From Kentucky Club to Carnegie Hall

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JAM SESSIONS OFTEN GIVE BIRTH TO NEW TUNES. ELLINGTON ARRANGEMENTS ARE TRICKY, WRITTEN TO SUIT THE SPECIAL TALENT OF HIS MUSICIANS

Duke Ellington celebrates 20 years of jazz at the mecca of all musicians

The top man in Negro music climbed on the bandwagon when he and his band played a hot spot called the Kentucky Club. That was twenty years ago, in New York City's Harlem. This year, Duke Ellington made another debut—at Carnegie Hall, goal of the great in music. With him were most of the men who had been with his Famous Orchestra since the early thirties; and the music they played was neither highbrow nor lowdown. The audience heard the same old hot-licks arrangements of Ellington's unique style, the music that has made him famous as a master of the jazz idiom.

Piano lessons bored Ellington when he was six years old. He never learned to play conventionally, but he was only a youngster when his flare for improvisations reaped attention and landed him a job in a Washington theatre. In 1923, he came to New York with the four musicians who formed the nucleus of the orchestra he has today. After a year of miscellaneous night club engagements, he opened at the Kentucky Club in Harlem. From then on, Duke's band was on the long stretch. One by one, his compositions hit the jackpot—*Mood Indigo, Sophisticated Lady, Ebony Rhapsody, Solitude, Caravan, Stormy Weather.* He played the Cotton Club, also in Harlem, in 1927, where he had a national broadcasting hook-up. His versatility kept him occupied. He has done movie shorts *(Black and Tan Fantasy)*, vaudeville (with Maurice Chevalier), two European tours which made his music as popular abroad as Mickey Mouse.

Ellington calls his work Negro Music, avoids the terms "jazz" or "swing." "It's still hot, but more subtle," he says. "Whatever it is, it's sure to be original." His fans are inclined to agree.

IN HOLLYWOOD, Duke presented "Ebony Rhapsody," for *Murder at the Vanities.* First among the current vogue of jazz versions of classical music, it was based on the "Hungarian Rhapsody."

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EDWARD KENNEDY ELLINGTON, called Duke because of his sartorial splendor, played the Oriental Gardens, Washington, D. C., in the early days. Sonny Greer, drummer, went with him to Carnegie Hall.

BLACK AND TAN FANTASY was first introduced by Duke at the Cotton Club in Harlem. Wild, tense and terrific, the number wowed Prohibition club-goers of the middle twenties. Later, RKO brought Ellington and his orchestra to Hollywood to make a modified short subject musical of this orchestration which is still being exhibited, is still popular among the Duke's multitude of fans.

WHEN RECORDING, Duke Ellington effectively guides his band by his own sign language. The Duke's fans call him a "terrific character," are avid collectors of any recordings he has ever made.

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THE NATIONAL PICTURE MONTHLY
June, 1943, Issue No. 6, Vol.No. 6

OldMagazineArticles.com

LATEST ELLINGTON triumph was the Carnegie Hall concert, ultimate goal of all musicians. There, his orchestra introduced a tone poem, *Black, Brown and Beige*, a musical history of the Negro race.