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## Duke Ellington

### **Early Life**

Born on April 29, 1899, Ellington was raised by two talented, musical parents in a middle-class neighborhood of Washington, D.C. At the age of seven, he began studying piano and earned the nickname "Duke" for his gentlemanly ways. Inspired by his job as a soda jerk, he wrote his first composition, "Soda Fountain Rag," at the age of 15. Despite being awarded an art scholarship to the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, Ellington followed his passion for ragtime and began to play professionally at age 17.

### **Songs**

Ellington's fame rose to the rafters in the 1940s when he composed several masterworks, including "Concerto for Cootie," "Cotton Tail" and "Ko-Ko." Some of his most popular songs included "It Don't Mean a Thing if It Ain't Got That Swing," "Sophisticated Lady," "Prelude to a Kiss," "Solitude" and "Satin Doll." A number of his hits were sung by the impressive Ivie Anderson, a

favorite female vocalist of Ellington's band.

'Take the A Train'

Perhaps Ellington's most famous jazz tune was "Take the A Train," which was composed by Billy Strayhorn and recorded for commercial purposes on February 15, 1941. "Take the A Train," the "A" referring to a subway line in New York City, took the place of Ellington's previous signature tune "Sepia Panorama."

#### Citations

<https://www.biography.com/musician/duke-ellington>

<https://www.libertyparkmusic.com/best-jazz-pianists/>

<https://youtu.be/cb2w2m1JmCY>

<https://www.songfacts.com/facts/duke-ellington>