church, Chesterfield Road/Beeton Road corner  
Contact. Edmund Gregory: 0114 230 3742  
17 Mar 2014: 'Strayhorn by Strayhorn and Others' – Roger Boyes (postponed from October)

### TDES (New York):

Monthly meetings at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Avenue at 54<sup>th</sup> Street in Midtown Manhattan, start at 7.30 pm, and visiting DESUK members will be warmly received by Morris Hodara, a fellow-DESUK member, and the New York membership.  
Note the change of day this year to Thursdays.

Dates are: 16 Jan. (Loren Schoenberg); 20 Feb. (Sanford Josephson on Norris Turney); 20 Mar.; 10 Apr.; 22 May (Members' Choice); 19 June (Business meeting and Audio-Visual presentation).

For further information, contact Roger Boyes

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## Editorial

Does the Society have your email address?

I ask because in his solo (but far from sole) responsibility as Membership Secretary, Victor Lawrence frequently sends out details of events and concerts via email. It's a very useful way of communicating with members and issuing updates in between editions of Blue Light.

Engaging with members in this way, and issuing supplementary material is certainly something I should like to do in the future. With pressure on column inches in the last two editions of BL, I have not been able to publish The Treasurer's report and other information from our AGM last May. Offering those details via email seems to me to be a viable alternative. It costs nothing and frees valuable space in the pages of BL for more Ellingtonia. I have created a PDF of the AGM materials and should you like a copy, please email me. Alternatively, please send a stamped addressed envelope and I will forward a 'hard copy' by return of post. I hope you will find this way of communicating some of the business of the Society an acceptable alternative and feel that, as a result, BL represents even better value for your membership fee. On which subject, of course, December is renewal month. I do hope you enjoy our magazine and will renew membership of the Society for 2014 as soon as possible. Payment options are detailed on the page opposite. With the forthcoming International Duke Ellington Conference, details of which are on page 5, the promise of new recordings of his last works and the commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of his death, next year can only re-affirm the enduring nature of Duke Ellington's legacy.

The cancellation of the fortieth anniversary concert at The Congress Theatre, Eastbourne was a disappointment but Ellington's music continues to thrive in other settings including a sell-out performance of the presentation *Louis and Duke in London*. Quentin Bryar reviews this and other London engagements on page 19.

On behalf of the Committee and the Editorial team of Blue Light, may I wish you a merry and peaceful Christmas and all good wishes for the New Year.

*Ian Bradley*

## Tell me it's the truth: Terry Teachout's Ellington biography published



Terry Teachout's much anticipated biography, *Duke: A Life of Duke Ellington* was published by Gotham Books in the USA on 17 October, 2013 and in the UK by Robson Books on 19 November.

Teachout's life of Ellington underwent a subtle change of title, from 'A Life' in the US to 'The Life' in the UK. (This and a different jacket design aside, the contents of the UK book are identical to its US counterpart).

The book has been received well. James Gavin writing in *The New York Book Review* says:

"Ellington's newest biographer, Terry Teachout, clearly saw the challenge of writing about the enigmatic legend. In *Duke: A Life of Duke Ellington*, he calls Ellington "a riddle without an answer, an unknowable man who hid behind a high wall of ornate utterances and flowery compliments that grew higher as he grew older."

"Yet in his clear eyed reassessment of a man regarded in godlike terms, Teachout, the drama critic for *The Wall Street Journal*, delves behind "the mask of smiling, noncommittal urbanity that (Ellington) showed to the world." The facts and stories he relates aren't new, but rarely have they had such a compelling narrative flow or ring of reliability. As in his last book, *Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong*, Teachout keeps his psychoanalyzing within safe limits; he contextualizes historically without sounding contrived, and honours his subject's musical achievements through just the right amount of close analysis..."

"Teachout relates even the most dramatic episodes in the Ellington story with a poised impartiality. He doesn't take a novelistic approach, nor does he describe music with the lyrical flights of fancy favoured by such authors as Greil Marcus and Lester Bangs. Teachout writes in an earthbound style marked by sound scholarship and easy readability. He particularly shines in his portraits of Ellington's renowned sidemen.... Duke humanizes a man whom history has kept on a pedestal."

Tom Nolan, author of acclaimed Artie Shaw biography *Three Chords for Beauty's Sake* argues: "All elements of Ellington's colourful, complicated, oft-secretive life - public and private, musical and personal - are brought to similar vivid life in this grand and engrossing biography by New York writer Terry Teachout, whose previous book on [Louis Armstrong](#) was also an indispensable summary.

" '*Duke*,' acknowledges Teachout, 'is not so much a work of scholarship as an act of synthesis, a narrative biography that is substantially based on the work of academic scholars and other researchers.' As such, it benefits from the perceptions and revelations of earlier scribes such as musicologist Gunther Schuller and Ellington collaborator [Billy Strayhorn](#)'s biographer [David Hajdu](#). What Teachout does with such materials is not unlike what Ellington did with elements he found at hand: he shapes them with individual skill into something of permanent worth.

"The author is frank in demonstrating the sometimes problematic ways Ellington created his works of lasting beauty. A brilliant composer and orchestrator, the Duke nonetheless lacked the knack to craft the sort of pop-song melodies upon which the music business was based; to compensate, he often appropriated tune fragments from his instrumentalists (including [Johnny Hodges](#), [Barney Bigard](#) and [Cootie Williams](#)), paying a small fee in lieu of royalties for what would become such popular hits as [\*Mood Indigo\*](#), [\*Sophisticated Lady\*](#), [\*Do Nothing Till You hear From Me\*](#)."

A more cautionary note which may strike a chord with some readers, however, is sounded by Ted Gioia. Writing in *The Dallas Morning News*, he says:

"I suspect many Ellington fans will feel Teachout has gone too far, if not in his personal revelations, then certainly in his constant suggestions that Ellington's skills were inadequate to his ambitions."

Full reviews will appear in the next *Blue Light*.

## International Duke Ellington Conference 2014: Call for papers

The screenshot shows the homepage of the conference website. At the top right is a logo of Duke Ellington. Below it, the text reads "THE INTERNATIONAL DUKE ELLINGTON CONFERENCE 2014 AMSTERDAM MAY 14-18". A navigation bar below includes links for HOME, PROGRAM, TICKETS, NEWS, ARTISTS, SPEAKERS, VENUES, HOTELS, HISTORY, and CONTACT. The main image is a black and white photograph of Duke Ellington playing a piano, overlaid with a Polaroid-style frame. To the right of the photo is the text "On the road with Duke Ellington". Below this is a box stating "22ND INTERNATIONAL DUKE ELLINGTON STUDY GROUP CONFERENCE MAY 14-18, 2014 HOSTED BY THE CONSERVATORY OF AMSTERDAM". A "ORDER TICKETS" button is located at the bottom right of the main image area. On the left side, there's a sidebar with sections for "ELLINGTON 2014" and "CALL FOR PAPERS". The "ELLINGTON 2014" section contains text about the conference's history and key features. The "CALL FOR PAPERS" section invites proposals and has a "SUBMIT PROPOSAL" button. Below these are sections for "VIDEOS" showing short clips and "IMAGES" showing small thumbnail photos.

Preparations for The International Duke Ellington Conference, which will be held in Amsterdam, May 14-18, 2014, continue apace. The website for the conference has now gone 'live' and may be accessed at: <http://www.ellington-2014.nl>

The website says:

**The preliminary programme boasts keynote lectures by acclaimed writers on Ellington, such as Harvey Cohen, David Schiff, and Matt Cooper, concerts of among others 'Black, Brown and Beige' by the conservatory big band under the baton of the renowned Ellington scholar David Berger, a commissioned arrangement for wind-ensemble of 'Such Sweet Thunder', a concert in the Bimhuis by Dutch Annual Jazz Award winner Oene van Geel, as well as a conference dinner in the prestigious Muziekgebouw aan het IJ (where King Willem-Alexander dined the evening of his crowning), and special hotel arrangements under auspices of the Conservatory of Amsterdam.**

The Conference organisers, Louis Tavecchio and Walter van de Lier welcome 300 word proposals and short CVs, sketching 30-minute presentations that will focus on anything Ellingtonian, but specifically on the conference theme: *On the Road with Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra*.

In addition to this information, Louis tells *Blue Light*: "Shakespeare's 450th Birthday will be celebrated worldwide in 2014, and we will join the festivities with a

new arrangement of Ellington's and Strayhorn's Shakespearean Suite *Such Sweet Thunder*, to be performed by Calefax, the famous Dutch Reed Quintet. A few years ago they already arranged and performed parts of The Ellington-Strayhorn *Far East Suite* (1966), and Ellington's Ballet Suite *The River*, composed in 1970 for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre. [http://www.calefax.nl/cd\\_nl.asp?id=1294](http://www.calefax.nl/cd_nl.asp?id=1294)

"David Berger, jazz composer, arranger and conductor, is recognized internationally as a leading authority on the music of Duke Ellington and the swing era. Conductor and arranger for the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra from 1988 through 1994, Mr. Berger has transcribed more than 700 full scores of classic recordings, including nearly 500 works by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. In 1996, Mr. Berger collaborated with choreographer Donald Byrd to create *The Harlem Nutcracker*, a full-length two-hour dance piece that expands on the Ellington/ Strayhorn score.

<http://www.kendormusic.com/store/index.php?a=viewCat&catId=264>

Louis told the Duke-LYM internet discussion group: "The programme is not definitive and new elements are likely to be added in the next weeks. We will keep you posted. We hope to see all of you in Amsterdam and, please, spread the news!" Proposals for presentations may be submitted via the website. Tickets and accommodation may now be booked on-line also.

## **Ellington in Afghanistan**



Photograph: L to R: William Brewer, U.S. Chargé d’Affaires; Ellington; Mr. Pardes, Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture.

On Sunday, 22 September 2013 BBC Radio 4 broadcast a programme as part of their *Witness* strand celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of Duke Ellington’s visit to Kabul, Afghanistan.

The performance at the Ghazi Stadium in Kabul, on 19 September, 1963 was part of Ellington’s State Department tour which began on 6 September when Ellington and the members of his orchestra flew from New York to Damascus, Syria.

During the course of the next two-and-a-half months, they played in Jordan, Lebanon, Afghanistan, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Iraq and Turkey. The band had reached Turkey on 22 November 1963 when news reached them of the assassination of President John F Kennedy.

In the *Witness* broadcast, Monica Whitlock interviewed Faiz Khairzada, who as President of Afghan Cultural Affairs, organized the concert, built the stage and collected Ellington from the airport when he arrived.

In his interview, he said: “It was a very beautiful concert. It was very exciting for me to have (Ellington) there in Kabul.

I remember well the second number that he did was ***Don’t Get Around Much Anymore***.

“The people enjoyed it thoroughly. It was something very, very new to them. The people in those days, even in Kabul, were not that familiar with blues and jazz so they were more interested in the performance: how the musicians acted and the trumpet and the clarinet solos. They were very much interested, awed by the thing, not so much the music as the performance.”

Asked about the size of the audience and the price of admission, Faiz Khairzada said:

“We had about I would guess - it’s a long, long time ago - but I think we had somewhere around 3 and 4 000 people in the stadium. It was free for the audience and of course the other people were invited guests, officials, Royal Family, etc.”

One particular incident during the concert stayed with Ellington himself, although his own account in an interview with Michael Parkinson (see boxout, on page opposite) differs from that given on *Witness*. Faiz Khairzada recalled:

“... (Ellington) looked over and said, “What’s happening?” I said, “This is the evening prayer time and that’s why they’re coming down. They’re not leaving, so he had a sigh of relief and then he got up and he said, “Oh, I’m sorry. Why don’t we get a break? Have a break now. People were grateful for that and he did it so charmingly, it worked very well. It took about ten, twelve minutes, 15 minutes for the people to say their prayers and they got back to their seats and the concert continued.”

Asked whether the concert had been a success, the former President of Afghan Cultural Affairs said:

“It was, it was. They gave him a great hand and members of the Royal Family, ministers and ambassadors went next to the stage to shake his hand. He went back to his hotel. I actually took him myself.

“We got along very, very well and he talked about his music. We discussed Louis Armstrong or I told him that I had made a film and I was working on another film and he wanted to know what it was all about.

“Then he told me, ‘You know, kid, you do the film and I’ll do the music for it.’ ”

‘I remember we were in Kabul and we were playing in the middle of this concert. Well, you know first of all, you figure out. You say, “Well, I wonder have these people ever heard of us before? I wonder if they’ve ever heard of *Mood Indigo* cause they got their own thing going on out there and it’s good too, you know. I used to ride around all night long, listening to the records they were playing in the cafes and things.

‘And along about half way (through) the concert, you see almost the entire audience rise and start walking and this is a little frightening and you know, you look around. There is nobody to tell you anything, nobody to tell you. It’s outdoors in a field, you know and then you find out. Then they come back you know later and then you find out that what they did was, they got up at that moment because that was when they had to go and face east and pray but you don’t know why...’

**Duke Ellington, interviewed by Michael Parkinson, 1973.**

## Herb Jeffries celebrates 100<sup>th</sup> birthday

Herb Jeffries celebrated his hundredth birthday on 24 September, 2013.

Bruce Fussier of the *Palm Springs Desert Sun* wrote:

“Herb has two major claims to fame. He was the first singing cowboy of colour and he was Duke Ellington’s male vocalist in the 1940 big band that is widely considered the greatest big band of all time.

“He made an even more significant impact in the early 1930s. That’s when he declared himself black to be able to sing with the all-black bands of Erskine Tate and Earl Hines even though Herb says he was only 1/16th black. His mother was Irish and his absentee father was part Sicilian and part Moorish.



“When he toured the South with Ellington’s band, he could have passed for white, but he chose to endure the slurs, discrimination and bad hotel rooms his bandmates had to experience. To him, it was worth it to play with the most significant jazz musician of the 20th century.

“Herb moved to Palm Springs in the 1980s and opened his own nightclub in the Bougainvillea Room of the Palm Springs Tennis Club. He sang at the McCallum Theatre’s *Let Freedom Ring* benefit for 9/11 victims in 2001 and, as recently as 2009, was hosting open mic nights in Palm Desert.

“He’s an amazing man who has survived an airplane crash, climbed the Swiss Alps and married the most famous stripper of the 1950s, Tempest Storm. He’s practiced yoga for more than 65 years, which most certainly has contributed to his lucidity and still robust baritone.”

As part of the celebrations, a video interview with Jeffries has been posted online. Of his memories of Duke Ellington he said:

“I was always fond of the governor because the governor was a sweetheart of a guy. The only time that I can remember when you just couldn’t make contact, he was creating and it was a creative thing. You could sit there and talk to him but it would sound like a tape recorder running. He’d answer your questions but he wasn’t there...”

To view the interview, visit YouTube and type ‘Herb Jeffries 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday Interview’ in the ‘Search’ box.

An extensive piece, *Herb Jeffries: The Bronze Buckaroo* by Bo Haufman was featured throughout Volume 6 of *Blue Light*, numbers 1-4.

## THE PERESS BB & B CD

From Downton (Salisbury) John Pinder informs me that the 1990s CD on which Maurice Peress conducts his orchestration of *Black Brown And Beige* etc. (see *BL* 20/3 p17), has also appeared on a Music Masters CD, 7011-2-C, and on a Nimbus CD, NI 2511. I imagine that the Nimbus is the most recent issue.

**Roger Boyes**

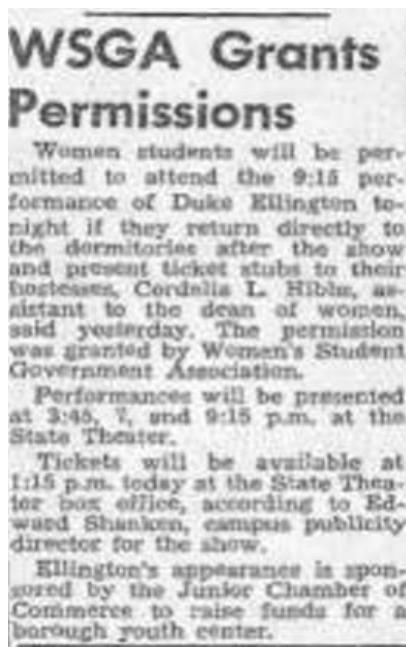
## New addition to Duke's itinerary

My article in the latest *Blue Light* prompted reader Bob Roberts to search for details of a concert he attended at Penn State College in 1954. Bob writes:

"I enjoyed your article in *Blue Light* covering Duke's itinerary in 1951. It prompted me to search for information about a concert I attended while a student at The Pennsylvania State College (which became a university in 1955). I knew very little about jazz at the time, so my memory of the concert is hazy."

This is new to the itinerary and is confirmed in the Junior Chamber of Commerce newsletter Bob forwarded:

Thursday, 18 March, 1954 3:45 pm, 7 pm, and 9:15 pm, State College, Pennsylvania, State Theatre. State College is a small city in its own right.



Three performances, sponsored by the State College Junior Chamber of Commerce to raise funds for a youth centre, were staged but the venture lost \$600, a record that stood at least until 2003. The Women's Student Government Association of Pennsylvania State College granted permission to women students "to attend the 9:15 performance of Duke Ellington tonight if they return directly to the dormitories and present their ticket stubs to their hostesses..."

Bob recalls attending one of the concerts, and thinks the ticket price was \$1.

(Sources: *The Daily Collegian*, State College, Penn., Thursday, 18 March, p.1.

*History of the Local Chapter*, Newsletter, Jaycees State College Area, Oct.-Dec.2003, p.4)

David Palmquist

## Duke in Yorkshire

I may be able to provide details of Duke Ellington's 17 February 1967 appearance in Bradford, including a set list not in running order as I jotted it down after the event, but this depends on locating my copy of the programme which is filed away somewhere in the depths.

Almost two years later on 28 November 1969 myself and two friends saw Duke at Wakefield Theatre Club. For a number of reasons this was not nearly so auspicious as Bradford, especially since Cootie Williams arrived late and clearly the worse for wear. In time honoured fashion he was immediately called by Duke for a solo turn which he did manage to get through more or less unscathed. Duke had also identified the venue as being likely to attract a 'wider' audience so insisted on including a 'greatest hits' medley. I would guess the rest of the programme was fairly similar to the 70th Birthday Concert.

Ray Hunter – a fellow DESUK member – mentioned that there was an episode when Harry Carney's music stand fell over but I think I must have missed that one. We were ferried back to Wakefield station by the taxi driver who had brought Cootie to the venue. He remarked that it was a wonder the man could stand up, let alone rush on stage for a couple of feature numbers ('*A Train/Tutti For Cootie* most likely). One of my friends was very impressed that Duke came on for the second set in a complete change of clothing – he was more taken with Mr Ellington's sartorial elegance than the actual music I suspect.

Mike Vawdrey

## More treasures from Storyville Records



From the Storyville Records website:

Storyville Records is proud to present volume 17 in the *Duke Ellington Treasury Shows* series. In April 1945, to promote the sale of war bonds, the Treasury Department contracted Duke Ellington to do a series of 55 min public broadcasts. This double CD contains broadcast no. 32 and no. 33 complete with radio speaks and encouragements to buy bonds, bonus material and extensive liner notes (written by DESUK's own Graham Colombé, Ed).

CD1 features broadcast no. 32 which was recorded at Radio City Studio 6B in New York City on November 24, 1945. The CD also features 11 bonus tracks from two broadcasts at the Hurricane Restaurant recorded April 9 and 20, 1944. CD 2 features broadcast no. 33 recorded at the Civic Opera House in Chicago January 20, 1946. The CD also features five bonus tracks from the Hurricane Restaurant in NYC recorded April 21 and 24, 1944.

The whole Duke Ellington Treasury Shows series will be 24 double CD's. So far Storyville has releases 17 and the rest are on the way! Treasury vol. 17 is the latest in the series.

## OBITUARIES

### Sathima Bea Benjamin

The singer Sathima Bea Benjamin died at her home in Cape Town on 20 August, aged 76. She left South Africa in 1962 following the Sharpeville massacre and the white supremacist government's institutionalizing of the country's racism into the wicked system of apartheid. For her as for many other South Africans a life of exile followed, though her heart remained in Cape Town.

Sathima told her story at Ellington conferences in Copenhagen and Chicago. Her father's family had reached Cape Town from St Helena and her mother's had come from Mauritius. But isolated islands in the Atlantic and Indian oceans are only a part of the exotic mix of her background. There were Filipino and Amerindian elements on her Mauritian side and an African one on the St Helenan. And with a grandma called Eva Thwaites, I'd be surprised if there wasn't some Lancashire or West Riding in the mix as well.

She was born in 1936, to parents who separated early. Mistreatment at the hands of her father's second wife led to a strict though loving upbringing by her grandmother. She took solace in music from an early age, enjoying a diet of British church and popular music, later supplemented by American songs and jazz. She trained as a schoolteacher but soon gravitated to the Cape Town night club scene, a very open one in the late 1950s. Apartheid put a stop to that and Sathima, by now with pianist Dollar Brand (Abdullah Ibrahim), left the country.

She first met Duke Ellington on 19 February 1963 in Zürich. After attending the Maestro's concert she went backstage and urged him to visit the club where Dollar's trio was playing, which he did. Sathima timed it well. Duke had recently joined Frank Sinatra's Reprise label, as a recording artist and as director of the 'Ellington Jazz Wing', and was free to record anyone he chose to. He recorded both Sathima and Dollar in Paris a few days after the Zürich meeting. The Dollar Brand recording and Duke's endorsement triggered his rise to eminence. In 1977, after many itinerant years, the Ibrahims finally settled in an apartment in the Chelsea Hotel in Manhattan. They separated when Abdullah returned to South Africa following the collapse of apartheid. Sathima remained in New York, and only returned to live permanently in Cape Town in 2011.

Elegant understatement characterized Sathima's singing. She let the songs speak for themselves, and she liked to float around the beat and hold on to the note as the rhythm, occasionally touched with a Cape Town shuffle, moved on. Unsurprisingly, her own songs revealed her strong political commitment; the couple were long-time supporters of the African National Congress and activists against apartheid.

In 2000 a short book of essays by various authors appeared titled *Sathima Bea Benjamin – Embracing Jazz*. It was published in Copenhagen by Booktrader, and it came with two CDs, one a sampler of songs from her earlier albums, the other a recent (1999) collection which reunited Sathima with some of her old associates who had remained in South Africa through the long night of apartheid. The book is out of print and probably hard to find, but well

worth seeking out, particularly if your interest in Ellington extends to singers and the standard songs repertoire, or to the political turmoils which shaped her remarkable life.

**Sathima Bea Benjamin 17 October 1936 – 20 August 2013**

**Roger Boyes**

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### Marian McPartland

Marian McPartland died on 20 August, aged 95, in Long Island, New York. Margaret Turner was born and raised in comfortably-off middle-class London suburbia, and studied piano at the Guildhall School of Music. She was drawn to jazz-flavoured popular music, and this interest led her to quit the course and go into variety, initially with Billy Mayerl. 'One of Mummy's dire predictions was, if you become a musician, Margaret you'll come to no good. You'll marry a musician and live in an attic'. She did both.

When war came she joined ENSA, later switching to its American counterpart, USO. She entertained the troops as they pursued the retreating German forces across northern France after D-Day, and met Jimmy McPartland when she was jamming in a tent in Belgium. At the end of the war she went to the USA as Jimmy's GI bride, settling first in his home town, Chicago. In 1949 the couple moved to New York, where Marian became a successful jazz pianist, overcoming what Leonard Feather described as the 'three hopeless strikes against her' of being British, white and a woman.

Prejudice was rife. She recalled one man who came over at the end of the set and told her, 'you know you can't be a respectable woman, the way you play piano'. She decided it was a compliment. She was drawn to Mary Lou Williams, and eventually gained her confidence and friendship. They stand together on Art Kane's celebrated 1958 photograph *A Great Day In Harlem*, two of the few women in the group.

When the changing face of popular music led to the marginalization of jazz, Marian became very active in music education, introducing young people to a musical heritage to which they were no longer being exposed. Her affair with Joe Morello and her husband's drinking led to the end of her marriage in 1967. But she remained on good terms with Jimmy – 'our divorce was a failure' – and they remarried shortly before his death in 1991. Her career thrived, and in 1969 disenchantment with the music business led her to set up her own record company, Halcyon, which she ran for ten years, before joining Concord in 1978, whose recordings chronicle her late-flowering maturity as a pianist. Her style combines rhythmic toughness with lightness of touch, and has been characterized as 'steel fingers in a velvet glove'. The album *Single Petal Of A Rose* dates from 2000, when she was 82.

She embarked on a very successful second career as a broadcaster on National Public Radio. *Piano Jazz* was the longest-running (1978–2011) jazz programme on radio. The format was simple – Marian and her guest at two keyboards, chatting and playing. She was also a somewhat self-effacing composer, and an occasional jazz journalist.

She was too late to be able to invite Duke Ellington to take part in the show, but their paths did cross, and he crops up several times in the recent biography of Marian, *Shall We*

*Play That One Together?* by Paul de Barros (St Martin's Press, New York, 2012).

In the 1950s Marian enjoyed a long residency at the Hickory House in New York. From time to time Duke would turn up and, writes de Barros, he would sometimes invite Marian over to his table, cut a little piece of steak, and offer it to her on the end of a fork. 'He had so much sex appeal it was frightening,' said Marian. 'I was so naïve and shy that I couldn't ever figure out how to act with him, although I enjoyed being with him.'

When she plucked up the courage to ask him what he thought of her playing he responded: 'You play so many notes.' She said: 'I thought about it and after a while I thought: He probably is telling me I'm playing too many. It was one of the best criticisms I ever had.'

At President Nixon's White House celebration of Duke's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1969, Marian recalled that Duke turned to Pat Nixon during the formal dinner and said: 'It's illegal for a woman to be so pretty'.

In February 1974 Duke was terminally ill, and already weak. When he came to Georgetown University in Washington, Marian asked him to play at Hawthorne School. Though very unwell he agreed. Marian arrived to find to her horror that the concert was on the fourth floor, and Duke was waiting. Duke said: 'I heard you were going to carry me upstairs'. We sat in a hallway and I held his hand. People were snapping pictures...Duke suddenly looked very pale and disoriented. 'Christ, what am I doing here?' he asked nobody in particular. 'What am I going to do?' 'You're going to play like you always do for kids and talk to them a little.'

Marian, who never renounced her British citizenship, was appointed OBE in 2010.

**Marian McPartland, b Windsor 20 March 1918, d Long Island NY, 20 August 2013**

Roger Boyes

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## Dennis Maurice James Dimmer



People often expressed surprise when Dennis told them that he was born on Christmas Day and in response he would playfully cross himself and bless them. However that was about as far as religion played any part in his life and so it is rather ironic that he should have suffered his fatal heart attack whilst meeting friends for their regular coffee morning held in the local Methodist church.

Researching his family's history as a birthday gift for him in 2007 was a particularly easy task for me as the Dimmers had not moved far from Wiltshire's Chalke Valley over a period of 200 years. His father, Maurice James, married in 1927 and he and his wife Ethel had three children: Dennis born in Salisbury in 1929 and daughters Edna and Doreen born at four-yearly intervals thereafter.

Dennis, who had left school at the age of 14, was a delivery driver by occupation and in the late 1970s joined J C Dean's haulage company where he continued to drive their huge articulated lorries around the southern counties of England and into Wales until his retirement at the age of 75 (that is not a typing error). It was work he loved as, once out of the depot, he was his own boss and the pace suited very well his laid-back attitude to life. I was only recently told by another driver that his CB handle was 'Grandad' – I doubt Dennis ever told anyone that! He was also never known to swear or use vulgar language either at work or at home.

His main sporting interests were in rugby and cricket which he keenly followed, but it was in the game of table tennis that he excelled as a player and younger opponents were frequently beaten by 'the old man'. Nevertheless it was his love of music for which he was best known. It all started when he listened to the American Forces broadcasts on the radio during the war and developed into a life-long appreciation of various musical genres. In the years that followed he amassed a vast and much envied record collection consisting mainly of big bands but including all jazz styles, vocalists, classical music and blues.

He did not become a fan of Duke Ellington until the 1950s but was soon an avid collector of his recordings in every format as well as associated memorabilia and saw the band on a number of occasions during its tours of England between 1963 and 1969. For many years he attended the International Duke Ellington Study Group conferences and in Ottawa in 1990 gave a presentation on his favourite band member trumpeter Ray Nance. Dennis was a founder member of the UK branch of the Duke Ellington Society formed in 1994 and served on its committee in its early years. For more than half a century he was a stalwart of the Salisbury Jazz Record Society and, since its inception in 1979, has been an enthusiastic member of Salisbury Jazz Club.

Amongst other things Dennis was knowledgeable, talkative, flirtatious, generous, trustworthy, adaptable and charming. It was these qualities alongside his sense of humour that gained him so many friends in different walks of life both at home and overseas and all are mourning the passing of this gentle giant. Personally, I shall never know a better friend. Our thoughts are with his daughter Helen and partner Mary at this sad time.

**Dennis Maurice James Dimmer, 25<sup>th</sup> December 1929 – 16<sup>th</sup> October 2013**

Wendy Lawrence

## Vic Bellerby



Ray Bolden, David Fleming, David Bradbury, Derek Else, Vic Bellerby, Roger Boyes, Wendy Lawrence (then Wendy Heuston), Bill Bailey (behind Wendy), Dennis Dimmer. The photograph was taken in The Black Horse, Rathbone Place in Fitzrovia, 1996-7.

Vic Bellerby, jazz critic and observer, and, with David Fleming, one of the founder members of DESUK, died in Harrow, London, on 30 May 2013 at the age of 91, following a hip fracture and subsequent stroke.

He was born Victor Lionel Bellerby in Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, on 24 August 1921, developing his interest in and writing on jazz from an early age. At 14, still at grammar school, his first published letter as an Ellington admirer appeared in the *Radio Pictorial* under the pseudonym 'Enraged Schoolboy'.

Vic had many letters published in the next few years in the *Melody Maker*, whose then editor described him as 'my inveterate correspondent', by which time he was all of 18 years of age and set to go into the RAF, where during the war years he encountered many jazzmen, including George Chisholm, whose autograph was soon obtained for his cuttings book.

After demobilisation and a spell with the BBC he joined Decca Radio and Television in London as a technical and

publicity writer, spending 25 very happy years until the section's closure, a sign of the times.

Apart from being one of the first contributors to *Jazz Journal* since 1953, he also wrote for the *Melody Maker*, *Jazz Music*, *Music & Musicians*, and *Jazz Express*, among others. In addition to a large number of biographical articles, Vic contributed two chapters to the book *Duke Ellington – His Life and Music* (edited by Peter Gammond) entitled *Such Sweet Thunder* and *Analysis of Genius*, published in 1958, as well as a chapter *Sing For Your Supper* on jazz vocalists, also published in 1958, in the *Decca Book of Jazz*.

After Decca and relatively short spells with Tannoy and IPC, the remainder of Vic's pre-retirement years were spent with Dowty Electronics. He then concentrated on travelling the country as a popular illustrated recitals speaker for many gramophone societies, mainly on jazz, but also on classical and ballet music.

He became Chairman of DESUK from its inception in 1995, serving until 2006. He wrote liner notes in retirement for several years for ASV's *Living Era* vintage jazz label, with some 80 titles, receiving an accolade from

Patricia Stacy in Los Angeles for his ‘fine, insightful liner notes’ on the Jess Stacy CD.

Some of his happiest memories were of times spent with the Ellington band on their visits to Britain. He was once stranded late in Birmingham after one of their concerts, so hitched a lift back to London with Harry Carney on the band’s coach, the proviso being that he should contribute a large bottle of whisky. Reportedly the journey was ‘a riot’.

Joan, his wife of 48 years, who survives him, along with sister Madge and family now living in Australia, feels that he was blessed with a varied and interesting life, assisted by an acute and dry sense of humour. He travelled extensively abroad mainly on cruises and attended London musical and other cultural events until the end of his life.

**Joan Bellerby**

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## **Enraged Schoolboy, Shelton**

**RB:** Here is that first letter to which Joan refers in her tribute to her husband, in which the 14½-year-old Vic protests at the casual stereotyping with which journalists characterized our music in the 1930s. It appeared in the Radio Pictorial<sup>1</sup> dated 28 February 1936:

### **Ellington Admirer**

I am only a schoolboy, but my mind has risen up in revolt against a picture you printed in a recent *Radio Pictorial*. A fan wrote up with the suggestion that more ‘swing music’ programmes would be welcomed, and also suggested that a programme of Ellington’s records would be suitable. Whereupon to represent Ellington you printed a picture of three half-crazy negroes producing loud wails from saxophones! Don’t you realize that this is equivalent to representing the Queen’s Hall Symphony Orchestra as a barrel-organ! RP has obviously the crazy notion that the misleading title ‘Hot Music’ is merely a name for a lot of spontaneous row. Does not RP know that Ellington has written more haunting and beautiful refrains than anyone else in jazz? Take his **Mood Indigo**, **Creole Love Call**, **Solitude** and **Rose Room** as examples, and then to represent his music as three crazy negroes. Does not the BBC and RP know true jazz has not yet penetrated to England? It seems not, and it would do much to dispel the illusion that ‘hot jazz’ is just a lot of noise if we could have regular programmes of the beautiful music of Ellington, Trumbauer, Armstrong, Carter etc.

*Enraged Schoolboy, Shelton*

<sup>1</sup>*Radio Pictorial* was a weekly listings magazine for such non-BBC radio stations as Radio Luxembourg, Radio Normandie, Radio Eireann.

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## **Remembering Vic**

### **Roger Boyes**

When I first encountered Vic’s writing on Ellington, in the two essays in Peter Gammond’s 1958 book to which Joan refers in her tribute, I was a teenager. *Such Sweet Thunder* became the second Ellington LP on which I spent scarce funds (the first was an HMV ten-inch, *Ellington Highlights 1940-41*). *Analysis Of Genius* stuck

in my memory for its concluding passages in which Vic extolled the merits of **Ultra De Luxe**, a Capitol recording which I never heard until the 1990s, when I bought Mosaic’s *Complete Capitol* set. No-one else ever seemed to mention this mysterious (to me) composition; but to this day when I read yet another sweeping put-down of Duke’s Capitol recordings, I call to mind the composition and Vic’s praise.

I next came across him as a sleeve-note writer, for some of the classic jazz reissues in Decca’s *Ace Of Hearts* series. The 1930s Count Basie Deccas come to mind. In the 1970s and after, I encountered him as a reviewer when I began to buy *Jazz Journal* regularly. In the 1980s I found in a second-hand bookshop in Skipton the 1959 Martin Williams anthology *The Art of Jazz*, to which Vic contributed an essay on Duke which itself was a distillation of an earlier series of articles in Albert McCarthy’s *Jazz Monthly*. In his introductory paragraph Williams wrote of ‘the perception and elucidation of quality and content which good impressionistic criticism’, as opposed to ‘vague and primitive enthusiasm’, can contribute. He continued: ‘Mr Bellerby’s essay is critical impressionism, and its approach has the further intrinsic advantage that it presents Ellington himself as an impressionistic artist’.

I first saw Vic in person at the 1985 Oldham conference, to which he contributed an intriguingly titled presentation, *Bizarre Brass And The Occult*. At Ellington’97 in Leeds he offered *Duke Plays The Others*. By then I had met him in his capacity as DESUK chairman, and was able to enjoy his communication skills at close quarters, doing a joint presentation with him on one occasion at, I think, Sheffield. He was invariably stimulating, perceptive and amusing. Vic was very helpful to me as editor of *Blue Light*, supplying copies of articles from long ago which were worth reviving, and continuing the arrangement by which we were able to rerun his *JJ* reviews.

Within the world of Ellingtonia Vic’s spiritual home seemed to me to be in the 1930s, and I regret the fact that I never discussed with him the music Duke played at his live performances in this country during my own formative years. He clearly enjoyed being around the band in those happy days. His retirement from active involvement in DESUK in 2006 saddened me. It was entirely understandable, but I wish it had been less sudden.

Vic continued to work for ASV Records, and his compilations for their *Living Era* series were invariably wise and well thought out, invaluable to those who confine our jazz record collecting to acquiring considered samples of the legacy of the great masters, instead of amassing comprehensive collections. It was a great shame when the ASV catalogue was terminated and deleted.

Joan has passed on to me a sheaf of cuttings of Vic’s writing on Ellington, and I hope that much from it will be reprinted in future issues of *BL*. Collectively they reveal great consistency in approach, from the teenage protestations of the first letter of 1936 to the mature reflections of later years. The succinct notes he prepared for the CDs in the *Living Era* series during the 1990s and after reveal that, unlike some, Vic never deviated from the

position of loving advocacy and perceptive understanding towards which the schoolboy's letter points.

In 1974 Vic wrote<sup>1</sup>: 'The energy of the Delius Society has done much for the propagation of the composer's music; may one hope for the institution of an Ellington Society which could influence record companies for the reissue and the preservation of Ellingtonia?' Twenty years later DESUK was formed, and Vic headed it for the next twelve years. We will remember him with continuing gratitude.

<sup>1</sup>Records And Recording, November 1974, reprinted in BL 17/4.

## Bizarre Brass and the Occult

by Ken Rattenbury.

A summary of Vic Bellerby's presentation at the first Oldham conference, Saturday 25 May 1985.

**RB:** This conference meant a lot to Vic. It helped secure Duke a place alongside other twentieth-century composers, as a creator of music demanding serious study and continuing considered evaluation. At least two Ellington '85 presenters, Andrew Homzy and Steven Lasker, went on to become eminent Ellington scholars.

'Bizarre Brass' was a strong indication that Vic's talk would deal with the role of 'growl' brass in the Ellington mix. 'The Occult' was, as Rattenbury says, more puzzling. Was it simply Vic's mischievous way of ensuring that conference attenders would be seated in the auditorium ready to listen, and not gossiping in the bar (a situation which, as I recall, was not unknown to Vic himself)?

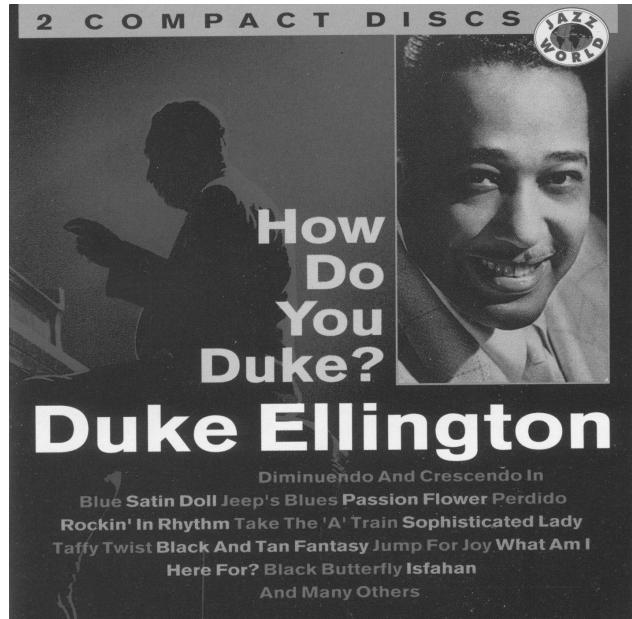
Ken Rattenbury wrote:

Vic Bellerby, veteran British jazz critic and observer, gave a talk on the Ellington 'growlers', *Bizarre Brass and the Occult*, and this was notable for some quiet, practised humour, but principally for a carefully selected, outstandingly edited tape of the principal 'growl' brassmen over the whole of the Ellington era: Bubber Miley, Cootie Williams, 'Tricky Sam' Nanton, Nance, Terry, Glenn, Booty Wood. Just where the 'occult' came in as a specific qualification I cannot easily recognise, although some of the effects demonstrated are patently not of this world of the human condition, nearer the jungle and its threatening atmospheres. Perhaps that's where the unknown/unreal/uncanny comes in? But I'm carping; I enjoyed the thought and care that had been lavished on the presentation, and the lucid exposition of one of the principal ingredients of the Ellington Effect, and told Mr Bellerby so.

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## The Famous Five LP Box Set



Recently I have been looking on the internet for Duke's stockpile recordings and found this item which might be of interest to Duke Ellington collectors.

In 1977/78 a set of LPs was issued entitled **Duke Ellington Popular Hits, Ballets, Extended Works & Jazz Performances** (M.F Distribution Co. Inc., 1977). The collection comprised 45 tracks on five LPs, taken from various studio dates and live venues previously broadcast by Danish Radio which accounts for the clarity of the recordings.

Of the 43 tracks 22 I have marked as X or X1, X2 and X3 have turned up on a two cd set on the JAZZ WORLD label JWD 102.307 called *How Do You Duke?* This is on a cheap label which also distributes the 'infamous' Jazz Hour/Jazz World series whose tracks are usually culled from who knows where.

Eleven tracks were also included on *Duke Ellington: The Feeling of Jazz* on Black Lion BLCD 760123. but that has only three items out of the eleven not included on the Jazz World double set. The story of the other missing fourteen tracks is that four tracks are out on single CDs.

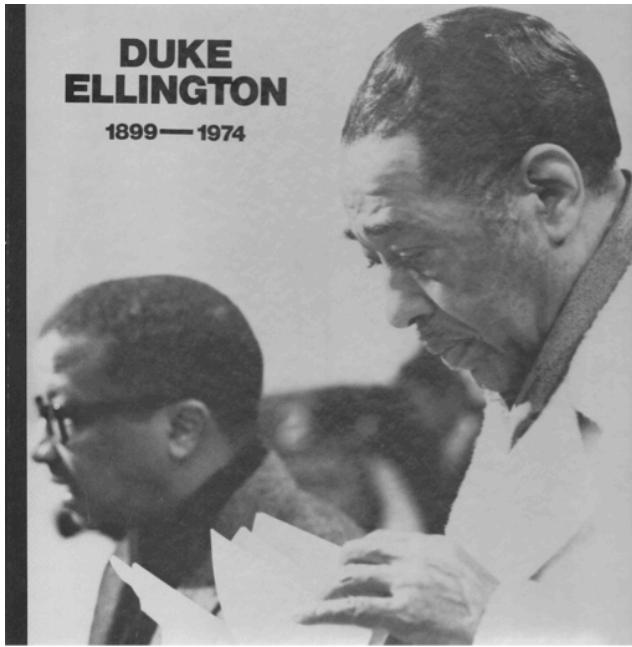
*Magenta Haze* is on LoneHill LHJ 10105, *The Complete Teatro Sistena Concert*, Feb 22 1967.

*Caravan* is on a rare CD on the JMY label from a concert in Paris, 11 March, 1964.

*Skillipoop*, recorded on 20 August, 1963 is on the recently issued *Duke Ellington's My People: The Complete Show* on Storyville Records.

*Such Sweet Thunder* is on a Jazz Hour, the sister label of Jazz World, cd. All other tracks on this cd also on original Jazz World 2 cd set. The rest are as far as I know are not on CD as yet.

Many thanks for this list below [filmsgraded.com](http://filmsgraded.com)



# DUKE ELLINGTON

1899—1974

## Side 1

Track	Title	Date
1	<i>Take The 'A' Train</i> X Z	24May 62
2	<i>Taffy Twist</i> X Z	6Jun 62
3	<i>Black And Tan Fantasy</i> X Z	25May 62
4	<i>Stompy Jones</i>	Feb 63

## Side 2

Track	Title	Date
1	<i>Sophisticated Lady</i> X	6Nov 58
2	<i>C-Jam Blues</i> X	6Feb 63
3	<i>Serenade To Sweden</i>	4Nov 69
4	<i>Boo-Dah</i> X Z	25May 62
5a	<i>I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart</i> X 1 Z	3Jul 62
5b	<i>Don't Get Around Much Anymore</i> X 1 Z	3Jul 62

## Side 3

Track	Title	Date
1	<i>Feeling Of Jazz</i> Z	3Jul 62
2	<i>Magenta Haze</i>	7Feb 66?
3	<i>Dancers In Love</i>	1966 or 1967?
4	<i>Anatomy Of A Murder</i> Z <i>I'm Gonna Go Fishing</i>	25May 62
5a	<i>Kinda Dukish</i>	X 3
5b	<i>Rockin' In Rhythm</i>	X 3

## Side 4

Track	Title	Date
1	<i>Mr. Gentle And Mr. Cool</i> X	20May 62
2	<i>Smada</i> X Z	24May 62
3	<i>Jump For Joy</i> X	3Jul 62
4	<i>Things Ain't What They Used To Be</i> X	6Nov 58

## Side 5

Track	Title	Date
1	<i>Caravan</i>	11Mar 64
2	<i>Skillipoop</i>	20Aug 63
3	<i>I Didn't Know About You</i>	1966 or 1967?
4	<i>Guitar Amour</i>	Feb 63

## Side 6

Track	Title	Date
1	<i>El Viti</i> X	7Feb 66?
2	<i>Passion Flower</i> X	26Sep 59
3	<i>Agra</i>	11Mar 64
4	<i>What Am I Here For?</i> X Z	24May 62
5	<i>Flirtibird</i> Z	24May 62

## Side 7

Track	Title	Date
1	<i>Satin Doll</i> X	26Sep 59
2	<i>Isfahan</i> X	11Mar 64
3a	<i>Diminuendo In Blue</i> X	6Nov 58
3b	<i>Wailing Interval</i> X	6Nov 58
3c	<i>Crescendo In Blue</i> X	6Nov 58

## Side 8

Track	Title	Date
1	<i>Jeep's Blues</i> X	6Nov 58
2	<i>Pyramid</i> X	Feb 63
3	<i>La Plus Belle Africaine</i> X	7Feb 66?

## Side 9

Track	Title	Date
1	<i>Happy Reunion</i>	11Mar 64
2	<i>Chinoiserie</i>	9Nov 71
3	<i>Sonnet To Hank Cinq</i>	6Nov 58
4	<i>Star-Crossed Lovers</i>	6Feb 63
5	<i>Such Sweet Thunder</i>	26Sep 59

## Side 10

Track	Title	Date
1	<i>Perdido</i> X	6Nov 58
2	<i>Black Butterfly</i> X	4Nov 69
3a	<i>Medley: In A Sentimental Mood</i> X2	6Nov 58
3b	<i>Medley: Mood Indigo</i> X2	6Nov 58
3c	<i>Medley: I'm Beginning To See The Light</i> X2	6Nov 58
3d	<i>Medley: Sophisticated Lady</i> X2	6Nov 58
3e	<i>Medley: I Got It Bad</i> X2	6Nov 58
3f	<i>Medley: Just Squeeze Me</i> X2	6Nov 58
3g	<i>Medley: It Don't Mean A Thing</i> X2	6Nov 58
3h	<i>Medley: Solitude</i> X2	6Nov 58

Ray Hunter (DESUK member number 19)

# BRUBECK ON ELLINGTON



For the conference in Woking, Ellington 2012, Darius Brubeck conducted an interview with his father on Dave's association with Duke Ellington. Filmed at his home on 20 October, 2011, the 91-year-old musician spoke of his personal and professional relationship to Ellington. Here is a transcription of that conversation between Darius, his wife Cathy, Dave and his wife Iola. IB

**Darius:** Duke Ellington is special to all of us. Remember, his son Mercer's *Ellington is Forever* concert at the Cathedral of St John the Divine in New York in 1976 was how Cathy came in to all of our lives. People ask me how did I meet my wife since she's from South Africa. I often say, 'Well, she hired me because she produced that concert on behalf of the Ellington organization and it was on Duke Ellington's birthday on April 29 and that was thirty five years ago. Your association (to Dave) with Duke goes back a lot further than 1976 though. That was already posthumous.

**Dave:** Well you see Jimmie Blanton was Ellington's great bass player and he became ill when they were on tour in the West Coast so they had to hire a West Coast musician. His name was Junior Raglin and he was from San Francisco. I had grown up playing jobs sometimes with him so Junior came over to me and said 'Would you like to meet Duke?'

I said 'Aw that would be great. How would we do that?' He said, 'Just follow me and I'll take you to Duke's dressing room and you'll meet him there.'

I said, 'Well, that'll be great.'

We went there and Duke looked up at me and I remember he had some kind of weird headdress on at the time and I couldn't open my mouth. I couldn't say anything. This was

my meeting with my mentor and the man that had given me so much and I now I'm tongue-tied.

**Cathy:** What year was that, Dave? What year do you think it was when you met Duke and played with Junior Raglin?

**Iola:** That was before you were in the service. You probably were in college at that time. So before 1942.

**Cathy:** Oh, before you were married.

**Darius:** So that's the first time you met Duke. And how did you actually become friends? Because Duke Ellington was a famous person. Obviously he met lots of people just like you've met lots of people but you were actually friends.

**Iola:** I just recently ran across an old letter that mentioned Duke coming in to the Blue Note in Chicago a number of times. He must have been booked in Chicago at that time. It was during this period that Duke became really interested in Dave. Then you tell the story about his arranging for you at the Hickory House.

**Dave:** I was playing in Chicago quite a few nights. Duke came in and said 'Dave in this world you've got to make it in New York so I'll arrange to get you a job in New York at The Hickory House.'

So that happened and all went very well and then I went on the road with my band, Duke's band and Gerry Mulligan. We had this tour together right across the whole country and it was a wonderful experience to be opening for my mentor Duke Ellington.

I was very excited about this tour and I was so glad to have had this opportunity to be on tour and in those days when I opened for Duke with my quartet there was kind of an unwritten law that the musicians that were involved would all be together on the road in a great big dressing room because you had the whole Ellington band and my quartet

with Gerry Mulligan. One day when I got to the job, I put all the musicians in one area. That was fine with me but then they said, 'You've got to be in the same dressing room with Duke.'

I said, 'No way do I want to be in the same dressing room with Duke. That'll panic me too much.'

As it turned out I was told, 'You have to be in this same dressing room for the leaders: you're a leader and Duke's a leader so you'll be in this dressing room.'

The first time I was really with Duke was that day and (it was) a great experience because Duke had so many good things that were different than I was used to. ...He wouldn't tell his valet what he wanted to wear until he heard the band playing the first tune then he'd pick the tuxedo with the fancy lining that he thought went with the occasion.

**Darius:** Speaking of occasions, I remember meeting Ellington twice and this doesn't amount to even an acquaintanceship. It was just literally I was with you and you said who I was and he was nice enough to kind of nod and say 'Hello'. One of those two times was at Lincoln Centre. There was a reception and he was wearing a light lavender dinner jacket with a black satin shawl collar and cuffs. I can picture him so clearly.

**Dave:** I think it would have been a great occasion so I'm glad you can remember it.

**Iola:** I think it may have been one of the old Timex shows. There were a series of Timex sponsored jazz concerts and they were big extravaganzas that always ended with a jam session.

**Darius:** Oh yeah they were on CBS, weren't they? On TV and they'd say, "Timex takes a licking and keeps on ticking" and the band really hit it...

**Iola:** I took a train to Denver to meet Dave and travel back with him to San Francisco and of course the whole tour was on that train. We were in the same car with Duke and at that time Duke had a little miniature spy camera. He kept taking pictures of Dave and me every time we'd look around.

**Darius:** Like a precursor to people taking cell pictures all the time.

**Iola:** I'd like to know whatever happened to that film.

**Darius:** Can you even guess what year it was? We can bracket what year it was.

**Iola:** Yes I can take a very good guess because I think it was the end of 1954, the fall tour. I know that because Danny was expected in May 1955.

**Cathy:** So it was the year that Dave was on the cover of *Time* magazine.

**Iola:** It was on the same tour. That was in Chicago, right?

**Dave:** I hated to be on the cover of *Time* before Duke. That just seemed incorrect.

**Iola:** Think that happened earlier in Chicago when he knocked on your door.

**Dave:** Oh, yeah. And I didn't want to be on the cover of *Time* before Duke. But seven o'clock one morning there was a knock on my door of the room and it was Duke handing me (the issue dated) November 4. He said, "Dave, you're on the cover of *Time*," and handed me the magazine so now I'm totally defeated. He seemed very happy.

**Darius:** Yeah that's a generous emotion.

**Iola:** Very generous, right. And another thing I think of interest is during the Nixon administration when Duke was given the Presidential Medal I think for his birthday. A

number of musicians were invited to that occasion to The White House including people we knew well like Paul Desmond and Gerry Mulligan and so forth. Dave had not received an invitation which we thought was a little odd but you know that's the way it is and then sort of at the last minute when Duke went over the list of people invited Duke said, "You have to add Dave to the list."



As it turned out I sat next to Mercer (Ellington) at the table and we were really taken care of very well so there was a real emotional tie. It wasn't just you're a colleague in music - we all feel that - but I think he really did feel that there was some kind of special link with Dave.

**Darius:** Also I noticed the word mentor several times which is a little different from hero. You feel you learned directly from him?

**Dave:** Oh yeah...

**Darius:** We talk of behavioural things as a musician. What did you admire in his music? What did he admire in yours? What did you have in common?

**Dave:** Well, he broke through what used to be the average jazz impressions and it became more a great friendship. He was going in to what seemed a new way of playing jazz. Of course it was jazz because it was Duke, but he was doing things with his band that were close to classical recordings.

**Iola:** Like *Black and Tan Fantasy* and some of the very early things he did...

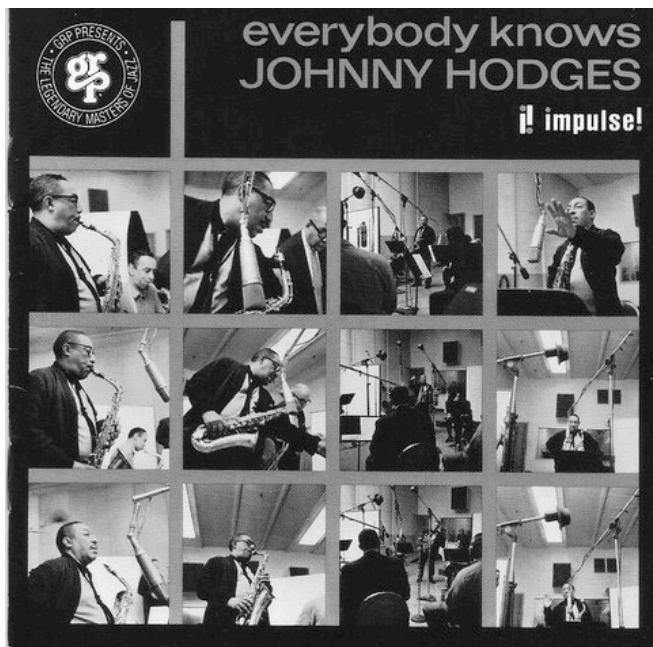
**Dave:** Yeah, and that was an eye opener for me to see that you could do things as they say out of the box.

**Darius:** So the extended form pieces... Were there things about the structures of his compositions? His harmony? His piano playing? I'm trying to think of specific things that relate him to you musically.

**Dave:** Well one of the nice... on that tour Duke was in a position where he had to do something because his band wasn't all there. You know, the great musicians he had they seemed to have gone out a little bit on the town, so he played some great solo piano and that's when I realized what a great pianist Duke was and it's only because he was forced to get out there to an audience and make something happen.

# On Record

## JOHNNY HODGES Everybody Knows JOHNNY HODGES



(1). Everybody Knows; A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing; Papa Knows; 310 Blues. (2) The Jeep Is Jumpin'; Main Stem; I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart/ Don't Get Around Much Anymore; Open Mike. (3) Stompy Jones; Mood Indigo\*; Good Queen Bess; Little Brother\*; Jeep's Blues; Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me; Ruint; Sassy Cue (68:04)

Johnny Hodges (as), with: (1) Paul Gonsalves (ts), Ray Nance, Cat Anderson (tp), Lawrence Brown (tb), Jimmy Jones (b), Ernie Shepard (b), Grady Tate (d); (2) same personnel, plus Russell Procope (as), Jimmy Hamilton (ts), Harry Carney (bs), Rolf Ericsson, Herb Jones (tp), Buster Cooper, Britt Woodman (tb); (3), personnel as (1) but add Russell Procope (as, cl), Harold Ashby (ts), Buster Cooper (tb). Richard Davis and Gus Johnson replace Shepard and Tate on bass and drums, though Johnny Hodges Jr., drums on \*. Producer: Bob Thiele.

NYC. (1) and (2) NYC 6 February 1964; (3) Englewood Cliffs NJ, 8 March 1965.

**Impulse GRD-116**

These sixteen tracks provided the content for two Impulse LPs, *Everybody Knows Johnny Hodges* (AS-61), and *Inspired Abandon* (Lawrence Brown All-Stars With Johnny Hodges (AS-89). The first four titles are octets, on two of which all five horns and the pianist take two solo choruses

each. Ernie Shepard's bass line is a joy to follow throughout all four pieces. Contrary to Stanley Dance's assertion in his full and interesting notes, *Everybody Knows* is a sixteen-bar theme which slips into blues choruses for the solos. *310 Blues*, a Strayhorn original produced for the occasion, is unusual, perhaps unique, in the sense that only the first and last four bars of the theme are scored, the middle four being a break for Hodges. The opening idea puts me in mind of another Strayhorn blues line, the opening to the much slower *Sweet And Pungent (Blues In Orbit)*. Billy's 1939 song *A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing*, is here a single-chorus vehicle for Hodges, who delivers a gem of a solo in a beautiful Strayhorn setting. *Papa Knows* is more of a curate's egg. There's a lovely Hodges chorus in which Brown takes the release, and a lovely subtone Gonsalves chorus in which Nance takes the release. But these delights are the fillings in a double sandwich in which three identical statements of the theme provide too much bread. For once the control-room fade, of which the CD has rather too many, is a relief and not an irritation.

On the other four tracks from the Hodges session, Ellington standards plus a Cat Anderson original, *Open Mike*, the octet is augmented to what is essentially the full Ellington orchestra of the day, shorn of the fourth trumpet and the third trombone. I often find Hodges sessions which deploy the full or near-full Ellington Orchestra less interesting than those with a smaller front line. This is the case here. A driving *Main Stem* is the standout item for the solo contributions. The Latin-flavoured *Open Mike* unfortunately emphasizes Cat's high-note playing over his other considerable gifts.

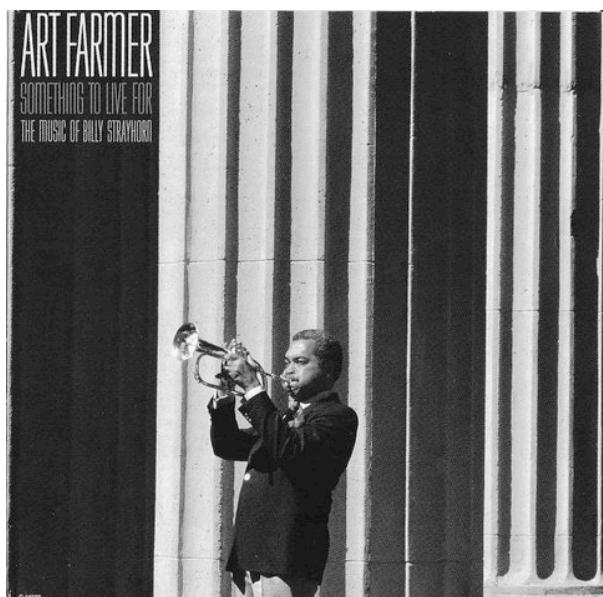
The Lawrence Brown session of a year later involved four brass and four reeds, Ellingtonians all apart from 'first-reserve' tenor Ashby, who in 1965 was yet to join the Orchestra. Once again there's outstanding double bass, this time from Richard Davis. Hodges' influence remains strong, with two of his originals, both blues, two of his 1930s 'small-group' classics, and *Ruint*, a blues line familiar from *Side By Side* which here gets a catchy 'honky-tonk' treatment. The other three tracks are Ellington standards. Johnny's young son takes over the drums on *Mood Indigo* and the string-of-solos blues *Little Brother*. After an ebullient *Stompy Jones* in which almost everyone has a solo slot, the front-line reduces to four for a refreshing *Mood Indigo* on which Hodges, Brown and Procope make up the front-line trio, and we hear soloists who don't usually solo on the familiar classic. *Good Queen Bess* has fine Anderson, plunger-muted, and this version of *Jeep's Blues* features several soloists, not just Hodges. *Do Nothin'* is a single-chorus outing of great beauty for the nominal leader, who also contributes a fresh introduction. Brown, Nance, Hodges and Hamilton solo on *Ruint*. *Sassy Cue*, an

interesting line with strong echoes of *Creole Love Call*, launches two blues choruses each from Brown and Hodges, before the theme returns, only to fizzle out in another unwelcome fade.

Not an indispensable LP maybe, and I have small reservations, but there's lots of lovely music here.

**Roger Boyes**

**ART FARMER  
SOMETHING TO LIVE FOR  
THE MUSIC OF BILLY STRAYHORN**



Isfahan; Blood Count; Johnny Come Lately; Something To Live For; Upper Manhattan Medical Group; Raincheck; Day Dream (44:00)

Art Farmer (flh), Clifford Jordan (ts), James Williams (p), Rufus Reid (b), Marvin 'Smitty' Smith (d). NYC 14 and 15 January 1987.

**Contemporary 0025218142922**

Universal has reissued this album from Fantasy's catalogue which originally appeared in 1987 on LP and CD (a format then in its infancy) as Contemporary C14029 (happy days when record serial numbers meant something to people and not just to a computer!).

Art Farmer gained early experience in big bands before maturing in the nourishing jazz world of 1950s New York. The expressiveness of the fluegel, which he adopted in the early 1960s, is well suited to Billy's music. Clifford Jordan came to the New York scene from the gutsy r'n'b bands of his native Chicago. Here their strikingly individual styles offer a contrasting and compatible front line, to which the rhythm team gives supple, sensitive support. The seven compositions span Billy's career from the 1930s to his final illness. All will be familiar to Ellington specialists, less so to the more general enthusiast. Each lasts from five to over seven minutes.

From the outset, when Farmer and Jordan split the initial section of *Isfahan*, it is clear that this is not simply a leader-dominated blowing session. While conveying little of the serenity of the Iranian city itself, *Isfahan*, works well at the

purposeful pace at which it is taken. This is the longest track on the set and everyone solos apart from Smith, whose only solo on the disc comes towards the end of *Raincheck. Blood Count*, which in the hands of sensitive performers cannot fail to move, is largely a vehicle for Art, with Clifford coming in for the final reprise of the release.

While Art takes most of the initial theme-statements, Rufus Reid presents *Raincheck*, then has an opening solo chorus. The allocation of solo space is particularly interesting on the two ballads *Something To Live For* and *Day Dream* (this last not included on the original LP, though recorded at the same sessions). Each lasts for two straight choruses. Art has most of *Day Dream*, but Clifford takes over for the last eight bars of the first chorus and the first eight of the second. On Billy's early song, after Art sets the mood in a short introduction (not the verse which Ella Fitzgerald sang), Clifford has most of both choruses, with Art taking over for the final section of each.

This is a well thought-out, well presented survey of Billy's compositions, by a distinguished quintet who offer variety in approach and involvement in execution. The brief inlay notes, by Pastor Gensel, the shepherd of the night flock in New York, add further interest.

**Roger Boyes**

## *For the record...*

Many thanks to our discographical consultant Brian Koller for notice of the following three newly released Ellington discs. We shall return to these releases in a future edition of *Blue Light* but felt it was important to draw readers' attention to their release as soon as we could. The recording from Vancouver is the first of three projected releases on the Squatty Roo label. We shall look in more detail at this release and the promise of two subsequent discs of material recorded in Paris in the next edition of *Blue Light*. **IB**

### **DUKE ELLINGTON**

#### **THE FAMOUS BERLIN CONCERT 1959**

(V.I.P. Boogie; Flirtibird; Medley: Fanfare; Don't Get Around Much Anymore; Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me; I Got It Bad; In A Sentimental Mood; Mood Indigo; I'm Beginning To See The Light; Sophisticated Lady; Caravan; Solitude; St. Louis Blues; Bill Bailey; Satin Doll; Skin Deep; Jam With Sam; Things Ain't What They Used To Be; Medley: Black And Tan Fantasy; Creole Love Call; The Mooche; Walkin' And Singin' The Blues; Sonnet To Hank Cinq; Such Sweet Thunder; Kinda Dukish / Rockin' In Rhythm; El Gato; Basin Street Blues

#### **Sounds of Yester Year DSOY935 (2013)**

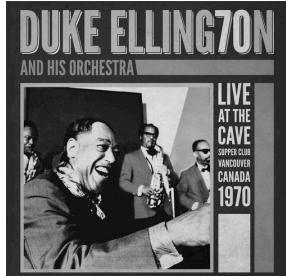
A 'needle drop' of two Swing House LPs, *The Elegant Mister Ellington* SWH-4 from 1978, and *V.I.P.*, SWH-28 from 1982. Both albums contain titles from the October 4, 1959 concert at the Sportpalast in Berlin, Germany. The sound quality is very good despite minor crackling.

The titles are not in the same order as they were played at the concert. Though most of the concert is included, eight titles are absent, two of which (*Newport Up* and *I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart/Don't Get Around Much*

*Anymore*) are on the Dance Band Days *The Incomparable Duke Ellington*, released on both LP and CD in 1987.

Six titles from the concert remain unissued: *Take The 'A' Train*, *Happy Anatomy*, *All Of Me*, *Happy Reunion*, and from the inevitable Ellington medley, *Just Squeeze Me* and *It Don't Mean A Thing*.

Brian Koller



### DUKE ELLINGTON LIVE AT THE CAVE SUPPER CLUB, VANCOUVER, CANADA 1970

C-Jam Blues; Kinda Dukish/Rockin' In Rhythm; 4:30 Blues; Fife; B.P Blues; Take The "A" Train; Up Jump; Birth Of The Blues; Passion Flower; Things Ain't What They Used To Be; Come Off The Veldt; Medley: Fanfare, Don't You Know I Care, In A Sentimental Mood, Prelude To A Kiss, Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me, Don't Get Around Much Anymore; Medley (Continued): Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me (repeated); Don't Get Around Much Anymore (repeated); Mood Indigo; I'm Beginning To See The Light, Solitude; It Don't Mean A Thing; I Got It Bad; Be Cool And Groovy For Me; Sophisticated Lady; I Can't Get Started; Stomp Soul Jump; April In Paris (includes three encores)

#### Squatty Roo Records SR 0184

The April 2, 1970 engagement at the Cave is released on CD for the first time. There are no liner notes aside from track and band member listings. All tracks were previously released on two record albums, *Duke Ellington Opens The Cave* Volume One and Two, on the bootleg label The Old Masters. An unauthorized audience recording with occasional background chatter from nearby tables. The sound quality is far below studio quality but nonetheless listenable.

The CD appears to be a needle drop from two clean album copies. Unfortunately, the CD engineer greatly amplified the sound, increasing the distortion and reducing the differences between quiet and loud portions of the performances. The engineer also fades out the sound between tracks, sometimes omitting Ellington stage announcements. The music from the two albums is complete except for the second version of *Come Off The Veldt* from the end of the final track of Volume Two. Those who own the two Old Masters albums have no need to purchase this CD.

Brian Koller

### DUKE ELLINGTON

**THE ELLINGTON SUITES: THE QUEEN'S SUITE/  
THE GOUTELAS SUITE/ THE UWIS SUITE** The Queen's Suite: Sunset and the Mocking Bird; Lightning Bugs and Frogs; Le Sucrier Velours; Northern Lights; Single Petal of a Rose; Apes and Peacocks; The

Goutelas Suite: Fanfare; Goutelas; Get-With-Itness; Something; Having At It; Fanfare; The Uwis Suite: Uwis; Klop; Loco Madi; The Kiss

Recorded Feb. 25, 1959; Apr. 1, 1959; Apr. 14, 1959; Apr. 27, 1971; Oct. 5, 1972  
Reissue produced by Nick Phillips  
Remastering by Joe Tarantino

#### Original Jazz Classics OJC-34614-02

This CD is principally a reissue of the 1990 Original Jazz Classics CD (OJCCD-446) but there are a few significant differences. *The Kiss* is previously unreleased.

*Loco Madi* is faded out at 9:08 instead of 5:51, which allows more than three additional minutes of an impromptu blues jam. Another bonus is three pages of liner notes by jazz author and New York University professor Ashley Kuhn. Stanley Dance's liner notes are retained from the 1990 CD and 1976 Pablo LP.

Tarantino's remastering increases the volume on all tracks, to the extent that it sometimes reduces the differences between louder and quieter portions of the recordings. For this reason, some collectors may prefer the 1990 CD, with the exception of tracks 15 and 16.

Brian Koller

## Performance

*Essentially Ellington*

*EFG London Jazz Festival*

*Panel Discussion with Walter van de Leur and Harvey Cohen*

*Martin Litton - solo piano*

*Scottish National Jazz Orchestra, musical director Tommy Smith*

*Ellington In Anticipation, leader Mark Lockheart*

*DJ set - Orphy Robinson and Cleveland Watkiss*

*Queen Elizabeth Hall, London*

*November 23 2013*

This year's London Jazz Festival devoted an afternoon and evening at the Queen Elizabeth Hall to Duke Ellington in programmes that ranged all the way from *Soda Fountain Rag* to 21st century deconstruction and remixing. Fittingly in the setting, there were several references to royalty in general and *The Queen's Suite* in particular, with two versions of *A Single Petal Of A Rose* (or 2-½ if you include a reference detected in one *Ellington In Anticipation* piece). The subtext to the day's events was an exploration of the context of Ellington's music and its relevance to musicians and audiences today, and it was thrilling (and very hip) at the end of the night to hear Ellington's *My People (Soap Box)* rap mixed by the DJs over *Kinda Dukish*, and *Portrait Of Mahalia Jackson* blasted out at disco volume.

The main event was a concert by the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra led by Tommy Smith followed by Mark Lockheart's *Ellington in Anticipation*. Both projects celebrate and renew Ellington and Strayhorn's music and both leaders happen to be tenor saxophonists, but Lockheart takes the process of recreating Ellington a good deal further.

Tommy Smith's SNCO sets out to give audiences as close to a real Duke Ellington concert experience as possible,

down to the band stage set-up and soloists coming down to the front. This approach can hit you between the eyes with Ellington's music played with the full power, precision and clarity of a modern, live big band -- *Daybreak Express*, for example -- and the SNJO showed that they rank among the best of the world's Ellington repertory orchestras. Most selections were from the Blanton-Webster band (*Jack The Bear*, *Concerto For Cootie*, *Harlem Airshaft*, *Sepia Panorama*, *Ko-Ko*), with Calum Gourlay outstanding on bass, along with excerpts from *Peer Gynt*, an opening *Black & Tan Fantasy* and *Creole Love Call*, and the two trombones and bass clarinet version of *Mood Indigo*. The saxophones played *Le Sucrier Velours* from memory, with beautiful lead alto from Ruaridh Pattison. Two-fisted pianist Brian Kellock made sure over-reverence or blandness was avoided throughout the set, which ended with him swinging *Kinda Dukish* into a climactic *Rockin' In Rhythm*.

The leader modestly confined himself to section work, but emerged for a stirring duet with Kellock on *A Single Petal Of A Rose*, the harmonies of which gave a glimpse of Smith's stature as an international jazz star and also what he might achieve with Ellington's music with less of a strict recreation remit.

Lockheart by complete contrast re-examines and twists the Ducal material to create more or less completely new music for his group, which comprised Finn Peters (alto), James Allsop (clt and bass clt), Lockheart (tenor), Margrit Hasler (viola), Liam Noble (piano), Jasper Holby (bass) and Seb Rochford (drums). The flexible line-up and approach make for a reinvention process that is reminiscent of flutist James Newton's 1985 album *African Flower*. *It Don't Mean A Thing* began the set with a quasi-gypsy 6/8 feel, and the band's wide range covered Kurt Weill-like sounds, use of ostinato passages and a couple of instances of solos over bluesy, gospel riffs. Tightly arranged and yet with considerable freedom for the players, some of the pieces had developed so far from their inspiration that they were retitled -- *My Caravan* (Juan Tizol's *Caravan*), *Jungle Lady (Satin Doll)* and *I've Seen The Light (I'm Beginning To See The Light)*.

CDs from both projects were reviewed in *BL* 20/3 (the *Ellington in Anticipation* CD took *Mojo* magazine's No. 1 jazz album of the year slot in November). <http://www.londonjazznews.com/2013/04/cd-review-scottish-national-jazz.html>

Earlier, in the QEH foyer now called the Front Room, first up was a discussion aimed at a non-specialist audience in which writer and broadcaster Kevin Le Gendre prompted Walter van de Leur and Harvey Cohen to give an overall picture of the importance and range of Ellington and his music. Le Gendre's questions covered Ellington's place in the jazz pantheon, the band's longevity, Billy Strayhorn, film soundtracks, Ellington as a pianist, and his importance to younger musicians and the avant garde. It was a particular pleasure to see Strayhorn expert Walter van de Leur here in the UK, and to hear him explain how hard it is to define and number Ellington compositions; by way of example, he said he had identified no fewer than 27 different manuscript arrangements of *I Got It Bad*.

Before the main concert, Martin Litton played a superb, hour-long concert of solo Ellington piano, complete with witty and informative commentary which included much

pianistic insight and reference to early influences and rivals, notably Willie the Lion Smith. Highlights included *Reflections In D*, a perfect rendition of *A Single Petal Of A Rose*, *Lots of Fingers* (with much "fast pianoing") and a lovely reading of Strayhorn's *Lotus Blossom*. This latter, played in the mild hubbub of the QEH foyer, brought to mind the version on *And His Mother Called Him Bill* and drew warm, heartfelt applause from a standing-room only audience. "Martin's not always given his due -- he's too often seen as a vintage pianist," as I heard one satisfied customer comment.

**Louis & The Duke In London**  
**The Blue Devils, director Keith Nichols**  
**Cadogan Hall, November 24 2013**

Although presented as part of the EFG London Jazz Festival, this concert to celebrate the London Palladium appearances of Louis Armstrong in 1932 and Duke Ellington in 1933 was effectively one of drummer Richard Pite's Jazz Repertory Company's concerts. To give a flavour of the original Palladium shows, broadcaster Russell Davies as compere and a string of variety 'turns' were added to the meat of the concert, which consisted of Enrico Tomasso's brilliant Armstrong trumpet in the first half and Keith Nichols leading his splendid band in an Ellington programme in the second half.

Nichols had the orchestra set up as it was in 1933 -- piano in the centre, reeds and trumpets at stage left and trombones stage right with the bass and banjo/guitar behind them. Best of all, the band played entirely acoustically, with a microphone used only for announcements and vocals, allowing the band to achieve the internal balance and dynamics which are lacking when everything is miked up and in the hands of a sound engineer.

The playing was superb and full of verve, particularly Tom Langham on banjo and guitar, Tomasso, George Hogg and Peter Horsfall on trumpets, Nichols himself and the brilliant Matthias Seuffert in the Barney Bigard seat.

The programme comprised *Ring Dem Bells*, *Black Beauty*, *Bugle Call Rag*, *Stormy Weather* (sung by Julia Biel), *Rockin' In Rhythm*, *The New Black & Tan Fantasy*, *The Whispering Tiger*, *Mood Indigo* and *It Don't Mean A Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing*, with an unannounced *Hot And Bothered* by way of encore. A brilliant and entertaining evening.

**Quentin Bryar**

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***Ellington in Anticipation***  
**Scarborough Jazz Festival, the Spa, Friday 27 to Sunday 29 May 2013.**

For the third time in five years, Delia and I attended the best single-venue jazz festival in the UK. The wide range of music on offer usually includes few, if any, Ellington/Strayhorn compositions but this year was different. I can't claim that this was due to us bumping into Alan Barnes, the festival compere and fellow DESUK member, in our hotel lift but I did take the opportunity to tell him that the Ellington Police were in town!

One of Alan's few musical appearances over the weekend was with David Newton (piano) in their famed duo format. Readers who attended the Ellington conferences at Leeds

(1997) or London (2008) will need no reminding about their brilliant reworking of familiar compositions. Here they excelled again with a generous quota of Ducal numbers.

However, the highlight of the festival for me was a rare concert performance of Mark Lockheart's *Ellington in Anticipation* the CD of which was reviewed in *Blue Light* 20/3 by Brian Morton. My copy arrived on Wednesday 2 October so the live performance was fresh in my mind. Please read the CD review on page 18 of BL 20/3, not only for the personnel and track listing (there were only minor changes at Scarborough) but also for Brian Morton's superb writing and his single-word final sentence.

The only change in membership of the octet (understandable after a 16 month gap) was that the violinist was replaced by Margrit Hasler on viola. The deeper tones we thus heard were, in my view, more appropriate to the overall mood of the compositions played. The CD tracks omitted were *Mood Indigo*, *Indian Summer* and (much to Delia's relief!) *'A' Train*. The 70-minute set ended with *Beautiful Man* (Harry Carney) with Liam Noble outstanding on piano.

Peter Caswell

## Long Island Sounds

In my happy experience previously normal people can achieve a truly extraordinary flow of eloquence responding to the question "What Ellington/Strayhorn recordings would you take to a desert island?" It seems that something similar happens when bandleader Pete Long is preparing a programme of music for his much admired *Echoes of Ellington* Orchestra to perform except that, according to his blog, his main problem appears to be one of exclusion rather than inclusion. How lucky can you get? Pete's blog follows.

Victor Lawrence

## What to Leave Out

### Pete Long

I've banged on at length about Duke Ellington in the past, and I feel another nugget of it coming on now. Tonight, I am the richest chap in the world, because I have a gig with the Echoes of Ellington at the fabulous acoustic paradise that is the Stables in Wavendon, just down the road from the fabulous architectural paradise that is Milton Keynes. It's all good- we've sold out, and I have a really strong team of chaps on. I am hoping that it's going to be delicious, making all that amazing noise. It is also a little bit poignant, because the Stables at Wavendon has at its heart the room which John Dankworth had built specially to display amazing noise like that to its best advantage.

The stakes, therefore are riding a little bit high, and I want to do a good job. Therefore, this morning in the home sheet music archive and sorting office, or shed, I was wading through all my Ellington music deciding which ones to pull out. I have two one-hour sets to fill, which is about twenty-two tunes. Ellington wrote about five thousand, of which I have access to around four hundred of the better known ones. In the shed, these are sorted into files according roughly to vintage, or in the case of, say, the Newport Jazz Festival, according to concert programme. Here's the rub.

Every piece in there is a masterpiece. I've got to leave 378 of them behind. It was easy for Ellington- asked which of his pieces was his favourite, he would say, "The one I'm working on today". Elegant old flanneler. If you check through a live Ellington record, you see that this was pretty much the case. He'd use a few of his massive hits as cornerstones of the programme, and then flesh it out with all his current stuff.

Using this as the model, the cornerstones of tonight's show will be Ellington tunes everyone expects to hear- *Take the 'A' Train*, *Solitude*, *Perdido*, *I Got It Bad*. The agonising bit is deciding on the rest. It's all brilliant. If someone gave me a 10 day festival to fill with Ellington, I could do a different programme every night with no duplication, and each one would be The Best Music You'd Ever Heard. I've not got twenty hours: I've got two. The first thing to do is to look and see who I've got in the band tonight, and think of which pieces will really show them off best. One of the strengths of Ellington's music is that it is largely a layered conversation between all the solo voices in the band, rather than taking the more usual approach of having the sections in the band hunt in packs. If you've got great soloists, you can really let the music breathe. Luckily, tonight, I've got a lot of the very best. This means that I can go to some very exotic corners of the repertoire. For the anoraks, it means I can have Jay Craig play the breaks in *Jumpin' Punkins*, or Ryan Quigley re-create *El Gato*.

This narrowed the choice down to around 150 must-hear numbers for tonight. I needed to get rid of another 128. I then considered the rise and fall of the gig. Ellington wrote so many beautiful ballads that if you take your eye of the ball for a second, you can lose yourself in the beauty and end up with nine slow ones in a row. Balancing fast against slow helps, but in the end you just have to get arbitrary and leave a load of gems in the shed for next time. It's just a bit of a shame that next time's on 8 December in Welwyn Garden City. Still, infinitely better than no next time at all.

## EVENTS CALENDAR

### Frank Griffith:

9 Dec, 8.30pm: FG with the Brian Knapp Trio at Ruislip Golf Club, Ickenham Road, HA4 7DQ. £8

15 Dec, 1-3pm: FG with Jazz at the Movies at Ronnie Scott's. 47 Frith Street, London, W1D 4HT. [www.ronniescotts.com](http://www.ronniescotts.com) £15

21/22 Dec, 9.30pm: FG as part of Café Society Swing with Alexander Stewart and China Moses. Leicester Square Theatre. £18.00.

19 Jan, 12.30-3pm: Frank Griffith and Nonorganic. The Gunnersbury, 590 Chiswick High Road, W4, 5RP. £10.

7 Feb, 12.30-3pm: Frank Griffith Quintet with Tina May at The Spice of Life, 6 Moor Street, W1. £6. [www.spicejazz.co.uk](http://www.spicejazz.co.uk)

22 Feb, 9.30pm. FG as part of Café Society Swing with Alexander Stewart and China Moses. Leicester Square Theatre. £18.00.

7 March, 8pm: FG with the Simon Cook Trio at South Hill Park, Recital Room, RG12 4DE. £8. [www.bracknelljazz.co.uk](http://www.bracknelljazz.co.uk)

9 March, 3-5pm: Frank Griffith and Nonorganic at Googlies, East Lodge Lane, EN2 8AS. £9

# BLUE LIGHTLY

**Geoff Smith, Managing Editor**

Glad we are that readers like the back page picture. To me, it is Editor Ian Bradley's presentation, the blue cover colour wash and the border, which brings the much-loved images to life and gives them the respect they deserve. The first two shots were of Duke with musicians but there is no special reason for this. I have recently picked up a postcard of the shot of the solo Ellington with various bits of musical piping around his neck and carrying a bass drum. It's in sepia, was printed in New York by Rapoport Printing Corp, and has the number P1725-4 within its border. On the reverse is the title *Duke Ellington 1934, Photographer Unidentified*.

Can anyone tell me more? For want of what else to do with it I put it on a shelf of Ellington books and I have found my attention drawn to it quite a lot. It has been widely used. Ken Vail has it in *Duke's Diary: Part One* page 93 among other Paramount publicity photographs (*Murder At The Vanities/ Belle Of The Nineties*) and a cropped version appears on the two title pages of *Duke Ellington* by David Bradbury.

Page 3 of the previous *Blue Light* (Autumn 2013) part-identifies that issue's back page picture, from a Cotton Club show. The one before that (Summer 2013) is of the band in 1942 in a publicity shot for *Cabin In The Sky*.

\*

I'm continuing to have a bit of a vinyl thing and found myself playing the Musicrafts (1946) and the Columbia singles (1947-57), rediscovered joy throughout after years of neglect by me and sounding pretty good on my old LPs. I don't have the Musicrafts on CD so asked our discography consultant Brian Koller for his recommendation. Back came Brian with his suggestion, a CD titled *Happy-Go-Lucky Local* available from Amazon with remastering by Jack Towers.

I did not ask Brian for his recommendations for the Columbias as I had already decided I was quite happy with the quality in general of my LPs despite the usually-derided "electronic enhancement". I have them on three double LP sets in chronological order, admittedly with some omissions, on British CBS. And as with most of my valued LPs I have transferred them to MiniDisk.

Common to the output from both companies was that certain vinyl warmth but I do take Brian's point about background noise and distortions in the Musicrafts. I suppose I have just become used to them and they have become for me an integral part of such as *Overtures I and II, Jam-A-Ditty, Indians, Local I and II, Blue Skies, Diminuendo, Magenta Haze, Golden Feather, Sultry Sunset, and Flippant Flurry*.

So for the time being my classic Musicrafts continue to be on Ember EMB 3327, a physically heavy chunk of 12-inch

vinyl in a near bulletproof sleeve given to me in 1961 by Ember owner Jeff Kruger. But am I missing something? If you have these or the Columbias on CD and can compare them with LP, perhaps you can convert me. Anyway, give 'em all a spin again – they're great.

\*

Our Editor has a thing about *Satin Doll* – if he doesn't get around much anymore with that piece and its "awful lyric" it will suit him just fine. I feel the exactly the same about *C Damn Blues*, too often used as a fill-up jam on concerts by the master and pretty much everyone else. Yet I can ride on *A Train* anytime, any place, anywhere, whether or not it is used as an opener. It doesn't even have to be by Duke. But when it is.....

Of course, as I never tire of telling, I entered this world on the very same day as of the first recording of *Take The A Train*, so I, better than anyone else, am entitled to love it to bits.

\*

Another perhaps over-played piece I nevertheless love is *Mood Indigo*. I note that this was to have been the title of Terry Teachout's biography of Duke, preferable for me to *Duke, A Life Of Duke Ellington*. In fact, when I first heard of the original title I thought it was good and why hadn't it been thought of before? Perhaps it has and had been similarly discarded. I suppose we shall never know. But there it is and maybe a future biographer will pick it up.

\*

Nigel Kennedy's new interpretation of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* for the BBC Proms series featured many young Palestinian musicians in his personally assembled orchestra. There was a lot of improvisation, even a touch of Ellington with a few choruses of *It Don't Mean A Thing* with Kennedy in a piano trio setting within the performance of the piece.

Nigel for me can do little wrong. His duo recording of *Mainly Black* with Alec Dankworth on bass (1986) is hardly mentioned today but is one of the great personal interpretations of Ellington, and his skill and heart as a jazz improviser has come on immeasurably since then. This new *Four Seasons* received rave reviews from the longhairs but as far as I could find they avoided the blindingly obvious aspect of the interpretation – it swung.

So has "jazzing the classics" come full circle? Ellington and Strayhorn were among many who were denigrated for exceeding their brief by swinging Tchaikovsky and others; Kennedy the classical player (albeit the maverick classical player) is praised by default for swinging Vivaldi.

All I will say now is Duke would have approved the Kennedy Prom and Kennedy is up there with Wynton Marsalis as an interpreter and ambassador for jazz-classic improvisation fusion. Also, Nigel Kennedy is British – Nigel for DESUK President?

As we were preparing to go to press we learned of the death of the eminent pianist, bandleader, composer and advocate of Duke's music, Stan Tracey.

**MINUTES of the DESUK Committee Meeting  
1pm on SATURDAY 20<sup>th</sup> July 2013  
Punch Tavern, 99 Fleet Street, London, EC4Y 1DE**

**Present:** Peter Caswell (Chair), Chris Addison, Ian Bradley, Catherine Coates, Frank Harvey, Victor Lawrence, Phil Mead, Antony Pepper, Geoff Smith

**1. Chairman's opening remarks (PC).** Chairman welcomed members old and new and hoped to conclude promptly at 3 pm.

**2. Apologies:** Quentin Bryar had sent his apologies.

**3. Draft Minutes of Committee Meeting 13<sup>th</sup> April 2013.** These had already been circulated and were approved.

**4. Matters arising:** There were no matters arising.

**5. Officers' Reports.**

a. Treasurer (VL). PC thanked VL for circulating reports to date. GS enquired about costs for BL. A discussion took place regarding the possibility of limiting postage costs by utilising PPI system as used by the Sinatra society. Following suggestions by VL and others, **it was agreed** that a specification be prepared and submitted to three printers including the current provider. The specification would request a cost/benefit analysis including full information on printing and posting of 250 copies, bearing in mind maximum weight considerations. We need comparative costs on addressing (or not) by labels or envelopes, taking into account membership covers 36 European and 22 world addressees, in addition to 170 in the UK. The specification would be prepared by GS, VL and IB in liaison. There was a brief discussion on whether BL should be referred to as journal, magazine or newsletter. The name was left as it is, after GS explained RB's reasoning on this matter.

b. Membership Secretary (VL). VL confirmed there were still some members who had not paid their subscription and he would continue to urge payment.

c. Blue Light Editor's report (IB). IB reported that he had sent his copy as a Word document and the printers had converted it to a pdf file. IB mentioned alterations he had made and said he was trying to engage more with the membership. He felt typesetting will need a little more attention. Roger Boyes had been a great help and BL had been ready in good time. Committee members congratulated IB on his first issue. CC suggested IB could submit a budget to VL for a programme to help with conversion on his computer. PC indicated this should go ahead. GS urged everyone to submit material to IB for consideration. IB confirmed RB is being provided with discographical information for a piece he is preparing.

d. Publicity (CA). CA had done some cold calling and emailing which had been fairly successful. Bishop Auckland society (Secretary – Peter Bevin) has requested a recital and in the first instance CA will be going to meet them for a chat. He asked IB to always include a publicity request and IB confirmed this would happen.

e. Meetings organiser/Website (AP). AP advised RB will give a recital to London branch in August and it is hoped the Christmas function will take place. He thought the AGM will probably be held in the UK before Amsterdam.

Website: the BL index is now on the website. The Events page is still to be sorted. VL said he was having difficulty

in getting to grips with this. PC proposed that the 2014 AGM and the Events page should be on the agenda for the next meeting.

**6. AGM 2013 – Draft Minutes Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May** for consideration. At this early stage, various amendments were put forward. CC would overhaul the document and an updated draft will be circulated in due course.

**7. A.O.B.**

a. Woking CD (GS) GS confirmed all permissions had been obtained and put forward the costs. The CD could be launched at the AGM if available. **It was agreed** this project should go ahead with an order for 100 discs.

b. Eastbourne Concert – 30<sup>th</sup> November 2013 (PM/GS). The concert is booked, Pete Long/Echoes of Ellington will be playing. There may also be a jazz workshop for local youngsters. Publicity is in the Eastbourne "What's On". Vincent Prudente may also be included. GS said the society should have 2 pieces in the programme included by RB and IB. The presence of the society at the conference will be discussed at the October committee meeting.

c. Tony Faulkner archive. AP confirmed Mike Fletcher has taken charge of the collection. IB will email him to chase him up regarding his presentation to the society on how he proposes to handle the collection.

d. Amsterdam Conference (GS). Remco Plas and Louis Tavacchio are anticipating an announcement will be made in the autumn, which will be published in BL. GS will chase them up for the information before the BL deadline. Amsterdam is now being publicised at "The World City of Jazz 2014". PC said that once the organisers have a list of potential attendees, should they need seed money, we will then consider financial support. GS will ask LT to move quickly on this. The conference will be on our October agenda.

**8. Dates/venues for committee meetings:**

**SATURDAY 18<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2014**

**Punch Tavern unless otherwise notified.**

The meeting closed at 2.52 pm.

C Coates

**Chris Addison, DESUK's Publicity Officer, is appealing to members to give him contact details for jazz and other music societies that they are aware of in their local area. He will then make contact to tell them of our existence, perhaps offer an Ellington-themed presentation, and encourage their supporters to join us.**

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**Email:chris.addison@hotmail.co.uk**



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