REFLECTIONS IN ELLINGTON

THE 1932 BAND IN TRUE STEREO
AND
ON THE ROAD WITH THE GREAT 1940 BAND

1932

As early as 1929, RCA Victor in the United States, and HMV in England were recording in stereo. Using two microphones to pick up the sound and two cutting tables to record it, Duke Ellington, Leo Reisman, Hoagy Carmichael, Waring's Pennsylvanians, the D'Oyly Carte Company, Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, The BBC Symphony under Sir Edward Elgar, Gertrude Lawrence and Noel Coward were all recorded in binaural stereo sound. This experiment lasted far into the 30's, resulting in records which, when taken individually, are perfectly ordinary monaural, but when paired with their 'mates' from the other cutting table, they yield spectacular stereo sound. It took until 1984 before someone finally got hold of such a pair of records, synchronized them, and heard the stereo.

Long playing records are not a recent invention. As far back as Edison's tinfoil, inventors had been working on how to put more time on a record without harming the fidelity of the playback. This was done in various ways. In 1922, the English inventor, Noel Pemberton-Billing, arrived at a 16-inch vertically cut disc that rotated slowly at the rim and gathered velocity as the needle tracked toward the center so that the groove speed was effectively constant. One of these would play for 20 minutes. Edison came out with an 80 rpm extremely microgroove Diamond Disc in 1926 that has 450 lines to the inch (177 lines per cm) and played about 20 minutes per side. For obvious technical reasons, these records were short-lived on the market. The popular standard Edison Diamond Disc, introduced in 1913, had 150 lines per inch, allowing up to five-and-one-half minutes of recording time on a ten inch side The extra time, however, was rarely used to good advantage by the Edison artists. After the onset of the Depression in 1929, record buyers shifted their attention increasingly to radio, while record companies tried increasingly desperate gimmicks to stay in business. By 1932, both Columbia and Hit-Of-The-Week offered mini-microgroove 78s ("... with almost twice the playing time of the average record."); but RCA Victor took the deepest plunge a year earlier and offered the most innovative product: ten and twelve inch coarse groove records that rotated at a constant 33-1/3 rpm, offering ten and fifteen minute programs, and a reasonably cheap (today they would say "affordable") player that could be easily connected to a Victor radio. This new line was launched with plenty of hoopla, including a ten minute long "Victor Artists Party" record. On this inauguaral disc, Frank Crumit is featured as the master of ceremonies, introducing Victor Arden and Phil Ohman, the Revellers, and Nat Shilkret and the Victor Orchestra. At a point early in the recording, Crumit enthusiastically exhorts:

Sounds like a celebration, doesn't it? Well, it's like this: We've all been singing and playing for Victor Records and, while we've enjoyed the work, we've always felt a little cramped for elbow room, so to speak. In other words, we could only put so much on a record and then simply had to stop. Ah! -- but here is something new that the RCA Victor people have developed: a long-playing record that can hold an entire vaudeville act or even a symphony, plus the wonderful new instrument to play it on ..."

(Continued on Insert)

1940

Empires rise and crumble, and luck can change overnight, but somewhere along the line everyone has a very good year. For Robert Schumann it was 1840, when song after song poured from his pen and he began his first symphony. Albert Einstein was on a roll in 1905, turning out a series of brilliant scientific papers, one of which unveiled a theory of special relativity. And Babe Ruth would long remember 1927, the year he hit 60 home runs.

1940 was one of those years for Duke Ellington. By then the 41 year-old bandleader was a seasoned writer for his ensemble, and he was ably assisted by his young collaborator Billy Strayhorn, and by trombonist Juan Tizol. The impending ASCAP ban (effective December 31, 1940) put pressure on musicians to find non-licensed material. Ellington responded with a steady stream of new compositions. Each record date yielded more masterpeices: **Jack The Bear, Ko-Ko, Concerto For Cootie, Cottontail, Dusk, A Portrait of Bert Williams** -- on and on the list goes. The 1940 works prove, however, that Ellington felt the need not just to compose but to compose as well as he could.

1940 was also a fortunate year for Ellington the bandleader. His orchestral palette was enriched by the arrival of tenor saxophonist Ben Webster in February. Jimmy Blanton, who had joined Ellington the previous October, both lifted and drove the band with his bouyant, beautifully shaped bass lines. Veteran "Washingtonians" Sonny Greer, Otto Hardwick, and Fred Guy brought a continuity of tradition, while relative newcomers like Strayhorn and Webster supplied fresh inspiration. The reed and brass sections had attained a virtuosic level of ensemble performance. The command of dynamics, tone color, and orchestral blend was matched by few ensembles; at the same time, nearly every man was a gifted soloist. The 1940 band was rich in talent, ripe with possibilities.

And 1940 was an active year for Ellington the travelling musician, although in this respect, not so different from the years before and after. He criss-crossed North America from Portland, Maine to Portland, Oregon; from Virginia Beach to Los Angeles; from El Paso to Winnepeg. One weekend in June, the band played in Ithaca, New York on Friday night; Youngstown, Ohio on Saturday; and Asheville, North Carolina on Sunday -- hauling some 900 miles by bus in 72 hours. Occasionally, there were breaks in the travel. The longest occurred during September and October when Ellington held forth from the Panther Room of the Hotel Sherman in Chicago; but otherwise, the band kept moving, shuttling from dance hall to auditorium to theatre, and squeezing in a dozen visits to recording studios in New York, Chicago and Hollywood.

Most lovers of Ellington's music are on familiar terms with the 1940 repertort. In addition to the studio recordings, various live broadcasts are available from Boston's Southland Cafe, the Hotel Sherman and the Crystal Ballroom in Fargo, North Dakota (that exceptional November night preserved for us by Jack Towers and Dick Burris). The present collection contains nine new 1940 treasures: three from Eastwood

(Continued on Insert)

CREDITS:

Original source material: Jerry Valburn collection
Master transfer (1932): Brad Kay
Master transfer (1940): Jack Towers & Jerry Valburn
Cover photo courtesy of Frank Driggs
Liner notes: Brad Kay (1932); Mark Tucker (1940)

EVERYBODYS EV-3005

1932

(Continued from Back Cover)

These records, or Program Transcriptions (as they were called), had opulent gold (for popular music) or silver (for classical) labels, and came in lavish gold-leaf art deco sleeves, starting at eighty-five cents each (only ten cents more than the standard 10-inch Victor popular record). What more could one want from life? Victor aggressively marketed these new records. Besides being issued in the United States, the Program Transcriptions were pressed and released in Argentina, Canada, and Japan. The Depression proved to be more of an obstacle than anyone could have forseen, and Victor was forced to abandon the project by early 1935. The re-entry of the long-playing record had to wait until 1948, when Columbia introduced the microgroove Lp as we now know it. While the RCA Program Transcription series lasted, many long performances were recorded and issued by artists such as those previously mentioned, including Duke Ellington --- which brings us to the story behind the performances that appear on this record.

In 1981, Steve Lasker, a good friend and leading Ellington collector on the west coast, brought to my attention a rare unissued white vinyl test pressing which represented the first of Duke's two 1932 transcription sessions (February 3, 1932). Steven had recently won this test in an auction of Belgian collector, Georges Debroe, who was in the process of disposing of his outstanding collection of rare Ellington material. Steven's test showed a matrix and take number different from those on the issued record. To me, this suggested a possible alternate take, and I urged him to try to find a copy of the issued Program Transcription. Steven was able to do this, but it was not until March 1984 that one was found. Issued or unissued, these records are far from common!

One Sunday night, he brought both discs to my home where we were able to make a comparison. Visually, it appeared as if one version was shorter. The grooves on the gold label shellac transcription appeared to take up less space, but this turned out to be an illusion created by the lines being pitched closer together. We listened carefully to each record comparing the solos and the routines. The performances were absolutely identical each time -- and yet, there was still a maddening difference. Steven noticed that certain notes played on Sonny Greer's orchestra bells were quite loud on the transcription, but nearly inaudible on the test; and his cymbal was overpowering on the transcription, while much softer on the test. It was inexplicable. Neither record sounded dubbed, and they weren't alternate takes either. It was the same moment in time recorded from different perspectives.

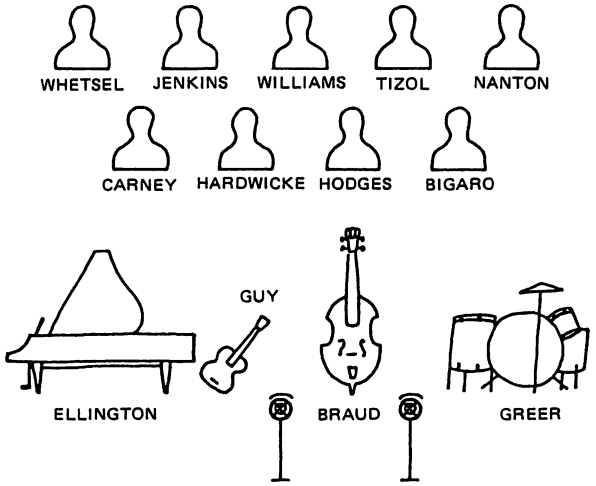


Diagram 1: Probable set-up for **2/3/32**. Biagro and Whetsel move to center for their solos.

Suddenly, I sensed the truth! Holding the two aloft, I said: "I think what we have here are the left and right channels of a stereophonic recording."

Scarcely believing my own conclusion, I transferred a little of **Hot and Bothered** from the test onto a tape and patched it through a channel on my mixer. Then I cued up the Program Transcription on my turntable, put that through a different channel and said to Steven, "Here goes nothing!"

What came out of the speakers, though crude compared to what you now hear on this record, put us both into instant amazed stupefactation. I then said, "There you are. Duke Ellington in stereo from 1932. For my next trick, I will play the Buddy Bolden cylinder."

Steven's reply was, "It better be in stereo or I won't listen to it."

We spent the better part of the next ten months working on the synchronization of these two discs (and wearing Steven's very precious test in the process). We were also wondering if the same factors could possibly be involved with Ellington's second transcription recording session (February 9, 1932). Then in correspondence with Georges Debroe, Steven learned that Jerry Valburn had two test pressings involving both sessions, and that what was sitting on his shelf probably represented the other channel of both recordings. By stroke of fate, Steven called Jerry on the evening, in November, before the latter was to leave for a trip to California.

Valburn came through. Not only did he carry with him those two precious tests, but also fine copies of his original Ellington Program Transcriptions. The work began the day after Jerry touched down in Los Angeles, and the many attempts at as perfect a matchup as possible is offered to all of you in this final product. Four months work, in all!

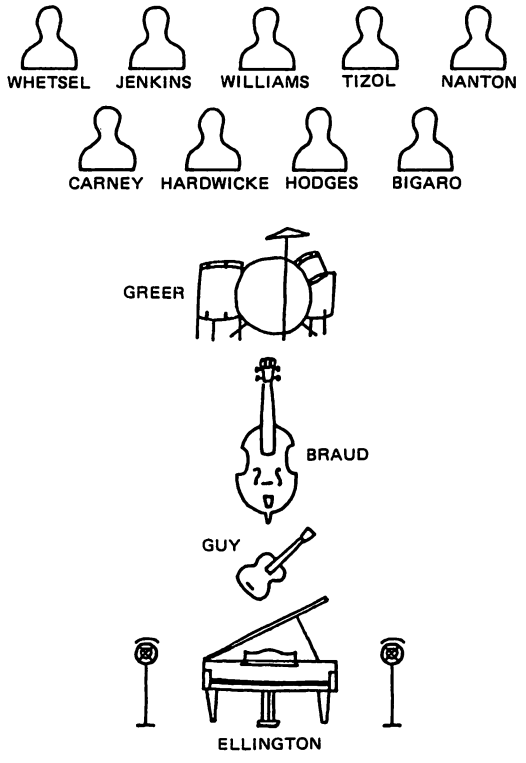


Diagram 2: Probable set-up for **2/9/32**. Bigaro, Whetsel and Nanton move to center for their solos.

[1] **No. 1: MOOD INDIGO - HOT AND BOTHERED - CREOLE LOVE CALL**
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA Rec: 2-3-32

STEREO MIX OF mxs.
LBRC 71811-1 (left) & LBSHQ 71812-2 (right)

Here is the Ellington orchestra as it must have appeared in the studio (diagram 1). The rhythm section is in front, with Ellington's piano on the left; Fred Guy's banjo in the curve of the piano, left of center; Wellman Braud's bass at the center; and Sonny Greer's drums on the right. The reeds are behind them, with Carney furthest to the left; Bigard to the far right; and Hodges and Hardwicke between. The brass occupies the rear, with the trumpets of Whetsel, Jenkins and Williams on the left; and the two trombones, Tizol and Nanton, on the right.

Whetsel and Bigard seem to move around as they solo, especially the latter who, after standing in the center for the first part of his solo on **Creole Love Call**, seems to dive for his chair and finish his solo from the right. Cootie remains fixed in his third trumpet chair, just left of center. The interplay between Cootie's trumpet and Sonny's cymbal on both **Hot and Bothered** and **Creole Love Call** is especially nice in stereo. During the last chorus of **Creole Love Call**, as the clarinets play the melody, Ellington has the brass come in one at a time, doing what composers call a "terracing effect." First, one horn enters slightly on the right; then another comes in slightly on the left; and then the rest enter, filling in the gaps. It is a stunning moment, causing one to wonder at how well worked-out was the whole stereo concept by this early date.

[2] **MEDLEY No. 2: EAST ST. LOUIS TOODLE-OO - LOTS O' FINGERS - BLACK & TAN FANTASY**
DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA Rec. 2-9-32

STEREO MIX OF mxs.
LBRC 71836-2 (left) & LBSHQ 71837-1 (right)

This session, six days later, has the orchestra in a different configuration (diagram 2). The brass and reeds are positioned as before, but now the rhythm section is laid out perpendicular to them so that the banjo, bass and drums all appear to come from the exact center, while the piano itself goes stereo -- the keyboard now sweeping from left to right.

One wishes they has played a more complete version of **East St. Louis Toodle-oo.** There was certainly time for it; at least you hear a little of Toby Hardwicke's bass sax during the bridge. Then Ellington, the reluctant piano virtuoso, becomes his true showman self on **Lots O' Fingers**, with hot stride piano notes all over the stero map. I imagine that the Victor engineers wanted to record a stereo piano pickup and asked Duke to include a piano interlude within the medley itself. He happily obliged them!

Whetsel is heard close up on **Black and Tan Fantasy**, panning his trumpet from left to right as he solos. Barney Bigard treats us to one of his trademark slow intense clarinet glissandi, and Cootie Williams leads the ensemble in a crackling finale. The real star turn, however, is taken by Tricky Sam Nanton whose trombone sound, as captured in stereo, seems even more eerie, distant, legendary and indescribable.

Stereo aside, this set of recorded performances offers a final look, a fond valedictory, to Duke Ellington and His Cotton Club Orchestra. Although the band was still making appearances at the Cotton Club, it's tenure as house band had terminated several months earlier, and at the time of these sessions had already taken on a new look and a new sound as Duke Ellington and his Famous Orchestra, never to sound quite this way again.

The Ellington medleys have turned out to be the tip of the stereo iceberg in this progress report. My research indicates that a vast amount of material was recorded in just this two-mike, two disc fashion on both long playing 33s and standard length 78s. If I read my documents correctly, and the parts can be found, we may look forward to stereo realizations of complete Gilbert and Sullivan operettas; works by Stravinsky, Sibelius, and Scriabin; fox-trot medleys by Leo Reisman, Paul Whiteman, Hoagy Carmichael; and who knows what else -- all from the late 1920s through mid-1930s, and perhaps later. I have pieced together, in stereo, a section of the 1929 Stokowski version of **The Rite of Spring** from two not-quite-identical Victor 78s; and a stereo part 3 of Elgar's **Cockaigne Concert Overture** (BBC Symphony conducted by Sir Edward Elgar), with take 1 from a Victor 78 (the left) and take 1A from an HMV 78 (the right). This is, no doubt, the best stereo separation in musical history - 4000 miles and 50 years!

The tip of the iceberg, yes, but also Pandora's box. Why did they do it? How could two discs be rigged up for stereo playback in the pre-tape days of 1929? How could all of this have remained undocumented and unknown? In no book or article does anyone, past or present, reminisce, speculate, or even allude to anything like this. Only recently have we learned of a mysterious note in a Victor record ledger page from a 1933 Leo Reisman session where it is written: "Special two channel recording process for Mr. Kellogg."

The evidence is in your hands. My best guess is that the practice of using two microphones and two cutting tables evolved from the basic need to have a safety master in case something went wrong; and in those early days, it happened many times with the cutting in wax masters. Further, it meant having two different balances for each take from which to choose. This seems to have been standard studio practice for some time at Victor, and most of the time at HMV. But, did they know they were recording in stereo? Listening to Ellington's piano on **Lots O' Fingers**, I just shake my head. I can't chalk it all up to a gigantic act of serendipity; but then, how could this practice have been carried on for several years on two continents with absolutely nothing to show for it until now? I give up. In the absence of first-hand reminiscenses or documentation, all this must remain a mystery. What remains, then, is for you to enjoy.

BRAD KAY
Venice, California - March, 1985

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BRAD KAY: For his work and effort in the restoration and balancing of this rare source material, and further, for his interesting and extensive notes on the project.

STEVEN LASKER: Whose curiosity and dedication revealed the stereo possibilities of the two Ellington recordings, and a special thanks to him for contacting Debroe and myself in his efforts to make this possible.

JACK TOWERS: Whose able assistance gave us a fine clean-up on Brad's final transfer. His dedication and patience have resulted in many hours of superior and click-free listening for us all. He was also involved in the transfer and clean-up of the 1940 material on this record.

Finally, I want to thank everyone involved with the events and circumstances that have made all of this a realization; the possibility of hearing Duke's 1932 band in true stereo in my lifetime.

Jerry Valburn

DISCOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Creole Love Call was recorded by Ellington for the Brunswick label on February 11, 1932, using a similar arrangement with the "terracing effect." On May 17, 1932, he recorded the **Lots O' Fingers** section of the second medley for Brunswick under the title **Fast And Furious.**

It is interesting to note that the Victor Recording ledgers show the initials of seven engineers assigned to the first session, and five engineers assigned to the second session.

For those among you who would like to try your own hand at restoring the first medley in true stereo, this is technically possible. In 1965, English RCA issued LP RD-7731, **The Duke Steps Out**, containing transfers of the two issued 1932 transcriptions (left channel). A few years later, French RCA issued volume 7 in their series **The Works of Duke**, which contains the first medley, apparently transferred from Debroe's test pressing (LBSHQ 71812 - right channel). He supplied RCA with a good deal of the material for the series. So, if you have the two lps in your collection and also have two turntables (or one tape recorder and one turntable), you can do it yourself.

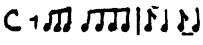
1940

(Continued from Back Cover)

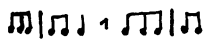
Gardens, Detroit (recorded July 29 and 31); four from Canobie Lake Park, New Hampshire (August 17 and 19); and two more from the Hotel Sherman (September 21 and 26). These previously unissued radio performances add even greater luster to the Ellington orchestra's achievements that year. They demonstrate once again the band's consistently high level of playing, regardless of the place or time. They provide new insights into individual musicians. And they illuminate further aspects of Ellington's compositional mastery.

On July 22, the Ellington orchestra recorded four original compositions at a Victor session in New York. Two of these appear here from the Eastwood Gardens NBC broadcast five days later: **Harlem Air Shaft** and **I Don't Mind** (better known as **All Too Soon**, and not to be confused with the 1942 **I Don't Mind**). Although the arrangements are nearly the same in both cases, the live performances offer striking comparisons.

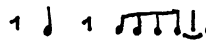
Harlem Air Shaft -- originally entered as **Rumpus In Richmond** in the Victor log book -- is a big band riff tune, but with a difference. Instead of merely providing back-ups for a soloist, the riffs form an organic part of the composition. Ellington takes the reeds' initial rhythmic figure:



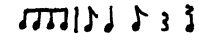
and develops it over the next four choruses. The trumpets have a shortened version in the second chorus:



and the reeds pare it down further in the third, following on the heels of the trombone's jaunty theme:



In the final chorus, there is one more variation for full ensemble



underneath Cootie Williams' muted solo before the original pattern returns in the reeds punctuated by shouts from the brass.

Against these riffs, a lot of other things are happening. The saxophones have a long sinuous countermelody in the first chorus. Cootie is featured soloist in both the second and fourth choruses, open and muted, respectively. In the third chorus, Barney Bigard takes a solo flight high above a witty, fast-paced conversation between trombones and reeds -- all over the solid swinging of the rhythm section. The rhythmic energy is exhilarating.

The Eastwood Gardens **Harlem Air Shaft** is slightly more relaxed than the Victor recording. Greer is looser with his fills and end-of-measure accents. Blanton goes up in his high register more where his bell-like notes sing out with clarity. Listen to the way in which he times his accent in the bridge of the third chorus to create a gradual wave of excitement. Cootie's first solo is a shade less assured than on the record, but he makes up for it later with some expressive plunger work.

One of the marvelous mysteries of the Ellington orchestra was how it could play the same arrangement yet always bring out new details in orchestration. Partly, of course, this resulted from varying microphone pick-ups, but also, I suspect, it came from Ellington's (and Strayhorn's) chord voicings which, prism-like, reflected light differently from different angles. The reeds behind Joe Nanton's solo (first chorus bridge) provide an example of how the colors could change from session to session. At Eastwood Gardens, the top voices (clarinet and altos) are bright; on the Victor disc, the mid-range is heavier and the tone mellower; and on the Fargo date, Carney's baritone sax is clearest and the other parts sound more separated.

The lovely ballad **I Don't Mind** features two of Ellington's strongest soloists: Lawrence Brown and Ben Webster. Brown is muted and sorrowful on the Victor recording (i.e., **All Too Soon**) but here, his horn is bolder and more assertive. Otto Hardwick's floating alto sax obbligato, too, is not as sentimental. These two features, plus a slightly faster tempo, contribute to a mood of hope rather than resignation.

Against muted trumpets, Webster's tenor solo breathes with passion. His lyrical excursion provides a foil to Brown's straightforward melodic statement. Hints of his as-yet-unplayed Fargo **Stardust** solo resound throughout, including at least one phrase that turned up later (measures 15-16). Blanton is tasteful with his triplet figures at the end of phrases.

The main difference in this **I Don't Mind** comes from the ending. The Victor version provides only two sides of the story: first Brown, then Webster. But here, Brown returns for an epilogue, bursting through Webster's final phrase with a high C. In part, the magic of this moment comes from the key slipping back to the original C major (after stepping up to D-flat for Webster's solo). Brown's coda nicely rounds off the arrangement which, perhaps due to time limitations, was kept off the original recording.

Rose Of The Rio Grande was one of the older pop songs in the Ellington book. Written by Harry Warren and Ross Gorman in 1922, it was recorded by many big bands in the late 1930s, including those of Glen Gray, Jan Savitt and Duke Ellington in 1938. While the lyrics are trifling, the sturdy chord progression may explain its sustained appeal. (Maceo Pinkard turned to virtually the same set of changes for his 1925 hit, **Sweet Georgia Brown**). For Ellington, of course, the song belonged jointly to vocalist Ivie Anderson and trombonist Lawrence Brown. The latter's two solo

choruses (and a third with ensemble backing) were nearly as fixed as Warren and Gorman's original melody.

This **Rose** contains few surprises. Only Brown's robust playing, Anderson's relaxed vocal, and some fine rhythmic support from Blanton and Greer. The trombonist's fills behind Ivy are more audible here than on some previously issued versions. The exuberance Brown brings to a solo he must have played night after night is just one aspect of the Ellington band's professionalism; another is the perfect intonation of the reed quartet behind Brown's first chorus.

Like **Rose Of The Rio Grande**, another solo vehicle first recorded by Ellington in 1938 is **Riding On A Blue Note.** On the 1938 recording, this 32 bar (AABA) original displayed Cootie Williams's muted horn for two choruses then let the ensemble take it out with a new theme over the same changes. But unlike **Rose**, this arrangement had evolved by 1940 into a different shape. Williams is still the main soloist, but now Johnny Hodges plays a major supporting role on soprano sax (an instrument he rarely, if ever, picked up after this year). Williams and Hodges face off three times. The exchange grows more heated until Cootie finally puts his growling horn close to the mike for the last word. Hodges also takes the bridge on the third and fourth choruses, ending the latter with a lightning run that Cootie pierces through with an early entrance.

Besides the addition of Hodges and the three duet sections, Cootie now rides over the ensemble's tune in the final chorus. By this time, Cootie knew the ensemble parts so well that some of his opening solo lines derive directly from them, forming a call-and-response arrangement. Such was the fascinating ecology of the Ellington orchestra: Ellington fashioned whole pieces from phrases invented by his solists, then later the soloists took them back again for further refinement. This creative recycling accounts, in part, for the supple relationship between soloist and ensemble in a piece like **Riding On A Blue Note.**

In **Boy Meets Horn**, the 1938 "concerto" for cornetist Rex Stewart, Ellington plays on the conceit that the soloist is just beginning to explore his instrument, whereas in fact, he has total control over his squeezed-out, half-valve tones. Stewart performed the piece often in the late 1930s and 1940s, and in this version exhibits his customary poise, wit, and natural phrasing.

By this time, certain performance details in **Boy Meets Horn** -- the held ninth chord-tone (G) at the end of the first chorus, the final cadenza with its humorous basso interruption -- had become set and can be heard in other versions recorded later. The original 1938 recording had only an ABA first chorus, whereas now it takes the more usual AABA form. This gives the piece a more conventional formal outline -- the same one Ellington chose for his 1940 **Concerto For Cootie:** Intro / AABA / Transition / C / Transition / A / Coda.

Art Hickman's durable **Rose Room** was a favorite with dancers in 1919, and probably still had them out on the floor at Canobie Lake this August night in 1940. Ellington recorded the tune in 1932 using a simple arrangement. Here he hews close to the earlier version, proceeding from Barney Bigard's warm clarinet solo to a chorus for piano (where Ellington plays with a chromatic sequence he would use later in **Dancers In Love**), to Lawrence Brown supported by some exquisite Blanton, and finally to a full band ride-out with Hodges on alto. Hodges's playing here -- especially the double-time passages -- hints at what he would do on **In A Mellotone**, Ellington's reworking of **Rose Room**, recorded less than a month later in the studio. The Canobie Lake version fades out with a volley of rim shots from Greer.

After some of the preceding solo vehicles, **Stompy Jones** celebrates the entire band. Over the most elementary chord progressions, four soloists -- Bigard, Williams, Carney and Brown -- each take 16 bars, leading up to the final series of ensemble choruses that build from one riff to the next, as preacher Joe Nanton exhorts his congregation to rock and shout. The arrangement here is the same as in 1934, although six years later Mr. Jones is, if anything, younger and more vital than ever. This piece may be seen as a sunny companion to **Ko-Ko.** Both are constructed from simple elements and mount to a great climax, but **Stompy Jones** is friendly rather than mysterious, light rather than dark.

In 1925, Ellington wrote several songs with lyricist Jo Trent for the revue **Chocolate Kiddies**, which departed New York in May for a long stint in Europe. The hit of the show was **Jig Walk**, a Charleston number whose main theme bears a perilous close resemblance to **Panama** (1911), written by Clef Club musician, Will Tyers (or Thiers). Despite its popularity, **Jig Walk** appears not to have been recorded by Ellington in the 1920s. The nickelodeon roll attributed to Ellington by some discographers does not sound like his piano style, follows the sheet music quite literally, and was probably made by the roll company; besides, Ellington told piano expert Mike Montgomery on several occasions that he never made any rolls. In **Jazz Masters of the 30s**, however, Rex Stewart makes a curious reference to an Ellington recording of this tune from the late 1920s. (Does anyone know to what he is referring? If so, let me know c/o Jerry Valburn). Stewart writes that **Jig Walk** was Ellington's "first recorded effort and a hit in Harlem, though lots of folks took exception to the title. They used the word jig in a fraternal sense among themselves and were offended when it was employed as a song title. But the musicians loved the record." Perhaps Stewart was thinking of renditions of the tune by bands like Ben Bernie, the Okeh Syncapators or the Ipana Troubadors. Several European bands also recorded it in the 1920s.

In the late 1930s, Ellington revived **Jig Walk**, giving it a compact, modern arrangement and probably using it as an opening salvo for his band. A performance of the piece has appeared on a 1938 broadcast from the downtown Cotton Club, but it lacks the punch and precision of the one recorded at Hotel Sherman. Ellington completely transformed his early song, although traces of the Charleston still sound in the brass figures behind Bigard's opening solo. Of the many imaginative touches, note the dissonant, ear-grabbing chords of the introduction and playful archaisms of the trills for saxophones in the third chorus. The entire performance is a knock-out, combining dazzling ensemble work with fiery solos and hard swinging from Blanton, Guy, and Greer.

Little Posey is Ellington's affectionate, good-humored tribute to trumpeter Freddy Jenkins, who played with the band from 1928 to 1938. As Ellington writes in **Music Is My Mistress**, Jenkins "brought us a new kind of sparkle: his every move was a picture, in the groove, and right on top of the action." Accordingly, Ellington's composition crackles with **Posey**'s energy and showy style. Short, crisp riffs announce the main theme, while Lawrence Brown takes the first two choruses. He's followed by two more choruses which show off the ensemble, although every few bars another soloist bubbles up to the surface: Bigard and his cascading clarinet, Carney and his powerful baritone, Nanton and his growling trombone.

Our 1940 segment ends with the NBC announcer inviting listeners to "Come on with us down to **Warm Valley.**" As Hodges's alto caresses the theme, Fred Guy's gentle strumming is heard with unusual clarity. The Ellington orchestra fades away into yet one more night from this very good year.

Mark Tucker
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Thanks to Jerry Valburn for letting me consult his copy of the 1940 Ellington band itinerary, also to Rick Woodward and Carol Oja for their help.

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