

THE RECORDINGS OF FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA

An Annotated Tentative Personnel - Discography

WILLIAMS, 'Fess' Stanley R. clarinet, saxes Born: Danville, Kentucky, 10th April 1894; Died: New York, 17th December 1975
Brother Rudolph was also a sax/clarinet player. Fess' sons, Rudy and Phil, both player saxophone, his daughter, Estella, was a vocaliste and pianiste. He was the uncle of bassist Charles Mingus. He originally played violin; at 15 went to Tuskegee to study with Major N. Clark-Smith, doubled on various instruments, but specialized on clarinet. Moved to Cincinnati in 1914, did local gigs on sax with Frank Port's Quartet. Led own band 1919-1923, then joined Ollie Powers in Chicago. Formed own band to accompany Dave and Tressie's variety act and moved with them to New York in 1924. Led own trio in Albany, then own band at Rosemont Ballroom. From 1926 to January 1928 led own Royal Flush Orchestra at the Savoy Ballroom, New York City. Moved to Chicago to front Dave Peyton's Band in 1928 (own orchestra continued to work in New York - directed by Hank Duncan and Howard Johnson. Fess returned to New York in the spring of 1929 and continued leading bands throughout the 1930s - some touring and long residencies at Savoy, Rosemont, etc.. Retired from full-time music to work in real estate, but continued to lead his own small vocal and instrumental group during the 1940s, with residencies in Newark, Staten Island, Pennsylvania, etc.. During the 1960s he managed the Goldenairs vocal group, but occasionally played gigs and concerts. Williams was an executive at Local 802, New York City until 1964.

March 12, 1926, saw the grand opening of the 'Savoy Ballroom' in Harlem, New York, 596 Lenox Avenue. Two bands were installed as house bands: the Charleston Bearcats - later Savoy Bearcats - and Fess Williams and his Royal Flush Orchestra. The Savoy Bearcats were responsible for the hot music, while Fess Williams and his Orchestra provided the music for shows and the sweet music for the next two years. Reportedly, the Williams band was the much more successful of either bands at the Savoy. Leaving the Savoy Ballroom in early 1928, Williams kept his band together with changing success until 1934.

Different from most of my other lists of bands or musicians at this web-site, I cannot help but criticize some of the musicians of the Royal Flush Orchestra for their lack of good taste and trashy improvisations contained herein. I'd excuse myself if anybody with a different taste or opinion would feel embarrassed by my statements.

FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA

001 FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA	New York,	Sep. 29, 1925
Fess Williams - alt, clt, ldr; George Temple - tpt; David 'Jelly' James - tbn; Perry Smith - ten, clt; Henry 'Hank' Duncan - pno; Ollie Blackwell - bjo; Ralph Bedell - dms		
9753 Green River Blues	Gen 3182,	Retrieval RTR 79032
<i>Composer credit: 9753 (Schutt)</i>		

This first recording of Fess Williams and his Royal Flush Orchestra was made by the band Williams had assembled after leaving the Dave and Tressie Mitchell show had broken up. This band played the Roseland Ballroom in Brooklyn - later known as the Brooklyn Roseland. The band stayed there until February 1926.

This recording shows a band of the regular dance-band personnel of trumpet, trombone, alto and tenor sax, and a three-piece rhythm section without a bass instrument.

The rhythm section delivers a well swinging and harmonic background for the wind instruments, Hank Duncan outstanding with his Stride style piano. Banjo and drums keeping good time. George Temple is a trumpet player sticking to the old-fashioned 6/8 way of rhythmic playing. The very individual Jelly James shows a nice growl solo. Tenor sax player Perry Smith is restricted to third-part and background playing. Leaves the bandleader, Fess Williams. He performs in a rather queer and abstruse style of his own, including much whining on clarinet and even barking on his alto. For all the time his band was part of the Harlem scene and witnessed the development of early Swing style, Fess never changed his strange, silly, and unmusical personal style. In my eyes, he did not recognise what was going on in jazz circles, and he did not care as his band had a long enduring success with the audience at the Savoy Ballroom.

It is very remarkable: this band with exactly this personnel was the almost un-altered nucleus of the Fess Williams band for the rest of the 1920s! (BTW: what is a royal flush? Can anybody tell me? John R.T. Davies might have given an amusing answer on the cover of his Ristic 30 LP cover. But: is this the real explanation?)

ADDENDUM 01-08-2024: Now I know! My good friend Michael Rader just mailed me the explanation: 'Royal Flush' is the highest and most powerful combination of cards when playing Poker. I really feel ashamed for my ignorance of important matters of culture and civilization! Sorry, everybody!!!

Notes:

- Rust*2,*3,*4: George Temple (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Perry Smith (clt, ten); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell (bjo); Ralph Bedell (dms)

- Rust*6: Fess Williams, cl, as, v, dir; George Temple, t; David 'Jelly' James, tb, Perry Smith, cl, ts, v; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell, bj; Ralph Bedell, d

002 FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA

New York,

Nov. 27, 1925

Fess Williams – clt, alt, voc, ldr;

George Temple – tpt; David 'Jelly' James – tbn;

Perry Smith – ten, clt, voc;

Henry 'Hank' Duncan – pno; Ollie Blackwell – bjo; Ralph Bedell – dms;

Perry Smith – voc (1,2)

9873 Caroline

Gen 3210,

Retrieval RTR 79032

9874 Some Other Time

Gen 3210,

Retrieval RTR 79032

Composer credits: 9873 (Yellman - Squires); 9874 (Davis – Squires)

Note: There are no take designations on the Gennett recordings. Those given in all Rusts are extracted from the Gennett files and do not show any relation to the discs. Thus, reissues cannot be appointed to any actual take-numbers. 'Caroline' might thus be -A or -B. Reissues on Retrieval CD and on LPs Ristic 30 and Bateau Chinois AC are identical.

'Caroline' shows Jelly James' comic trombone break in the introduction. After the scored verse Fess Williams leads the saxophone section with his obtrusive whining style on alto through the first chorus, which is then followed by his equally whining vocal. The answering voice in the vocal chorus belongs to tenorist Perry Smith. A trombone/trumpet chase chorus follows with rather expert but rhythmically simple trumpet by Temple and James' growling, ended by some silly clarinet break. The final ensemble chorus shows the band in rollicking form and nice swing. The melody is played by the alto sax, what would mean that Perry Smith is responsible for the clarinet break and the peculiar clarinet obligato over the band. Or is it the other way? Williams on clarinet and Smith on tenor in its upper register without vibrato playing the melody? Probably the latter alternate.

'Some Other Time' again is disposed by Williams' queer alto sax vibrato in the first chorus and his peculiar vocal, while Temple plays an appreciable muted trumpet chorus. In the last chorus the same problem occurs as before: does Fess play the melody on his alto without (!) vibrato and Smith has the clarinet part, or is it Fess playing the clarinet obligato and Smith on high tenor - without vibrato – stating the melody? After re-thinking I would suggest Fess taking the clarinet parts and Perry Smith playing melodies on high tenor sax.

Notes:

- Rust*2,*3: George Temple (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Perry Smith (clt, ten); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell (bjo); Ralph Bedell (dms)

- Rust*4: George Temple (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Perry Smith (clt, ten); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell (bjo); Ralph Bedell (dms)

- Rust*6: Fess Williams, cl, as, v, dir; George Temple, t; David 'Jelly' James, tb, Perry Smith, cl, ts, v; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell, bj; Ralph Bedell, d

003 FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA

New York,

Feb. 19, 1926

Fess Williams – clt, alt, voc, ldr;

George Temple – tpt; David 'Jelly' James – tbn;

Perry Smith – ten, clt, voc;

Henry 'Hank' Duncan – pno; Ollie Blackwell – bjo; Ralph Bedell – dms

9983 Nobody's Business

Gen unissued

not on LP/CD

9984 Wimmin, Aah!

Gen 3259,

Retrieval RTR 79032

9985 I'm Just Wild About My Sweet Gal

Gen unissued

not on LP/CD

Composer credit: 9984 (Dougherty – Green - Warren)

That's a perfect title for the Fess Williams band and their leader: 'Wimmin, Aah!' Fess Williams plays the first chorus on his alto and thus gives us an opportunity to compare relations of the reed instruments. We hear Fess with his very individual vibrato on alto, together with the rather slim and light tenor sound of Perry Smith. That same relation occurs in the last chorus between Fess on clarinet and Smith on his high tenor. George Temple has a nice middle-eight solo on his muted horn in the penultimate chorus, and the ensemble playing in the last chorus really is astonishing, with a driving Mr. Smith on his tenor. There's a great banjo player with the band, with taste and rhythmical impetus. It's great jazz music for a ballroom of the time, if we forget the little lacks of good taste and the performances vocally and instrumentally of the bandleader.

Those little lacks of taste may also be seen from a different side: "His (Fess Williams – KBR) phrasing contains unexpected moments and Fess uses quite a repertoire of special effects – growls, high speed runs, slap-tonguing (to produce the popping sound heard occasionally), and a sort of car-revving effect using very fast repetition across about six notes in an up and down fashion (see 'My Mammie's In Town', session 005 – KBR). Fess Williams' range when playing the saxophone extends beyond the generally accepted compass of the instrument, and he was adept at producing and holding some pretty high notes. The growl effect on either clarinet or saxophone can be produced in two ways – humming while playing adds a buzz to the note; while flutter-tongue technique gives a coarse growl. Other effects are used, such as trills across widely spaced notes, also short and long slides or slurs from one note to another." (Part of cover text by Brian Hills of Harlequin 2039 LP – thanks a lot, Mr. Hills!)

Notes:

- Rust*2,*3,*4: George Temple (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Perry Smith (clt, ten); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell (bjo); Ralph Bedell (dms)

- Rust*6: Fess Williams, cl, as, v, dir; George Temple, t; David 'Jelly' James, tb, Perry Smith, cl, ts, v; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell, bj; Ralph Bedell, d

004 **FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA** New York, c. May 06, 1926
 Fess Williams – clt, alt, voc, ldr;
 George Temple – tpt; David ‘Jelly’ James – tbn;
 Perry Smith – ten, clt;
 Henry ‘Hank’ Duncan – pno; Ollie Blackwell – bjo; Ralph Bedell – dms
 74158-B Caroline Gen 3210, Retrieval RTR 79032
 74159-B Make Me Know It Gen 3210, Retrieval RTR 79032
Composer credits: 74158 (Yellman - Squires); 74159 (Williams – Squires)

Fess Williams and his Royal Flush Orchestra are now one of the house-bands at New York’s “most beautiful” ballroom, the Savoy Ballroom, where they started their business on 12th March, 1926. Their engagement lasted until March 1929.

And here’s another ‘Caroline’ (see above). Introduction and verse are mainly the same, with the same fatuities by trombone and saxes. But then the verse has a beautifully played hot trumpet part. The melody chorus then is played by the two saxophones, Fess leading whiningly on alto. The following vocal chorus certainly is sung by the bandleader (no unknown female as given in all Rusts!). Trombone and trumpet take over for the third chorus in call-and-response manner and the title is ended by a hot all-out chorus. This is hot and enthusiastic jazz music of its time.

‘Make Me Know It’ starts with a muted trumpet verse. It must then be Perry Smith taking over the first chorus on his silly staccato tenor, as he plays into the first bars of Fess Williams’ subsequent vocal chorus accompanied by the retained muted trumpet. The last chorus mostly has Williams playing the clarinet breaks in his personal way in the ensemble.

But where is that unknown female vocal that Rust lists?

Notes:

- Rust*2: *George Temple (tpt); David ‘Jelly’ James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Perry Smith (clt, ten); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell (bjo); Ralph Bedell (dms)*

- Rust*3,*4: *George Temple -t; David ‘Jelly’ James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr; Perry Smith -cl -ts -v (1); Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell -bj; Ralph Bedell -d; unknown girl -v*

- Rust*6: *Fess Williams, cl, as, v, dir; George Temple, t; David ‘Jelly’ James, tb, Perry Smith, cl, ts, v; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell, bj; Ralph Bedell, d; unknown female, v*

005 **FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH SAVOY ORCHESTRA** New York, May 24, 1926
 Fess Williams – clt, alt, voc, ldr;
 George Temple – tpt; David ‘Jelly’ James – tbn;
 Perry Smith – ten, clt;
 Henry ‘Hank’ Duncan – pno; Ollie Blackwell – bjo; Ralph Bedell – dms
 142244-1 Make Me Know It Har 189-H, Fountain FJ-116 (LP)
 142244-2 Make Me Know It Har 189-H, Retrieval RTR 79032
 142245-2 My Mama’s In Town Har 189-H, Fountain FJ-116 (LP)
 142245-3 My Mama’s In Town Har 189-H, Retrieval RTR 79032
Composer credits: 142244 (Williams - Squires); 142245 (Panico – Hirsch - Nuzzo)

This Harmony version of ‘Make Me Know It’ uses the same arrangement as the foregoing Gennett one. It’s Perry Smith alone on his tenor presenting the melody chorus following the ensemble verse. Williams then sings the lyrics in his own inimitable way. The last chorus brings a row of Williams’ clarinet breaks in the ensemble.

Fess Williams delights us with one of his whimpering clarinet solo in ‘My Mama’s In Town’, to be succeeded by one of Jelly James’ growl solos. And then, at last, we have a beautiful solo for one chorus by ‘Hank’ Duncan in fine stride-style. Henry Duncan, by the way, was a very good friend of Fats Waller’s, and band pianist in Waller’s big band for a long time in the 1930s. As equalization we have to endure a tasteless chorus of crazy arpeggios on the changes on the tenor sax, without any structure or melodic development. Oh yes, I know, it’s jazz music for shows. Thanks to Mr. George Temple, the last chorus is a swinging ride-out. And they actually have a first-class rhythm section.

Notes:

- Rust*2,*3,*4: *George Temple (tpt); David ‘Jelly’ James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Perry Smith (clt, ten); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell (bjo); Ralph Bedell (dms)*

- Rust*6: *Fess Williams, cl, as, v, dir; George Temple, t; David ‘Jelly’ James, tb, Perry Smith, cl, ts, v; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell, bj; Ralph Bedell, d*

Discernible differences of takes:

142244-1: *Tenor sax break immediately after vocal chorus: 6 eighth-notes D-Db-D-b-a-g, 1 quarter-note D*

142244-2: *Tenor sax break immediately after vocal chorus: 6 eighth-notes g-a-b-D-D-E, 1 quarter-note g*

142245-2: *Start of trombone solo after clarinet solo: sustained C for the whole first bar*

142245-3: *Start of trombone solo after clarinet solo: 3 quarter-notes Bb – C – G, 1 half-note G*

006 **FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA** New York, Jun. 08, 1926
 Fess Williams – clt, alt, voc, ldr;
 George Temple – tpt; David ‘Jelly’ James – tbn;
 Perry Smith – ten, clt;
 Henry ‘Hank’ Duncan – pno; Ollie Blackwell – bjo; Ralph Bedell – dms
 X-173 It’s Breaking My Heart To Keep Away From You Gen 3336, Retrieval RTR 79032
 X-174-A Ya Gotta Know How To Love Gen 3336, Retrieval RTR 79032
Composer credits: X-173 (Roman - Squires); X-174 (Warren - Green)

The first title has a 32-bars chorus with a ABCA structure, played by two whining saxophones. And there is pianist Duncan’s very good accompaniment behind Fess Williams’ vocal.

‘Ya Got To Know ...’ starts with nice trumpet with a bit of trombone. And then the inevitable trashy vocal chorus by the bandleader with good piano accompaniment. The two brass players then succeed in deliver a hot and honest last ensemble chorus.

Notes:

- Rust*2,*3,*4: *George Temple (tpt); David ‘Jelly’ James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Perry Smith (clt, ten); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell (bjo); Ralph Bedell (dms)*

- Rust*6: Fess Williams, cl, as, v, dir; George Temple, t; David 'Jelly' James, tb, Perry Smith, cl, ts, v; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell, bj; Ralph Bedell, d

007 FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA	New York,	Oct. 01, 1926
Fess Williams – clt, alt, voc, ldr;		
George Temple – tpt; David 'Jelly' James – tbn;		
Perry Smith – ten, clt, voc;		
Henry 'Hank' Duncan – pno; Ollie Blackwell – bjo; Ralph Bedell – dms		
E-3884/85	Messin' Around	Voc 1054, Retrieval RTR 79032
E-20398/99	Messin' Around	Br 3351 not on LP/CD
E-3886	Heebie Jeebies	Voc 1054, Retrieval RTR 79032
E-3887	Heebie Jeebies	Voc 1054, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
E-20400/01	Heebie Jeebies	Br 3351 not on LP/CD

Composer credits: E-3884/5 (St. Cyr - Cooke); E-3886/7 (Atkins - Jones)

These are two titles from the Chicago jazz scene – see composer credits. In 'Messin' Around' we hear in short succession the leader naming the title's name followed by two short tenor sax breaks, then the melody chorus played by two clarinets in harmony, the tune's verse in a free ensemble and the leader again singing the lyrics. He is beautifully accompanied by Hank Duncan's stride piano – dropping the banjo for this chorus – and vocally answered/commented by Perry Smith probably. Then Ollie Blackwell gets eight bars for his structured banjo solo, being immediately interrupted by Fess' gas-pipe clarinet for eight bars, followed by Jelly James' one-dimensional trombone solo and a no-nonsense tenor sax solo, for eight bars each. The title ends with a hot and satisfying ride-out chorus.

Then the band tackle 'Heebie Jeebies', Louis Armstrong's hit of half-a-year earlier. After a somewhat incoherent introduction, tenorist Smith presents the theme chorus on his sax, followed by the trumpet with the verse, and then it's Mr. Williams with an abstruse alto sax chorus, followed by nice piano from Hank Duncan. It is Williams, again, then with the verse on his clarinet, and Temple on trumpet doing a solo chorus and a moderate ride-out ensemble.

Notes:

- Rust*2: George Temple (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Perry Smith (clt, ten); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell (bjo); Ralph Bedell (dms)

- Rust*3,*4: George Temple -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr; Perry Smith -cl -ts -v (3,4); Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell -bj; Ralph Bedell -d

- Rust*6: Fess Williams, cl, as, v, dir; George Temple, t; David 'Jelly' James, tb, Perry Smith, cl, ts, v; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell, bj; Ralph Bedell, d

Discernible differences of takes:

E-3886: Alto sax solo after verse starts with 1 three-quarter-note ab, 7 eighth-notes c-eb-Ab-c-eb-Ab-C, etc.

E-3887: Alto sax solo after verse starts with 1 half-note ab, 1 eighth-note c, 1 quarter-note eb, 4 eighth-notes eb-db-bb-G, etc.

008 FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA	New York,	Oct. 27, 1926
Fess Williams – clt, alt, voc, ldr;		
George Temple – tpt; David 'Jelly' James – tbn;		
Perry Smith – ten, clt;		
Henry 'Hank' Duncan – pno; Ollie Blackwell – bjo; Ralph Bedell – dms		
E-4012/13	Atlanta Black Bottom	Voc unissued not on LP/CD
E-4014/15	High Fever	Voc unissued not on LP/CD

Composer credits: see session 009

No tests of these two sides are known to exist. No comment possible.

Notes:

- Rust*2: not listed

- Rust*3,*4: George Temple -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr; Perry Smith -cl -ts; Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell -bj; Ralph Bedell -d

- Rust*6: Fess Williams, cl, as, v, dir; George Temple, t; David 'Jelly' James, tb, Perry Smith, cl, ts, v; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell, bj; Ralph Bedell, d; Charles Cooke, a

009 FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA	New York,	Nov. 18, 1926
Fess Williams – clt, alt, voc, ldr;		
George Temple – tpt; David 'Jelly' James – tbn;		
Perry Smith – ten, clt;		
Henry 'Hank' Duncan – pno; Ollie Blackwell – bjo; Ralph Bedell – dms;		
Charles Doc Cooke - arr		
E-4092	High Fever	Voc 1058, Retrieval RTR 79032
E-4094	Atlanta Black Bottom	Voc 1058, Retrieval RTR 79032

Composer credits: E-4092 (Sanders); E-4094 (Dickerson - Robinson)

'High Fever': Rust*6 lists Charles 'Doc' Cook's authorship of the used arrangement, here. But I can only recognise moderate conformities with Cook's own recorded version of this tune which might be caused only by the general form/structure of the original composition.

Therefore, I'd like to question this statement. Yet, Cook's recording might well have been the basis of this version here. The ingredients are as in all Williams sides reported before: the soloist's individual peculiarities as known, jazz-wise or not, but no Williams vocal, here. I assume that this tune did never have any lyrics, probably being a ragtime piano composition.

'Atlanta Black Bottom' is a nice tune and is played with a nice arrangement, maybe by the same arranger. There only is one weak point (you guess it): it's the tedious two-reeds section – 10 bars of a blues chorus – late in the tune. I endure the clarinet solo. This, obviously, is the only recording of this title during the jazz age.

Notes:

- Rust*2,*3,*4: George Temple (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Perry Smith (clt, ten); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell (bjo); Ralph Bedell (dms)

- Rust*6: Fess Williams, cl, as, v, dir; George Temple, t; David 'Jelly' James, tb, Perry Smith, cl, ts, v; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell, bj; Ralph Bedell, d, Charles Cooke, a

010 **FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA** New York, Nov. 30, 1926
 Fess Williams – clt, alt, voc, ldr;
 George Temple – tpt; David 'Jelly' James – tbn;
 Perry Smith – ten, sop;
 Henry 'Hank' Duncan – pno; Ollie Blackwell – bjo; Ralph Bedell – dms;
 Perry Smith – voc (2)
 36985-2 What Did Romie-O-Juliet? (When He Climbed Her Balcony) Vic test, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
 36986-2 Nobody But My Baby Is Getting My Love Vic test, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
Composer credits: not known

The first title has a sensitive Temple trumpet chorus, a nice banjo solo and the ubiquitous Fess Williams slap-tongue clarinet solo. Fess then sings/talks in his manner, and the tune is performed in a respectable jazzy way. There is a one-bar break in the coda played by a soprano sax. This would probably be by Perry Smith, as tenor (in Bb) players usually prefer soprano saxes (also Bb) when doubling.

'Nobody But My Baby' is a tune by – possibly – Clarence Williams and Andy Razaf, the accomplished lyricist of the Harlem scene. Fess plays the theme on his clarinet over Smith's soprano. We hear the same vocal duet Williams – Smith as before, with fine piano accompaniment below. And it is a relaxed and jazzy last chorus then, only Smith's trills across the chords in bars 25 to 28 diminish the positive impression.

But we certainly have to be grateful that somebody – who? – had access to Victor's vaults to be able to find such an unissued item and publish it!

Notes:

- Rust*2: George Temple (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Perry Smith (clt, ten); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell (bjo); Ralph Bedell (dms)

- Rust*3,*4: George Temple -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr; Perry Smith -cl -ts -v (2); Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell -bj; Ralph Bedell -d

- Rust*6: Fess Williams, cl, as, v, dir; George Temple, t; David 'Jelly' James, tb, Perry Smith, cl, ts, v; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell, bj; Ralph Bedell, d

- B. Rust, *The Victor Master Book, Vol. 2: t / tb/ 2s/p/ bj/ d; vocalists: Fess Williams and Perry Smith.*

011 **JELLY JAMES AND HIS FEWSICIANS** New York, Jan. 25, 1927
 George Temple – tpt; David 'Jelly' James – tbn;
 Perry Smith – clt, sop;
 Henry 'Hank' Duncan – pno; Ollie Blackwell – bjo
 GEX-481 Make Me Know It Gen 6045, Frog DGF 73
 GEX-482 Georgia Bo Bo Gen 6045, Frog DGF 73
Composer credits: GEX-481 (Williams); GEX-482 (Trent - Waller)

Now, with Fess Williams recording for Vocalion, the Gennett people still seem to be interested in the Williams band as one of the main attractions for customers of Harlem's night life.

Without Fess as bandleader and director of musical matters, the band sounds much more to be in the jazz field although lacking fire and enthusiasm. The personnel seems to be inspired by the contemporary recordings of Louis Armstrong's Hot Five.

The main soloist is Perry Smith on clarinet, on which he is much less experienced than on the soprano sax. I even thought the clarinet to be played by another player. But the short triplet phrase in bars 6/7 of the initial clarinet chorus decidedly points to Smith. And also there are wrong notes played. His performance sounds bloodless and tedious on clarinet. George Temple is without real drive and fire as on the Fess Williams sides. Jelly James solos more as before in his accustomed legato style, but without growl colours. Hank Duncan finds a lot of solo space, and he uses it. Blackwell is the reliable rhythm man on these sides. There definitely is no drummer on these two sides, although listed in all discographies, what adds to the retained swing and fire. But: this is workman-like jazz without any comedy and without the trashy ingredients offered by Fess Williams on his recordings.

Notes:

- Carey, McCarthy, *Jazz Directory, Vol. 5: prob personnel: George Temple (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); unknown (clt); Henry Duncan (p); Ollie Blackwell (bj); Ralph Bedell (d)*

- Rust*2: George Temple (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); Don Pasquall or Craig Watson (clt, sop); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell (bjo); Ralph Bedell (dms)

- Rust*3,*4,*6: George Temple -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Perry Smith -cl -ss; Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell -bj; Ralph Bedell -d

012 **FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA** New York, Feb. 02, 1927
 Fess Williams – alt, clt, voc, dir;
 Kenneth Roane (1), George Temple – tpt; David 'Jelly' James – tbn;
 Otto Mikell – alt, clt (1); Perry Smith – ten, clt;
 Henry 'Hank' Duncan – pno; Ollie Blackwell – bjo; Clinton Walker – bbs (1); Ralph Bedell – dms
 E-4503 / 05 White Ghost Shivers Voc 1085, Retrieval RTR 79032
 E-4506 / 08 My Pretty Girl Voc 1085, Retrieval RTR 79032
Composer credits: E-4503/05 (Tarto – Swan); E-4506/08 (Fulcher)

From this recording date on, the Fess Williams band presents a complete big band personnel as used in the 1920s – two trumpets, one trombone, three reeds, and four rhythm. And instantly, there is an exception to this statement: The second title of this session - 'My Pretty Girl' - is performed by the eight-piece personnel, only, as before.

Kenneth Roane was a renowned first part trumpet player cum arranger at this time in Harlem, New York. So, George Temple is freer for solo work and does not have to care so much for playing the lead. Otto Mikell was first alto saxophonist with the 'Savoy Sultans' at this time, the band playing opposite the Williams band at the Savoy Ballroom (see elsewhere at this web-site). He thus seems to be just a place holder for a third reed player not yet enlisted. But the saxophone section is now completed as the arrangements required.

Clinton Walker on his tuba adds a lot of depth to the band's sound. He will later be found to play with King Oliver's New York orchestra. In 'White Ghosts Shivers' George Temple contributes the hot trumpet solos with nice blue playing. He decidedly develops into a real hot trumpet soloist. All other soloistic is offered by bandleader Williams on his "squeezed" alto sax or on his growl clarinet. The tune is an attractive piece in minor mode.

'My Pretty Girl' is played with fire and drive, yet with the eight-piece personnel of before, only. It features the usual Fess Williams Characteristics. George Temple solos first, then Fess takes over on his alto, and Jelly James has an un-effective half-chorus. (By the way, Fletcher Henderson tackled this tune in January 1931, using an arrangement by Benny Carter. Just listen!)

Notes:

- Rust*2: George Temple (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Perry Smith (clt, ten); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell (bjo); Ralph Bedell (dms)

- Rust*3: Kenneth Roane -George Temple -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr); Otto Mikell -as; Perry Smith -cl -ts; Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell -bj; Clinton Walker -bb; Ralph Bedell -d

- Rust*4: Kenneth Roane -t -a; George Temple -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr); Otto Mikell -as; Perry Smith -cl -ts; Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell -bj; Clinton Walker -bb; Ralph Bedell -d

- Rust*6: Fess Williams, cl, as, v, dir; Kenneth Roane, t, a; George Temple, t; David 'Jelly' James, tb, Otto Mikell, as; Perry Smith, cl, ts; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell, bj; Ralph Bedell, d

013 FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA

New York,

Feb. 25, 1927

Fess Williams – alt, voc, dir;

George Temple – tpt; David 'Jelly' James – tbn;

Otto Mikell – oboe, alt; Perry Smith – ten, bsx;

Henry 'Hank' Duncan – pno; Clinton Walker - bbs

E-4598 Gambler's Blues

Voc 1087,

Retrieval RTR 79032

E-4599 Gambler's Blues

Voc 1087,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

E-4601 / 02 I Wasn't Scared, But I Just Thought That I Had Better Go

Voc 1087,

Retrieval RTR 79032

Composer credits: E-4598/99 (Moore - Baxter); E-4601/02 (Shunk)

'Gambler's Blues': I hear: Fess Williams on alto in the introduction, from then on only vocalizing. Then there is an oboe playing the melody of the tune straight - like a 'cantus firmus'. This might be Otto Mikell, a renowned multi-instrumentalist – as the son of a famed teacher father. Tenorist (pitched Bb) Perry Smith probably plays the bass-sax (also pitched Bb). The bass part is played by the bass-sax, under the given circumstances probably as stated above. Clearly recognised is Jelly James' trombone, and at the beginning I believe to hear a trumpet playing one of the middle-parts. The only accompaniment is by the piano, thus 'Hank' Duncan, and the tuba, smoothly at the bottom. For me there is no need for additional saxophones, attributing the instruments as above. The tune is made up of an intro, one eight-bar chorus, one sixteen-bar verse, and two-and-a-half eight-bar choruses. The chord structure and the recited story is that of 'St. James Infirmary', framed only by a gambler's memory.

'I Wasn't Scared ...' is Fess' story again, accompanied by the same group, only dropping the oboe, whose player probably is on alto, now. And the tuba cares for the soft but strong harmonic basis.

Notes:

- Rust*2: George Temple (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Perry Smith (clt, ten); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell (bjo); Ralph Bedell (dms)

- Rust*3: Kenneth Roane -George Temple -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr); Otto Mikell -as; Perry Smith -cl -ts; Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell -bj; Clinton Walker -bb; Ralph Bedell -d

- Rust*4: Kenneth Roane -t -a; George Temple -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr); Otto Mikell -as; Perry Smith -cl -ts; Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell -bj; Clinton Walker -bb; Ralph Bedell -d

- Rust*6: Fess Williams, cl, as, v, dir; Kenneth Roane, t, a; George Temple, t; David 'Jelly' James, tb, Otto Mikell, as; Perry Smith, cl, ts; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell, bj; Ralph Bedell, d

Discernible differences of takes:

E-4598: Bass-sax break at the beginning: sax plays: 4 eighth-notes Eb-C-Bb-C, 1 dotted quarter-note Bb

E-4599: Bass-sax break at the beginning: sax plays: 5 eighth-notes Eb-C-Bb-C-Bb

Fess Williams has now enlarged his Royal Flush Orchestra by a lead trumpet player – Kenneth Roane, a lead alto saxophonist – Otto Mikell, remainder of the "emigrated" Savoy Bearcats, and a tuba player who later appeared in King Oliver's New York band – Clinton Walker. The band now seems to be equipped for the demands of the management and the growing audience of the Savoy Ballroom.

014 FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA

New York,

Mar. 28, 1927

Fess Williams – alt, clt, voc, dir;

Kenneth Roane, George Temple – tpt; David 'Jelly' James – tbn;

Otto Mikell – alt, clt, bar; Perry Smith – ten, clt, bsx;

Henry 'Hank' Duncan – pno; Ollie Blackwell – bjo; Clinton Walker – bbs; Ralph Bedell – dms;

Fess Williams - arr

E-22361 Variety Stomp

Br 3532,

Retrieval RTR 79032

E-22362 Variety Stomp

Br 3532,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

E-22363 Variety Stomp

Br 3532,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

E-22364 Phantom Blues

Br 3532,

Retrieval RTR 79032

Composer credits: E-4772/3 (Henderson – Green - Trent); E-4774 (Handler – Riley - Mills)

'Variety Stomp' – with three alternate takes as listed below (mind the false take designation in the booklet to Retrieval RTR 79032!) – closely follows the Henderson Victor version with its fine arrangement by Don Redman, using whole-tone scales in the interlude and bridges, very "modern" for their time. I have opted for Perry Smith's playing the bass-sax for some reason as explained in session 013 above, and I keep it, but certainly, in this larger personnel, it might also possibly be Otto Mikell who rumbles on the bass-sax. Fess Williams' clarinet solo is remarkably moderate in using queer notes and slap-tongue practices.

And then there is 'Phantom Blues', a tune that has nothing of a blues structure or anything reminding of a blues. Instead, there are several different strains accumulated containing soloistic by George Temple on muted trumpet, Fess Williams on clarinet, and a sober but nice and technically proficient alto solo, which is by Otto Mikell, an ensemble player rather than soloist (compare 'Senorita Mine' by the Savoy

Bearcats!). Otto Mikell was lead saxophone player of the Savoy Bearcats in 1926, but apparently switched over to Fess Williams when the Bearcats left for a year-long South America tour in early 1927.

Notes:

- Rust*2: George Temple (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Perry Smith (clt, ten); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell (bjo); Emanuel Casamore (bbs); Ralph Bedell (dms)

- Rust*3: Kenneth Roane -George Temple -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr; Otto Mikell -as; Perry Smith -cl -ts; Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell -bj; Clinton Walker -bb; Ralph Bedell -d

- Rust*4: Kenneth Roane -t -a; George Temple -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr; Otto Mikell -as; Perry Smith -cl -ts; Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell -bj; Clinton Walker -bb; Ralph Bedell -d

- Rust*6: Fess Williams, cl, as, v, dir; Kenneth Roane, t, a; George Temple, t; David 'Jelly' James, tb, Otto Mikell, as; Perry Smith, cl, ts; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell, bj; Ralph Bedell, d; Fess Williams -a

Tune Structures:

E-22362 *Variety Stomp* Key of Gm / Db / Gm / Db Brunswick
(Intro 8 bars ens)(Verse 1 16 bars AA GT m-tpt)(Verse 2 16 bars AA PS bsx)(Bridge 7 bars PS bsx 2 – ens 5 (!))(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA FW clt)(Interlude 16 bars ens)(Bridge 4 bars ens)(Verse 3 16 bars AA GT m-tpt)(Bridge 6 bar ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA ens 16 – PS ten 8 – ens + FW clt obl 8)

E-22364 *Phantom Blues* Key of C / F / Db / C Brunswick
(Intro 12 bars ens)(Strain A1 14 bars AA JJ tbn 2 – GT m-tpt 4 – JJ tbn 2 – GT m-tpt 6)(Bridge 4 bars ens)(Strain A2 14 bars AA FW clt)(Strain B 18 bars ens)(Strain A3 14 bars OM alt)(Interlude 6 bars ens)(Strain C 12 bars FW growl-clt)(Bridge 2 bars ens)(Strain A4 14 bars AA ens 6 – GT m-tpt 4 – ens 6)(Coda 4 bars ens)

Discernible differences of takes:

E-22361: Last two bars of title: Fess Williams plays 8 syncopated quarter-notes db-db-bb-ab-f – ab-e-Db

E-22362: Last two bars of title: Fess Williams plays a row of 4 very soft quarter-notes f-Db-f-Db-f-Db-f-db

E-22363: Last two bars of title: Fess Williams plays 2 eight-notes db-db, 5 syncopated quarter-notes db-bb-ab-f-Db, 1 dotted quarter-note f, 1 quarter-note Db

015 FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA

New York,

Jun. 15, 1927

Fess Williams – clt, alt, ldr;

Kenneth Roane, R.Q. Dickerson – tpt; David 'Jelly' James – tbn;

Otto Mikell – alt, bar, clt; Perry Smith – ten, clt;

Henry 'Hank' Duncan – pno; Ollie Blackwell – bjo; Clinton Walker – bbs; Ralph Bedell – dms

Fess Williams - arr

E-23633 Alligator Crawl

Br 3589,

Retrieval RTR 79032

E-23634 Alligator Crawl

Br 3589,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

E-23636 Ozark Blues

Br 3589,

Retrieval RTR 79032

Composer credits: E-23633/4 (Waller); E-23636 (Rose)

Mr. Michael Haxell in Storyville 118 (1985) presented a very interesting question: "Is it possible that R.Q. Dickerson is on the sides recorded by Fess Williams on 15 and 24 June 1927? The solos sound nothing like the accredited trumpeters Temple and Roane and I note that GAPS 100 (LP) does list the composer of 'Ozark Blues' as R.Q. Dickerson." L. Wright added: "Neither Voc 1117 nor Br 3589 show a composer credit."

I have listened and have to admit that Mr. Haxell's ears obviously were in perfect shape, as his assumption may be absolutely right: the trumpet solos heard on these four/five sides of June 1927 might easily be by R.Q. Dickerson when compared with his solo work on the Andy Preer sides of February 03, 1927! Dickerson's presence has to be considered here! And why should Fess Williams not have engaged Dickerson in case he would have been in need of an able jazzy trumpet player? George Temple might have been ill or elsewhere occupied and Kenneth Roane is only known as a – admittedly very good – first trumpet man and arranger and not a soloist. Situations of this kind very often happened in Harlem musicians' circles of the time. (Dear Mr. Haxell, thank you very much for this suggestion! But, sorry, the GAPS 100 cover does not give any composer credits!)

Notes:

- Rust*2: George Temple (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl); Perry Smith (clt, ten, vcl); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell (bjo); Emanuel Casamore (bbs); Ralph Bedell (dms).

- Rust*3: Fess Williams, cl, as, v; George Temple, Kenneth Roane, t; David 'Jelly' James, tb; Otto Mikell, as; Perry Smith, cl, ts; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell, bj; Clinton Walker, bb; Ralph Bedell, d.

- Rust*4,*6: Fess Williams, cl, as, v; George Temple, t; Kenneth Roane, t, a; David 'Jelly' James, tb; Otto Mikell, as; Perry Smith, cl, ts; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell, bj; Clinton Walker, bb; Ralph Bedell, d.

Tune Structures:

E-23633/34 *Alligator Crawl* Key of C/F/C Brunswick
(Intro 4 bars OM bar – ens)(Strain A1 16 bars AA' OM bar 4 – RQD o-tpt 4 – OM bar 4 – RQD o-tpt 4)(Strain A2 16 bars AA' ens 4 – FW clt 4 – ens 4 – FW clt2 – ens 2)Strain B 1 16 bars AA saxes)(*Strain B 2 16 bars AA JJ o-tbn)(Bridge 4 bars ens modulation)(Strain C 1 24 bars FW clt 8 – ens 8 – FW clt 8)(Strain A 3 16 bars AA' JJ o-tbn 4 – clts 4 – JJ o-tbn 4 – clts 4)(Strain A 4 16 bars AA' JJ o-tbn 4 – clts 4 – JJ o-tbn 4 – ens 4) Note: Strains B and C are strains C and B, respectively, in Fats Waller's composition/solo recording!

E-23636 *Ozark Blues* Key of G Brunswick

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Strain A 16 bars AA' FW clt)(Strain B 1 16 bars AA ens 4 – FW clt 4 – ens 4 – FW clt 4)(Strain B 2 16 bars AA ens 4 – FW clt 4 – ens 4 – FW clt 4)(Strain C 16 bars AA RQD m-tpt + clts)(Strain D 8 bars FW clt)(Strain B 3 16 bars AA FW clt + ens)(Tag ens 2)

Discernible differences of takes:

E-23633: *Start of tbn-solo: 2 quarter-notes e-f (gliss), 1 eighth-note F and 1 half-note Ab (note f on first beat of B2!)

E-23634: *Start of tbn-solo: upbeat to strain B2: tbn plays 4 eighth-notes C-Db-D-F and 2 quarter-notes D-Bb (note Bb on first beat of B2!)

016 FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA

New York,

Jun. 24, 1927

Fess Williams – clt, alt, ldr;

Kenneth Roane, R.Q. Dickerson – tpt; David 'Jelly' James – tbn;

Otto Mikell – alt, clt; Perry Smith – ten, clt;

Henry 'Hank' Duncan – pno; Ollie Blackwell – bjo; Clinton Walker – bbs; Ralph Bedell – dms;
Fess Williams – arr

E-23747	Number Ten	Br 3596,	Retrieval RTR 79032
E-23750	Razor Edge	Br 3596,	Retrieval RTR 79032

Composer credits: E-23747 (Rose); E-23750 (Jackson)

As noted above, I follow Mr. Haxell's assumption as above and list R.Q. Dickerson as the probable trumpet soloist on these two June 1927 sessions.

In 'Razor Edge' I hear three saxes after Fess Williams soloing on clarinet, but Rust gives only two. Or does Fess William play alto sax in the section what I cannot imagine as he was fronting the band? But obviously Fess did indeed complete the three-part saxophone section – at least on record. It is a lively item and it is played with fire and gusto using a nice arrangement – of whom? R.Q. Dickerson is playing with much better rhythm – more off-beat phrasing - than George Temple. This title was also recorded by the Blackbirds of Paradise, a band of Birmingham, Alabama, in July 1927. But no copy of this recording was ever known.

Notes:

- Rust*2: George Temple (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl); Perry Smith (clt, ten, vcl); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell (bjo); Emanuel Casamore (bbs); Ralph Bedell (dms).

- Rust*3: Fess Williams, cl, as, v; George Temple, Kenneth Roane, t; David 'Jelly' James, tb; Otto Mikell, as; Perry Smith, cl, ts; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell, bj; Clinton Walker, bb; Ralph Bedell, d.

- Rust*4,*6: Fess Williams, cl, as, v; George Temple, t; Kenneth Roane, t, a; David 'Jelly' James, tb; Otto Mikell, as; Perry Smith, cl, ts; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell, bj; Clinton Walker, bb; Ralph Bedell, d.

Tune Structures:

E-23747 Number Ten Key of C Brunswick

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Verse 1 16 bars AABA ens 8 – KR o-tpt 4 – ens 4)(Verse 2 16 bars AABA OM alt)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA ens 8 – RQD m-tpt 8 – ens 8 – RQD m-tpt 6 – JJ o-tbn 2)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA ens 8 – FW clt 8 – ens 8 – FW clt 6 – ens 2)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA ens 16 – HD pno 6 – JJ o-tbn 2 – ens 8)(Verse 3 16 bars AABA ens 8 – FW clt 4 – ens 4)(Tag 2 bars ens)

E-23750 Razor Edge Key of Bb/Eb/Bb

Brunswick

(Intro 4 bars ens 2 – JJ o-tbn 2)(Strain A 1 32 bars AABA ens 16 – OB bjo 8 – ens 8)(Strain B 32 bars ABAC FW clt)(1/2 Strain A2 16 bars AA RQD m-tpt + clts)(Bridge 2 bars modulation ens)(Strain C 16 bars FW clt 14 – ens 2)(Strain A 2 32 bars AABA JJ o-tbn + saxes 16 – saxes 8 – ens 8)(Tag 2 bars ens)

In early 1928, Fess Williams accepted an invitation to front pianist Dave Peyton's Orchestra at a new theatre at Chicago's South Side, the Regal Theatre. He was lured away for six months by a baronial pay, including a six-months' option for further engagement. He returned until March 1929, taking over the lead of the Royal Flush Orchestra, again, which had been lead and fronted in the meantime by alto saxophonist Lockwood Lewis of Louisville, Kentucky, and 'Dixieland Jug Blowers' fame. In Chicago, the Peyton Orchestra recorded two sides under Fess Williams' name and lead (below).

017 FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS JOY BOYS

Chicago,

Apr. 03, 1928

Fess Williams – clt, dir;

Rennard 'Fats' Robbins, Reuben Reeves – tpt;

Eddie Atkins, William Franklin – tbn;

Ralph Brown – alt, oboe; unknown – alt; Norval Morton – ten, flt;

Clarence Lee, Bobby Wall, Joe McCutchin – vln;

Dave Peyton – pno; Lawrence W. Dixon – bjo; Sudie Reynaud – sbs; Jasper Taylor – dms

E-7291 Dixie Stomp

Voc 15690,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

E-7292 Drifting And Dreaming (Sweet Paradise)

Voc 15690,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

Composer credits: E-7291 (Tremaine); 7292 (Gillespie – Van Alstyne)

These two sides, actually, are by 'Dave Peyton's Regal Theatre Orchestra' of Chicago, fronted by Fess Williams.

The musicians are entirely important members of the Chicago jazz scene of the time. Strangely, all Rusts do not list a pianist for this band.

Bandleader Peyton was a named pianist and composer in Chicago, and there certainly was no reason to exclude him from recording. So, if you listen, he can decidedly be recognised behind the strings in bars 45/46/47 of 'Dixie Stomp'.

Oh, oh, there is pure schmaltz on this second side – as the title might have announced. But behind all the violin sounds we can easily hear the piano work of Dave Peyton. From the jazzier side we have eight bars of hot Reuben Reeves and sixteen plus 8 bars of the usual Fess Williams clarinet. In the middle-eight part of strain B1 we recognise the very antiquated fast vibrato of 'Fats' Robbins, he a reliable lead-trumpet man and a remainder of the early Sammy Stewart's 'Ten Knights of Syncopation' of 1924. He also may possibly be heard on oboe on this side.

As a serious orchestra of this time had a three-part reed-section, I take my liberty to include a third (second) alto sax player as a probability.

Notes:

- Rust*2,*3,*4: Professor Stanley Williams (dir); Fats Robbins (tpt, oboe); Reuben Reeves (tpt); Charles Atkins, William Franklin (tbn); Ralph Brown (alt, oboe); Norval Morton (ten, flt); Clarence Lee, Bobby Wall, Joe McCutchin (vln); Lawrence Dixon (bjo, cello); Sudie Reynaud (bbs); Jasper Taylor (dms)

- Rust*6: Fess Williams, cl, dir; Fats Robinson (sic!), t, o; Reuben Reeves, t; Eddie Atkins, William Franklin, tb; Ralph Brown, as, o; Norval Morton, ts, f; Clarence Lee, Bobby Wall, Joe McCutchin, vl; Lawrence W. Dixon, bj; Sudie Reynaud, sb; Jasper Taylor, d "The next two titles (these! – KBR) are actually by Dave Peyton's Regal Theatre (Chicago) orchestra, fronted for this session by Williams, who was serving as master of ceremonies at the Regal while Lockwood Lewis managed Williams' Royal Flush Orchestra in New York. These are the only known recordings of the Peyton orchestra."

Tune Structures:

E-7291 Dixie Stomp Key of G/Eb

Vocalion

(Intro 7(!) bars ens)(Strain A 16 bars RR m-tpt 8 – ens+vlns 4 – RR m-tpt 4)(Strain B1 16 bars vlns 8 – ens 8)(Strain C 16 bars ens)(Strain B2 16 bars FW clt)(Strain D 24 bars ens 8 – vlns 8 – ens 8)(Tag 1 bar ens)(Strain A2 16 bars RR m-tpt 8 – vlns 4 – ens 4)(Tag 2 bars ens)

E-7292 Drifting And Dreaming Key of Bb

Vocalion

(Intro 8 bars ens)(Strain A 16 bars AA vlns+flt)(Strain B1 32 bars AABA tbn 16 – ens 8 – tbn 8)(Strain C1 14 bars RR m-tpt 8 – ens 6)(Strain B2 32 bars AABA vlns+ens)(Strain B3 32 bars AABA FW clt 16 – ens 8 – FW clt 8)(Tag 4 bars ens+cym)

Fess Williams, back in New York again, continues his leadership of the Royal Flush Orchestra with a complete big-band-personnel of the time, keeping the whole three-part reeds-section of the band of his absence. Yet, surprisingly, he left the Savoy Ballroom after a two-weeks notice to further successes that, yet, did not materialise as expected, and the Fess Williams band went into decline, also caused by the Depression. But he still was under contract with the Victor Recording Company, that brought him ten further recording sessions – and the records sold very well. Williams kept a big band of changing personnels for most of the following 1930s.

018 **FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA** New York, Apr. 17, 1929
 Fess Williams – alt, clt, voc, dir;
 Kenneth Roane, George Temple – tpt; David ‘Jelly’ James – tbn;
 Lockwood Lewis – alt, clt; Felix Gregory – alt, clt, bar; Perry Smith – ten, clt, bsx;
 Henry ‘Hank’ Duncan – pno; *Ollie Blackwell or (Andy Pendleton?)* – bjo; Emanuel Casamore – bbs; Ralph Bedell – dms;
 Perry Smith, Fess Williams – speech (4); unknown – scraper, bell (4)
 51234-2 Here ‘Tis Vic V-38056, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
 51235-1 A Few Riffs Vic uniss on 78, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
 51235-2 A Few Riffs Vic V-38064, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
 51236-2 Hot Town Vic V-38077, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
Composer credits: 51234 (Fess Williams); 51235 (Fess Williams); 51236 (Fess Williams)

The band personnel now have changed a bit, in that Fess Williams can concentrate on fronting his band and doing his gimmicks, vocally and instrumentally. The band now includes a three-part reed-section with Lockwood Lewis – who had taken over leadership during Fess Williams’ absence in Chicago – and Felix Gregory, he an experienced Caribbean reed player by the real name of Gregorio Felix, as reported. He probably was one of the number of clarinetists hired by Lt. Jim Europe for his ‘Hell-Fighters’ band in the Caribbean in 1917/18 to be sent to France with the American army. Perry Smith still is in the tenor sax stool.

The rhythm section is listed as expanded by a second banjo player, Andy Pendleton. But what I hear on all three titles, is a very timid and restrained single banjo player who is almost unheard. This is decidedly different from Blackwell’s hard-hitting banjo playing of before. Thus, I believe to hear possibly Mr. Pendleton, only. But: following Rust, Andy Pendleton appears as a duo-singer in King Oliver’s Dixie Syncopators session of August 13, 1928 and as solo vocalist acc. by Clarence Williams on June 26, 1928, and on February 10, 1933 acc. by Leroy Tibbs (these latter sides are un-reissued, as far as I know). His recorded vocals accompanied by Clarence Williams are not convincing at all. This makes me assume that he was employed by Fess W. out of personal reasons without any concrete business in the band, possibly only for vocals substituting Fess in shows. The listing of two banjo players in the Victor Master book might then be caused by the fact only that Pendleton carried a banjo for entrance into the recording studios? We never hear two banjos discernibly simultaneously in the subsequent recordings.

Clinton Walker was replaced by Emanuel Casamore, and here again, almost nothing can be heard of the new tuba player. Is he really present?

While reliable Ralph Bedell kept his drum seat and shines on the cymbals. And it’s still the modest Hank Duncan on piano, caring for the main rhythm basis at this session.

‘Here ‘Tis’ has much Fess Williams very own clarinet soloistic, a bit George Temple – or is it Kenneth Roane? - on muted but impressive trumpet, and a very little bit of ‘Jelly’ James’ trombone. The title is Fess’ composition, with a nice structure and harmonics, but it drags a lot. Interesting is Bedell’s way of using the cymbals.

‘A Few Riffs’, Williams’ composition and – I assume – his arrangement, is a sequence of 16-bars choruses, distributed to – mainly – Fess’ solos, and Bedell’s cymbals, with a bit of Temple’s muted trumpet, and Fess’ clarinet, again. Interesting, yet, is, that the arranger (Fess?) underlaid the entire tune with a permanent short riff played by a baritone sax and a bass-sax. That same device will be recognised in the following title. I assume that Lewis plays alto, Felix plays the baritone, and Smith – like in session 013 – plays the bass-sax.

Williams, again, is composer – and probably arranger - of ‘Hot Town’. Here, that same coupling of baritone and bass saxes is often used to deliver a boring after-beat rhythm.

Notes:

- Rust*2: *George Temple, Kenneth Roane (tpt); David ‘Jelly’ James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Lockwood Lewis (alt); Felix Gregory, Perry Smith (clt, ten); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell, Andy Pendleton (bjo); Emanuel Casamore (bbs); Ralph Bedell (dms)*

- Rust*3: *Kenneth Roane -t -a; George Temple -t; David ‘Jelly’ James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr; Lockwood Lewis -as; Felix Gregory -Perry Smith -cl -ts; Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell - Andy Pendleton -bj; Emanuel Casamore -bb; Ralph Bedell -d*

- Rust*4: *Kenneth Roane -t -a; George Temple -t; David ‘Jelly’ James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr; Lockwood Lewis -as; Perry Smith -cl -ts; Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell -Andy Pendleton -bj; Emanuel Casamore -bb; Ralph Bedell -d*

- Rust*6: *Fess Williams, cl, as, v, dir; Kenneth Roane, t, a; George Temple, t; David ‘Jelly’ James, tb, Lockwood Lewis, as; Felix Gregory, cl, as, ts; Perry Smith, cl, ts; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell, Andy Pendleton, bj; Emanuel Casamore, bb; Ralph Bedell, d*

- B. Rust, *The Victor Master Book, Vol.2: 2t, tb, 4s, p, 2bj, bb, d*

Tune Structures:

51234 *Here ‘Tis* Key of Cm/Eb Victor
 (Intro 8 bars ens 4 – GT o-tpt 3 – ens 1)(Verse 16 bars FW clt + ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AA’ ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA GT m-tpt 30 – tpts 2)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA FW clt 30 – GT o-tpt 2)(Tag 2 bars GT o-tpt 1 – ens 1)(Verse 16 bars FW clt + ens)

51235 *A Few Riffs* Key of G Victor
 (Intro 4 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars AA FW clt)(Chorus 1 16 bars AA’ RB dms – FW clt 4 – RB dms 4 – FW clt 4)(Chorus 2 16 bars AA’ RB dms – FW clt 4 – RB dms 4 – FW clt 4)(Chorus 3 16 bars AA’ GT m-tpt)(Chorus 4 16 bars AA’ FW clt)(Chorus 5 16 bars AA’ FW clt)(Tag 3 bars ens)

51236 *Hot Town* Key of Bb Victor
 (Intro 34 bars PS - FW cross-talk)(Strain A1 32 bars AABA GT m-tpt)(Strain B1 16 bars AB FW clt)(Strain B2 16 bars AB JJ tbn)

(1/2 Strain B3 A ?FG bar)(Strain A2 32 bars AABA ens 16 – GT m-tpt 8 – ens 8)(Coda 16 bars ens 2 – HD pno 6 – GT m-tpt 8)

Discernible differences of takes:

51235-1: Chorus 1, second four-bar period of clarinet (bars 13, 14, 15): clarinet plays distinctly growl style

51235-2: Chorus 1, second four-bar period of clarinet (bars 13, 14, 15): clarinet plays clear, without growl notes

019 **FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA** New York, Apr. 22, 1929
 Fess Williams – alt, clt, voc, dir;
 Kenneth Roane, George Temple – tpt; David ‘Jelly’ James – tbn;
 Lockwood Lewis – alt, clt, bar; Felix Gregory – alt, clt; Perry Smith – ten, clt, bsx;

Henry 'Hank' Duncan – pno; *Ollie Blackwell or (Andy Pendleton?)* – bjo; Emanuel Casamore – bbs; Ralph Bedell – dms;
 51198-1 Friction Vic V-38056, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
 51199-1 Kentucky Blues Vic V-38077, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
 51900-1 Do Shuffle Vic uniss on 78, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
 51900-2 Do Shuffle Vic V-38064, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
 51900-3 Do Shuffle Vic uniss on 78, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
Composer credits: 51198 (Fess Williams); 51199 (Walter Brown); 51900 (Kenneth A. Roane)

In 'Friction' – a Fess Williams composition/arrangement again - the coupling of baritone and bass sax is a determining element. I think it is Williams' lack of musical and melodic fantasy and creative power that makes him take refuge with such rather primitive devices. And his now familiar gimmicks catch more and more room at the expense of musical quality. Or was it to stir up the audience? The banjo player only plays the after-beats, and I assume this to be A. Pendleton.

With 'Kentucky Blues' – no blues changes here – we have a rather boring accumulation of four clarinet verses of a composition that also includes an interlude for the sax section and one chorus for brass solos. And the citation of 'My Old Kentucky Home'. No swing and no tension, here. But there again is the strong four-four banjo player, assumably Ollie Blackwell?

'Do Shuffle' is Kenneth Roane's composition/arrangement and the same tune as 'Harlem Shuffle' as recorded by the Lloyd Scott band with probably Roane on lead trumpet in January 1927 – also for Victor. But here, the Fess Williams band gives an entirely different picture of their potentials: the band swings and plays with an enormous drive and fire. Fess' clarinet solo still is of the same quality as before, but they gave him only 18 bars. Everything else is first class Harlem big band music, yet, with little soloistic. A joy to hear! And I'd say: Ollie Blackwell on banjo. It's a gas!

It seems that alto player Felix Gregory has now joined the band, because Lockwood Lewis and Gregory appear together on the big band-photo known. And as Ralph Brown from Chicago (did Fess snatch him from the Dave Peyton Band of Chicago?) replaced Lockwood Lewis, Gregory must have been with the band already. Felix Gregory was one of the number of skilled reed players engaged in Puerto Rico by Noble Sissle – ordered by Jim Europe – to strengthen Europe's 'Hellfighters' Band in Europe 1918 in WWI. His real name was Gregorio Felix Delgado.

Notes:

- Rust*2: George Temple, Kenneth Roane (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Lockwood Lewis (alt); Felix Gregory, Perry Smith (clt, ten); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell, Andy Pendleton (bjo); Emanuel Casamore (bbs); Ralph Bedell (dms), one reed man omitted

- Rust*3,*4: Kenneth Roane -t -a; George Temple -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr); Lockwood Lewis -as; Perry Smith -cl -ts; Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell -Andy Pendleton -bj; Emanuel Casamore -bb; Ralph Bedell -d

- Rust*6: Fess Williams, cl, as, v, dir; Kenneth Roane, t, a; George Temple, t; David 'Jelly' James, tb, Lockwood Lewis, as; Perry Smith, cl, ts; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell, Andy Pendleton, bj; Emanuel Casamore, bb; Ralph Bedell, d

- B. Rust, *The Victor Master Book, Vol.2: 2t, tb, 3s, p, 2bj, bb, d*

- David Thompson, *Martha Moreno de Schwarz, James Reese Europe's Hellfighters Band and the Puerto Rican Connection.*

Tune Structures:

51198 Friction Key of Cm / Ab Victor
 (Intro 8 bars ens)(Verse 1 16 bars AA FW clt)(Verse 2 16 bars AA JJ m-tbn)(Bridge 8 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AB FW clt)
 (Chorus 2 32 bars AB saxes 30 – RB dms 2)(Chorus 3 32 bars AB GT m-tpt 14 – PS bsx 2+14 – ens 2)(Chorus 4 32 bars AB ens 14 – GT m-tpt 2 – ens 16)(Coda 16 bars ens 2 – cross-talk 14)

51199 Kentucky Shuffle Key of Bb / Eb / Bb Victor
 (Intro 6 bars ens)(Verse 1 16 bars AA' FW clt)(Verse 2 16 bars AA' FW clt 14 – ens 2)(Interlude 16 bars AB saxes)(Chorus 32 bars AABA GT o-tpt 16 – JJ o-tbn 4 – GT o-tpt 10 – saxes 2)(Tag 2 bars saxes)(Verse 3 16 bars AA' FW clt)(Verse 4 16 bars AA' FW clt)(Tag 3 bars FW clt + ens)

51900 Do Shuffle Key of Eb / Eb / Bb Victor
 (Intro 4 bars ens)(Strain A 16 bars AA' KR o-tpt)(Chorus 1 32 bars AB HD pno 14 – FW clt 2+16)(Chorus 2 32 bars AB saxes 22 – o-tpts 2 – saxes 6 – tpts 2)(Chorus 3 32 bars AB brass + saxes chase)(Strain B 20 bars AB clts)(Bridge 4 bars ens+EC bbs)(Chorus 4 32 bars AB ens 8 – JJ o-tbn 6 – saxes 2 – ens+FW clt 6 – tpts 2 – ens 8)(Tag 2 bars ens)

Discernible differences of takes:

51900-1: Clarinet break last two bars of solo in chorus 1: 4 syncopated quarter-notes + quarter-pause eb – Eb – eb – Eb

51900-2: Clarinet break last two bars of solo in chorus 1: 4 syncopated quarter-notes + quarter-pause eb – bb – g – Eb

51900-3: Clarinet break last two bars of solo in chorus 1: 5 syncopated quarter-notes + quarter-pause d – bb – ab – F – D

020 FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA

Camden, NJ,

May 15, 1929

Fess Williams – alt, clt, voc, dir;

Kenneth Roane, George Temple – tpt; David 'Jelly' James – tbn;

Ralph Brown, Felix Gregory – alt, clt; Perry Smith – ten, clt;

Henry 'Hank' Duncan – pno; *Ollie Blackwell or (Andy Pendleton?)* – bjo; Emanuel Casamore – bbs; Ralph Bedell – dms

50882-2 Snag Nasty Vic V-38128, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

50883-2 Big Shot Vic V-38128, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

Composer credits: 50882 (Kenneth Roane); 50883 (Fess Williams – Hank Duncan)

For these two titles, Fess Williams' interpretation of hot music or jazz becomes apparent, again. The band drags and the arrangements are not much more than show-cases for the bandleader's queer clarinet performance.

There is little hot soloing, and the banjo player seems to be Andy Pendleton on both sides, because of his un-swinging after-beat rhythm.

Yet, in 'Big Shot' he has a nice moderate banjo solo.

Nothing world-shaking, here!

Notes:

- Rust*2: George Temple, Kenneth Roane (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Lockwood Lewis (alt); Felix Gregory, Perry Smith (clt, ten); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell, Andy Pendleton (bjo); Emanuel Casamore (bbs); Ralph Bedell (dms), one reed man omitted

- Rust*3: Kenneth Roane -t -a; George Temple -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr); Lockwood Lewis -as; Felix Gregory -Perry Smith -cl -ts; Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell -Andy Pendleton -bj; Emanuel Casamore -bb; Ralph Bedell -d

- Rust*4: Kenneth Roane -t -a; George Temple -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr); Ralph Brown, Felix Gregory -as; Perry Smith -cl -ts; Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell -Andy Pendleton -bj; Emanuel Casamore -bb; Ralph Bedell -d

- Rust*6: Fess Williams, cl, as, v, dir; Kenneth Roane, t, a; George Temple, t; David 'Jelly' James, tb, Ralph Brown, Felix Gregory, as; Perry Smith, cl, ts; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell, Andy Pendleton, bj; Emanuel Casamore, bb; Ralph Bedell, d
 - B. Rust, *The Victor Master Book, Vol.2: 2t, tb, cl, 3s, p, 2bj, bb, d*
 - Storyville 51-87, Al Vollmer, Clarence M. Jones: "Ralph Brown then said that he joined Fess Williams' band in New York in 1929, taking Lockwood Lewis' place. He was with Fess for most of 1929 and 1930, and remembered very clearly recording with the band for Victor in the Camden studios – he recalled driving himself from New York to Camden to make the records."

Tune Structures:

50882 *Snag Nasty* Key of Eb / Ab Victor
 (Intro 4 bars ens)(Strain A 32 bars AA' FW clt + ens 30 – brass 2)(Strain B 20 bars saxes)(Strain C 12 bars ens 2 - JJ o-tbn 2 - KR o-tpt 2 - JJ o-tbn 2 - KR o-tpt 2 - JJ o-tbn 2)(Chorus 1 12 bars FW clt 10 – HD pno 2)(Chorus 2 12 bars HD pno 10 – FW clt 2)
 (Chorus 3 12 bars KR o-tpt + ens)(Tag 2 bars KR o-tpt + ens)
 250883 *Big Shot* Key of F (Dm) / Bb Victor
 (Intro 8 bars ens)(Strain A1 24 bars AA' brass + ens 23 – FW clt 1)(Strain A2 24 bars AA' FW clt)(Strain B 8 bars JJ o-tbn + saxes 4 – ens 3 – FW clt 1)(Strain C1 16 bars AA' ?AP bjo)(Strain C2 16 bars AA' FW clt)

021 **FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA**

Camden, NJ,

May 16, 1929

Fess Williams – alt, clt, voc, dir;

Kenneth Roane, George Temple – tpt; David 'Jelly' James – tbn;

Ralph Brown, Felix Gregory – alt, clt; Perry Smith – ten, clt;

Henry 'Hank' Duncan – pno; Ollie Blackwell or (Andy Pendleton?) – bjo; Emanuel Casamore – bbs; Ralph Bedell – dms

50889-1 Sell It

Vic uniss on 78, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

50889-2 Sell It

Vic V-38062, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

50890-1 Betsy Brown

Vic V-38062, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

50890-2 Betsy Brown

Vic uniss on 78, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

Composer credits: 50889 (Fess Williams); 50890 (Geo. Temple)

It stands out that many of the titles recorded by the Fess Williams band after the leader's return from Chicago, are compositions/arrangements of his own or one of his musicians. This amounts to 20 recorded titles of a complete number of 30. And it also stands out that of these 13 are Fess' originals and 7 of his colleagues.

Now, 'Sell It' is one of Fess' own creativity and it "shines" for its poor variety of form and harmonics. (If only the Victor people had made the Charlie Johnson band make so many recordings!!!)

Trumpeter George Temple's 'Betsy Brown' at least has nice and pleasing changes in the chorus, yet no attractive melodic theme. Anyway, the tune sounds nice, and certainly was a good vehicle for a sensitive dance. And it includes good solos by Temple on muted trumpet and James on muted trombone.

I hear one strong swinging banjo playing a four-four rhythm and would opt for Ollie Blackwell, at least for the second title. I (KBR) am really puzzled by the listing of two banjo players for these sessions – they are also present on the band photo, but I always do hear one single player, although possibly in somewhat different styles: a softer player possibly preferring after-beat rhythm, and a stronger player preferring four-four rhythm. The last one thn would probably be Blackwell re his early recordings with Fess. But I must confess that I am not certain at all. Did they share their parts, and, if so, why? And if they played together permanently, why do we not hear/recognise them?

Notes:

- Rust*2: George Temple, Kenneth Roane (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Lockwood Lewis (alt); Felix Gregory, Perry Smith (clt, ten); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell, Andy Pendleton (bjo); Emanuel Casamore (bbs); Ralph Bedell (dms), one reed man omitted

- Rust*3: Kenneth Roane -t -a; George Temple -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr); Lockwood Lewis -as; Felix Gregory -Perry Smith -cl -ts; Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell – Andy Pendleton -bj; Emanuel Casamore -bb; Ralph Bedell -d

- Rust*4: Kenneth Roane -t -a; George Temple -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr); Ralph Brown, Felix Gregory -as; Perry Smith -cl -ts; Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell –Andy Pendleton -bj; Emanuel Casamore -bb; Ralph Bedell -d

- Rust*6: Fess Williams, cl, as, v, dir; Kenneth Roane, t, a; George Temple, t; David 'Jelly' James, tb, Ralph Brown, Felix Gregory, as; Perry Smith, cl, ts; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell, Andy Pendleton, bj; Emanuel Casamore, bb; Ralph Bedell, d

- B. Rust, *The Victor Master Book, Vol.2: 2t, tb, cl, 3s, p, 2bj, bb, d*

- Storyville 51-87, Al Vollmer, Clarence M. Jones: "Ralph Brown then said that he joined Fess Williams' band in New York in 1929, taking Lockwood Lewis' place. He was with Fess for most of 1929 and 1930, and remembered very clearly recording with the band for Victor in the Camden studios – he recalled driving himself from New York to Camden to make the records."

Tune Structures:

50889 *Sell It* Key of C / Bb Victor
 (Intro 8 bars ens)(Strain A1 16 bars AA FW alt)(Strain A2 16 bars AA FW alt)(Strain B1 16 bars AA brass 6 – saxes 2 – brass 6 – RB dms 2)(Strain B2 16 bars AA brass 6 – saxes 2 – brass 6 – RB dms 2)(Strain A3 16 bars AA FW alt)(Strain C1 24 bars AA GT m-tpt)(Strain C2 24 bars AA FW alt)(Strain A4 16 bars AA FW alt + ens)

50890 *Betsy Brown* Key of Ab Victor

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Strain A1 16 bars AB GT m-tpt)(Strain A2 16 bars AB PS ten 14 – GT o-tpt 2)(Strain B 16 bars AB FW clt 15 – saxes 1)(Strain C1 32 bars AA' saxes 30 – tpts 2)(Strain C2 32 bars AA' JJ m-tbn 16 – tpts 14 – FW clt 2)(Strain C3 32 bars AA' FW clt 16 – FW clt + ens 16)

Discernible differences of takes:

50889-1: F. Williams starts his first solo (immediately after intro): 2 eighth-notes eb-e, 1 quarter-note c, 1 half-note c

50889-2: F. Williams starts his first solo (immediately after intro): 1 quarter-note e, 1 half-note c, 1 eighth-note c, 1 half-note c

50890-1: G. Temple starts his solo (immediately after intro): 2 quarter-notes c, 1 eighth-note c, 1 half-note c, 1 quarter-note eb, 1 eighth-note e, 1 half-not f

50890-2: G. Temple starts his solo (immediately after intro): 3 equal quarter-notes c

022 **CLARENCE WILLIAMS AND HIS BLUE MOANERS**

New York,

Aug. 07, 1929

Ed Allen – cnt; Charlie Green – tbn;

Jimmy Dorsey – clt, alt;

Clarence Williams – pno; Cyrus St. Clair – bbs; Dave Tough – dms, wbd;

Eva Taylor – voc

N-1063-A

Moanin' Low

Ed uniss. on 78, Diamond Cut DCP-303D

N-1063-B	Moanin' Low	Ed unis.on 78, Document DOCD-5410
N-1063-C	Moanin' Low	Ed uniss. on 78, Diamond Cut DCP-303D
N-1064-A	Come On Home	Ed unissued.on 78 not on LP/CD
N-1064-B	Come On Home	Ed uniss. on 78, Diamond Cut DCP-303D
N-1064-C	Come On Home	Ed uniss. on 78, Diamond Cut DCP-303D

In the past, this has been listed as involving members of Fess Williams' Band on the strength of a statement to the effect by Eva Taylor (see below). Aural evidence does not bear this out and Allen and St. Clair can be easily recognised. The trombone player and the clarinetist are a different matter, with the former sounding like Charlie Green, a more versatile and mobile player than usually acknowledged (compare Bessie Smith's "New Orleans Hop Scop Blues"). The clarinet player owes much to Jimmie Noone. Since Eva Taylor recorded with white musicians around this time, Dorsey was not entirely impossible for us, although this suggestion was only half serious. Fess Williams has been suggested by YFS on the strength of his recordings with Georgia White in 1940, but others in our listening team disagreed vehemently. The solution was found in the Charleston Chasers coupling of June 28, 1929, where we hear Eva Taylor together with Jimmy Dorsey and – beware (!) – Dave Tough. Comparison confirms both white men's presence here without doubt! And it has to be emphasised that just around this time in his life Jimmy Dorsey recorded with Ted Lewis using a distinct clarinet style modelled after Jimmy Noone (listen To Ted Lewis' 'Aunt Hagar's Blues', and you'd be amazed!). See also my former article 'Clarence Williams and his Blue Moaners' elsewhere at this web-site under 'Issued Articles'!

Notes:

- Storyville 26: Ed Allen (cnt); unknown (tbn); unknown (alt, clt); prob Clarence Williams (pno); unknown (bjo); unknown (dms, wbd).

"Tom Lord also adds that the clarinet on 19339-A has a distinct New Orleans flavour, resembling Omer Simeon but not definite enough to identify. It is perhaps appropriate at this point to note that both Darnell Howard and Albert Nicholas recalled dates with Clarence Williams about this time; but both thought for Columbia."

- Lord, Clarence Williams, p297: George Temple or Kenneth Roane (tpt); David "Jelly" James (tbn); Felix Gregory or Perry Smith (clt); Clarence Williams or Hank Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell or Andy Pendleton (bjo); Ralph Bedell (dms) Eva Taylor (vcl). The Edison ledgers list the following (this one – KBR), from which no results were issued. The first note for this was Rust (1st edition). At that time Rust gave "instrumentation and personnel unknown, apart from Clarence Williams, piano and Evy Taylor, vocal." However, Rust (3rd edition) and Godrich & Dixon (2nd edition) list the information below (see 'Notes' below – KBR). Apparently, Eva recalled that the Fess Williams band accompanied her on this date. I have heard a tape of three tests (19338-A, -B, and 19339-A) on which there was considerable distortion due to over-recording, making definite identification difficult. My notes, at the time, indicated that the clarinet had a "New Orleans sound" to it. I agree with the instrumentation given by Rust. The recording date is by Ray Wile, and the Edison ledgers."

- Rust*2: instrumentation and personnel unknown, apart from Clarence Williams (pno); Eva Taylor (vcl).

- Rust*3,*4,*6: George Temple or Kenneth Roane -t; David "Jelly" James -tb; Felix Gregory or Perry Smith -cl; Clarence Williams or Hank Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell or Andy Pendleton -bj; Ralph Bedell -d -wb; Eva Taylor -v.

- BGR*2: instrumentation and personnel unknown.

- BGR*3,*4; unknown, t; unknown, tb; unknown, cl; Clarence Williams, p; unknown, bj; unknown, d.

Notable differences of takes:

N-1063-A: Pace c. 84 bpm, playing Ab major as final chord / first two bars of tune: tpt plays 3 half-notes Eb-Eb-Eb / first chorus bar 15/16: clt plays 2 trills / pno plays no final note at very end

N-1063-B: This take appears on DOCD-5410, and is very probably remastered too fast (Pace c. 102 bpm), playing Bb major as final chord, which might be a factual Ab major, if remastered correctly?

N-1063-C: first chorus bar 16: clt plays no trill but 4 grace-notes / pno plays final note F (Eb ?) at very end of tune
Pace c. 94 bpm, playing Ab major as final chord / first two bars of tune: tpt plays 3 half-notes Eb-F-Eb / first chorus bar 16: clt plays jumping-trill f-g-f / pno plays no final note at very end

N-1064-A: This take not issued on LP/CD, thus no comparison possible.

N-1064-B: Pace c. 116 bpm, playing F major/G major. Introduction bar 3: tpt plays dotted half-note c, quarter-note d.

This take also on DOCD-5410, also remastered too fast (pace c. 125 bpm), thus playing G major/A major, but aurally identical.

N-1064-C: Pace c. 112 bpm, playing F major/G major. Introduction bar 3: tpt plays jumping-trill c-d-c into dotted half-note c
Comparing these takes I have made use of the take designations of the Diamond Cut CD Edison Laterals 4 'Eva Taylor with Clarence Williams', which, by the way, has the first 7 titles mixed up on the CD box – or on the CD, if you like it. Referring to this CD designation, these same two titles on the 'When Edison Recorded Sound' LP have matrices N-1063-B and N-1064-B.

023 FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA

Camden, NJ,

Sep. 20, 1929

Fess Williams – alt, clt, voc, dir;

John Brown, George Temple – tpt; David 'Jelly' James – tbn;

Ralph Brown, Felix Gregory – alt, clt; Perry Smith – ten, clt;

Henry 'Hank' Duncan – pno; Ollie Blackwell – bjo; Emanuel Casamore – bbs; Ralph Bedell – dms;

John Brown, Perry Smith, Ralph Bedell – voc (2)

55928-1 Sweet Savannah Sue Vic V-38085, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

55929-3 Ain't Misbehavin' Vic V-38085, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

55930-1 Buttons Vic uniss on 78, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

55930-3 Buttons Vic V-38095, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

55931-1 Musical Campmeeting Vic uniss on 78, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

55931-2 Musical Campmeeting Vic V-38095, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

Composer credits: 55928 (Razaf – Waller - Brooks); 55929 (Razaf – Waller - Brooks); 55930 (Stanley Bennett); 55931 (Fess Williams)

With this session, we find two pop/jazz songs by the great composer/lyricist-duo Andy Razaf and Fats Waller recorded. And, with the exception of Fess Williams' own individual peculiarities, this is nice and hot jazz music the Harlem way.

'Sweet Savannah Sue' is a real swinger with Williams' sober clarinet and vocal performance and – above all – George Temple great trumpet work throughout. The Victor Master Book says: one banjo only from now on, and I would guess – or assume – Ollie Blackwell with his strong and swinging four-four beat.

'Ain't Misbehavin'' receives a really swinging and respectable treatment, even Ralph Bedell as vocalist is acceptable here, although imitating a little his bandleader.

And then – surprisingly – a wonderful driving and rhythmic title by one Stanley Bennett, 'Buttons'. Good structure and good changes, and a very great performance. That's a band, now!

Fess Williams' own 'Musical Campmeeting' is not a persiflage on Southern "Camp-Meetings" as so often practised by Cab Calloway or Willie Bryant in later years, but just a straight attempt in composing a dance number for his repertoire. And he seems to have listened and thought about his former way of doing such things – and he seems to have learned. The tune is a dance title in medium tempo, good for dancers and a Harlem audience without jazz demand.

Notes:

- Rust*2: George Temple, Kenneth Roane (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Lockwood Lewis (alt); Felix Gregory, Perry Smith (clt, ten); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell, Andy Pendleton (bjo); Emanuel Casamore (bbs); Ralph Bedell (dms), one reed man omitted, one banjo omitted

- Rust*3: John Brown -George Temple -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr); Lockwood Lewis -as; Felix Gregory -Perry Smith -cl -ts; Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell -Andy Pendleton -bj; Emanuel Casamore -bb; Ralph Bedell -d; John Brown, Perry Smith, Ralph Bedell v trio (2); one bj omitted

- Rust*3: John Brown -George Temple -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr); Lockwood Lewis -as; Felix Gregory -Perry Smith -cl -ts; Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell -Andy Pendleton -bj; Emanuel Casamore -bb; Ralph Bedell -d; John Brown, Perry Smith, Ralph Bedell v trio (2); one bj omitted

- Rust*4,*6: Fess Williams -cl -as -v -dir; John Brown -t -v; George Temple -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Ralph Brown -Felix Gregory -as; Perry Smith -cl -ts; Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell or Andy Pendleton -bj; Emanuel Casamore -bb; Ralph Bedell -d -v

- B. Rust, *The Victor Master Book, Vol.2: 2t, tb, cl, 3s, p, bj, bb, d; vocalists: Fess Williams, Ralph Bedell, Perry Smith and John Brown*
- Storyville 51-87, Al Vollmer, Clarence M. Jones: "Ralph Brown then said that he joined Fess Williams' band in New York in 1929, taking Lockwood Lewis' place. He was with Fess for most of 1929 and 1930, and remembered very clearly recording with the band for Victor in the Camden studios – he recalled driving himself from New York to Camden to make the records."

Tune Structures:

55928 Sweet Savannah Sue Key of Bb Victor

(Intro 4 bars ens)(1/2 Chorus 1 16 bars A'C FW clt)(Verse 16 bars GT m-tpt)(Chorus 2 32 bars ABA'C FW voc)(Chorus 3 32 bars ABA'C FW clt + GT m-tpt/JJ o-tbn)(Chorus 4 32 bars ABA'C GT m-tpt + ens)

55929 Ain't Misbehavin' Key of Eb Victor

Chorus 1 32 bars AABA GT o-tpt 16 – m-tbn + saxes 8 - ?JB o-tpt 1+8)(Bridge 4 bars FW alt + ens)(Verse 16 bars saxes)(Bridge 6 bars ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA FW + choir voc)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA ens 16 – FW alt 8 – ens 8)(Tag 2 bars voc + ens)

55930 Buttons Key of Eb / Bb / Eb Victor

(Intro 8 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA GT m-tpt 16 – *FW clt 8 – GT m-tpt 8)(Verse 32 bars ens 8 – JJ o-tbn 6 – ens 2 + 16)

(Bridge 4 bars ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA FW alt + ens)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA ens)

55931 Musical Campmeeting Key of C Victor

(Intro 8 bars ens)(Chorus 1 22 bars ABA ?GT m-tpt 6 – ens 2 - ?GT m-tpt 12 – ens 2)(Verse 12 bars ens)(Chorus 2 22 bars ABA ens)(Chorus 3 22 bars ABA JJ m-tbn + clts)(Chorus 4 22 bars ABA **FW alt)(Chorus 5 22 bars ABA FW alt 6 – ens 6 – FW alt 4 – ens 6)

Discernible differences of takes:

55930-1: Fess Williams' clarinet is silent in the middle-eight of chorus I(*)

55930-3: Fess Williams' clarinet solos in the middle-eight of chorus I(*)

55931-1: Fess Williams' alto solo in chorus 4 starts with 1 quarter-note c, 1 three-quarter-note c (**)

55931-2: Fess Williams' alto solo in chorus 4 starts with upbeat 3 eight-notes g-a-g, 1 quarter-note c, 1 three-quarter-note c (**)

024 FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA

New York,

Dec. 06, 1929

Fess Williams – alt, clt, voc, dir;

John Brown, George Temple – tpt; David 'Jelly' James – tbn;

Ralph Brown, Bobby Holmes – alt, clt; Perry Smith – ten, clt;

Henry 'Hank' Duncan – pno; Ollie Blackwell – bjo; Emanuel Casamore – bbs; Ralph Bedell – dms

57197-1 Goin' To Get 'Cha Vic V-38106, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

57198-1 Hot Mama Vic uniss on 78, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

57199-2 Your Smilin' Face Vic uniss on 78, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

57200-2 Slide, Mr. Jelly, Slide Vic V-38106, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

Composer credits: 57197 (Fess Williams); 57198 (---)(Jelly James); 57199 (---); 57200 (Fess Williams)

Bobby Holmes with Fess Williams and his Royal Flush Orchestra is a section man now, with very little ad-lib playing possibilities – if any. Any solo duty for a reed instrument is executed by bandleader Williams only – with the exception of the tenor sax. And there is nothing positively and decidedly identifiable as Holmes' work.

As Ralph Brown recalled being with Williams for most of 1929 and 1930 (see below), he most probably was with the band just in the middle of this period, December 1929, so that Gregory Felix should be omitted from the personnel - being replaced by Bobby Holmes. But regarding Holmes' participation with subsequent King Oliver recordings while being a member of the Fess Williams Band which did not have a steady engagement at the Savoy Ballroom anymore, it should be considered that Holmes possibly had not yet joined the Williams band at this early time, but possibly later when the Oliver band was touring the Middle-West from late May 1930 (without Bobby Holmes). 'Goin' To Get 'Cha' is Fess Williams' own creation and thus full of his usual bad taste. But it has a very nice solo chorus of George Temple's muted trumpet. The harmonics are the 'Tiger Rag' changes.

Judging from structures and changes, 'Hot Mama' and 'Your Smilin' Face' very probably are compositions of band-members as in earlier sessions, but their names have not been documented (Jelly James first one – second Hank Duncan?) as both titles were never issued in 78 form. Both titles are nice tunes with attractive arrangements, the second one including a seldom Stride piano solo by Hank Duncan, with drummer Bedell changing over to snare-drum which un-fittingly gives a kind of ragtime rhythm to the band. His use of the soft after-beat choked cymbal – also temporarily played with double-strokes - is much more swinging.

In 'Slide, Mr. Jelly', Fess Williams obviously wants to merit his trombonist for his year-long company. This certainly is a very nice and human trait of the bandleader. The tune – as could be expected – is a bit rough and ready, but nevertheless bears some nice work by 'Jelly' James on trombone, Hank Duncan on piano – accompanied with that strange ragtime snare-drum rhythm again, as above – and some fiery technically exacting trumpet parts by – probably – lead trumpet player John Brown. (George Temple does not own these rapid fingers, as I believe.)

Notes:

- Rust*2: George Temple, Kenneth Roane (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Lockwood Lewis (alt); Bobby Holmes (alt, clt); Felix Gregory, Perry Smith (clt, ten); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell, Andy Pendleton (bjo); Emanuel Casamore (bbs); Ralph Bedell (dms), one reed man omitted, one banjo omitted

- Rust*3: John Brown -George Temple -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr); Bobby Holmes -as; Felix Gregory -Perry Smith -cl -ts; Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell -Andy Pendleton -bj; Emanuel Casamore -bb; Ralph Bedell -d; one bj omitted
 - Rust*4: Fess Williams -cl -as -v -dir; John Brown -t -v; George Temple -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Bobby Holmes -Ralph Brown or Felix Gregory -as; Perry Smith -cl -ts; Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell or Andy Pendleton -bj; Emanuel Casamore -bb; Ralph Bedell -d -v
 - Rust*6: Fess Williams, cl, as, v, dir; John Brown, t, v; George Temple, t; David 'Jelly' James, tb, Bobby Holmes, Ralph Brown or Felix Gregory, as; Perry Smith, cl, ts; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell or Andy Pendleton, bj; Emanuel Casamore, bb; Ralph Bedell, d
 - B. Rust, *The Victor Master Book, Vol.2: 2t, tb, 4s, p, bj, bb, d*
 - Storyville 51-87, Al Vollmer, Clarence M. Jones: "Ralph Brown then said that he joined Fess Williams' band in New York in 1929, taking Lockwood Lewis' place. He was with Fess for most of 1929 and 1930,"

Tune Structures:

57197 *Goin' To Get 'Cha* Key of Bb Victor
 (Intro 10 bars FW alt)(Chorus 1 32 bars AA' JJ o-tbn + clts 14 - FW alt 2 - JJ o-tbn + clts 14 - FW alt 2)(Chorus 2 32 bars AA' FW alt)(Chorus 3 32 bars AA' GT m-tpt 30 - FW alt 2)(Chorus 4 32 bars AA' FW alt)(Chorus 5 32 bars AA' JB o-tpt - ens 14 - clts 2 - ens 14 - FW alt 2)(Coda 8 bars FW alt)
 57198 *Hot Mama* Key of C / Ab / C Victor
 (Intro 8 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA FW clt)(Verse 16 bars ens)(Bridge 4 bars ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA JJ o-tbn 6 - clts 2 - JJ o-tbn 6 - clts 2 - ens 8 - JJ o-tbn 6 - ens 2)(Tag 2 bars ens)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA FW clt + GT m-tpt 16 - GT m-tpt 8 - FW clt + GT m-tpt 6 - FW clt 2)(Chorus 4 32 bars AABA FW clt + ens 16 - PS ten 8 - FW clt + ens 8)(Tag 2 bars FW clt + ens)
 57199 *Your Smilin' Face* Key of Eb Victor
 (Intro 6 bars ens 2 GT o-tpt 6)(Chorus 1 32 bars 24 bars ABA ens)(Chorus 2 24 bars ABA HD pno 22 - ens 2)(Verse 16 bars ens)(Chorus 3 24 bars ABA JJ o-tbn 8 - clts 8 - JJ o-tbn 8)(Chorus 4 24 bars ABA ens 8 - ?JB o-tpt 8 - ens 8)
 57200 *Slide, Mr. Jelly, Slide* Key of Bb / Gm / Bb Victor
 (Intro 8 bars JJ o-tbn 2 - saxes 2 - ?JB o-tpt 4)(Strain A1 16 bars AA JJ o-tbn 2 - saxes 6 - JJ o-tbn 2 - saxes 5 - JJ o-tbn 1)(Strain A2 16 bars AA' 16 bars ens)(Strain A3 16 bars AA' 16 bars ens)(Strain B1 16 bars AA' FW clt)(Strain B2 16 bars AA' ?JB m-tpt)(Strain A4 16 bars AA' ens)(Strain A5 16 bars AA' HD pno)(Strain A6 16 bars AA' clt)(Strain A7 16 bars AA' JB o-tpt)(Strain A8 16 bars AA' JB o-tpt + ens)(Coda 4 bars ens)

025 FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA

New York,

Apr. 18, 1930

Fess Williams - alt, clt, voc, dir;

John Brown, George Temple - tpt; David 'Jelly' James - tbn;

Ralph Brown, Bobby Holmes - alt, clt; Perry Smith - ten, clt;

Henry 'Hank' Duncan - pno; Ollie Blackwell - bjo, gtr; Emanuel Casamore - bbs; Ralph Bedell - dms;

Frank Marvin - voc (3)

59757-1	She's Still Dizzy	Vic 23025,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
59758-1	Hot Mama	Vic 22864,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
59758-2	Hot Mama	Vic uniss on 78,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
59759-1	'Leven Thirty Saturday Night	Vic V-38131,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
59760-2	I'm Feeling Devilish	Vic V-38131,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

Composer credits: 59757 (Temple); 59758 (Jelly James); 59759 (Burtnett - Grantham - Kirkpatrick); 59760 (Maceo Pinkard)

That's a nice tune composed by trumpeter George Temple with minor and major parts and a fine muted solo by its composer: 'She's Still Dizzy'. I - KBR - am particularly delighted by the drummer's most delicate and tasteful work on his probably newly-acquired high-hat cymbal. In general, it has to be noted that drummer Bedell did a great job in feeding the band with a swinging and strong but unobtrusive beat all these years as saved on record. (Chapeau!!!) The harmonic changes of this title later appear again in the swing period in the well-known title 'Rose Room'.

'Hot Mama' is the same arrangement as at the foregoing session, only, that Chorus 3 is entirely taken over by George Temple with his muted trumpet. The final break is played by Ralph Bedell.

'Leven Thirty Saturday Night' is a pop song of the time and given a soft and swinging form, introduced by the elegant John Brown on lead trumpet. Surprisingly, Frank Marvin takes over singing duties, and fits better into the procedure than Fess himself. Nice music to dance. And then, Fess Williams "feels devilish" vocally, but instrumentally Perry Smith on tenor sax and probably Bobby Holmes on alto sax have entire choruses at their disposal.

Notes:

- Rust*2: George Temple, Kenneth Roane (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Lockwood Lewis (alt); Bobby Holmes (alt, clt); Felix Gregory, Perry Smith (clt, ten); Henry Duncan (pno); Ollie Blackwell, Andy Pendleton (bjo); Emanuel Casamore (bbs); Ralph Bedell (dms); Frank Marvin (vcl)(3); various members of the band (vcl)(4); one reed man omitted, one banjo omitted

- Rust*3: John Brown -George Temple -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr); Bobby Holmes -as; Felix Gregory -Perry Smith -cl -ts; Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell -Andy Pendleton -bj; Emanuel Casamore -bb; Ralph Bedell -d; Frank Marvin -v (3,4); one bj omitted

- Rust*4: Fess Williams -cl -as -v -dir; John Brown -t -v; George Temple -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Bobby Holmes -Ralph Brown or Felix Gregory -as; Perry Smith -cl -ts; Henry Duncan -p; Ollie Blackwell or Andy Pendleton -bj; Emanuel Casamore -bb; Ralph Bedell -d -v; Frank Marvin -v

- Rust*6: Fess Williams, cl, as, v, dir; John Brown, t, v; George Temple, t; David 'Jelly' James, tb, Bobby Holmes, cl, as; Ralph Brown or Felix Gregory, as; Perry Smith, cl, ts; Henry Duncan, p; Ollie Blackwell or Andy Pendleton, bj; Emanuel Casamore, bb; Ralph Bedell, d, Frank Marvin, v

- B. Rust, *The Victor Master Book, Vol.2: 2t, tb, cl, 3s, p, bj, bb, d; vocalists: Frank Marvin, Fess Williams*

- Storyville 51-87, Al Vollmer, Clarence M. Jones: "Ralph Brown then said that he joined Fess Williams' band in New York in 1929, taking Lockwood Lewis' place. He was with Fess for most of 1929 and 1930,"

Tune Structures:

59757 *She's Still Dizzy* Key of Dm / F / Dm Victor
 (Intro 8 bars ens)(Strain A1 16 bars AABA JJ o-tbn)(Strain A2 16 bars AABA saxes)(Strain B1 32 bars AA' FW clt)(Strain B2 32 bars AA' GT m-tpt 30 - JB o-tpt 2)(Tag 2 bars JB o-tpt 1 - EC bbs 1)(Strain C1 16 bars clts)(Strain C2 16 bars AABA ens 12 - FW clt + ens 4)(Tag 3 bars ens)
 59758 *Hot Mama* Key of C / Ab / C Victor
 (Intro 8 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA FW clt)(Verse 16 bars AB ens)(Bridge 4 bars ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA JJ o-tbn 6 - clts 2 - JJ o-tbn 6 - clts 2 - ens 8 - JJ o-tbn 6 - ens 2)(Tag 2 bars ens)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA GT m-tpt 30 - RB dms 2)(Chorus 4 32 bars AABA FW clt + ens 16 - PS ten 8 - FW clt + ens 8)(Tag 2 bars FW clt + ens)

59759 *Leven Thirty Saturday Night* Key of Eb / C / Eb Victor
(Intro 8 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA JB o-tpt + saxes 30 – JJ o-tbn 2)(Tag 6 bars JJ o-tbn 2 – ens 4)(Verse 16 bars AB FW clt)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA FM voc 30 – ens 2)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA FM voc 30 – ens 2)(Chorus 4 32 bars AABA ens)(Coda 8 bars ens)

59760 *I'm Feeling Devilish* Key of Ab Victor
(Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA PS ten + ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA BH alt)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA FW voc 30 – GT m-tpt 2)(Chorus 4 32 bars AABA GT m-tpt)(Chorus 5 32 bars AABA FW voc + HD pno 30 – ens 2)(Chorus 6 32 bars AABA ens 16 – ?JB o-tpt 8 – ens 8)

Discernible differences of takes:

59758-1: F. Williams starts first chorus on clt (immediately after intro): 2 syncopated quarter-notes eb, 1 half-note c
59758-2: F. Williams starts first chorus on clt (immediately after intro): 1 half-note eb (downward bound), 1 half-note c

026 FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA

New York,

Jul. 10, 1930

Fess Williams – alt, clt, voc, dir;

John Brown, Emanuel Clark – tpt; David 'Jelly' James – tbn;

Ralph Brown, Bobby Holmes – alt, clt; Perry Smith – ten, clt;

Walter 'Fats' Pichon – pno; Ollie Blackwell – bjo; Emanuel Casamore – bbs; Ralph Bedell – dms

62335-1	All For Grits And Gravy	Vic 23025,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
62336-1	Playing My Saxophone	Vic 24153,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
62336-2	Playing My Saxophone	Vic uniss on 78,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
62337-1	You Can't Go Wrong	Vic uniss on 78,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
62337-2	You Can't Go Wrong	Vic 24153,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
62338	Geechy Dance	Vic unissued	not on LP/CD

Composer credits: 62335 (Easton); 62336 (F. Williams); 62337 (F. Williams)

It must now be conceded with esteem that the Fess Williams Royal Flush Orchestra have now reached a considerable degree of musicianship and virtuosity.

'All For Grits And Gravy' is a heavily arranged 32-bar tune with much ensemble playing - Ralph Brown perfectly leading the saxophones – and solo parts by new trumpet soloist Emanuel Clark and remarkably strong 'Jelly' James on trombone, the band's old "war-horse".

Now, who could have written 'Playing My Saxophone'? Who else, but Mr. Fess Williams! And yes, the tune is almost entirely occupied by Mr. Fess Williams' tasteless (in a classic jazz context) alto-sax. And he sings rather modestly.

'You Can't Go Wrong' is Fess' tune, and he have had an answer. There is no soloistic but from the bandleader, and everything as expected.

Notes:

- Rust*2: Emanuel Clark, John Brown (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Bobby Holmes (alt, clt); Felix Gregory, Perry Smith (clt, ten); Walter 'Fats' Pichon (pno); Ollie Blackwell, Andy Pendleton (bjo); Emanuel Casamore (bbs); Ralph Bedell (dms); one reed man omitted, one banjo omitted

- Rust*3: John Brown -Emanuel Clark -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr); Bobby Holmes -as; Felix Gregory -Perry Smith -cl -ts; Walter 'Fats' Pichon -p; Ollie Blackwell -Andy Pendleton -bj; Emanuel Casamore -bb; Ralph Bedell -d; one bj omitted

- Rust*4: Fess Williams -cl -as -v -dir; John Brown -t -v; Emanuel Clark -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Bobby Holmes -Ralph Brown or Felix Gregory -as; Perry Smith -cl -ts; Walter 'Fats' Pichon -p; Ollie Blackwell or Andy Pendleton -bj; Emanuel Casamore -bb; Ralph Bedell -d

- Rust*6: Fess Williams, cl, as, v, dir; Emanuel Clark, George Temple, t; David 'Jelly' James, tb, Bobby Holmes, cl, as; Ralph Brown or Felix Gregory, as; Perry Smith, cl, ts; Walter 'Fats' Pichon, p; Ollie Blackwell or Andy Pendleton, bj; Emanuel Casamore, bb; Ralph Bedell, d

- B. Rust, *The Victor Master Book*, Vol.2: 2t, tb, 3s, p, bj, bb, d; vocalist: Fess Williams

- Storyville 51-87, Al Vollmer, Clarence M. Jones: "Ralph Brown then said that he joined Fess Williams' band in New York in 1929, taking Lockwood Lewis' place. He was with Fess for most of 1929 and 1930,"

Tune Structures:

62335 *All For Grits And Gravy* Key of Bb / Eb Victor
(Intro 12 bars RB dms 2 +2 – ens 8)(Verse 1 16 bars AA' JB o-tpt 4 – ens 4 – JB o-tpt 4 – ens 4)(Bridge 4 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AA' ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AA' EC m-tpt 10 – PS ten 2 EC m-tpt 2 – ens 2 -EC m-tpt 6 – ens 10)(Bridge 4 bars ens)(Verse 2 16 bars AA' FW clt 14 – tpts 2)(Chorus 3 32 bars AA' JJ o-tbn 10 – tpts 2 – JJ o-tbn 2 – ens 2 -JJ o-tbn 6 – ens 10)(Chorus 4 32 bars AA' ens)(Tag 2 bars RB dms 1 – ens 1)

62336 *Playing My Saxophone* Key of Cm / Eb / C Victor
(Intro 12 bars RB dms – FW alt chase)(Strain A1 16 bars AA FW alt)(Strain A2 16 bars AA FW alt)(Strain B1 16 bars AA' ens)(Strain B2 16 bars AA' ens)(Strain A 3 16 bars AA EC o-tpt)(Strain C1 16 bars AA FW voc + WFP pno obl)(Strain C2 16 bars AA FW alt)(Strain C3 16 bars AA FW alt)(Strain A4 16 bars AA FW alt + ens)(Tag 4 bars ens)

62337 *You Can't Go Wrong* Key of Eb / Cm / Eb Victor
(Intro 8 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AA' FW clt + ens)(Verse 16 AA ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AA' FW voc)(*Chorus 3 32 bars AA' FW voc)(Tag 2 bars ?RB alt – ens)

Discernible differences of takes:

62336-1: Fess Williams alto coda/tag: 3 very high whole-notes eb – d - c.

62336-2: Fess Williams alto coda/tag: 3 very high whole-notes eb – d (fluffed) - c.

62337-1: Fess Williams starts his second vocal chorus* with "I said, you can't go wrong."

62337-2: Fess Williams starts his second vocal chorus* with "No, you can't go wrong."

027 FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA

New York,

Jul. 23, 1930

Fess Williams – alt, clt, voc, dir;

John Brown, Emanuel Clark – tpt; David 'Jelly' James – tbn;

Ralph Brown, Bobby Holmes – alt, clt; Perry Smith – ten, clt;

Walter 'Fats' Pichon – pno; Ollie Blackwell – bjo; Emanuel Casamore – bbs; Ralph Bedell – dms;

Frank Marvin – voc (3)

63302	Dinah	Vic unissued	not on LP/CD
63303-1	Ida, Sweet As Apple Cider	Vic 23005,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
63303-2	Ida, Sweet As Apple Cider	Vic 23005,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
63304	Just To Be With You Tonight	Vic unissued	not on LP/CD

63305-1 Everything's O.K. With Me Vic 23003, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
 63305-2 Everything's O.K. With Me Vic uniss on 78, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041
 Composer credits: 63303 (Eddie Leonard); 63305 (Davis – Coots)

The Fess Williams band performing pop songs of the day, but no own compositions of their leader. God arrangements and little soloistic outings except for those of the leader. Nothing new, so far. But drummer Bedell seems to have developed a favourite for his snare-drum. While he did prefer to play the cymbals – choked or high-hat – before, he now plays press-rolls on his snare-drum or uses the brushes. This might probably cohere with a general change of taste among band musicians.

Notes:

- Rust*2: Emanuel Clark, John Brown (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Bobby Holmes (alt, clt); Felix Gregory, Perry Smith (clt, ten); Walter 'Fats' Pichon (pno); Ollie Blackwell, Andy Pendleton (bjo); Emanuel Casamore (bbs); Ralph Bedell (dms); one reed man omitted, one banjo omitted

- Rust*3: John Brown -Emanuel Clark -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr); Bobby Holmes -as; Felix Gregory -Perry Smith -cl -ts; Walter 'Fats' Pichon -p; Ollie Blackwell -Andy Pendleton -bj; Emanuel Casamore -bb; Ralph Bedell -d; one bj omitted

- Rust*4: Fess Williams -cl -as -v -dir; John Brown -t -v; Emanuel Clark -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Bobby Holmes -Ralph Brown or Felix Gregory -as; Perry Smith -cl -ts; Walter 'Fats' Pichon -p; Ollie Blackwell or Andy Pendleton -bj; Emanuel Casamore -bb; Ralph Bedell -d

- Rust*6: Fess Williams, cl, as, v, dir; Emanuel Clark, George Temple, t; David 'Jelly' James, tb, Bobby Holmes, cl, as; Ralph Brown or Felix Gregory, as; Perry Smith, cl, ts; Walter 'Fats' Pichon, p; Ollie Blackwell or Andy Pendleton, bj; Emanuel Casamore, bb; Ralph Bedell, d

- B. Rust, *The Victor Master Book, Vol.2: 2t, tb, 3s, p, bj, bb, d; vocalist: Fess Williams, with chorus (2,3)*

Tune Structures:

63303 *Ida, Sweet As Apple Cider* Key of C Victor

(Intro 2 bars FW alt)(Chorus 1 32 bars ABAB' FW alt 14 – ens 2)(Verse 16 bars ?JB m-tpt 4 - ?RB alt 4 - ?JB m-tpt 16)(Chorus 2 32 bars ABAB' FW voc 30 – JJ o-tbn 2)(Chorus 3 32 bars ABAB' RB dms (brushes) + tpts 30 – ens 2)(Chorus 4 32 bars ABAB' FW voc + choir)(Tag 4 bars FW voc + choir)

63305 *Everything's O.K. With Me* Key of C/Bb Victor

(Intro bars 4 ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA ?EC m-tpt 16 – ens 8 - ?EC m-tpt 6 – ens 2)(Tag 2 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars AA ens)

(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA WFP pno)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA FW voc)(Chorus 4 32 bars AABA PS ten 16 – FW clt 8 – FW clt + ens)

Discernible differences of takes:

63303-1: Fess Williams, alto, starts first chorus (immediately after two-bars intro): 3 eighth-notes g - a - d, 1 half-note c

63303-2: Fess Williams, alto, starts first chorus (immediately after two-bars intro): 4 eighth-notes g - a - g - e, 1 half-note d

63305-1: Fess Williams sings at end of first A-part of vocal-chorus: "since I'm OK with you, oh, oh."

63305-2: Fess Williams sings at end of first A-part of vocal-chorus: "since I'm OK with you."

028 FESS WILLIAMS AND HIS ROYAL FLUSH ORCHESTRA

Camden, N.J.,

Jul. 31, 1930

Fess Williams – alt, clt, voc, dir;

John Brown, Emanuel Clark – tpt; David 'Jelly' James – tbn;

Ralph Brown, Bobby Holmes – alt, clt; Perry Smith – ten, clt;

Walter 'Fats' Pichon – pno; Ollie Blackwell – bjo; Emanuel Casamore – bbs; Ralph Bedell – dms

63302-4 Dinah Vic 23005, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

63304-3 Just To Be With You Tonight Vic 23003, not on LP/CD

63304-4 Just To Be With You Tonight Vic 23003, not on LP/CD

63304-5 Just To Be With You Tonight Vic 23003, Jazz Oracle BDW 8041

63305-3 Everything's O.K. With Me Vic 23003, not on LP/CD

Composer credits: 63302 (Lewis – Young - Akst); (Fusman – Samuels - Sandry)

That's a nice rendition of 'Dinah', the Fess Williams way. But he seems to have been lost in the introduction, as there are 4 bars of a simple sustained brass chord without Mr. Williams above them. And then it's Williams slap-tonguing his clarinet and singing. Perry Smith can be heard – very scarcely at all – in the verse on his tenor sax. Emanuel Clark has a nice chorus on his muted trumpet, followed by Fess' vocal, to end the tune.

And then, at the very end of Fess Williams' Royal Flush Orchestra's complete recorded output, it's pure "schmaltz" together with the leader's strange clarinet and vocal. I – KBR – certainly could have done without 'Just To Be With You Tonight', thinking of the many nice and swinging titles and choruses – and moments in between!

Notes:

- Rust*2: Emanuel Clark, John Brown (tpt); David 'Jelly' James (tbn); Fess Williams (clt, alt, vcl, ldr); Bobby Holmes (alt, clt); Felix Gregory, Perry Smith (clt, ten); Walter 'Fats' Pichon (pno); Ollie Blackwell, Andy Pendleton (bjo); Emanuel Casamore (bbs); Ralph Bedell (dms); one reed man omitted, one banjo omitted

- Rust*3: John Brown -Emanuel Clark -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Fess Williams -cl -as -v -ldr); Bobby Holmes -as; Felix Gregory -Perry Smith -cl -ts; Walter 'Fats' Pichon -p; Ollie Blackwell -Andy Pendleton -bj; Emanuel Casamore -bb; Ralph Bedell -d; one bj omitted

- Rust*4: Fess Williams -cl -as -v -dir; John Brown -t -v; Emanuel Clark -t; David 'Jelly' James -tb; Bobby Holmes -Ralph Brown or Felix Gregory -as; Perry Smith -cl -ts; Walter 'Fats' Pichon -p; Ollie Blackwell or Andy Pendleton -bj; Emanuel Casamore -bb; Ralph Bedell -d

- Rust*6: Fess Williams, cl, as, v, dir; Emanuel Clark, George Temple, t; David 'Jelly' James, tb, Bobby Holmes, cl, as; Ralph Brown or Felix Gregory, as; Perry Smith, cl, ts; Walter 'Fats' Pichon, p; Ollie Blackwell or Andy Pendleton, bj; Emanuel Casamore, bb; Ralph Bedell, d

- B. Rust, *The Victor Master Book, Vol.2: 2t, tb, 3s, p, bj, bb, d; vocalist: Fess Williams, with chorus (2,3)*

Tune Structures:

63302 *Dinah* Key of C / Bb Victor

(Intro 8 bars saxes 4 – JJ o-tbn + tpts 4)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA FW clt 30 – tpts 2)(Verse 16 bars AA' PS ten 16)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA FW voc 22 – JJ o-tbn 2 – FW voc 8)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA EC m-tpt 30 – FW voc 2)(Chorus 4 32 bars AABA FW voc)

63304 *Just To Be With You Tonight* Key of C Victor

(Intro 8 bars ?JB m-tpt)(Chorus 1 32 bars AA'BA JJ m-tbn+clts 16 – JJ m-tbn+?JB 8 – JJ m-tbn+clts 6 – ens 2)(Verse 16 bars AB JB o-tpt)(Chorus 2 32 bars AA'BA FW clt 16 – JB m-tpt 8 – JJ o-tbn 6 – ens 2)(Chorus 3 32 bars AA'BA FW voc 30 – ens 2)(Coda 8 bars FW voc +ens)

Discernible differences of takes:

63304: As there seem to be no takes known but -5, nothing might be said of the differences of the alternate takes.

63305: As take -3 seems to be unknown, nothing might be said of the differences to the alternate takes reissued.

Fess Williams later recorded on clarinet with Georgia White in 1940 and with Sam Price and his Texas Bluesicians in 1941, and even led vocal and instrumental bands of his own throughout the 1940s, but it is not known whether he thought about to change his so very antiquated style at any time. One of the three Sam Price titles has him on alto with his old characteristics. But the Georgia White sides show him rather adapted and retained – and even beautiful in places.

K.- B. Rau
01-08-2024