FROM ORIGINAL ANALOG MASTER





STORYVILLE

For many people Ben Webster is indelibly linked with the name of Duke Ellington. Ben had a long and distinguished career, of which his work with Duke was only a small part, but the crucial exposure just as he reached musical maturity was given by Ellington, and that maturity was hastened by the challenge of playing with Ellington. Yet he also gave a lot to the band and to the continuing Ellington tradition.

In other words, he created the role of the tenor saxophone with Duke. Before he joined for his longest stay (in January 1940), there had been no expectation of significant tenor contributions – despite Ben's previous brief encounters in 1935 and 1936. But, in far less time than the 3 ½ years he remai-

ned, Ben had made the tenor an Ellingtonian voice almost as strong as Johnny Hodges and Harry Carney on alto and baritone. His departure left a huge hole in Duke's music, which was filled by a series of heavyweight soloists including Al Sears, Jimmy Forrest, Don Byas, Ben again, and the great Paul Gonsalves.

Ellington always knew how to bring the best out of his major collaborators and, whereas Webster had sounded somewhat anonymous on other

people's records, with Duke he became the Ben we know and love. Like his favourite ballads, Ellington's swingers put the spotlight on his blend of two different tenor traditions. These were the luxuriant, harmonically involved outpourings perfected in the 1930s by Coleman Hawkins, and the tersely rhythmic Southwestern style originally based on Hawk's 1920s work. To

these elements, Ben added tone-colours which were unusual and whose variety was unusually wide for the period.

It is no coincidence that so many tunes in his repertoire were from the Ellington book. And, indeed, several of his own favourite performances (studio and live sessions) were done while he was a member. Veteran engineer Jack Towers

told me that the tenor solo on Duke's *Black, Brown And Beige,* written for Ben but only commercially recorded after his time, was a special favourite. "He would often ask me for a copy of the concert recording – the Boston version, not the Carnegie Hall – because of something he did in his introduction. He certainly liked to listen to himself play".

No fewer than six of the eight Ellington numbers here were composed between 1940 and 1943,

and first recorded with Ben on board. Even *Rockin' In Rhythm* and *Stompy Jones* (1930 and 1934 respectively) were still in Duke's pad – Rockin' stayed longer than anything else except huge hits like *Mood Indigo* – and there are air shots of both of them dating from Ben's tenure on the tenor. Given the symbiotic relationship of Ellington's writers (himself, Strayhorn, Mercer Ellington, Juan Tizol) with his sidemen, it is reasonable to say that Ben helped to create these pieces.

Cotton Tail, probably the most famous item to feature Ben, is a special case for not only is it almost de rigueur for any tenor soloist to quote Ben's improvisation, the sax section chorus which follows has been attributed (by people who should know, like Rex Stewart) to Webster as arranger. But, in a more general way, Ben described one consequence of Duke's methods: "You looked around and saw Duke scribbling on a piece of paper. Next time that lick you had invented turned up as his composition."

It's appropriate that the performances with the Danish Radio Band, apart from the simple blues *Things Ain't What They Used To Be*, are all based on the original scores. Thus Ben is not always the only soloist, with short trumpet spots on *Bojangles* and *Stompy* going to Allan Botschinsky, and clarinet and trombone on Rockin' by Jesper Thilo and Torolf Mølgård. But Webster certainly gets most of the available space, and his influence is also felt in the choice of tempos much closer to the originals than even Duke's own later versions.

More hectic is the contrasting quartet assault on the opening *Cotton Tail*, in which Niels Pedersen quotes another *I Got Rhythm* variant known as *Swing Spring* and based on a solo Bud Powell recorded with Cootie Williams. Interestingly *Perdido*, which sports a complete catalogue of shakes, trills, slurs and even a honk, and *In a Mellow Tone* were recorded with Teddy Wilson and it's often forgotten that the year before Ben joined Duke was spent with Wilson's big band – Webster was also on five of Wilson's sessions with Billie Holiday including the very first, and they were reunited on Ben's first album with strings.

But he remained an indelible part of Ellingtonia. On one of "The Guv'nor"s last trips to Europe, an extra Sunday afternoon concert was scheduled at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw for the band to play without Duke. Dutch enthusiast Donald Beck remembers that "some of the musicians decided to get him on stage. He was so proud, sitting there with his funny little hat on."

Brian Priestly

Tracks 2 & 4:

Kenny Drew (p); Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen (b); Al Heath (d) Recorded at Pori-Jazzfestival, Finalnd, July 14th 1967

Tracks 1 & 3:

Teddy Wilson (p); Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen (b); Makaya Ntsoko (d) Recorded at Odd Fellow Palaeet, Copenhagen, 1969

Track 9:

Palle Mikkelborg, Perry Knudsen, Palle Bolvig, Allan Botschinsky & Arne Lamberth (t); Per Espersen, Torolf Mølgård, Axel Windfeld, Ole Kurt Jensen & Erling Kroner (tb); Ulfe Karskov, Jesper Thilo, Erling Christensen, Bent Nielsen & Flemming Madsen (reeds); Ole Kock Hansen (p); Ole Molin (g); Hugo Rassmussen (b); Bjarne Rostvoid (d); Finn Ziegler (v) Conductor: Ray Pitts. Recorded for Dansih Radio, November 22nd 1971 Produced by Erik Moseholm

Tracks 5 & 7:

Palle Mikkelborg, Perry Knudsen,
Palle Bolvig, Allan Botschinsky &
Henry Hendel (t); Poul Jørgensen, Per Espersen,
Torolf Mølgård, Ole Kurt Jensen & Helmuth
Hjorth Hansen: (tb); Uffe Karskov, Jesper Thilo,
Erling Christensen, Bent Nielsen & Flemming
Madsen (reeds); Ole Kock Hansen (p); Ole Molin
(g); Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen (b);
William Schioppfe (d); Bjarne Rostvold
& John Steffensen (congas).
Conductor: Niels Jørgen Steen
Recorded for the Danish Radio,
October 10th 1969
Produced by Erik Moseholm

Tracks 6 & 8:

Palle Mikkelborg, Palle Bolvig,
Allan Botschinsky, Arne Lamberth & Svend
Lundvig (t); Torolf Mølgård, Ole Kurt Jensen,
Helmuth Hjorth Hansen, Poul Keldgård & Kurt
Jänberg (tb); Uffe Karskov, Jesper Thilo, Erling
Christensen, Bent Nielsen & Flemming Madsen
(reeds); Niels Jørgen Steen (p); Niels-Henning
Ørsted Pedersen (b); William Schiöppfe (d);
Bjarne Rostvold & John Steffensen (congas)
Conductor: Ib Glindeman
Recorded for the Danish Radio,
November 27th 1969
Produced by Poul Clemensen

BEN WEBSTER PLAYS DUKE ELLINGTON



- 1 PERDIDO 8:39 Tizol-Drake-Lengsfelder
- 2 JOHNNY COME LATELY 4:47
 - B. Strayhorn
- 3 IN A MELLOW TONE 6:58 D. Ellington
- 4 COTTONTAIL 4:56 D. Ellington
- 5 ROCKIN' IN RHYTHM 5:39 D. Ellington
- 6 THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE 3:05 D. Ellington
- 7 STOMPY JONES 5:34 D. Ellington
- 8 COTTONTAIL 3:19 D. Ellington
- 9 BOJANGLES 4:20 D. Ellington

2XHD MASTERING: RENÉ LAFLAMME 2XHD EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: ANDRÉ PERRY Album cover & Insert artwork: André Perry Liner notes: Brian Priesley Graphics: Sylvie Labelle



THE 2xHD FUSION MASTERING SYSTEM



In the constant evolution of its proprietary mastering process, 2xHD has progressed to a new phase called 2xHD FUSION, integrating the finest analog, with state-of-the-art digital technology.

The mastering chain consists of a selection of high-end vacuum tube equipment. For the recordings on this album, the original ½" 15 ips CCIR master tapes were played on a Nagra-T tape recorder, modified with high-end tube playback electronics, wired with OCC silver cable from the playback head direct to a Nick Doshi tube head preamplifier. The Nagra T, with its four direct drive motors, two pinch rollers and a tape tension head, has one of the best transports ever made. A custom-built carbon fiber head block and a head damping electronic system permit 2xHD FUSION to obtain a better resolution and 3D imaging.

The resulting signal is then transferred into high resolution formats by recording it in DSD 11.2 MHz using a Merging Technologies' Horus A to D converter. All analog and digital cables that are used are state of the art. The 2xHD FUSION mastering system is powered by a super capacitor power supply, using a new technology that lowers the digital noise found in the lowest level of the spectrum. A vacuum tube NAGRA HDdac (DSD) is used as a reference digital playback converter in order to A and B with the original analog master tape, permitting the fusion of the warmth of analog with the refinement of digital.

2xHD was created by producer/studio owner André Perry and audiophile sound engineer René Laflamme.

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