THE RECORDINGS OF
LE ROY TIBBS
AND HIS CONNIE´S INN ORCHESTRA

An Annotated Tentative Personnelo - Discography

This personnelo-discography is based on RUST, JAZZ AND RAGTIME RECORDS 1897 - 1942.
Personnels are taken from this source, but modified in the light of earlier or subsequent research or on the strength of my own listening, discussed with our listening group or other interested collectors.

- Documented, most certain and aurally absolutely obvious identifications are listed thus: Le Roy Tibbs
- Probable, generally agreed, but not documented identifications are listed in italics, thus: *Le Roy Tibbs*
- Not attributable identifications – although the musician in question might be an otherwise well-known person – are listed thus: unknown
- If a possible identification for an otherwise unknown musician is suggested by the author without the possibility to prove the factual evidence, it is listed thus: (*Le Roy Tibbs)*

When feeling certain without a musician´s documented presence, I have not refrained from altering Rust´s statements without using italics. In any case, my statements are open to discussion and I would appreciate any contribution - pro or contra!

As always in my discographies on this website I have written recording sessions with their headings, dates, titles and names of musicians in italics, whenever I am convinced that the eponymous musician of this discography is not part of the accompanying group of this session! Documented names of musicians if known – in recording ledgers or on record labels – are listed in bold letters.

This discography still is - and will certainly be - a work in progress for a long time, if not eternally. Yet, on the way to a definite discography of all jazz recordings before 1942 - which certainly will never be possible - it is intended to fill some gaps that have not been treated before.

TIBBS, Le Roy, and his Connie´s Inn Orchestra

001 **LE ROY TIBBS AND HIS CONNIE`S INN ORCHESTRA** New York, Feb. 01, 1928
Allie Ross – vln;
Gilbert Parris, Ed Allen – tpt; Te Roy Williams – tbn;
Eric Dale Brown – alt, bar; Harvey Boone – alt, sop, clt; Arville Harris – alt, ten, clt;
Le Roy Tibbs – pno; Leroy Harris – bjo; Cyrus St.Clair – bbs; Hugh Davis – dms

145604-2	One O´Clock Blues	Col 14309-D,	Frog DGF 32
145605-2	I Got Worry (Love Is On My Mind)	Col 14309-D,	Frog DGF 32

Composer credits are: 145604 (Allen, Bishop and Waller); 145605 (De Rose and Trent)

This band was the house-band at the Immermann brother´s 'Connie´s Inn' Ballroom in 1928 (see 'Sources' below!).
The personnel was certified by Ed Allen´s recollection and approaches correctness. From this band Clarence Williams obviously drew Ed Allen and brothers Arville Harris on reeds and Leroy Harris on banjo for his own recording units, while tuba player St. Clair came over from the Charlie Johnson band for this recording session, only, the regular tuba player being Frank Tizol.
Gilbert Parris - as a respected first trumpeter with the early Arthur Gibbs band and the Savoy Bearcats in 1926 – plays lead parts only, while Ed Allen shows his own typical clear and sober sort of handling a melody when soloing with his very fine intonation and his lazy rhythm. This great stylistic property may be observed on all his many recordings with Clarence Williams in the 1920s/30s.
On trombone we have Te Roy Williams, a player of little recognition in Harlem, who suddenly appeared named as bandleader on a Harmony recording of Elmer Snowden´s Nest Club Orchestra of which he was a member at the recording date in May 1927 until only very shortly thereafter. As Snowden declared later: "*Te Roy was my trombone player, who was on notice when this record was made. Jimmy Harrison came in about a week later, and Te Roy went with Leroy Smith. This was my Nest Club Band, and to this day, I still can´t figure out how his*

name got on the label." His soloing is assured and performed clearly with harmonic knowledge, yet lacking a swinging jazz beat. He also was deputizing for this session, the regular trombonist being Ed Cuffee.
Arville Harris shows his very personal fidgety way of multi-toned soloing on clarinet, which probably made him successor to William Thornton Blue in the Cab Calloway band in early 1931.
*Rust*6 names Andrew Brown (of Missourians and Calloway fame) an alto sax, but this seems to be guess-work only - which might, yet, possibly be correct – but is denied by Ed Allen. As Ed Allen did not remember the first name of this altoist Brown, and several musicians with that same surname did not uncover this player´s real identity, I would like to mention Ralph Brown, altoist with Clarence Jones and his bands in Chicago, and two years later with Fess Williams and his Royal Flush Orchestra in New York. As it is known, he was an experienced dance band musician and might well have been able to handle the Allie Ross/Le Roy Tibbs band-book. Unfortunately only, in his recollections (Storyville 51-87) he did not mention such a recording date. It has to be accounted that he was a Chicago musician, what did not prevent him to join the Fess Williams band in 1929. And: Harlem and Chicago were not worlds apart! And he later on was still in New York (1933 – KBR), as ascertained by Harry Dial in his book 'All That Jazz About Jazz', p. 56: "I went to work at the Log Cabin under Ralph Brown, a sax player I had known in Chicago." As I assume, this player Brown may be seen as doubling on baritone, because he obviously was a band member - Allen recalled the surname! – and may therefore be playing his fixed and special part.*

At last, there was a third alto player, as remembered by Ed Allen (see below), without any name. He may possibly have been hired for this recording session out of a dilemma, when the tenor sax player did not show up of whatever reason at all, and no substitute tenor player could be presented on the spot. Thus, he certainly was not part of the band, and Ed Allen´s failure to remember his name is understandable. But, there is a problem to have an alto player play a tenor sax part of the band-book on alto sax! And this at short notice. So, what did this man do at the session? Regular three-part saxophone sections at this time had their scores transposed – the altos a minor third downward and the tenors a whole step upward – and thus it certainly was not possible – or extremely difficult – to have the altoist play from a tenor score. As the band´s arrangements do not seem to be very complicated and the saxophone parts mainly consist of background parts, the bandleader might have prepared a third alto part on the spot and further more relied on the player´s experience and expertness.
From earlier recordings we recognise Leroy Tibbs as a well-educated classically trained player on the full-handed side of pianists, with little single-tone melodic lines, but harmonic (vertical) sounds displaying "symphonic" and orchestral thinking of the performer not unlike Joe Steele. His left hand is only faintly that of the Harlem School of pianists, but rather encompassing bass-notes as completion of the right-hand chords/harmonies. In his right hand he mainly plays chordal figures sounding like band arrangements, what may demonstrate that he was a band pianist/arranger above all.
ADDITION 19-02-2024: Because of stylistic and sound reasons I – KBR – would now deny Leroy Harris´ presence as banjo player on these sides! I have written earlier: "*LeRoy Harris is an utterly dependable banjo player, without soloistic ambitions, what made him Clarence Williams´ favourite for his recording sessions all through the late 1920s".* And then Cyrus St. Clair, the poet on the big brass horn. What more could you wish for the rhythm section. Interesting are the use of the newly invented and fashionable hand-cymbals by the Zildjian Co. (intro of second title) by drummer Hugh Davis, and his use of mallets on cymbal.
Listen to the whole-tone alto break in the coda of first title, and the overall sound of the band led by the violin. And all the little details of making jazz music an artistic pretension.
ADDITION 01-06-2026: Having received a nice letter from Javier Sola Laso of Madrid, Spain recently, who informed me of his researches re 'Le Roy Tibbs and his Connies Inn Orchestra'. Javier states that the original personnel of the Le Roy Tibbs band at the time of recording was: Gilbert Parris (sic), Ed Allen – tpt; Ed Cuffee – tbn; Eric Dale Brown, Harvey Boone – clt, alt, sop; Arville Harris – clt, ten, sop; Joseph Breen – vln; Leroy Harris – bjo, flt; Frank Tizol – bbs, sbs; Walter Johnson – dms. The personnel of the recording band, yet, was as given above. Thanks a lot for your information, Javier!! I have adjusted my above personnel and the related tune-structures below.
Notes:
- Ch. Delaunay, New Hot Discography, 1948: not listed
*- Rust*2: Ed Allen and another (cnts); Ed Cuffee (tbn); Arville Harris (clt/alt); unknown alt/bar; unknown ten; unknown vln; Le Roy Tibbs (pno); Leroy Harris (bjo); Cyrus St. Clair (bbs)*
*- Rust*3: Ed Allen and another -c; Ed Cuffee -tb; Arville Harris –cl –as; unknown –as -bar; unknown -ts; Allie Ross -vn; Le Roy Tibbs -p; Leroy Harris -bj; Cyrus St. Clair -bb; Hugh Davis -d*
*- Rust*4: Ed Allen -Gilbert Paris -c; Te Roy Williams -tb; Arville Harris –cl –as; ?Andrew Brown –as -bar; unknown -ts; Allie Ross -vn; Le Roy Tibbs -p; Leroy Harris -bj; Cyrus St. Clair -bb; Hugh Davis –d*
*- Rust*6: Ed Allen, Gilbert Paris, c; Te Roy Williams, tb; Arville Harris, cl, as; ?Andrew Brown, as, bar; unknown, ts; Allee Ross, vn; Le Roy Tibbs, p; Leroy Harris, bj; Cyrus St. Clair, ob; Hugh Davis, d*

Tune-structures:
One O´Clock Blues Key of Eb Columbia
(Intro 5 bars ens 3 – TRW o-tbn 2)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA EA o-cnt 6 – brk 2 saxes – EA o-cnt 8 – saxes + AR vln 8 – saxes + AR vln 6 - brk 2 brass)(Verse 16 bars AABA GP o-tpt + ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA TRW o-tbn 16 – AH clt 14 – CSC brk 2 bbs)(1/4 Chorus 8 bars GP o-tpt 8 + ens)(Coda 2 bars ?HB alt 2 + ens)
I Got Worry (Love Is On My Mind) Key of C Columbia
(Intro 6 bars ens + HD hand-cymbal)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA EA m-cnt 6 – brass brk 2 – EA m-cnt 6 – saxes brk 2 – ens 8 – EA m-cnt 8)(modulation 2 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars AA´ ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA ?EDB bar 16 – AH clt 8 – ?EDB bar 6 – TRW o-tbn 2 brk)(1/2 Chorus 16 bars BA TRW o-tbn 7 – ens 1 – ens 8)

SOURCES:

- W.C.Allen, Hendersonia, p.76: Record Changer (March 1948): "It was stated that violinist Ralph 'Shrimp' Jones led the band at the Bamville in 1922 with a personnel including Howard Scott, cornet; Coleman Hawkins, tenor sax; Leroy Tibbs, piano; Bob Escudero, tuba; Kaiser Marshall, drums; Jones, violin. This article went on to say that this was probably "the first permanent organized unit, complete with its own arrangers, to be formed from among the young Negro jazzmen."

- W.C.Allen, Hendersonia, p.241: New York Age, Dec. 10, 1927: "Leroy Tibbs Orchestra at Lincoln, Lafayette, Alhambra Theatres simultaneously on Saturday December 3rd, 1927."

- W.C.Allen, Hendersonia, p.251: "The Immermann brothers fixed it up to their liking, named it after one of themselves (Connie´s Inn), engaged Wilbur Sweatman´s Orchestra as their first attraction, (Fletcher Henderson says he first heard Coleman Hawkins, playing in this band!), and asked the world to watch for the opening of "Harlem´s Largest Cabaret" (July 1923). Under their aegis, it became one of "the" places for downtown white to go slumming in Harlem. Presenting outstanding Negro orchestras and talent, their floor shows came to be

elaborate productions with hit tunes and Broadway shows emanating from them. Violinist Leroy Smith replaced Sweatman in September 1923 and led the house band until February 1926. Allie Ross´ Orchestra (with Howard Scott and Luke Smith, trumpets) then replaced Smith´s. When Ross formed a new band for Lew Leslie´s 'Blackbirds' show in late 1927, his pianist Leroy Tibbs stayed on as leader at Connie´s Inn until the fall of 1928, when Leroy Smith returned. All these bands were essentially "show" or dance bands, although there were always hot men in each of them."

- Storyville 45-91, Al Vollmer, Chicago Get-Together: "I have met with Ed Allen on a number of occasions and several things he has told me are worth reporting. In August 1971 Ed told me that violinist Allie Ross had originally had the Le Roy Tibbs band. He said that three alto players were present, Arville Harris, one whose name he could not recall and another whose surname was Brown … not Brown of the Missourians nor Toby Brown … but I forgot to ask about Tom Bown (Blues & Gospel Records p. 526 (recte 572 - KBR)). He gave the following for the recording on page 1661 (Rust*3): Ed Allen, Gilbert Paris, cnts; Te Roy Wiliams, tbn; Arville Harris, unknown, - - Brown, alts; Le Roy Tibbs, pno; Leroy Harris, bjo; Cyrus St. Clair, bbs."

- Storyville 73-7, R. Gulliver, Leon Abbey: "Gilbert Paris was strictly straight … he had a good attack. He came from W.C. Handy and I think he was in the Army band with Tim Brymn."

K.- B. Rau
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