

# Mp3 Anthony Brown's Asian American Orchestra - Far East Suite



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Nominative for a 2000 Grammy present for Best Great Jazz Ensemble Performance, this impertinent interpretation of the Ellington-Strayhorn masterwork "Far East Suite" blends the familiar sounds of a traditional jazz orchestra with more alien musical instruments. 10 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Big Band, JAZZ: World Fusion Far East Suite Songs Details: Andrew Bartlett, Amazon.com "Of all the compositions Duke Ellington rolled out during his 1960s tenure on the U.S. State Department international touring circuit, Far East Suite was clearly the jewel in 1966--and has remained so since. The Ellington orchestra's famed recording of the work is cited as the best of his '60s material. And perhaps he could have imagined the suite as it appears in the thriving context of percussionist Anthony Brown's Asian American Orchestra. Brown spirits the work away, keeping central parts extra-Ellingtonian, with flourishes from different band sections running headlong across each other, especially on "Ad Lib on Nippon." Brown's band is incredibly resourceful, making a dozen players frequently sound like a much fuller orchestra. Jon Jang plays a double-take-worthy rendition of the original's piano parts, sprucing them with big keyboard blasts here and there but otherwise remaining largely faithful to the score. The horn soloists step out from the tight arrangements in stunning fashion, especially Hafez Modirzadeh's tenor solo on "Mount Harissa" and Melecio Magdaluyo's growling baritone on "Agra." The band interpolates several traditional Asian melodic additions into the Ellingtonian foundation, adding Chinese wind instruments beautifully to "Blue Pepper" and enlivening the overall piece with elements that make it in many ways even more compelling than the original. Brown has been nominated for a 1999 Grammy Award for this work, recognition of a flawless nod to and updating of an Ellington classic. It's one of the most thoughtful and creative tributes to the Duke on record." Randy McElligott, JAZZIZ, July 1999 "This is a monumental work played elegantly with

Style and respect to the composers. One of the top Jazz recordings of 1999, and highly recommended to anyone who would like to hear an excellent orchestra play an Ellington classic. Anthony Brown has done a fantastic job of retaining Ellington's mood and intentions, as well as integrating them into his orchestra with superb results. Pick up a copy and bask in this fascinating work." JAZZTIMES "Brown and his colleagues have taken the work a giant step beyond Ellington-Strayhorn's original jazz orchestra parameters, which is a major accomplishment." Wayne Saroyan, JAZZWEST.COM "One of the most creative -- and certainly the most innovative -- of the slew of Ellington "tribute" albums released during the centennial of Duke's birth..." Walter Tunis, Lexington Herald Leader "...Brown has cooked up what might be the year's most audacious Ellington salute: a recording and complete concert presentation of his Far East Suite. In the orchestra's expressive interpretation of the work - a 1966 piece that is one of Ellington's final collaborations with longtime musical cohort Billy Strayhorn - Brown augments a jazz orchestra with instruments from Iran, Japan and China to underscore the sounds and influences Ellington absorbed during tours of the Middle East and Asian in 1963 and 1964." Orrin Keepnews "This is the most important tribute to Ellington in his centennial year." Album Description -From Anthony Brown This recording of the FAR EAST SUITE is the culmination of a ten-year-long endeavor, the fulfillment of a marriage between a research project and a dream. The idea of blending Asian and Middle Eastern instruments and sensibilities into the multicultural melange of Duke Ellington and collaborator Billy Strayhorn's musical travelogue first occurred in 1989 while I was a doctoral research fellow at the Smithsonian Institution's newly acquired Duke Ellington Collection. During the fellowship, I was able to examine many of the thousands of original and copied manuscripts, scores, sketches and band parts as yet uncataloged in the archives. In 1991, I premiered a precursory project, a new version of Ellington's 1928 Cotton Club "jungle music" classic, "The Mooche," at the tenth anniversary of the Asian American Jazz Festival at the San Francisco Asian Art Museum. After completion of my doctoral coursework at UC Berkeley in 1992, I was hired by the Smithsonian to direct the Jazz Oral History Program, serve as curator of musical culture and assist in the completion of the Duke Ellington traveling exhibition, Beyond Category: The Musical Genius of Duke Ellington. Thus, the heretofore dream of first-hand accessibility to Ellington's musical magic was realized during my four years at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. A similar albeit more extensive process of intensive research and study was conducted for a new FAR EAST SUITE. The nine-movement Ellington-Strayhorn original is a musical portrait of the countries and people who

welcomed them and the Orchestra on their tours in the 1960s. This new arrangement was originally conceived as a fitting commemoration of the Duke Ellington centennial, a celebration of his homage to Asia and the Middle East. The FAR EAST SUITE seemed ideally suited as a musical mirror of today's global community, a scintillating tapestry of contrasting moods, compositional styles, approaches to modality and tonality, and always the blues. There is only one commercial release of the Ellington Orchestra performing the FAR EAST SUITE, although various versions of "Ad Lib on Nippon" and the July 1963 recording of "Isfahan" (originally titled "Elf") are currently available on CD. Through examining original manuscripts, orchestral parts and subsequent transcriptions, and by creating a score reduction from the original 15- to a 12-piece orchestra with the invaluable arranging and copying assistance of Dan Nielsen, a blueprint for a new interpretation was constructed. The process now involved creating an arrangement incorporating and showcasing the distinctive talents of the members of Asian American Orchestra. About the Artist From Anthony Brown- I have led large ensembles beginning in 1986 at Rutgers University to perform original extended works, and continuing in 1988 in Berlin to perform a commissioned work, EAST/WEST PROJEKT, with an orchestra comprised of American and East and West Berlin musicians. Other earlier prototypes include Anthony Brown's Uptown Showdown (1988-91) and [African EurAsian] Eclipse (1992-97), named after Ellington's suite inspired by Marshall McLuhan's 1967 prediction of "the world going oriental." The current Asian American Orchestra represents the realization of an international ensemble capable of an unprecedented versatility and variety of repertoire. The Asian American Jazz Orchestra, originally assembled in 1998 for a national touring project on the Japanese American internment experience of World War II (Big Bands Behind Barbed Wire, Asian Improv Records), featured artists who are steeped in the jazz tradition and who possess native fluency on a variety of indigenous instruments. The Orchestra has expanded and is now comprised of critically-acclaimed leaders of San Francisco's Asian American creative music movement Jon Jang, Mark Izu and Francis Wong; mainstays of the thriving Latin jazz scene Wayne Wallace, Melecio Magdaluyo and John Worley; virtuoso multi-instrumentalists and scholars from the traditional and world music communities Dr. Hafez Modirzadeh and Qi Chao Liu; and leading session artists Jim Norton, Louis Fasman and Dave Martell. Although the members represent the intercultural musical mosaic of the San Francisco Bay Area, the Orchestra's roots are in the Asian American creative music movement, and the prominence of Asian sonorities and sensibilities define our sound and style. Hence, the creation of this

orchestra could only be realized in the San Francisco Bay Area, "gateway to the East." Band members:  
Anthony Brown - drumset w/pedal to, gong Louis Fasman - trumpet, flegelhorn Mark Izu - bass, Chinese  
mouth organ Jon Jang - piano Qi Chao Liu - Chinese mouth organ, reed trumpet and bamboo flutes  
Melecio Magdaluyo - alto and baritone saxophones Dave Martell - trombone Hafez Modirzadeh - tenor  
and alto saxaphones, alto clarinet, Persian end-blown flute, double reed instruments and frame drum Jim  
Norton - clarinet, alto and baritone saxophones, bassoon, piccolo Wayne Wallace - trombone Francis  
Wong - tenor saxophone, flute, clarinet John Worley - trumpet, fluegelhorn

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