

# Jumpin' Punkins

(Mercer Ellington)  
Soloists: Ellington, Bigard, Ellington, Carney, Greer,  
Ellington

This is a quirky, unassuming, utterly charming composition. One of the few pieces featuring Greer as a soloist, it also gives Harry Carney an entire 32-bar chorus to himself (which is more space than he usually got during this period).

*Jumpin' Punkins* is filled with marvelous effects—the introduction that comes out of nowhere and temporarily obscures the feeling of a pulse; Jimmy Blanton's double-stops behind Ellington's sparse solo; the trombone trio's calls answered by Carney; the orchestra's dissonant chords interrupting Greer's breaks. Ellington combines old and new in this work, displaying contemporary arranging and harmonic ideas within a blues-and-gospel-tinged framework.

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## ohn Hardy's Wife

(Mercer Ellington)

Soloists: Ellington, Carney, Stewart, Brown

Virtually the same tempo as *Jumpin' Punkins*, this piece shares other characteristics, such as the opening duetlike section for Ellington and Blanton and the exchange between trombones and Carney early on. Although *John Hardy's Wife* is credited to Mercer Ellington, parts of the arrangement—the reed voicings before Stewart's and Brown's solos—sound like the work of Duke (or possibly Strayhorn).

Stewart's muted tone and exaggerated shakes at the end of phrases bring to mind Cootie, though the personality and style are purely Rex's own. Throughout the performance Blanton's plucked lines resonate clearly, perfectly in time and in tune.

# C hocolate Shake

(Ellington-Webster)

Soloists: Greer/Ellington, Carney,  
Nance, Carney,  
Anderson, Carney

The band performs here with great verve and drive. The crunching dissonant chords and trumpet-section shakes in the last chorus are delivered with savage fury. These are stylized African instrumental effects that Ellington knew well from his tenure at the Cotton Club, and they were being used years later, too, as in John Coltrane's *Africa* (1961).

This song has a memorable melody, but it never became a standard. One reason for this may have been the lyrics, which have a kind of smug, self-conscious air about them. Another may be the diminished-seventh-chord arpeggio on the third line of the A section (on the words "Eden for days," "minus her arms," and "rhythmical quake"). While it is not hard for an instrumentalist to play, it is difficult for vocalists, and Anderson has problems with it, singing the first note of the chord a half-tone flat each time.