

Duke Ellington – Blues in Orbit (1959)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Blue In Orbit* [play](#)
2. *Track 360* [play](#)
3. *Villes Ville Is The Place, Man*
4. *Brown Penny*
5. *Three J's Blues*
6. *Smada*
7. *Pie Eye's Blues*
8. *C Jam Blues*
9. *Sweet & Pungent*
10. *In A Mellotone*
11. *Sentimental Lady*
12. *Blues In Blueprint*
13. *The Swingers Get The Blues, Too*
14. *The Swinger's Jump*

Cat Anderson - Trumpet Shorty Baker - Trumpet Harry Carney - Reeds, Sax (Baritone) Duke Ellington - Composer, Piano Matthew Gee - Composer, Horn (Baritone), Trombone Paul Gonsalves - Reeds Bill Graham - Reeds Jimmy Hamilton - Reeds Johnny Hodges - Reeds, Sax (Alto) Quentin Jackson - Trombone Ray Nance - Trumpet, Violin Russell Procope - Reeds John Sanders - Trombone Billy Strayhorn - Composer, Piano Clark Terry - Trumpet Michael Booty Wood - Trombone Jimmy Woode - Bass Britt Woodman - Trombone Sam Woodyard - Drums

The atmospheric, floating quality (see title) of the production and the mysterious, airy, and sparse arrangements make this record an overlooked gem. The first three tracks, recorded in February 1958, include the slow-moving blues of the title track, on which Duke Ellington's eerie piano fills answer the statements of the full band. "Track 360" is a dramatic aural representation of a train wreck. The remainder of the album was recorded at two midnight sessions in December of the following year. Ray Nance (the only trumpet because of band restructuring) and especially Johnny Hodges offer the most rewarding solo contributions of the date, many of

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which stand alongside their best ever. Hodges's magnificently fragile and seductive alto graces "Brown Penny" and handles both delicate and driving passages with aplomb on Billy Strayhorn's "Smada" (with the composer in the piano chair) while Nance belts out the bridge. The band also revisits classics from the Ellington songbook: Nance shows his violin prowess on "C Jam Blues" before growling through "In a Mellotone"; "Sentimental Lady" is in Hodges's capable caress. --*Marc Greilsamer*

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