

Ellingtonia

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Theodore R. Hudson, Editor

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Foggy Bottom's Duke

by Patricia Braxton

As part of a series of events that George Washington University (GWU) is offering in celebration of its 100th year in Washington, DC's Foggy Bottom, the university in partnership with the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History presented on April 25 a panel discussion and a concert titled "Edward Kennedy Ellington's Washington."

Radio veteran Dick Golden, now at GWU, was MC and moderator of a discussion of whether Ellington has been underrated as a pianist. Smithsonian musicologist and author John Hasse gave a 20-minute presentation on Ellington that included great vintage photographs of Northwest Washington covering some of the sites where Ellington lived, frequented, or played in his early years. Hasse even quoted our favorite editor, Ted Hudson, on Duke's growing up in a segregated Washington during an "era when you put your best foot forward." Other panelists included Washington area pianist Jon Osmond and GWU's head of Vocal Jazz Studies, Allison Crockett. The latter two then joined other GWU faculty forming a 5-piece band featuring "Take the A Train," "Day Dream," an upbeat contemporary version of "In a Sentimental Mood," and "Satin Doll."

One of the most interesting parts of the program was the intermittent playing of short recordings such as an excerpt from Stanley Dance's eulogy at Ellington's funeral; Ellington speaking of being pleased when Frank Sinatra selected to record "I Like the Sunrise," which would have been his choice; and Duke discussing the switch of the orchestra's theme from "East St. Louis Toodle-oo" to "Take the A Train."

Birthday Celebration at Ellington Park

West End Friends, Washington's Advisory Neighborhood 2A Commission, and George Washington University jointly presented the Third Annual Birthday Concert at Ellington Park on his birthday. Entertainment included performances by students from the Ellington School of the Arts and by the University's King James & the Serfs of Swing band.

The Ellington Conference in 1985 at Oldham, England

by Peter MacHare, Program Coordinator

For our last program of the season, Patricia Willard will present a video about Ellington '85, a conference that took place (in Patricia's words) "at a charming, obscure inn on the northern moors—seemingly like a magical other world."

Many Ellington scholars and fans attended this conference, some of whom were members of our Society. Notable Ellingtonians Jimmy Hamilton, Willie Cook, Alice Babs, and Herb Jeffries attended. There are interviews, film clips, and even a birthday party. The video quality may not be great, but the event is worth seeing and hearing.

The program will be held at 7 pm on Saturday, 2 June 2012 at Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Streets, NW, and is for members only.

Let's make our last meeting of the season a pot luck with contributions from any members willing to bring something, since yours truly forgot to ask for a volunteer. Your President is pleased to provide the drinks and ice, as he always does.

Send Us Your Email

Please send us your email address to peter@depanorama.net with Ellington Society in the subject heading. With Ted Hudson retiring as our newsletter Editor, it may be necessary to announce some programs and other events via email.

Help Wanted

We are looking for volunteers to fill several positions within our Society. Our longtime Treasurer Frank "Bruiser" Arnold has decided to step down after serving very ably for many years. The Treasurer's duties take only about an hour and one-half each month, he reports. We could use someone to serve as Program Coordinator—this person is responsible for scheduling our monthly programs. And finally, we could also use a volunteer to serve as Refreshments Coordinator—this person is responsible for scheduling volunteers to bring refreshments to our monthly meetings.

If you are willing to be considered for any (or all) of these positions, please get in touch with Peter MacHare at peter@depanorama.net.

Jazz (Especially Ellington) on the Internet

by Peter MacHare

Not Internet savvy? You need to be. The Internet contains a wealth of music and information about the kind of music we love.

I'm going to start close to home with Peter MacHare's (hey, that's me) **A Duke Ellington Panorama** at <http://depanorama.net/>. This site contains our society's page (just click on DESociety at the top of the page) and all or our newsletters back to 1986. This site also contains the fabulous *Duke Ellington Music Society (DEMS) Bulletins* founded by Benny Aasland and presently edited by Sjef Hoefsmit. *DEMS Bulletins* contain a very large amount of information about Duke Ellington, concentrating on Duke's discography. Y'all should read every issue. A Duke Ellington Panorama also contains updates to the immense discography *The New Duke Ellington Story on Records* (commonly referred to as *The New Desor*) by Luciano Massagli and Giovanni Volonté which we presented during the show-and-tell portion of our May meeting. And A Duke Ellington Panorama also contains an Ellington discography (complete for the years 1924-1944 except for the recent Mosaic set) of released materials.

Lucky for one, one Internet site, **Ellington on the Web "I Ain't Got Nothin' but the Links,"** <http://ellingtonweb.ca/>, compiled by the estimable and admirable David Palmquist, is the most comprehensive source for Ellington information. It also contains a fantastic discography, keyed to your *New Desor*.

With jazz fans, of course, the music isn't the main thing, it's the only thing. We love to find out who played with whom on what recording. There are three sites particularly good. First, the **Jazz Discography Project** at <http://jazzdisco.org/> tends to concentrate on "Blue Note, Prestige, Riverside Records (the big three labels of modern jazz); bebop, cool/west coast, hard bop, modal/mode, free/avant-garde jazz musicians; Miles Davis's person connections; and more."

Second, <http://jazzdiscography.com/> contains jazz discographies created with a software package called BRIAN (named for Brian Rust) and includes an excellent Frank Sinatra discography among many others.

Third, we have the granddaddy of all jazz discography on the Internet, **Tom Lord's The Jazz Discography**, <http://www.lordisco.com/>, which claims to contain "everything you need to know about virtually any jazz record ever released." This site contains the largest motherlode of information of jazz recordings available on the web, but to subscribe the cost is \$9.99 per month.

The **Red Hot Jazz Archive** at <http://www.redhotjazz.com/> has lots of old jazz with expired copyright. You can read about the music, listen to it, and even download it. You will need to install RealPlayer to download or hear the music.

Besides Red Hot Jazz, there is a lot of free music on the Internet that you can download. Just search the artist, the title of what you are looking for, and the word "download" and see what you come up with. I was recently looking for a copy of "Washington & Lee Swing" by Louis Armstrong (now how cool is it to have Pops' record your college song?). The recording is out of print, but I found that I could download it.

Another great pleasure of Internet music is watching music videos on **YouTube**. Just go to <http://youtube.com/> and search "Duke Ellington." You will be pleasantly surprised how many videos turn up. I think you will then be inspired to search for more of your musical interests.

I'll close out this brief tour with two sites of general interest. You may have noticed that there are far fewer record stores than there used to be. To make up for this, you've got to go to <http://www.amazon.com/>. At **Amazon**, you can order CDs and DVDs of all your favorite artists. You can even hear samples of the music before you order. So, if you can do nothing else on the Internet, you need to know how to order an album from Amazon.

Lastly, the general Internet encyclopedia, the **Wikipedia**, often contains surprisingly good information about all sorts of things, music and historical. Check it out at <http://en.wikipedia.org/>.

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Miles and Duke

The report that the US Postal Service in collaboration with France's La Poste will issue a Miles Davis "forever" stamp brings to mind what he said about another musician who has been thusly honored, Duke Ellington: "At least one day out of the year all musicians should just put their instruments down, and give thanks for Duke Ellington."

Davis wrote that when Duke offered him a job, "... I couldn't make it, because I was finishing up *Birth of the Cool*. That's what I told him and it was true. I didn't—couldn't—go with Duke because I didn't want to put myself in a musical box playing the same music, night after night after night. My head was somewhere else. I wanted to go in another direction from the one he was going, although I loved and totally respected Duke."

A Night in Zurich, A Morning in Paris: Sathima Benjamin and Duke Ellington, 1963

by John Edwin Mason

In 1963, Duke Ellington changed the lives of two young South Africans forever. One of them was the composer/pianist Abdullah Ibrahim, then known as Dollar Brand. The story of Duke's discovery of this great talent in a Zurich, Switzerland, nightclub, the recording session that he produced in Paris, and the subsequent release *Duke Ellington Presents the Dollar Brand Trio* is well known.

The world is much less familiar with Sathima "Bea" Benjamin, the singer who persuaded Duke to visit that tiny Zurich club on a snowy winter night. She and Ibrahim, her husband-to-be, had fled South Africa in search of freedom and opportunity. Her singing impressed Duke deeply, and he recorded her as well as Ibrahim. Sadly, Benjamin's effort languished in a vault, until it was finally released to much acclaim as *A Morning in Paris* in 1996.

In March, I spoke with Benjamin, in Cape Town, South Africa, where she has resettled. She told me that when Duke arrived in Zurich for a concert, she already knew that Frank Sinatra had asked him to recruit new talent for Reprise records. She was determined to get his attention:

"... I don't know how I got backstage. . . . there were all these women with their furs. You know, Duke Ellington loved the ladies, and the ladies loved him. So there were a whole lot of rich, elegant Swiss ladies, with their furs and jewels, waiting to get in his dressing room. . . . and I'm standing there with my little Salvation Army clothes. . . . But every time the door would open, he would catch my eye. Then at one point he said, 'Let her in.' And there I was in the room. It was a miracle.

"I said if you'd just come with me when the show is over and listen to the Dollar Brand trio, I think you would be very interested. He didn't even ask me at that point what do I do. He said 'OK.'

"Afterwards . . . we get to the club and the owner had the key in the door. Abdullah and [band members] Makaya [Ntshoko] and Johnny [Gertze] were standing outside, and they see me get out of the car with Duke Ellington. Oh, my God! . . . So the owner puts the key back in the door and we go in.

"The trio played, and Duke sat there in wonderment. [He] said, 'Listen. Be at my hotel at 10:30 am.' We didn't sleep that night. It was February and was snowing. . . . We just couldn't believe what happened. [The next day, Ellington arranged for Sathima, Abdullah, and the band to travel to Paris to record for him.]

"... when we got to Paris . . . they took us to the Champs-Élysées. I have never in my life lived in such a grand hotel. . . . I was just amazed at the grandeur of it all. But that's what Ellington did. [At the Barclay studios], Ellington came in with little Billy Strayhorn. And he said, 'Strays... this is Bea. I think the two of you can do wonderful things.' And Strayhorn sits there, he has his big glass of champagne and his cigar. He says, 'What are we going to do?' Instead of me coming up with an Ellington song, I said I'm going to sing 'A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square.'

"Then Ellington said sing with the trio. . . . When I started to sing 'I Got It Bad,' he ran out of the booth. He said, 'Get off of the piano,' to Abdullah. 'This is my song.' I thought, 'Oh, first it was Strayhorn, now here's Ellington. I can either drop dead now or sing like I never sang before.' And I know I sang like I never sang before.

"A little later I sang 'Solitude' for the very first time. And ever since that time, when it comes time to do 'Solitude' in a show, I tell the pianists 'No, no, no.' They tell me that I don't have to sing it alone. I say, 'I'm not singing it alone. I'm hearing Ellington accompanying me. I'm not alone. . . . Ellington is here with me.'"

A Morning in Paris is available from Ekapa records. Tracks from the album are can be found on YouTube.

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Quotation of the Month

There was obviously a great personal bond between Paul [Gonsalves] and his leader, although the Duke's characteristically urbane comments in [Stanley] Dance's book do not hint at it. But Paul spoke to Duke, via *Downbeat's* issue for the Ellington 75th birthday, with an openness that matched the music [they had] just discussed. "You have been like a father to me," he said. "You have helped me shape my career. I think that I would like to be like you. I love you." The man capable of the frankness of those words has gone how, but we can still cherish the immediacy of his music as his permanent memorial. There is no doubt that it will last as a monument to a remarkable individual and to the depth and vigour of his response to life.

-- Graham Colombé, *Into Jazz*, June 1974; reprinted in *Blue Light*, Winter 2011-12

Basic Reference Works for Researchers, Enthusiasts, and General Public

Compiled by Theodore (Ted) Hudson

Over the years dedicated scholars have produced reference books on Ellington and his world that meet high standards for accuracy, completeness, and usefulness. Below are five tried and true such works that are generally available today.

● **Ellingtonia: The Recorded Music of Duke Ellington and His Sidemen, Fifth Edition**, comp. W.E. Timmer (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press Studies in Jazz No. 54, 2007)

This highly regarded work is essentially a discography. The main body is a chronological listing, the first entry being Snowden's Novelty Orchestra with Duke on piano, recorded 26 July 1923 in New York City's Victor Studios, the recording "likely rejected . . . and its master destroyed . . ." Its last entry is a concert at Northern Illinois University on 20 March 1974.

Following the Chronological Section are addenda, including: The Ellingtonians (names by which groups have been known and a definition for "Who is an Ellingtonian?"); indexes of Titles and of Musicians; General Index; Cities and Venues; On the Air; and private and unissued recordings. The entries' spatial format makes the data relatively easy to read.

● **The New Desor: An Updated Edition of Duke Ellington's Story on Records, 1924-1974, Parts One and Two**, by Luciano Massagli and Giovanni M. Volunté (Milano, Italy: 1999)

DESOR, as it is commonly called, is an amazing feat, decades in the making! Its first edition was published in Milano, Italy in 1983. Today it is the best known of the genre devoted to Ellington.

Part One is a chronological listing of recording sessions. The first entry lists "It's Gonna Be a Cold, Cold Winter," sung by vocalist Alberta Prime in New York City during November 1924, and ends, as does Timmer, with an unreleased recording of "Take the 'A' Train" by the orchestra at the Northern Illinois University Center on 20 March 1974.

In Section One: Sessions, each of the entries has, as far as is possible: date, name of band on record label, recording location, tune title/s, personnel and their instruments played, catalog number for each tune, best known title for the tune, vocalists, number of original and subsequent releases, and recording matrix number and take number. *Part One* also has keys to abbreviations used throughout.

Part Two is an index to *Part One*. A Titles section lists in alphabetical order all the titles in the chronological listings, making it possible, for instance, to see all the times that "Take the 'A' Train" was recorded. A Discs section is followed by a Musicians section. This last one shows when each one entered and left the band, the tunes on which he or she performed, and when.

Timmer and Desor are enhanced discographies. The following publications might be classified as discographies, too, but moreso as chronicles or perhaps, in a way of speaking, annotated itineraries.

● **Duke Ellington: Day by Day and Film by Film**, by Klaus Stratemann (Copenhagen: JazzMedia APS, 1991)

This classic reference covers Duke's career in film from his first, *Black and Tan* in 1929, to *Shepherd of the Night Flock* in 1977. The body of the book is as expected, chronological, and is divided into "Interludes."

Information about the individual films characteristically include the producer and director, cast, music, related record releases, background, and some form of appraisal. Happily, the book is not concerned exclusively with films. Interspersed are bits of history and other interesting informative writing and occasional essays.

The work is enriched by graphics, advertisements, programs, ephemera, and very good photographs. Dated personnel charts list the musicians and their tenures. Among the appendices are Select TV Programs; Ellington on Television; Cotton Club Programs and Film Illustrations; and Personnel Charts and Lists. Other end material includes a Bibliography; General Index; and indexes of Persons, Musical Units, Compositions, Cities, and Venues.

● **Duke Ellington: A Listener's Guide**, by Eddie Lambert (Lanham, MD and London: Scarecrow Press and Institute of Jazz Studies, 1999)

Written in narrative style, this reference does not pretend to be a complete, or formal, discography. Rather, it offers Lambert's non-technical analyses and critical views of what many consider to be Ellington's more significant compositions from 1924 to 1974. Some have found it rewarding to listen to the music while reading Lambert.

The arrangement of the book is both topical and chronological: Each era or phase is introduced by a short introductory essay, with such titles as "The Miley Era," "1940-An Artistic Peak," and "Billy Strayhorn." A final chapter offers a thoughtful and insightful "Duke Ellington's Music in Perspective."

Appendices are grouped as Bibliography, Discography, French RCA Integrale, Volumes 14 to 17: A Guide, and The Ellington Musicians and the Dates They Were with the Band. The volume ends with a helpful index.

● **Duke's Diary, Part One: The Life of Duke Ellington 1927-1950**, by Ken Vail (Cambridge, England: Vail Publishing, 1999) and **Part Two: The Life of Duke Ellington 1950-1974**, by Ken Vail (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002)

These two volumes are similar in format and intent, the difference being the time spans. In narrative fashion, they list Ellington's club, concert, and film appearances and detail his recording sessions. With its richness of photographs and reproductions of events advertisements, reviews, graphics, media clippings, and other ephemera, *Duke's Diary* is good for just plain page-turning browsing. Neither volume, though, has an index or table of contents.



Short Sheets . . .

♪ Ellington Center for Arts Salon ♪

Founded and headed by Mercedes Ellington, the Ellington Center for the Arts presented a Theatrical Salon for a new musical, *YES!* by Earl Wilson Jr., on 5 March at the Baruch Performing Arts Center in New York City.

♪ Duke Included in Ella Exhibit ♪

Patrons at the Ella Fitzgerald tribute exhibit at Kansas City's American Jazz Museum experience films of her on a large monitor performing "Lush Life," "Don't Get Around Much Any More," and "Lady Be Good" with the Ellington orchestra. There is also a photograph of her performing before an audience that includes Benny Goodman and Duke.

♪ Remembering Geneva Frances Perry ♪

The opening of the renovated Howard Theatre brings to mind our member Geneva Perry, who died in March 2002. She played saxophone with the famous Sweethearts of Rhythm, and in retirement from that became a LeDroit Park community activist and preservationist. Germane to our mentioning her now is that she was a dedicated community advisor on an initiative named the Howard Theatre Project.

♪ Jazz Education Network ♪

The relatively new Jazz Education Network has announced a 4th Annual Conference to be held on 2-5 January in Atlanta, GA. Some consider the organization a logical successor of the International Association for Jazz Education that shut down in 2008 because of bankruptcy.

♪ New Ellington Mural at Birth Site ♪

A very large, multi colored Ellington-themed mural now is in a place high on the Duke Ellington Building in the block of Ward Place, NW in Washington, DC where once stood the Ellington home at 2121 where he was born. The plaque installed there at Street level in 1988 remains in place. Our Society participated in the ceremony on that occasion.

Yes, Gonsalves Did Join Dorsey Band

In our March issue we asked if anyone had information on Paul Gonsalves at one time having left Duke to play with Tommy Dorsey.

Two of our members responded. Jane Vollmer in Buffalo, NY wrote that Gonsalves left the Ellington band on 15 February 1953, with Tony Scott replacing him, and returned from the Dorsey band on 2 March 1953. And our president, Peter MacHare, pointed out a passage on page 145 of John Morton's book *Backstory in Blue*. Here it is:

" . . . for three weeks in February 1953, Gonsalves went to play with trombonist Tommy Dorsey, who after some six years had reformed his band. In some respects he appreciated his three-week stint with the sentimental gentleman of swing. Sy Oliver, who had left Jimmie Lunceford in 1939 to do Dorsey's arrangements, gave the band pulse, and Dorsey liked to balance ballads and dance numbers—a disposition that fitted Gonsalves perfectly.

"Michael James said, however, that he went with Dorsey because he offered him more money. He soon returned because "Duke's music was more interesting." "I'm with you," he told Duke, "just take care of my family."

Ed. Note: Gratitude

My editing of our newsletter has been a fulfilling experience for which I am deeply grateful!

Our long-term president Terrell Allen sent out engaging, unique, monthly one-page letters that have proved to be classic. Theodore Shell, who succeeded him, continued in this fine tradition, using the generic title *Newsletter*, then turned the responsibility for a four-pager over to me, then his vice-president, in April 1993. Not long after, our members renamed it *Ellingtonia*. I continued as editor during Shell's administration, my own, into Peter MacHare's. On 30 June I will step down.

Looking back, I am especially thankful for the unstinting support of our members and all who helped by contributing news, reviews, humor, commentary, graphics, suggestions, and by other ways. As our leader was wont to say, I say to all of you, "Take a deep one!"

Now and Then by Brad Bradbie

(Powha Publishing Company)
Commentary by Bill Hassan

A mark of a great composer is to have his compositions enjoyed and become transgenerational. One of our members, Brad Bradbie, has done just that with his new CD release *Now and Then*. He has written all of the compositions and lyrics, self-produced the CD, and gathered a group of stellar musicians and vocalists to interpret these sterling pieces of music. At heart, Brad is a hipster who has historically seen some of the greatest epochs of jazz and many of its creative geniuses. All of the solos and solists' interpretations are perfectly suited for the compositions.

Because Brad can write and transform images that he has seen over time, the listener is transformed visually into each composition. He pays homage to various supporters of the music as well as giving notice of geographical global themes. His ballads create contemplative moods and the up-tempo pieces remind you of those early days when you sat in a club only a few feet from the artists, staring into the bell of the horns, or you were close enough to almost touch the musicians and have the music completely mesmerize you. We look forward to the next installments of Brad's kept secrets *Then and Now*.

Ed. Note: Brad Bradbie offers our members copies for \$15 each. Send a check to Powha Publishing Company, PO Box 538, Charlotte Hall, MD 20622.

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

Patricia Braxton and Patricia Willard

Pat Braxton's "Update on June Norton" that first appeared in our April 2011 issue has been reprinted, with attribution, in the *International DEMS Bulletin* XII:1 (April-July 2012), published in Belgium.

A review by Patricia Willard of the book *Clark: The Autobiography of Clark Terry*, written with his wife Gwen Terry, appears in the same issue.

Arthur (Art) Luby and Davey Yarborough

Art Luby's play "Paul Gonsalves on the Road" is scheduled to premiere on 21 July, the venue being Mountain, at Mount Vernon United Methodist Church in Washington, DC. Part of the Capital Fringe Festival, it will run on 21-22, 24, 27-28 of July.

A special feature of the drama will be our member Davey Yarborough—whom we know best as a saxophonist and flutist, Chair of Instrumental Music at the Ellington School of the Arts, and co-founder of the Washington Jazz Studies Institute—in a dramatic role as Gonsalves.

For curtain times and other details, go to the Web site <http://capitalfringe.org>.

Gayle Pinderhughes

We have learned that our new member Gayle Pinderhughes is a maternal grandniece of brothers Andrew and Louis Thomas. Andrew was the first manager of the Howard Theatre; Louis had the Oriental Gardens/Thomas Cabaret at 901 R Street in Washington where, c.1920, Duke, Claude Hopkins, "Bricktop," and others played. (There exists a photo of the trio Duke, Greer, and Sterling Conaway/Conway/taken at the cabaret.) The building was a designated historical structure, but nevertheless was razed in 2002.

Sjef Hoefsmit

It's great to know that Sjef Hoefsmit has progressed enough from his surgery to resume publication of *DEMS Bulletin*. For your copy of the latest issue, go online to www.depanorama.net/dems/121a.htm.

Recent Books for Your Consideration

Discover Jazz by John Edward Hasse and Ted Lathrop (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2011)

David Baker: A Legacy in Music by Monika Herzog (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011)

Gunther Schuller: A Life in Pursuit of Music and Beauty by Gunther Schuller (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2011)

Online Exhibit, Smithsonian Institution

Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn: Jazz Composers
National Museum of American History
historyexplorer.si.edu/resource/?=1995

Our May Meeting: Duke Ellington on Video

by Art Luby, Secretary

The May meeting of the Society featured a presentation by Peter MacHare of videos of Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong. The videos were appearances by the orchestra in otherwise forgettable feature films, although several were made specifically to feature the orchestra—i.e., "soundies." The videos go all the way back to the Cotton Club years and, one of the most interesting showed Duke with Artie Whetsol playing a brilliant muted trumpet, recreating the genesis of "Black and Tan Fantasy."

There were, by and large, well known performances, but always fun to revisit. We were able to see how Ray Nance earned his nickname "Floorshow" as he took on "It Don't Mean a Thing," and Ivie Anderson's rendition of "I Got it Bad" is still poignant seventy years after the fact. Peter added some famous Louis Armstrong videos, including the legendary and unsurpassed rendition of "Dinah."

In an era in which videos are made off of cell phones it is strange to think how rarely we can actually see the Ellington Orchestra in performance. These pre-war videos were almost forgotten at one time and each time they are on display one feels fortunate that the tape was somehow preserved.

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