

# "Beyond Category: The Musical Genius of Duke Ellington" at the National Civil Rights Museum



**DUKE ELLINGTON**

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — The Memphis experience has been shaped by its musical legends and talents. This river city is home to everything from down home blues, to soul stirring gospel, to raucous rock-n-roll.

It's the "Home of the Blues/ Birthplace of Rock-n-Roll." In keeping with Memphis' rich music history, the National Civil Rights Museum will increase appreciation for the vibrancy of jazz through an exhibition of the musical achievements of Duke Ellington.

The museum will house a 4,000 square-foot exhibition, Beyond Category: The Musical Genius of Duke Ellington. The exhibit includes personal memorabilia, musical instruments and original scores, international posters, photographs, recreations of period settings, scrapbooks, and press clippings of one of the foremost composers, musicians, and

innovators of the 20th century, Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington.

"The music of Duke Ellington will add new dimensions to Memphis' rich music tradition," says Juanita Moore, executive director of the National Civil Rights Museum.

The Duke Ellington Collection illustrates influences from Ellington's life such as a street scene complete with landmarks of the Washington, D.C. neighborhood where Ellington grew up; a cityscape vignette, showing downtown clubs and uptown Harlem, especially the Cotton Club, one of New York's hottest nightclubs, where Ellington performed from 1927-

1931. In addition, the exhibition follows Ellington's orchestra years with the use of vintage radios and period microphones and interactive video stations that add a modern touch to the nostalgic settings.

The title of the exhibition "Beyond Category," was also Ellington's highest term of praise. Additionally, it is a fitting description of the man himself. Born Edward Kennedy Ellington (1899-1974), the composer, writer, band leader, and orchestrator was nicknamed "Duke" at an early age for his aristocratic demeanor and elegant dress.

Composing by the age of 14, Ellington produced at least 1,500 compositions, including popular songs, instruments, theatrical works, and motion picture scores. Undeniably one of a kind, the musical genius that was Ellington lay in his uncanny ability to combine seemingly contradictory styles, moods, and sounds turning them into collaborations.

This traveling exhibit of the Duke Ellington Collection is the first in a series focusing on the origins of the jazz orchestra, the swing era and New Orleans jazz. The exhibition is a part of

America's Jazz Heritage, a partnership of the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund and the Smithsonian Institution. It was organized by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition

Service (SITES) and the National Museum of American History's Division of Musical History.

For more information, call the National Civil Rights Museum at (901)521-9699.

## Micheal Jackson Boogies From CAA

HOLLYWOOD - Michael Jackson has left Creative Artists Agency in all areas of representation and is moon walking to United Talent Agency, where the self-styled King of Pop has signed for representation as an actor only.

CAA is losing the artist's lucrative concert, personal appearance bookings and potential pay TV rights for North America. He has not toured in the states for 11 years, however, since the Jackson Family Victory tour in 1984. His exit comes at a time when he and his promoters promise to support his latest "HIStory" album with both a domestic and international run.

The agency represented Jackson for what is believed to have been 10 years and had worked for The Jackson Five earlier. CAA confirmed that he had left the agency in all areas of representation.

It's not clear who will now represent the artist in other areas and what will happen with those billings or with his personal appearance business. Marcel Avram, who runs Mama Concerts & Rau, orchestrates Jackson's tours and is likely to support "HIStory."

Promoters and representatives in the U.S. and abroad have been examining dates for the tour as well as possible promotional partners from corporate America. PepsiCo, a longtime partner, canceled its endorsements in November 1993, three months after allegations of child molestation arose against the performer and after Jackson canceled his "Dangerous" world tour, claiming he was addicted to prescription painkillers.

Sandy Gallin, who did not return calls, remains Jackson's manager.

Jackson's concert tours are a lucrative business. He has a large and loyal following around the world. He has sold out 30,000 seat arenas 13 nights in a row with tickets retailing for \$100 a pop. Depending on its structure, a Jackson stateside tour could gross more than \$100 million.

Jackson could easily sell out one night at Dodgers Stadium, but the real test is whether he can sell out multiple nights in similarly sized venues.

In October 1992, Home Box Office paid what industry sources estimated was a record-breaking \$3 million to \$5 million for pay TV rights to air one of his "Dangerous" concerts from his Bucharest, Romania stop. At the time, it was the cable channel's highest-rated music special. HBO will once again join with Jackson to broadcast his return

to the stage.

Although his following is staggering — his appearance on "PrimeTime Live" last month drove that broadcast to become the highest-rated outing for an ABC news magazine ever, the performer has had a hard time translating his music and concert prowess into a career as a feature film performer.

In 1991, Sony Corp. announced plans for an ambitious multimedia venture with Jackson to produce albums, movies, TV and entertainment software. However, nothing ever came from that agreement.

Neither Jackson's Nation Films production company at Sony Pictures Entertainment nor his Michael Jackson Prods. nor his much ballyhooed association with David Kirschner at 20th (See Michael Jackson, Pg 21)

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