



## **Music is My Mistress**

*Duke Ellington*

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## **Music is My Mistress** Duke Ellington

"Music is my mistress, and she plays second fiddle to no one." This is the story of Duke Ellington—the story of Jazz itself. Told in his own way, in his own words, a symphony written by the King of Jazz. His story spans and defines a half-century of modern music. This man who created over 1500 compositions was as much at home in Harlem's Cotton Club in the '20s as he was at a White House birthday celebration in his honor in the '60s. For Duke knew everyone and savored them all. Passionate about his music and the people who made music, he counted as his friends hundreds of the musicians who changed the face of music throughout the world: Bechet, Basie, Armstrong, Lena Horne, Ella Fitzgerald, Sinatra, to name a few of them. Here are 100 photographs to give us an intimate view of Duke's world—his family, his friends, his associates. What emerges most strongly in his commitment to music, the mistress for whom he saves the fullest intensity of his passion. "Lovers have come and gone, but only my mistress stays," he says. He composed not only songs that all the world has sung, but also suites, sacred works, music for stage and screen and symphonies. This rich book, the embodiment of the life and works of the Duke, is replete with appendices listing singers, arrangers, lyricists and the symphony orchestras with whom the Duke played. There is a book to own and cherish by all who love Jazz and the contributions made to it by the Duke.

## **Music is My Mistress Details**

Date : Published February 21st 1976 by Da Capo Press (first published 1973)

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## **From Reader Review Music is My Mistress for online ebook**

### **Laurel Scott says**

Duke Ellington's autobiography is a must-read for his fans. His writing is as tasty as his compositions. His descriptions of the musicians, various other people in his life, his spiritual inspirations, and his tours are wonderful. The book also has an extensive discography and other reference material.

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### **Spiros says**

In addition to being high up in the pantheon of those who have made me Proud to be an American, Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington was one beautiful cat. The problem with his autobiography? Basically, it's 480 or so pages (copiously illustrated, so really about 410 pages) of Duke waxing rhapsodic about how great everybody and everything is. With absolutely no discernable narrative structure. Still, some wonderful bits throughout, so I'll probably keep it in my bedside bookcase and dip back into it from time to time.

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### **Eric says**

I swear that at least a quarter of this book was about food and Duke's penchant for doggie bags -- that's the kinda autobio you're in for here. Soft, fluffy, self-censored, overly diplomatic, all comers praised... Still, his personality shines through, and there are some good stories and anecdotes in the mix. Enjoyed this far more than I should have.

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### **Jim says**

Wonderful Biography from the Grand Master of Jazz. Best Bio or Auto-Bio I've ever read.

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### **david f says**

A jazzy friend of mine recommended Duke Ellington's music to me and gave me this book. I began reading it, then was distracted for a while; I haven't yet picked it back up. Ellington knew his stuff, though, and the bits that I have read are down-to-earth and very personable. He might as well be sitting across from you at a coffee shop and telling you the stories himself. Though he rambles often, Ellington has moments where his odd quotes jump right off the page.

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### **Marc Davis says**

I love Duke Ellington, but not this book. His music is clever and innovative and emotional. The book is just

one big smiley face. That was Duke's personality. Couldn't say a bad word about anyone. But the result is all the good words about literally everybody and everything that ever happened to him are just not believable. Some good anecdotes, a few interesting mini-profiles, but mostly just bland. Exactly the opposite of his music.

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### **Lucrezia says**

Poiché vivo in una caverna sono quasi un eremita. Ma c'è una differenza, perché ho una donna. Le amanti vanno e vengono, ma la mia donna resta. E' bella e gentile. Mi serve con umiltà. E' dinamica. Ha grazia. Se la senti parlare non credi alle tue orecchie. Ha diecimila anni ma è moderna come il domani, una donna nuova ogni giorno ed eterna come il tempo. Vivere con lei è un labirinto di ramificazioni. Aspetto trepidante ogni suo gesto.

La musica è la mia signora e non fa da secondo violino a nessuno.

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### **Phillip says**

this book started out a teeny bit rough for me. great musicians don't always forge the best literary voices. duke's voice seemed overly eager to entertain, and push the razzle dazzle...but as the story continued, he shed his dancin' shoes and got down to the business of telling the story of how it all happened...the amazing journey of one of the longest standing bands in the history of american music. after a rough start, this book was intensely satisfying.

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### **Robert S says**

Duke Ellington was more than just a jazz musician, he was a musical treasure that provided joy to millions through the wonderful music he created. Even today, his music continues to inspire and be enjoyed by people from all over the globe. Jazz is just one of those universal languages that transcends any borders or barriers.

Its an unfortunate reality of the jazz genre in particular that many of its legends died young, leaving a lack of written account in their own words about their fascinating lives, their views on music, and more. We are lucky that this is not the case with Duke and instead we get to spend some time with one of the most interesting musicians of the 20th century.

Duke provides the reader with his feelings about the numerous musicians he played with, listened to, or crossed paths with in his life. The only unfortunate part is his stories are often so short that you don't get to scratch the surface.

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### **Winter Sophia Rose says**

Fascinating, Compelling & Insightful! I Loved It!

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## **Asails F says**

Used to love watching Duke and others in the morning in between the cartoons playing their songs.

I remember Duke telling the story of how the Song Take the A train was made. And then later hearing the Billy Strayhorn version. Their very close relationship was even more amazing and helped make music history.

Read this book.

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## **Mia says**

It's rare to find a memoir that exudes such ebullience. Even as you disagree with an opinion or acknowledge that there are obviously parts of the story not being told, the sheer joy and curiosity expressed is infectious. One of my favorite quotations from the Q&A epilogue: "Q: Based on your observations, what do you believe will lead to the downfall of mankind? A: A combination of complacency and underestimation."

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## **Anders says**

As a huge fan of the Ellington band, and Duke's + band's incredible accomplishments while on earth this was a very engaging read. Duke verbal style, flowing and distinguished as well as generous prose is fun to read. Especially his own rendition of his early years and describing life playing music in New York in the 20's and 30's is wetly appetizing and imaginative, even when he goes over the top in his storytelling. The book is packed with charming and insightful analogies to the muse, references to food, international travelling, princes, kings, nobility all over, and their female counterparts. His enormous prolificity, incredible musicianship, endless appetite, love, humanity and elegant appearance led to work 52 weeks of the year, and heralding around the globe. It's fascinating to ponder what he chose to put on paper versus what he left out. He never says a bad thing about anyone, even Nixon - "beautiful". His words about music are quite beautiful and poetic, and his positive tone about how he sees life inspiring and respectable. There probably was a choice to speak like that early on in order to keep up an optimal attitude towards the world, and inspire a matching answer in return.

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## **Jelinas says**

I was six years old the first time I ever touched a piano. Being the stereotypical Korean parents that they were, my parents insisted on my taking piano lessons before my feet could even touch the pedals.

Thus began my tempestuous relationship with classical music – I loved to listen to it and hated playing it. I went from being a mediocre pianist to a downright awful violinist. I certainly never blossomed into the prodigy that my parents dreamed of bragging to their friends about.

But I'll always be thankful for the piano lessons because they paved the way for me to understand and appreciate jazz music.

And jazz has no greater hero than Duke Ellington.

Ellington penned an autobiography in 1973, when he was seventy-four years old. The life experience he'd racked up at that point was impressive. He'd traveled all over the world and become a household name in a time when blacks were allowed to play the hottest clubs, but not to frequent them. His was a truly a life less ordinary.

Ellington describes his childhood, his family, and his introduction into the music scene with no less flair than you'd expect from one of the forefathers of jazz. While his writing doesn't necessarily flow (he was better at the music than the words), some of his anecdotes about the people he met on his musical journey had me on the floor. When you're a musician, you meet some real interesting cats.

There are some drawbacks to reading a man's account of his own life, however. He's free to omit whatever he chooses. He speaks constantly of his son Mercer, but never mentions who Mercer's mother was. I had to hop on Wikipedia to discover that her name was Edna Thompson and that she was Duke's childhood sweetheart. I had to go to WikiAnswers to find out that they were married from 1917 to the late 1920s. Beyond that, I'd probably have to read a biography of Duke Ellington.

But reading Ellington's firsthand account of his musical escapades was worth the while. It's almost as good as living it myself.

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## **Josh Giunta says**

Duke could be the first person to write an autobiography who named each chapter after someone else and wrote more about about his peers & colleagues than of himself.

Favorite quote =

Q: "What is your favorite composition you have written?"

Ellington: "The one I'm going to write tomorrow."

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