Why Some People Think Duke Ellington Is a Member of the Royal Family.

A piano player. A composer. An orchestra leader. Duke Ellington reigned over a land called Jazz.

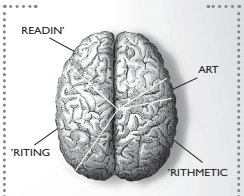
KIDS DON'T GET ENOUGH ART THESE DAYS. So you can see why some of them might accidentally confuse a jazz legend named Duke with royalty named duke. But it's finally time to set the record straight.

Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington didn't rule over a proper English estate. Instead he reigned supreme over jazz institutions like The Cotton Club. He riffed powerfully on the piano, but it was really the full orchestra that he considered his most compelling instrument. He brought improvisation to his music — a process unheard of while using a 15-piece orchestra. The result was a new approach to jazz that sparked a revolution and an evolution.

Royal dukes are squaresville. They have no rhythm. And they wear crowns.

His music spread across the world with songs like "Sophisticated Lady," "In a Sentimental Mood" and "Take the 'A' Train." His historical concert in 1953 at the Newport Jazz Festival has entered into the lexicon of legendary performances. There's no doubt about it, Ellington's brand of jazz has contributed significantly to the music of the American songbook and to anyone who has ever tapped their foot to a beat.

Jazz is art, you dig? Art can transform lives. In fact, the more art kids get, the more knowledgeable they become in subjects like math and science. And the more likely they'll become well-rounded, cool parts of society. For the *Ten Simple Ways* to get more art instilled in kids' lives, visit AmericansForTheArts.org.



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