


[HOME](#)
[CURRENT ISSUE](#)
[NEWS](#)
[REVIEWS](#)
[CLIPS/TRAILERS](#)
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[FORUMS](#)
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### Whats New?

Movie Review

[Deuce Bigalow: European Gigolo](#)

Movie Review

[Four Brothers](#)

DVD News

[Win The Big Black Comedy Show: Volume 3 on DVD!](#)

DVD News

[Roswell: The Complete Third Season DVD Giveaway!](#)

Movie Review

[The Skeleton Key](#)

Movie News

[Singer: Superman "an Extraordinary Responsibility"](#)

DVD Review

[Bright Leaves](#)

DVD Review

[Miles Davis: The Cool Jazz Sound / Duke Ellington: The Big Band Feeling](#)

TV News

[Xena Embarks on the Galactica](#)

TV News

[The Sopranos to Sing a Bit More?](#)

Movie News

[Flash Update](#)

Music Review

[Ear Plugs: Brendan Benson/Keith Slettedahl, 7/26/05](#)

Home [▶](#) Reviews [▶](#) DVD Review [▶](#) [Miles Davis: The Cool Jazz Sound / Duke Ellington: The Big Band Feeling](#) Friday, 12 August 2005

## Miles Davis: The Cool Jazz Sound / Duke Ellington: The Big Band Feeling

Contributed by Brent Simon

Thursday, 11 August 2005



The "Stars of Jazz Collection" continues to be a veritable golden pipeline for jazz and blues aficionados, as two recent catalogue releases from music titans Miles Davis and Duke Ellington reconfirm. Though their respective genius has left this mortal realm, the recovery of old performance material and the latest technological advances have together constituted an authentic "happening" for both musicologists and amateur fans alike, so surprisingly aesthetically satisfying are the remnants.

*Miles Davis: The Cool Jazz Sound* is a mere 25 minutes in length, but it's a mesmerizing disc for anyone remotely familiar with or interested in the trumpet legend. Recorded with a 15-piece orchestra in early April of 1959 for a live CBS broadcast from the Robert Herridge Theater in New York City, the line-up features a virtual murderer's row of musical all-stars. Alongside Davis on trumpet and flugelhorn are John Coltrane on tenor and alto sax, Jimmy Cobb on drums, Danny Bank on clarinet, Wynton Kelly on piano and Jimmy Cleveland, Rod Levitt, Bill Elton and Frank Rehak all on trombone. The set consists of four tunes: Dave Brubeck's "The Duke," Gil Evans' soul-piercing "Blues for Pablo," Ahmad Jamal's "New Rhumba" and Davis' own composition, the immediately catchy "So What." As Coltrane and others stand coolly in the background, smoking cigarettes and awaiting their turn at a solo, Davis' lower neck bulges like a bullfrog, providing the terse, powerful blasts of this call-and-response gem, which would go on to anchor his seminal 1959 album *Kind of Blue*.

*Duke Ellington: The Big Band Feeling* is a bit longer. Clocking in at 45 minutes, this title features a track listing that includes "Sophisticated Lady," "Caravan," "The Mooche," "VIP's Boogie," "Mood Indigo," "Cottontail," "The Hawk Talks," "Flamingo," "C Jam Blues (Hot

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[Fullmetal Alchemist: Vol. 4 - The Fall of Ishbal](#)

## Game Review

[Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition](#)

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## This Month In Print



## Polls

What next-gen console system(s) do you intend to purchase upon its release?

- Xbox 360
- PlayStation 3
- Nintendo Revolution
- Xbox 360 & PlayStation 3
- Xbox 360 & Nintendo Revolution
- PlayStation 3 & Nintendo Revolution

## Featured Clip

Chocolate)" and the classic "I Got It Bad and That Ain't Good." Even neophyte jazz listeners will likely recognize several of these tunes from film, television or advertising; "Cottontail" was used by Mazda in the 1990s, and "Mood Indigo" has popped up in a variety of campaigns. Ellington is as smooth as ever, and the direction/presentation is, like the Davis title, surprisingly involved and evolved for the time, not just a flat, two-dimensional concert shoot.

Though the video quality is typical of the era, these discs — both individually and collectively — are among the most stunning catalogue musical titles I've seen, capturing legendary figures at the apex of their creativity. The sound, too, is surprisingly solid. While no extra interviews, contextual analysis or anything of the like turn up to complement the main programs, finds of this magnitude are rewarding in and of themselves. A (Shows) B+ (Disc)

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