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TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE (CU) MAY 25 AM 11 50

FROM : Amembassy KARACHI

DATE: May 27, 1964

SUBJECT: EDUCATIONAL & CULTURAL EXCHANGE: Cultural Presentations:
Duke Ellington Orchestra

REF :

He came, he performed and he conquered. This is the literal story of Duke Ellington's visit to Karachi and his performances here. Calling him an "Ambassador of Goodwill" Pakistan's largest English daily, Dawn, described him as the "most widely acclaimed visitor from the United States after Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy".

Highest tributes were paid to Duke Ellington and his group by individual listeners, the press, professionals and others. Spontaneous and most enthusiastic response was extended to the two Ellington public performances and a demonstration-performance for university students.

Review of Activities. Duke Ellington and his orchestra arrived in Karachi in the afternoon of November 1, 1963. Soon thereafter he recorded an interview for Radio Pakistan which was broadcast over the regional network the same evening. Later in the evening he performed under the auspices of Pakistan-American Cultural Center before a capacity audience of 1500 at the court yard of the Metropole Hotel. The concert was broadcast over the local station of Radio Pakistan.

On November 2, a free day, Duke held a press conference in his Agha Khan suite at Hotel Metropole. Although the conference was brief it was widely reported in newspapers, particularly Ellington's appreciation of Pakistani music and his frank appraisal of jazz music in modern perspective.

In the....

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Drafted by:

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In the evening Ambassador Walter P. McConaughy held a reception in honor of Duke Ellington and his group which was attended by prominent Pakistani musicians, composers, music critics and officials of Radio Pakistan.

The second public performance was presented by Duke Ellington's orchestra before a SRO house on November 3.

The next day Ellington appeared with a full orchestra for a demonstration-performance program at the Pakistan American Cultural Center. The program designed, exclusively for university students, was attended by 900 enthusiastic young men and women who were enthralled by the rhythmic beauty, relaxing freshness and sentimental echo of jazz music. Many were of the opinion that the orchestra was at peak form, undoubtedly due to the informality of the occasion and the enthusiastic response of the young audience.

Publicity and Press Coverage: The local press published a considerable amount of pre-concert material, mainly USIS-supplied stories, pictures and advertisements. The leading cultural magazine, VISION, published two articles on Duke Ellington and his group. Fourteen sets of a locally produced exhibit on the Ellington orchestra were placed in popular public places and the larger educational institutions. The Pakistan-American Cultural Center printed program was sold out at the two performances.

Wider coverage was received after each performance. All daily newspapers, and some weeklies prominently printed stories on the excellence of the performances as well as detailed background material on the orchestra. Almost all English and language dailies published several photographs of Duke Ellington in advance of his arrival and after the performance.

In an unrestrained vein the press here highly commended Ellington's "masterly performance and his astonishing technical splendor" which turned "audience into active participants in a dynamic and stimulating experience of music". No other American visitor except Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy received such a popular ovation from the press in recent years.

Following are some excerpts from the local newspapers:

"....One of the "reigning divinities" of the jazz, Duke is perhaps the most outstanding exponent of the dominant American musical.....

musical style; but the distinctive stamp of Duke Ellington is the imaginative use of instrumental timbres and exotic ensemble voicing and the quality of his compositions, which include brilliant recreations of Tchaikovsky and rearrangement or extensions of Mendelssohn's famous pieces. Using carefully chosen musicians he manipulates their individual playing styles to achieve a fusion of the racy musical language of jazz and classical forms in his highly polished and impeccably worked compositions. His works have both beauty and range; and their rich tonal coloration, relentless rhythmic pulse and descriptive orchestration make a lacework of magic that intoxicates the senses. There is in their playing a dynamic impetus from the beginning to the end and an authentic musicianial passion, which lifts up the brooding melancholy and soul-searching despondency of the more emotional pieces..." DAWN, November 6, 1963.

"...Saxophones roll out rich dulcet tones, the rhythm section rocks, the brasses attack, and in come snatches of the basic melody played on the piano by the incomparable Duke Ellington, a genius of contemporary music, and creator of new musical vogue..." LEADER, November 11, 1963.

"...Duke Ellington and his world famous orchestra charmed and captivated an appreciate audience tonight during their first jazz concert here in the moon-bathed garden of the Metropole Hotel. The inimitable Duke and his instrumentalists were in rare form. The first nighters roared and clapped their approval as the lilting, swaying strains of old favourites as Take a Train, Mood Indigo, Sophisticated Lady Solitude and others filled the night air..." MORNING NEWS, November 2, 1963.

"...The unique creative talent of Duke Ellington, who formed his orchestra almost 40 years ago, is one of the essential foundation stones on which jazz music has grown and developed.

Ellington's influence has not been limited to his pioneering innovations as an orchestra leader. He is composer who has contributed importantly not only to jazz but also to the whole spectrum of contemporary American music..." DAILY NEWS, November 8, 1963.

Statement of income and expenses:

The total income of Rs.25,332.00 accrued to the Pakistan American Cultural Center from the Duke Ellington program.

From....

From this amount, Rs.1,000.00, came from insertion of advertisements in the program; Rs.1,059.00 from sale of program; and, Rs.23,273.00 from the sale of tickets. Expenses incurred in connection with the performances amounted Rs.16,024.27. The balance of Rs.9,307.73 was equally divided between the Embassy and the PACC according to the terms of the contract.

EVALUATION:

The visit of Duke Ellington and orchestra in Karachi was a great success. It not only provided to people in Karachi an opportunity to listen to a representative form of contemporary American music by one of the most outstanding artists of our times, but it boosted the prestige of American music as a whole. His tour, as Dawn reported, was "one of the indications that the creative vitality of the arts on the western side of the Atlantic is outliving the long period of obeisance to the proud Old World capitals, and is indeed striking out in independent new directions, spreading and beyond the frontiers of geography, not without overtones of economic power and confidence in its manifest destiny". Dawn, which is usually restrained in its appreciation of American sponsored programs, ~~xxxxxx~~ declared that "when Duke Ellington left the stage after a second sumptuous and glittering performance at the Metropole on Sunday evening, he had sounded a triumphant counterblast to the popular notion that jazz was trivial and grotesque, and a somewhat scandalizing aberration from the more respectable forms of musical creation...".

The Morning News struck an enthusiastic note of appreciation by citing similarity between Pakistani music and jazz inasmuch as "both were on the effort to interpret and improvise. The impact of Duke Ellington's "vivid brilliance and fluent playphony was a spell of happiness and harmony in the middle of the year's harvest of suspicion, fear and disillusionment". This comment evidently referred to anti-American sentiments which were on a very high pitch in October and November, 1963. In the same context some journalists made individual remarks that 'Americans were clever enough to score success by shifting emphasis to cultural when political climate was not favorable'. There is no doubt that Duke Ellington's visit did contribute in boosting America's prestige here and to strengthen the belief that the basis of United States' interest in Pakistan had remained unchanged.

Duke Ellington's performances served to impress upon the audience....

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audience in Karachi the cultural strides being made in the United States particularly in field of music, and how this tradition had gained an international repute. The performances stimulated a greater appreciation of American jazz and American cultural presentations in general.

The concerts served to attract wide audiences and associated the United States with a spontaneous and popular musical form. The program helped the post in promoting and fortifying contacts with such groups as artists, writers, newspapermen and government officials.

For the Ambassador

William B. King

William B. King
Counsellor of Embassy
for Public Affairs

Enclosures: *att*

Press Clippings
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