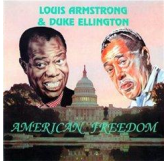


Louis Armstrong & Duke Ellington - American Freedom (1961)

Written by bluesever
Friday, 22 July 2016 11:58 -

Louis Armstrong & Duke Ellington - American Freedom (1961)



01. Duke`s Place (5:05) 02. I'm Just A Lucky So And So (3:07) 03. Cottontail (3:44) 04. Mood Indigo (3:58) 05. Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me (2:37) 06. The Beautiful American (3:08) 07. Black And Tan Fantasy (4:00) 08. Drop Me Off At Harlem (3:49) 09. The Mooche (3:42) 10. In A Mellow Tone (3:49) 11. It Don't Mean A Thing (3:58) 12. Solitude (4:54) 13. Don't Get Around Much Anymore (3:31) 14. I'm Beginning To See The Light (3:36) 15. Just Squeeze Me (3:58) 16. I Got It Bad And That Ain't Good (5:30) 17. Azalea (5:03) Louis Armstrong - trumpet, vocals; Duke Ellington - piano; Barney Bigano - clarinet; Trummy Young - trombone; Mort Herbert - bass; Danny Barselona - drums. Recorded at RCA Studios, New York City on April 3 & 4, 1961.

Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington were (and are) two of the main stems of jazz. Any way you look at it, just about everything that's ever happened in this music leads directly -- or indirectly -- back to them. Both men were born on the cusp of the 19th and 20th centuries, and each became established as a leader during the middle '20s. Although their paths had crossed from time to time over the years, nobody in the entertainment industry had ever managed to get Armstrong and Ellington into a recording studio to make an album together. On April 3, 1961, producer Bob Thiele achieved what should be regarded as one of his greatest accomplishments; he organized and supervised a seven-and-a-half-hour session at RCA Victor's Studio One on East 24th Street in Manhattan, using a sextet combining Duke Ellington with Louis Armstrong & His All-Stars. This group included ex-Ellington clarinetist Barney Bigard, ex-Jimmie Lunceford swing-to-bop trombonist Trummy Young, bassist Mort Herbert, and drummer Danny Barcelona. A second session took place during the afternoon of the following day. The music resulting from Thiele's inspired experiment is outstanding and utterly essential. That means everybody ought to hear this album at least once, and many will want to hear it again and again all the way through, for this is one of the most intriguing confluences in all of recorded jazz. Armstrong blew his horn with authority and sang beautifully and robustly. "Azalea" is a harmonically pixilated melody with complicated, peculiarly rhymed lyrics composed by Duke many years earlier with Armstrong in mind. Other highlights include the bluesy "I'm Just a Lucky So and So," a smoking hot, scat-laden rendition of "Cotton Tail," and "The Beautiful American," a marvelously modern exercise composed on the spot by Ellington that

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leaves one with the curious impression that Armstrong has just finished sitting in with Charles Mingus. It's also a premonition of the Ellington/Mingus/Roach Money Jungle session that would take place the following year. Since Thiele had "borrowed" Ellington from Columbia without permission, Roulette compensated by "lending" Count Basie & His Orchestra for the big-band blowout album entitled First Time! The Count Meets the Duke. The Armstrong/Ellington master takes were originally issued on two long-playing records; Together for the First Time came out on Roulette in 1961 and The Great Reunion appeared in 1963. Both albums later resurfaced as a Roulette LP two-fer entitled The Duke Ellington/Louis Armstrong Years. This material is also available in a Roulette Jazz Deluxe Edition with The Making of The Great Summit, a fascinating supplementary disc containing an hour's worth of rehearsals, conversations, and alternate takes. Those who truly love and respect Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington will want to obtain, absorb, study, and cherish the Deluxe Edition of The Great Summit. --- arwulf arwulf, Rovi

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