



BY GLENN ASTARITA

The purpose of this recording was for pianist Ted Howe's Duke Ellington show to be choreographed for an Atlanta, Georgia-based dance troupe. Thankfully, Howe and his trio recorded a portion of the Duke's songbook for mass consumption, while exuding a cheery and indubitably upbeat vibe along the way. Fused with snappy rhythms, Latin slants, and brisk swing vamps, the trio succeeds at instilling a personalized approach into familiar territory.

Howe simply glides across his acoustic piano keys, featuring bluesy trills and sobering movements, and he also revs his band up on several occasions. But this divergent program highlights the pianist's versatility. For example, he duly conveys warmth via softly stated harmonies on *In A Sentimental Mood*, while incorporating stride piano techniques on *It Don't Mean A Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing*. The trio frames its rendition of *Take The A Train* upon a slickly articulated swing vibe. Howe's game plan translates into a highly entertaining and somewhat motivational reckoning of Ellington's legacy.