

# Duke ellington

People



**DUKE ELLINGTON** Duke Ellington, named Edward Kennedy Ellington at birth, was born on April 29, 1899, in Washington D. C. to James Edward Ellington and Daisy Kennedy Ellington. Both of Ellington's parents were talented, musical individuals. Edward Kennedy was later nicknamed Duke by his childhood friend, Edgar McEntire and this name has stuck with him throughout his life and career. Duke Ellington was one of Jazz and Big Band's most influential icons.

He was known for famous recordings such as "Sophisticated Lady", "Take the A Train," "It Don't Mean a Thing If It Ain't Got that Swing," and "Satin Doll." Duke Ellington started taking piano lessons at age seven and became more serious about his piano lessons after hearing a pianist who worked at Frank Holiday's poolroom. He was fourteen and had started sneaking into the poolroom. After listening to the poolroom's pianist, something was ignited within and he fell in love with the piano.

Ellington was known for his ability to choose members for his band who possessed very unusual talents while playing their instruments. These talents included Bubber Miley, who used a plunger to make the "wa-wa" sound, and Joe Nanton, who was known for his trombone "growl." It was for this quality to find such unusual players and his ingenious ability to compose beautiful music that led to Ellington's huge success. Duke Ellington composed over 1,000 compositions right up until the day he died, May 24, 1974.

Although Ellington was known as a huge figure in Jazz, his music spread beyond the Jazz genre; it stretched into blues, gospel, popular, classical and film scores. Through his efforts and achievements, he has made Jazz more

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accepted as an art form and genre. Ellington had received 12 Grammy awards from 1959 to 2000. These awards were granted in the categories of Jazz, Big Band and composing; three of the awards were posthumous. Ellington has several famous quotes such as, " There is nothing to keeping a band together.

You simply have to have a gimmick, and the gimmick I use is to pay them money! "; " If it sounds good and feels good, then it IS good! " and His autobiography, " Music is My Mistress" describes " the Duke's " life in music. He ate, drank, walked and talked music. His music is known all over the world and when you think about Jazz and Big Band music greats, you would definitely think of Ellington. Duke Ellington has several memorials in New York, where lived for many years in a town house on the corner of Manhattan's Riverside Drive and 106th Street ; in Washington D.

C. , his birthplace and Los Angeles, California. Starting with Washington, D. C. , In 1974, the Calvert Street Bridge was renamed Duke Ellington Bridge; in 1989, a bronze plaque was attached to the newly named Duke Ellington Building at 2121 Ward Place and a mural by Aniekan Udofia was placed above his name; In 2010, the triangular park, across the street from Duke Ellington's birth site, at the intersection of New Hampshire and M Streets, NW was named, Duke Ellington Park. In New York, West 106th Street was officially renamed Duke Ellington Boulevard.

A large memorial to Ellington, created by sculptor Robert Graham, was dedicated in 1997 in New York's Central Park, near Fifth Avenue and 110th Street, an intersection named Duke Ellington Circle. A nationally renowned annual competition called " The Essentially Ellington High School Jazz Band <https://assignbuster.com/duke-ellington/>

Competition and Festival” started in 1996 at “Jazz at Lincoln Center” recognizes prestigious high school bands. In Los Angeles, California, a statue of Ellington at a piano is featured at the entrance to UCLA's Schoenberg Hall. It was here that Duke Ellington arrived very late to a free concert due to a mix-up of venues.

To make up for this mistake, Duke Ellington and his band played a four hour concert at Duke Hall. This ended up being the first-ever jazz performance in a concert venue. Duke Ellington was one of only four other Jazz musicians to appear on the cover of “Time Magazine”. He was also the only African American to appear by himself on a circulating US coin. He has been recognized by historians as being the first African American musician who created a significant Hollywood film score comprising of non-diegetic music. His works have been inducted into the “Grammy Hall of Fame” and many tributes were made in his honor.

In 1954, Dave Brubeck dedicated “the Duke” which became a standard for other musicians. The album, “The Real Ambassadors” has a vocal version, “You Swing Baby (The Duke)” which is performed by Louis Armstrong and Carmen McRae and dedicated to Duke Ellington. Miles Davis created “He Loved Him Madly” as a tribute to Ellington one month after his death. Stevie Wonder wrote the song “Sir Duke” as a tribute to Ellington in 1976. A song by Judy Collins called “Sir Duke” was written in 1975 honoring and describing his funeral.

Ellington appeared publicly up until a couple of months before he died from lung cancer and pneumonia on May 24, 1974. He was 75 years old. It is recorded that his last words were, “Music is how I live, why I live and how I

will be remembered. " At his funeral, over 12, 000 people attended which was held at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Ella Fitzgerald summed up the occasion by stating, " It's a very sad day. A genius has passed. " Her words resonate in the hearts of many; for, through his efforts and contributions to the world, genius is truly evident.