

THE CITY OF JAZZ

by Duke Ellington

Dated March 26, 1959 this is the FOREWORD to a book entitled "Just Jazz 3", by Sinclair Traill and Gerald Lascelles (1959).

The City of Jazz is a place in which certain people live. Some are on their way out, while many others are on their way in. Some are rushing to get there, but others appear reluctant and are cautious in their approach. Still others claim they are afraid, and hesitate to expose themselves in this place they feel so strange, this strange place where the most solid citizens are so hip, or slick, or cool. These hesitant ones fear they will feel like country folk in the metropolis, or like people on the Chinatown bus-tour. They wonder if they will be taken for suckers or squares.



Duke Ellington: my many visits to and from the city... has convinced me that its people are all very nice human beings... PHOTO CREDIT JOHN ANTILL

My experience on my many visits to and from the city (I do one-nighters, you know) has convinced me that its people are all very nice human beings. There are those who work for the city (the players), those who work at the city (the analysts), and those who just enjoy it (these are my people). The citizens of all three categories are more concerned with what they like than what they dislike. All of them, too, assume that they know one another. For instance, when they meet for the first time they embrace warmly like old college chums.

In the city's public square, you find statues of heroes, some are of those who built the walls, like Buddy Bolden and King Oliver. They appear to have been sculptured in

bars, after-hour joints, and houses of ill-repute. Some are of those who fought to save the city, like Fletcher Henderson and Paul Whiteman, and they are identified with the world of ballroom palaces. Some are of those who went down swinging, like Bix Beiderbecke and Chick Webb, and who were decorated posthumously for heroic performances above and beyond the call of duty. Lastly, in the same concert halls where they play the masterworks, are statues of some of the great ones still defending the walls, like Bechet, Armstrong and Hawk.



*Some fought to save the city, like Fletcher Henderson (left, pictured with Benny Goodman) while some went down swinging, like Chick Webb (below)...
HENDERSON/GOODMAN PHOTO COURTESY
A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF JAZZ*



This City of Jazz does not have any specific geographical location. It is anywhere and everywhere, wherever you can hear the sound, and it makes you do like this—you know! Europe, Asia, North and South America, the world digs this burg as Digsville, Gonesville, Swingersville, Wailingsville. There are no city limits, no city ordinances, no policemen, no fire department, but come rain or come shine, drought or flood, I think I'll stay here in this scene, with these cats, because almost everybody seems to dig what they're talking about, or putting down. They communicate, Dad. Do you get the message? Villesville is the place—*trelos anthropos!*