

Ellingtonia

Newsletter Of
The Duke Ellington Society



Courtesy Carlyle Productions

Volume XI, Number 3

MARCH 2003

Theodore R. Hudson, Editor

Copyright © 2003 by The Duke Ellington Society, Inc., P.O. Box 15591, Washington, D.C. 20003-0787, U.S.A.

Web Site: depanorama.net/desociety/

Different Copyright Laws Affect CD Releases Here and Abroad

A recent Supreme Court decision upheld the so-called Bono Copyright Extension Act passed by Congress in 1998. It extended terms of most copyright by 20 years, and in effect provided 95 years of protection in some cases. In a 21 January editorial (titled as an imperative "Free Mickey Mouse"), the *Washington Post* concluded, "The copyright system, though constitutional, is broken."

Of more immediate importance to music enthusiasts is that European Union countries observe a 50-year copyright term. This means, for instance, that a jazz artist's 1950 recording is in their public domain and may legally be reproduced in these countries without the artist's or copyright owner's permission and without payment. The situation could make some United States companies, in order to protect their interests, consider teaming with or buying out some of the European CD producers. Perhaps more important, it may well cause domestic companies to reconsider the financial (and cultural) wisdom of going through the process of producing and marketing quality reissues.

In United States stores and by way of the internet, foreign-produced recordings have been readily available. For years pirated recordings of jazz, some of poor quality, have been a minor problem. Now it appears that for many early recordings, makers of these "bootleg" LPs and CDs will become legal or go out of business.

What are your reactions to these issues? Send your observations, comments, and proposed solutions to us—and let us know whether or not we may publish them..

Let's Follow Their Leadership

We proudly point out that three of our members have renewed their memberships through 2004: Harold Gray, Janna T. Steed, and Coleman Tuckson! But wait. Harold "Foodhead" Finley has paid up through 2005!!

March Program: First a Play and Then Riddles

by Mac Grimmer & Peter MacHare, Program Coordinators

We can always count on Bill Hasson to break the mold and present something new and completely different. The first part of our March program will consist of a short play that Bill is writing especially for the evening. The soundtrack to the play will be appropriate Ellington music. During the second half of the program, Bill will present a series of riddles; the answer to each is an Ellington composition.

Bring your thinking caps! Bill, go easy on us; we are not as smart as we look!

The March program will be at our regular meeting place, **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Streets, NW, on Saturday, 1 March 2003, at 8 pm.** See you cats and kittens there!

12th Annual East Coast Jazz Festival February 12 - 15, 2003

Doubletree Hotel, Rockville, Maryland
For Schedule, Attractions and Other Info:
301-933-1822

www.fmjseastcoastjazz.com

This Is a Great Event That Benefits a Great Cause:
The Fish Middleton Jazz Scholarship Fund

Do You See a Star ☆ or Two ☆☆ On Your Mailing Label?

If you see a star ☆ beside your name, it means we miss you very much and are awaiting your membership renewal. Two stars ☆☆ mean we very much want you to join us as a first-time-ever member. Dues remain a real bargain:

First-Time-Ever Member, \$20
Renewing Member, \$30 Couple, \$50 Student, \$5

Rush Your Check Payable to
The Duke Ellington Society, Inc. at
PO Box 15591, Washington, DC 20003, USA

Ultimate Ellingtonia — Duke Ellington: 1969 All-Star White House Tribute

(Blue Note 7243 5 35249 2 0)

Reviewed by Mac Grimmer

It doesn't get any better than this. A once-in-a-lifetime affair, a star-studded "who's who of jazz" performing tributes to Duke, not just anywhere, but at the Nixon White House, of all places. Conceived by Willis Conover and facilitated by Leonard Garment, this concert could be considered the ultimate tribute to Ellington by his jazz peers.

The band, six horns and a rhythm section, is unbelievably hot, burning through the Ellington repertoire, everyone at the top of his game. Some of the highlights:

- An exuberant Clark Terry, all over the horn, all night, particularly in his duet with Bill Berry on "Squeeze Me."
- J. J. Johnson's jaunty solo on "Satin Doll."
- Paul Desmond playing Johnny Hodges licks at the end of "Things Ain't . . ."
- Louie Bellson in the engine room, swinging hard and driving the band all night. Listen to him on "Ring Dem Bells" and "Caravan."
- Earl Hines' startling fireworks on "Perdido," a two-minute show-stopper that should be in a "Best of Earl Hines" collection. This alone is worth the price of the CD!
- Four more piano players: Hank Jones, Dave Brubeck, Billy Taylor (able to stretch out in a trio setting) and Duke himself (an improvisation, "Pat," at the end the evening).
- Gerry Mulligan's take-no-prisoners solos (and duets with Terry & Desmond on his fast arrangement of the usually placid "Prelude to a Kiss.")

There is a definite musical let-down three-quarters of the way through the evening when minor-league vocalist Mary Mayo takes over for four tunes, but Joe Williams, turning the heat back up, comes to the rescue with "Come Sunday" and "Jump for Joy."

This event was filmed as well as recorded, but so far only an 18-minute version, with just bits and pieces of the music, has been released (available on a Canadian VHS tape). Perhaps someday we'll see as well as hear the concert, along with the (still unheard) jam session afterward. This also was filmed, and other musicians present (Dizzy, Willie the Lion, et al) sat in.

Why did it take 30 years before we could hear this? All the musicians signed a release except Jim Hall, the guitarist. Although anti-Nixon, he did show up to play; already compromised, he might as well have signed the release too. Louis Armstrong, on the other hand, his conscience never wavering, refused an invitation to play at the Nixon White House, and never had that problem. George Avakian (possibly on the enemies list) was disinvited; it would be interesting to know who else was.

Fortunately Hall finally came around, signed, and we can hear this incredible concert. Art triumphs over politics.

Duke Ellington / Sacred Music:

The Aardvark Jazz Orchestra with Vocal Soloists, Narrator, and Chorus (Aardmuse Recordings CD 103)

Reviewed by Theodore R. Hudson

The Boston-based Aardvark Jazz Orchestra was founded in 1973 by The Reverend Mark S. Harvey, one of our members, and is directed by him. Over the years it has played at festivals, churches, universities, concert halls, and other venues. A United Methodist minister, Mark Harvey also teaches jazz at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and is a trumpeter as well, having played with the likes of Gil Evans and Howard McGhee and recorded with George Russell. A friend of the late Father John Gensel, by whom he was mentored and to whom he dedicates this CD, Harvey was an usher at Ellington's funeral.

Duke Ellington / Sacred Music is the seventh of the orchestra's CDs. It is a repertory orchestra, but does not seek to slavishly replicate original arrangements and recordings. "Heaven" and "The Shepherd (Who Watches Over the Night Flock)" exemplify the respectful liberties that it takes. The former begins with a guitar introduction, what was an originally an Alice Babs solo becomes a trumpet solo by Jeanne Snodgrass, and the familiar Johnny Hodges passage becomes a slightly up-tempo tenor sax solo, both underpinned by a Latinish rhythm before resumption of the piece's beginning tempo. In "The Shepherd," Harvey's opening trumpet solo is a tad more introspective than was Cootie's. Then follows a full-throated, declamatory sermonette by trombonist Bill Lowe, after which there is a quieter but no less fervent testimony by a saxophonist before Harvey returns for a benediction. All told, it's a fetching, fresh rendition.

A treat is Billy Strayhorn's rarely heard "A Song for Christmas," which had been sung by Lena Horne to Billy's piano accompaniment at the Sacred Concert in 1965 at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City. On this recording it is sung by Donna Hewitt-Didham, accompanied here too by only a pianist, Harvey. Another too infrequent offering is "The Magi" from *Three Black Kings*, its recurring rhythmic motifs expertly executed by the orchestra at a brisk and bracing pace.

The rest of the selections are familiar works in which the orchestra, MIT Concert Choir, a Choir of Men and Boys, a tap dancer, and vocalists all contribute. Audience response and a sharp recording help one visualize Tony De Frantz, as David, dancing "before the Lord with all his might." In "It's Freedom" Strayhorn's "four freedoms" are narrated to choral accompaniment. After its stately start by classically trained soprano Pamela Wood. (Continued on page 3 under "Aardvark")

Short Sheets . . .

National Recording Registry Selections

The Library of Congress is accepting nominations for its 2003 National Recording Registry of recordings "that are culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant." The 50 items on the Registry for 2002 are, to say the least, interestingly inclusive. Among them are: Scott Joplin compositions on piano rolls; Booker T. Washington's 1895 Atlanta Exposition speech; a recitation of "Casey at the Bat"; a description of the 1937 crash of the Hindenburg; Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech; the Fewkes field recordings of the Passamaquoddy Indians; Grand Ole Opry's first network broadcast; and —tah dah!— Duke Ellington Orchestra "Blanton-Webster Era" recordings.

Want to see the complete list of 50 and directions for submitting nominations for 2003? Check the web site at < www.loc.gov/rr/record/nrpb >.

Grammy Nominees

Among the five in the running for the 2003 Grammy award for best jazz instrumental solo are "Chelsea Bridge" by Pete Christlieb and "Sunset and the Mockingbird" by Tommy Flanagan, Strayhorn and Ellington compositions, respectively.

Emerson Parker Article Reprinted

Long-time Ellington enthusiasts in the Washington, DC area remember the pioneering radio broadcasts by Emerson R. Parker. The December *Tailgate Ramblings*, edited by our Don Rouse, reprints "Collecting the Easy Way," an article by Parker that appeared in the February 1946 issue of *Pickup*, a British monthly, in which Parker, a "completist" by nature it seems, describes how he acquired his enviable library of Ellington and associated recordings.

IAJE and Ellington/Strayhorn

The Toronto Ellington Society's newsletter account of events and performances at the recent International Association of Jazz Educators Convention there offers the opinion: "If there were any disappointments in the program it might have been only a few brief passing references to Ellington (although the Canadian contingent paid tribute to Duke at the closing ceremony), and the fact that too many of the performers strayed too far from Strayhorn."

Asian American Orchestra in DC in April

We just learned that as during the Jazz Appreciation Month celebration, the Asian American Orchestra led by Dr. Anthony Brown will include Washington, DC in its East Coast itinerary. They are scheduled to perform at 7:30 pm on April 13 at the Sackler-Free Gallery, and at 12 noon the next day, April 14, at the Carmichael Auditorium of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

! Coming to the East Coast !

In Mid-April

Anthony Brown's Asian American Orchestra
Watch for Further Announcements!

David Fleming, 1923-2002

A "Thanksgiving" service for David Fleming, who died in December, was held at Gillingham, which he referred to as his "country retreat," not far from his London, England home. "Take the A Train" was played as his remains were carried into the crematorium, and the secular service ended with "Day Dream."

For several years David was the first to renew, well ahead of time, his annual membership in our Society. When not the first, he was unfailingly among the first several.

Blue Light, the excellent quarterly he edited until recently, recalls: "David was the prime mover in the inauguration of DESUK [Duke Ellington Society, United Kingdom]. His love for, and knowledge of, Ellington and Ellingtonia was tremendous," and "[He] was a schoolmaster during his working life, and his love of the English language and its use kept us all on our toes. His careful research and his painstaking articles were always a pleasure to read, not only for the imparted knowledge but at least for the elegant style in which it was presented."

We extend sincere condolences to David Fleming's family and other loved ones.

He Is . . . and the Winner Is . . .

Last month we invited readers to tell/guess the last name and nickname of William Henry Berthol Bonaparte Bertholoff and hinted that Duke had written and recorded a composition about him.

This was no puzzle for our member **Alan Schneidmill**, the only respondent to correctly identify him as none other than Willie "The Lion" Smith. The musical tribute by Duke is "Portrait of the Lion."

Aardvark (Continued from page 2)

"Praise God and Dance" turns into a joyful rouser of swinging instrumental solos and chases, chanting orchestra, choral exuberance, propulsive rhythm — joyful praise and dance, indeed!

A minor observation: The listener might wish for better acoustics, balance, and sound fidelity in spots, but must remember that these are not studio but live performance recordings. These minor technical things are more than compensated for by the music.

Groups such as the Aardvark Jazz Orchestra led by dedicated music lovers such as Mark Harvey who keep the art of Ellington, Strayhorn, and other masters of America's classic music alive in their communities deserve our praise and gratitude.

Duke Ellington / Sacred Music and other CDs by the Aardvark Jazz Orchestra are available for \$15 each, plus \$2 s&h. Mail a check payable to AARDVARK, c/o Mark Harvey, PO Box 8721, JFK Station, Boston, MA 02114-0037, USA. For more information, check out the website: < www.aardvarkjazz.everplay.net > or inquire by e-mail at: < mharvey@mit.edu >.

"Dramatis Felidae" (To Use Our Man's Term in *MIMM*)**About Our Members****Ronnie Wells**

We, of course, appreciate Ronnie Wells as vocalist and music educator. The upcoming East Coast Jazz Festival reminds us to salute her as well for her leadership of the Festival and for her selfless, dedicated work with the Fish Middleton Jazz Scholarship Fund. The late Middleton, some may remember, was a presenter at the first Annual International Ellington Study Group Conference, held by our Society in Washington, DC in 1983.

Ted Hudson, Ben Pubols

In a ceremony at the Smithsonian, Ted Hudson was

Member's Choice Brings Variety

by Peter MacHare

Our theme for our February program was to bring a favorite Ellington recording. What a variety we heard!

Bill Flemons got things started with choices from a night Cab Calloway was fronting the Ellington Orchestra when Duke was indisposed. Cab told the audience that he hadn't had a band for some years, "but I've got one tonight." We heard "Tootie for Cootie," "I Got It Bad," and "Things Ain't What They Used To Be," the latter two featuring Johnny Hodges. We let Bill get away with three selections instead of just two because Helen Frazier was able to attend the meeting for the first time in a few months. We wanted her to hear as much Hodges as possible so she would come