

# It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)

*Music by DUKE ELLINGTON*

*Words by IRVING MILLS*

*Arranged by VICTOR LOPEZ*

## INSTRUMENTATION

Conductor  
Vocal Solo  
Solo B $\flat$  Part (Substitute for Vocal)  
Solo E $\flat$  Part (Substitute for Vocal)  
Solo Bass Clef Part (Substitute for Vocal)  
1st E $\flat$  Alto Saxophone  
2nd E $\flat$  Alto Saxophone  
1st B $\flat$  Tenor Saxophone  
2nd B $\flat$  Tenor Saxophone  
E $\flat$  Baritone Saxophone  
1st B $\flat$  Trumpet  
2nd B $\flat$  Trumpet  
3rd B $\flat$  Trumpet  
4th B $\flat$  Trumpet  
1st Trombone  
2nd Trombone  
3rd Trombone  
Bass Trombone  
Guitar Chords  
Guitar  
Piano  
Bass  
Drums

JAZZ  
VOCAL  
SERIES

## NOTES TO THE CONDUCTOR

*It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)* is a 1931 composition by Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington and lyrics by Irving Mills. This composition was Ellington's signature song for his orchestra. Duke Ellington called his music "American Music" rather than jazz, and liked to describe those who impressed him as "beyond category." He remains one of the most influential figures in jazz, if not in all American music and is widely considered as one of the twentieth century's best-known African American personalities. As both a composer and a bandleader, Ellington's reputation has increased since his death, with thematic repackaging of his signature music often becoming best sellers. Posthumous recognition of his work includes a special award citation from the Pulitzer Prize Board.

This vocal arrangement is a swing chart and although the term "swing" has come to mean many things, a common thread among jazz musicians relates to subtle changes in the timing of the melody, which help promote a swinging feeling. For the vocalist, there is plenty of flex in how the lyrics can be approached. Some phrases are performed slightly ahead of the beat, across the beat, or behind the beat, allowing the performer to express a more relaxed, rhythmic, or even driving feeling. I suggest listening to the demo recording at [alfred.com/downloads](http://alfred.com/downloads).

This arrangement is written in the original key of F minor ( $A\flat$  is the relative major). There are temporary tonal center shifts to  $D\flat$  major and  $E\flat$  major during the bridge but these shifts do not affect the key signature. Many cautionary accidentals have been added throughout to assist players.

The first three measures of the introduction are similar to measures 97–99 at the end. Work on the articulations and dynamics. Make certain that the winds are using the correct jazz phonetics for tonguing; use "doo" or "dah" for legato, "dit" for staccato, and "daht" for marcato (roof top) accents. This composition has many repeated notes and rhythms, specifically, in the "doo-wah-doo-wah-doo-wah" passage, which starts at measure 9, then again at 17, 33, 73, and the coda. This should facilitate the teaching and learning of the chart. Again, emphasize the articulations.

The rhythm section should rehearse their individual parts first until they feel comfortable and close to have it memorized. Then, the rhythm section should play together and strive for a cohesive sound and steady pulse throughout. The bass part, mostly walking bass, has to flow smoothly and the guitar should not dynamically overpower, always playing on the light side. At measure 37, a suggested drum solo has been written, but the player is encouraged to create an original solo in the style of the piece. The shout chorus starts with a pick-up to measure 45, followed by sixteen measures of interspersed solo(s) for the repeated "A" section. This section offers some flexibility depending on the needs of the ensemble. At 53 and 61, suggested solos have been written for 1st tenor and 1st trombone and 1st alto and 2nd trumpet respectively. Additionally, as an added option, the solos have been cued in the vocal part using suggested scat singing syllables. At the coda, observe the dynamic level as it builds little by little until the end.

Ultimately, either a male or female singer can sing the vocal part. Additionally, there are many professional recordings of this tune that will help the vocalist assimilate the proper style. Work on stage presence and holding the microphone. All eyes will be on the singer so, move around and be expressive when performing. Optional parts are included for  $B\flat$ ,  $E\flat$  and bass clef instruments in lieu of the vocal part.

Swing away!

—Victor López



**Victor  
López**

Victor López is a highly acclaimed educator, composer, arranger, and adjudicator. He holds music degrees from the University of Florida and Florida International University, with an Ed.D. in Educational Administration and Supervision. He has served as director of bands at the middle and senior high school levels and as an administrator in the Miami-Dade County Public Schools. He has recorded and performed with various artists and has appeared in numerous music videos. He has over 450 compositions/arrangements published as an exclusive composer, arranger and clinician for Alfred Music Publishing Co.





13

VOCAL DON'T MEAN A THING. ALL YOU GOT TO DO IS SWING. DOO WAH, DOO WAH, DOO WAH, DOO WAH, DOO WAH, DOO WAH, DOO WAH, DOO WAH. It

ALTO 1 *mf*

ALTO 2 *mf*

TENOR 1 *mf*

TENOR 2 *mf*

BARI. *mf*

TRP. 1

TRP. 2

TRP. 3

TRP. 4

TBN. 1

TBN. 2

TBN. 3

BASS TBN.

GR. F#m F7 F#m D9 (G#F#) D9 F#m B9 B9 E9 Bb7 B7 Ab

PNO. F#m F7 F#m D9 (G#F#) D9 F#m B9 B9 E9 Bb7 B7 Ab

BASS

DRUMS

13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

21

VOCAL  
 MAKES NO DIFFERENCE IF IT'S SWEET OR HOT. GUST GIVE THAT SHY - THIM EV - 'EV THING YOU GOT.

ALTO 1  
 m2

ALTO 2  
 m2

TENOR 1  
 m2

TENOR 2  
 m2

BARI.  
 m2

TRP. 1  
 m2

TRP. 2  
 m2

TRP. 3  
 m2

TRP. 4  
 m2

TBN. 1  
 m2

TBN. 2  
 m2

TBN. 3  
 m2

BASS TBN.  
 m2

GTR.  
 Eb7m7 Ab9 Ab9(#9) D7m9 F#m7 b7 Eb

PNO.  
 Eb7m7 Ab9 Ab9(#9) D7m9 F#m7 b7 Eb

BASS  
 m2

DRUMS  
 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28



29

To CODA

VOCAL

ALTO 1

ALTO 2

TENOR 1

TENOR 2

BARI.

TRP. 1

TRP. 2

TRP. 3

TRP. 4

TBN. 1

TBN. 2

TBN. 3

BASS TBN.

GTR.

PNO.

BASS

DRUMS

29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36

Legal Use Requisites Purchase

DON'T MEAN A THING IF IT AIN'T GOT THAT SWING. DOO WAH. DOO WAH. DOO WAH. DOO WAH. DOO WAH. DOO WAH. DOO WAH. DOO WAH.

F#m F#m/E F#m/Eb F#m/D D9 C7(#9) F#m B9(b9) B9 E9 Bb9/7 B9/7 Ab6

F#m F#m/E F#m/Eb F#m/D D9 C7(#9) F#m B9(b9) B9 E9 Bb9/7 B9/7 Ab6

CONDUCTOR

IT DON'T MEAN A THING

37 (OPT. OPEN DRUM SOLO - REPEAT 37 - 45)

VOCAL

ALTO 1

ALTO 2

TENOR 1

TENOR 2

BARI.

TRP. 1

TRP. 2

TRP. 3

TRP. 4

TBN. 1

TBN. 2

TBN. 3

BASS TBN.

GTR.

PNO.

BASS

DRUMS

SOLO AD. LIS.

FLOOR TOM

TOMS

END SOLO

37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44



45

VOCAL

ALTO 1

ALTO 2

TENOR 1

TENOR 2

BARI.

TRP. 1

TRP. 2

TRP. 3

TRP. 4

TBN. 1

TBN. 2

TBN. 3

BASS TBN.

GTR.

PNO.

BASS

DRUMS

EMPHASIS BACKBEATS

45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52

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69

VOCAL

ALTO 1

ALTO 2

TENOR 1

TENOR 2

BARI.

TRP. 1

TRP. 2

TRP. 3

TRP. 4

TBN. 1

TBN. 2

TBN. 3

BASS TBN.

GR.

PNO.

BASS

DRUMS

69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76

Legal Use Only

Opt. Solo

End Solo

End Opt. Solo

Cue: A Sax/Trp. or Vocal Solo

Doo doo doo oop

Doo doo doo oop oop

Doo oah

Chords: Eb7, Ab9, Ab9(#9), Dbm9, Fm7, Bb7, Eb, C7(b9)

77

VOCAL

ALTO 1

ALTO 2

TENOR 1

TENOR 2

BARI.

TRP. 1

TRP. 2

TRP. 3

TRP. 4

TBN. 1

TBN. 2

TBN. 3

BASS TBN.

GR.

PNO.

BASS

DRUMS

77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84

Legal Use Requisites Purchase

CODA

89

VOCAL

DOO WAH, DOO WAH, DOO WAH, DOO WAH, DOO WAH, DOO WAH, DOO WAH, DOO WAH. *mf* DOO WAH, DOO WAH, DOO WAH, DOO WAH, DOO WAH, DOO WAH, DOO WAH.

ALTO 1

ALTO 2

TENOR 1

TENOR 2

BARI.

TRP. 1

TRP. 2

TRP. 3

TRP. 4

TBN. 1

TBN. 2

TBN. 3

BASS TBN.

GR.

PNO.

BASS

DRUMS

85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92



VOCAL: DOO WAH... DOO WAH... DOO WAH... DOO WAH... DOO WAH... DOO WAH... DOO WAH... DOO WAH... YEAH!

ALTO 1: *p* *CRESC.* *mf* YEAH!

ALTO 2: *p* *CRESC.* *mf* YEAH!

TENOR 1: *p* *CRESC.* *mf* YEAH!

TENOR 2: *p* *CRESC.* *mf* YEAH!

BARI.: *p* *CRESC.* *mf* YEAH!

TRP. 1: *p* *CRESC.* *mf* YEAH!

TRP. 2: *p* *CRESC.* *mf* YEAH!

TRP. 3: *p* *CRESC.* *mf* YEAH!

TRP. 4: *p* *CRESC.* *mf* YEAH!

TBN. 1: *p* *CRESC.* *mf* YEAH!

TBN. 2: *p* *CRESC.* *mf* YEAH!

TBN. 3: *p* *CRESC.* *mf* YEAH!

BASS TBN.: *p* *CRESC.* *mf* YEAH!

GR.: *p* *CRESC.* *mf* YEAH!

PNO.: *p* *CRESC.* *mf* YEAH!

BASS: *p* *CRESC.* *mf* YEAH!

DRUMS: *p* *CRESC.* *mf* YEAH!

96 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

