



Today, Duke Ellington is considered by many as being one of America's greatest composers, bandleader and recording artist of all time, but when he was a child, this jazz great almost gave up playing music altogether!

Tired of practicing classical music every day, young Duke Ellington quit his piano lessons to play outside with his friends when he was seven years old. In fact, Duke didn't take up the piano again until he reached his teens. Why did Duke Ellington start playing piano again in high school? The answer is pretty simple: to get a date. Teen Duke found out that the girls at his school loved a boy that could play a mean piano. True to his royal nickname, the "Duke" showed up to every music gig dressed like royalty, flashing a big smile to each lady in the audience."

As a teenager, by day, Duke Ellington earned money as a dishwasher and a few other odd jobs, and by night he formed small jazz ensembles to play high school dances and dance halls. Soon after, the Duke decided to follow his dream of a musical career by moving to New York with some of his closest musician friends. At first, Duke Ellington and a group of friends found only limited success. The dance craze at this time, just after World War 1 time was the Charleston and there was a lot of competition for jazz audiences in New York. But after a while they worked up a reputation and landed a permanent gig in the late 1920s with the hottest club in Harlem, New York called The Cotton Club. It was there the Duke became famous.

Duke Ellington was most popular in the 19___s and ___s when he hosted a weekly radio broadcast and white clientele were pouring in to see him nightly. This set the stage for him to become a worldwide celebrity and he enjoyed many years playing and touring the world. His music is generally known as part of the ___ ___ era.

Many bandleaders led from the _____ like Duke Ellington. Other instruments in the Big Band were _____, _____ and _____.

Just about every year in the height of his career, Duke Ellington and his Orchestra produced major jazz hits which included _____, It _____ a _____, _____ and _____.

Today, Duke Ellington is remembered with many awards and memorials signifying his contributions to American music. He has a star on the Hollywood walk Of Fame and was one of only five jazz musicians to have ever been featured on the cover of Time Magazine. In 1976, pop music great Stevie Wonder wrote a song called *Sir Duke* as a tribute to Duke Ellington and in 2009, Duke Ellington became the first African - American to be featured on a US coin. From his early performances at high school to his Carnegie Hall successes, everyone loved his royal highness, Duke Ellington!

FAST FACTS

NAME: Edward Kennedy Ellington

BORN: April 29, 1899 - Washington D.C., USA

DIED: May 24, 1974

STYLE: Big band, jazz, swing

INSTRUMENTS: Piano, Bandleader

IMPORTANT WORKS

FUN FACTS

Duke Ellington stopped using his full name, Edward Kennedy Ellington, when a buddy in grade school decided that a royal name better fitted Duke's aristocratic attitude. True to his reputation, the Duke dressed to impress, always wearing the trendiest fashions and trying his best to woo his adoring female fans.