

# Duke Ellington Quotes

*Music, Jazz, Inspirational, Art, Two, Play, Problem, Doe, Children, Needs,  
Should Have, Thinking, Language, Deadline, Honesty, Sound, People, Mother,  
Music Is, Writing*

There are 2 rules in life: Number 1- Never quit Number2- Never forget rule number 1.

~Duke Ellington

Music, of course, is what I hear and something that I more or less live by. It's not an occupation or profession, it's a compulsion.

~Duke Ellington

There are two kinds of music. Good music, and the other kind.

~Duke Ellington

A problem is a chance for you to do your best.

~Duke Ellington

If you have a great band with a mediocre drummer, you have a mediocre band. If you have a mediocre band with a great drummer, you have a great band!

~Duke Ellington

The most important thing I look for in a musician is whether he knows how to listen.

~Duke Ellington

Everyone prays in their own language, and there is no language that God does not understand.

~Duke Ellington

You have to stop listening in categories. The music is either good or it's bad.

~Duke Ellington

I merely took the energy it takes to pout and wrote some blues.

~Duke Ellington

Love is supreme and unconditional; like is nice but limited.

~Duke Ellington

Gray skies are just clouds passing over.

~Duke Ellington

There are two kinds of worries - those you can do something about and those you can't. Don't spend any time on the latter.

~Duke Ellington

You've got to find a way of saying it without saying it.

~Duke Ellington

Simplicity is a most complex form

~Duke Ellington

There is nothing to keeping a band together. You simply have to have a gimmick, and the gimmick I use is to pay them money!

~Duke Ellington

Music is the tonal reflection of beauty.

~Duke Ellington

A goal is a dream with a finish line.

~Duke Ellington

I never had much interest in the piano until I realized that every time I played, a girl would appear on the piano bench to my left and another to my right.

~Duke Ellington

Playing 'bop' is like playing Scrabble with all the vowels missing.

~Duke Ellington

Love is indescribable and unconditional. I could tell you a thousand things that it is not, but not one that it is. Either you have it or you haven't; there's no proof of it.

~Duke Ellington

Be a number one yourself. And not a number two somebody else.

~Duke Ellington

There is hardly any money interest in art, and music will be there when money is gone.

~Duke Ellington

By and large, jazz has always been like the kind of a man you wouldn't want your daughter to associate with.

~Duke Ellington

Roaming through the jungle of "Ohs" and "Ahs", searching for a more agreeable noise, I live a life of primitivity with the mind of a child and an unquenchable thirst for sharps and flats.

~Duke Ellington

Jazz today, as always in the past, is a matter of thoughtful creation, not mere unaided instinct.

~Duke Ellington

It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing.

~Duke Ellington

Fate is being kind to me. Fate doesn't want me to be too famous too young.

~Duke Ellington

Sing sweet, but put a little dirt in it.

~Duke Ellington

Self-discipline, as a virtue or an acquired asset, can be invaluable to anyone.

~Duke Ellington

Music is my mistress and she plays second fiddle to no one.

~Duke Ellington

Art is dangerous. It is one of the attractions: when it ceases to be dangerous, you don't want it.

~Duke Ellington

New music? Hell, there's been no new music since Stravinsky.

~Duke Ellington

The wise musicians are those who play what they can master.

~Duke Ellington

What does music mean to you? What would you do without music?

~Duke Ellington

There is no art without intention.

~Duke Ellington

The Europeans who went to Africa came back with 'modern' art. What is more African than a Picasso?

~Duke Ellington

People do not retire. They are retired by others.

~Duke Ellington

If it sounds good and feels good, then it IS good!

~Duke Ellington

Create, and be true to yourself, and depend only on your own good

taste.

~Duke Ellington

The artist must say it without saying it.

~Duke Ellington

I don't believe in categories of any kind, and when you speak of problems between blacks and whites in the U.S.A. you are referring to categories again.

~Duke Ellington

Problems are chances for us to do our best.

~Duke Ellington

A musical profit outweighs a financial loss.

~Duke Ellington

A Satin Doll is a woman who is as pretty on the inside as she is on the outside.

~Duke Ellington

Every man prays in his own language.

~Duke Ellington

Jazz is a good barometer of freedom.

~Duke Ellington

Selfishness can be a virtue. Selfishness is essential to survival, and without survival we cannot protect those whom we love more than ourselves.

~Duke Ellington

I don't need time. What I need is a deadline!

~Duke Ellington

My biggest kick in music -playing or writing- is when I have a problem. Without a problem to solve, how much interest do you take in anything?

~Duke Ellington

Tomorrow is in the wings waiting for you to sound her entrance fanfare.

~Duke Ellington

New York is a place where the rich walk, the poor drive Cadillacs, and beggars die of malnutrition with thousands of dollars hidden in their mattresses.

~Duke Ellington

Somehow I suspect that if Shakespeare were alive today, he might be a jazz fan himself.

~Duke Ellington

It's like an act of murder - you play with intent to commit something.

~Duke Ellington

Yet, every time God's children have thrown away fear in pursuit of honesty-trying to communicate themselves, understood or not, miracles have happened.

~Duke Ellington

Now I can say loudly and openly what I have been saying to myself on my knees.

~Duke Ellington

I don't need time, I need a deadline.

~Duke Ellington

Hurry, get on board, it's comin', listen to those rails a-thrumming all aboard. Get on the "A" train, soon you will be on Sugar Hill in Harlem.

~Duke Ellington

I fluffed off the guy who kept requesting tunes all night, then found out he was the King's son.

~Duke Ellington

If anybody was Mr. Jazz it was Louis Armstrong. He was the epitome of jazz and always will be. He is what I call an American standard, an American original.

~Duke Ellington

Without a deadline, baby, I wouldn't do nothing.

~Duke Ellington

There is no art when one does something without intention.

~Duke Ellington

On becoming more acquainted with the word of the Bible, I began to understand so much more of what I had been taught, and of what I had learned about life and about the people in mine.

~Duke Ellington

Of the One O'Clock Lab Band after hearing their performance, and sitting in with them at the White House: "I wish it were mine".

~Duke Ellington

Billy Strayhorn was my right arm, my left arm, all the eyes in the back of my head, my brainwaves in his head, and his in mine.

~Duke Ellington

The problem of expressing the contributions that Benny Carter has made to popular music is so tremendous it completely fazes me, so extraordinary a musician is he.

~Duke Ellington



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