

a magazine  
of arts,  
life and  
thought

# VISION

Karachi  
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DUKE  
ELLINGTON  
and his  
Orchestra  
comes to  
Pakistan

AMERICAN AID TO PAKISTAN

an exclusive interview with JOHN HEILMAN



a biographical sketch



# DUKE ELLINGTON

A man of heroic proportions  
and beyond category



the role but only as a facet of his creativity. "Jazz", he says proudly, "has gotten beyond category. It's not just somebody improving. It has to swing. Some of the great masters wrote music centuries ago that was improvised and could be improvised upon. They would hear a theme and develop it. I've always believed there are really only two kinds of music—good music and the other kind".

Composer Ulysses Kay, on a U.S. State Department tour of the Soviet Union in 1959, reported that a professor at the Moscow House of Composers greeted his party with a piano chorus of Duke's theme, "Take the 'A' Train", then cornered Kay for an hour's eager questioning about his idol's latest musical concepts.

As eloquent orally as he is orchestrally, Duke will penetratingly philosophize about the blues: "Anyone who gets the blues is a result of a love affair. You might be blue...but you only get the blues when you're the guy on the odd end of that triangle."

The next instant he will describe the phenomenon of "hearing the symphony swing" when he performed "Night Creature", his tone parallel for piano, jazz band and symphony orchestra in three movements with the N.B.C. Symphony of the Air and subsequently with symphony orchestras in major cities of the U.S. as well as with the Stockholm Symphony and the Paris Opera Orchestras. Written in 1955, it was recorded for the first time early this year in Europe and is his latest release on Reprise Records, where he is director of the company's Ellington Jazz Wing.

In the spring of 1963, his first Reprise album, "Afro-Bossa," was released. The New York Times critic John S. Wilson summed up the consensus in these words: "And what Ellington! The solid Ellington ensemble sound, the typically Ellingtonian colorations, the use of the distinctive Ellington soloists within the development of an arrangement...are brought back to focus."

For Reprieve he is currently busy discovering and recording unusual music and artists such as a South African trio and girl singer and a combination he calls "The Three Violinists" (his own Ray Nance, Stephane Grappelly of Paris and Svend Asmussen of Copenhagen), while—and again for the first time in his impressive career—having complete freedom to record his own orchestra as he hears it and feels it should be heard.

Music magazines internationally have had Duke Ellington's name at the top of their lists as many years as they have been conducting polls. Latest additions to his impressive collection of trophies were the two plaques naming him the number one big band leader and arranger-composer in *Down Beat* Magazine's 1963 International Critics Poll. Father Norman O'Connor, known widely as "the jazz priest," made the presentation July 6th at the Newport Jazz Festival, scene of Ellington's electrifying and headline-making 1956 performance of "Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue," which had fans dancing in the aisles to Paul Gonsalves' 27 consecutive tenor saxophone choruses. Duke, in lieu of an acceptance speech, delighted

as he puts it, "choreographic suggestions," and staged in Chicago, August 16th to September 2, 1963, for the Emancipation Centennial Authority.

He composed the song the same week he added six new compositions to his score of "Sugar City," the musical version of "Blue Angel," which opens on Broadway early in 1964. And this activity coincided with a trip to Stratford, Ontario, Canada, to confer with Director Michael Langham on the music he was writing for the July 29, 1963 production of "Timon of Athens" at the Stratford Shakespearean Festival, where he has previously appeared playing his musical interpretations of the Bard's themes—including orchestrated iambic pentameter. Duke and his longtime associate and arranger Billy Strayhorn, insist that Shakespeare "had rhythm in his soul."

Ellington's highly literate and literary musical extensions are not bound exclusively to the classicists, although in 1961 the Theatre National Populaire of France commissioned him to score "Turcaret" by 17th Century Gallic playwright Alain Lesage. He wrote that one concurrently with appearing in "Paris Blues," for which he also did the music and won an Academy Award nomination in Hollywood. His earlier motion picture score for Otto Preminger's "Anatomy of a Murder" carried away three Grammy Awards from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Science the same year that the Berlin Film Festival presented him a Bambi for the best movie score of a German picture, "Jonas."

Many, many compositions of Duke Ellington are regarded as a different kind of "classics" in an area which he refuses to limit as "jazz" or as "popular" music, but encompasses hits like "Mood Indigo," "I'm Beginning To See The Light," "Sophisticated Lady," "Satin Doll," "Solitude," "Don't Get Around Much any More," "It Don't Mean A Thing," "In A Sentimental Mood," "Caravan," "I Let A Song Go Out of My Heart," "I Got it Bad," "Don't You Know I Care" and "I Didn't Know About You."

In February, 1958, during an Ellington engagement in Hollywood, some ringsiding Ellington fans decided that people who love Duke Ellington and his orchestra and their music ought to get together, share their enthusiasms and keep informed about Ellington's activities. They formed the Duke Ellington Society. Today this organization's membership numbers in the thousands with representatives in 22 countries. Nearly every big name in the arts appears on the roster. Every April a "Duke Ellington Week" is proclaimed, and birthday parties on April 29 climax the celebration in London, Paris, New York, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Vancouver, Stockholm, Hollywood, Toronto, Barcelona and in numerous other cities around the world.

It's all probably leading up to a realization of the proposal made last year by the internationally known music writer Ralph J. Gleason who called for a special act of the United States Congress to declare Duke Ellington and his contributions to contemporary culture a nationally supported asset and property, to establish a Duke Ellington Musical Foundation and Workshop and

**EDWARD Kennedy** "Duke" Ellington is probably best described by a pair of his own unique superlatives, which he uses to honour qualities he admires in others—"A man of heroic proportions" and "beyond category".

The terms apply to Ellington as a person, a composer, as a writer, as a philosopher, and as the leader of today's most famous and exciting orchestra.

Ellington and his famous orchestra will present concerts in Dacca, Lahore and Karachi during their tour of Pakistan. He will open in Dacca on October 28, followed by appearances in Lahore October 29 to November 1 and in Karachi November 1 through November 4.



# VIGNETTES OF DUKE ELLINGTON'S MUSIC MAKERS PERFORMING IN PAKISTAN

**BILLY STRAYHORN**, writer of the orchestra's theme song "Take the 'A' Train" and Duke's alter ego, has been associated with the Ellington orchestra since 1939. Famous for his own compositions like "Lush Life," "Chelsea Bridge," "Raincheck," "Day Dream," "Passion Flower" and "Absinthe," he has also collaborated with Duke Ellington in such longer works as "The Perfume Suite," "Such Suite Thunder" and "A Drum Is a Woman." Besides his ability as a composer and an arranger, he is a gifted pianist, and on occasion—though rarely in public—he takes the leader's place at the keyboard.

## THE TRUMPETS

"Cat" **Anderson** joined the band in 1944 and with one or two intervals, during which he led his own groups, he has been a member ever since. His previous band experience included periods with Lucky Millinder, Erskine Hawkins and Lionel Hampton. He is famous for his high notes and his upper-register work often provides climatic propulsion to closing choruses. He is also responsible for occasional obbligati which, while less demanding in terms of virtuosity, are similarly effective.

**Rolf Ericson** was born in Stockholm. He arrived in the U.S.A. during 1947, since when he has worked with such famous bandleaders as Benny Carter, Benny Goodman, Woody Herman, Stan Kenton and Harry James. He joined Duke Ellington's band in time for its second visit to Sweden in 1963. His well-constructed solos offer further proof that jazz has indeed become an international language.

**Ray Nance** joined Duke Ellington in 1940 after playing in the bands of Earl Hines and Horace Henderson. Since that time he has not ceased to grow in artistic stature. A versatile musician, he solos with taste, wit and warmth on both cornet and violin. His highly individual vocals and dances are equally alive with humor and satire.

"Cootie" **Williams**, a master of the "growl" idiom with plunger mute, occupies an honored position in the Ellington story. He played such an important role during the band's formative period that Raymond Scott wrote a song in lamentation when he left in 1940. After many years as leader of his own bands, the return in 1962 of this great artist to his chair in the Ellington orchestra was as welcome as it was unexpected.

## THE TROMBONES

**Lawrence Brown**, who first joined the band in 1932, left in 1951 and returned in

Howard and Les Hite. One of the most gifted and respected trombone stylists in the field, his smooth, melodic playing contrasts with the plunger-muted role he has also taken on his capable shoulders during the last few years.

**Chuck Connors**, who majored in trombone at Boston Conservatory of Music, had played in Dizzy Gillespie's big band before joining Duke Ellington in July 1961. His bass trombone then represented an extension of the Ellington tonal palette and its robust sound continues to give an added depth to the ensemble.

**Buster Cooper**, who is one of the younger veterans, joined Duke Ellington in June 1962 after experience in the bands of Nat Towles, Lionel Hampton, Lucky Millinder and Benny Goodman. His boldly conceived solos are executed with striking attack and rhythmic drive.

## THE SAXOPHONES

**Harry Carney's** name is synonymous with the baritone saxophone, an instrument for which he earned undreamed-of freedom and respect. His facility and rich, satisfying sound began a trend which established the baritone's sole possibilities. A veritable sheet-anchor of the section to which he gives depth and splendor, Harry Carney has been with the band continuously since 1926, a fact which speaks most eloquently for itself.

**Paul Gonsalves** joined the band in 1950 after working in those of Sabby Lewis, Count Basie and Dizzy Gillespie. His classic sequence of blues choruses on *Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue*, which brought an unforgettable triumph at the Newport Jazz Festival in 1956, sometimes obscures the fact that at slower tempos and in gentler moods he plays with scarcely rivaled warmth and invention. Within his profession, he is one of the most admired tenor saxophonists.

**Jimmy Hamilton** is primarily featured as a clarinetist. Obviously prized by Duke Ellington for his facility and accuracy, several works have been specially written to display his splendid technique and fine tone. In contrast with his suave clarinet work, he also occasionally plays vigorous tenor saxophone solos. He joined the band in 1942 after experience in those of Benny Carter and Teddy Wilson.

**Johnny Hodges** is providence's gift to a song-writing bandleader and it is difficult to avoid the cliché in writing about

epic lyricism early raised him to a pre-eminence where he has remained, impenetrable to the assaults of time and the innovations of others. He left Chick Webb to join Duke Ellington in 1928 and, apart from a few years in the early '50s, has been with the band ever since.

**Russell Procope** had a long and distinguished career in the bands of Chick Webb, Fletcher Henderson, Benny Carter, Teddy Hill and John Kirby before joining Duke Ellington in 1945. He is featured as a soloist on both alto saxophone and clarinet. On the latter instrument he continues the tradition established by Barney Bigard and provides an interesting contrast with the style of Jimmy Hamilton.

## THE RHYTHM

**Ernie Shepard**, who comes from Beaumont, Texas, took up the bass while touring as a singer with Fats Kelly's band. Since then he has played with Stan Getz, Eddie Heywood, Eddie Chamblee and Gene Ammons. He became a member of the Ellington band in 1962 and he gives it a big, vibrant bass foundation.

**Sam Woodyard** gained his professional experience with Joe Holiday, Roy Eldridge and Milt. Buchner prior to his entry into this band in 1955. His quick, intuitive grasp of essentials, and his strong, driving beat, soon established him as one of the best drummers in the big-band field, and Duke Ellington has since devised several showcases to display his formidable soloistic ability.

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