



# Duke Ellington's America

*Harvey G. Cohen*

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Few American artists in any medium have enjoyed the international and lasting cultural impact of Duke Ellington. From jazz standards such as “Mood Indigo” and “Don’t Get Around Much Anymore,” to his longer, more orchestral suites, to his leadership of the stellar big band he toured and performed with for decades after most big bands folded, Ellington represented a singular, pathbreaking force in music over the course of a half-century. At the same time, as one of the most prominent black public figures in history, Ellington demonstrated leadership on questions of civil rights, equality, and America’s role in the world.

With *Duke Ellington’s America*, Harvey G. Cohen paints a vivid picture of Ellington’s life and times, taking him from his youth in the black middle class enclave of Washington, D.C., to the heights of worldwide acclaim. Mining extensive archives, many never before available, plus new interviews with Ellington’s friends, family, band members, and business associates, Cohen illuminates his constantly evolving approach to composition, performance, and the music business—as well as issues of race, equality and religion. Ellington’s own voice, meanwhile, animates the book throughout, giving *Duke Ellington’s America* an intimacy and immediacy unmatched by any previous account.

By far the most thorough and nuanced portrait yet of this towering figure, *Duke Ellington’s America* highlights Ellington’s importance as a figure in American history as well as in American music.

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