

THE RECORDINGS OF GEORGE McCLENNON A New Look

An Annotated Tentative Personnel - Discography

GEORGE McCLENNON

In 2001 the JAZZ ORACLE label of Toronto, Canada, brought us a most interesting and beautiful CD offering the complete works of clarinetist George McClennon. As always with this label production was immaculate and of the highest order, and praise cannot be high enough as the principal of this CD is one of the small group of "gas-pipe" clarinetists who play in a manner that we usually do not regard as befitting for heroes of classic jazz.

But, as always, there are two sides to this coin, and we have to accept that the "gas-pipe" clarinet was some kind of fashion in the early twenties – Wilbur Sweatman, Wilton Crawley, Ernest Elliott, Fess Williams, Boyd Senter, Ted Lewis, and even Benny Goodman in his early days come to mind – and this kind of performance has to be seen in its time, whereas today we tend to see this "corny" playing with reference to the subsequent achievements of jazz and necessarily devalue this mode of playing. But in its time, gas-pipe playing must have been a much appreciated gimmick. What else would have been the cause for McClennon receiving a recording contract from OK lasting from 1923 to 1926?

The accompanying booklet is equally well done, containing a short but very interesting essay on the "gas-pipe" tradition, pointing to interesting crossovers between klezmer music and jazz. Concerning the much older tradition of klezmer music the question certainly arises as to how klezmer influenced early jazz clarinetists. While we can be fairly certain that there was an influence on people like Ted Lewis and many early white musicians played jazz and klezmer interchangeably (Dave Tarras), "gaspipe" playing emerged in the same context as freak cornet and trombone playing, attempting to emulate animal and human noises. While brass playing with various kinds of mute was well accepted and entered the mainstream of jazz, the corresponding clarinet styles were a short-lived fashion. If "gaspipe" playing is employed today, it is either a deliberately "corny" effect or a direct reference to klezmer clarinet styles.

The CD booklet also offers some hitherto unknown photos of our principal, his biography, advertisements and record labels, all very comprehensive and well researched.

And then the booklet lists the appropriate personnels. And it is these personnels which I would like to deal with in this article.

From my articles on various subjects here in Names&Numbers the reader might have recognized that I am not a collector of 78s (I usually do not give any issue numbers as they would only be copied from RUST or any other publicly accessible sources). I am only interested in the music and the people who made it – the software you might say – and not the technical device to carry it – the hardware. The music can be heard by everybody in its entirety but - as usual in the 20s – the personnels are marginal or wrong or non-existent. And it always is my aim to shed some light upon these by compiling existing data from accessible publications.

As our listening group of international collectors and jazz addicts have clearly shown when listening through all the many Clarence Williams band recordings of the 1920/30s (see Names&Numbers 58 – 61), it was the practice of soloists and vaudeville acts to hire complete working bands or parts of them to fulfil recording contracts if they did not have their own bands at the date of recording or even permanently.

In the case of George McClennon it is easy to see that this famous vaudeville performer did not have a band. Instead he owned arrangements made for his very personal requirements when performing on stage. Obviously these arrangements were handed out to house bands of the theaters to be played as accompaniment to the soloist. This device can be heard here on the following titles: "Bologna" June 11, 1925, "While You're Sneakin' Out...." June 18, 1926, "Disaster" August 1926, "Narrow Escape" September 29, 1926. These cited recordings reflect one side of his vaudeville repertoire, i.e. scenes or sketches in the manner he obviously learned from his adopted father Bert Williams. The band plays his arrangements and McClennon performs his scenes over the music, in "Disaster" even bursting out crying: absolutely great!

On the other side the recording company seems to have had a desire to record McClennon's fancy "gas-pipe" clarinet, but to this aim he obviously had no band arrangements. So they hired the Clarence Williams Blue Five, the Piron band (if it really is this aggregation), the June Clark Creole Band from Ed Smalls' Sugar Cane Club and part of Preer's Cotton Club Orchestra, later known as the Missourians.

But these working bands had no parts for McClennon to cover a definite functionality in their playing. So, McClennon simply piped along wherever he felt he had found a place for himself or where he found room for a solo chorus.

Accordingly these band performances are the really very interesting part of McClennon's recordings, he himself mainly "disturbing" the otherwise very interesting and enthusiastic music of Harlem in the 1920s.

HARLEM TRIO	New York,	Apr. 1923
George McClennon – clt; unknown – pno; unknown (<i>Buddy Christian</i>) – bjo		
71511-A Clarinet Laughing Blues	OK 8072,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8022

HARLEM TRIO	New York,	Apr. 1923
George McClennon – clt; <i>Eddie Heywood, Sr.</i> – pno; unknown – bjo		
71511-E Clarinet Laughing Blues	OK 8072,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8022

This is the first instance of McClennon on record. Why his trio performances were recorded under the name "Harlem Trio" I do not know. The CD booklet says that "these two sides were almost certainly recorded at different sessions". Close listening will reveal a very distinct difference of sound. The – E take in other cases marks the re-recording of a certain title some days after the initial attempt. So this may apply to our recording, too. But I hear distinct differences between these two takes which might even indicate that two different pianists and banjo players were involved: take – A is played in "simple" 12 bar blues changes whereas the piano player on – E uses enlarged and more fashionable blues changes. Furthermore the pianist in – A plays a constant dotted quaver rhythm, boring and much less interesting and expert than the pianist in – E who plays a rhythmically varied and harmonically more modern and pleasing accompaniment. Yet the identity of Eddie Heywood, Sr. can not be recognized from his playing here compared to his later recordings. I therefore suggest that the session was repeated because of the inadequacy of pianist in take – A. The banjo player delivers a very functional and rudimentary beat without any embellishments. He is much more in the foreground in take – A than in – E and might even be different persons, in this case possibly Buddy Christian on take – A.

GEORGE McCLENNON'S JAZZ DEVILS	New York,	May 09, 1924
Thomas Morris – cnt; unknown (<i>John Lindsey</i>) – tbn;		
George McClennon – clt; unknown (<i>George Scott</i>) – alt;		
Clarence Williams – pno; unknown – bjo; unknown (<i>Louis Cottrell</i>) – dms		
72512-B Box Of Blues	OK 8143,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8022
72513-B Dark Alley Blues	OK 8143,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8022

For this session Rust*6 lists this personnel: Prob. Thomas Morris – cnt; Charlie Irvis – tbn; G. McClennon – clt; Bob Fuller – alt; Clarence Williams – pno; Buddy Christian – bjo; unknown - dms. The Jazz Oracle CD booklet follows this statement. Tom Lord's *Clarence Williams* (1976) lists the same with some reservations and the following statement: "*Rust is the only previous source to list this as a Clarence Williams session. His listing is undoubtedly a result of a Record Research (i.e. 66) article. Williams mentioned Morris and Irvis. Since Rust's listing (Rust*3?), it's felt that the identity of the cornetist is not absolutely certain. The alto player here is aurally the same man as on Virginia Liston's OK 8138 (January 7, 1924). The estimation of the date is from Rust.*"

Trumpet/cornet: In an attempt to sort out all the 'impossibles' in the discographically listed appearances of Thomas Morris, I have – together with an expert listening group – not been able to deny Morris' presence here. This tpt/cnt player shows all the characteristics of Morris as listed in my article in Names & Numbers 49/23: "*Morris' playing is characterized by a lot of (mainly) use of mute (plunger?), the tendency to repeat short simple phrases three or four times in a row, a blues-oriented playing, frequent use of blue-notes and a rather unsecure tone and pitch*". So, for me this is certainly Morris.

Trombone: The trombonist certainly is not Irvis. Irvis owns a mainly linear style of playing which cannot be heard here. This man here plays rather vertical phrases. His assured playing marks an experienced player who seems to come from the South. He frequently uses an end phrase in his solos which is familiar from Kid Ory's playing with Armstrong, Oliver or Morton. Yet I feel unable to put a name to him. In the light of John Lindsey's assumed presence on the following recording session I am inclined also to take this man in consideration.

Alto sax: The proposed presence of George Scott on alto-sax might seem highly speculative but will be explained in the sessions of August and September 1926. I only maintain that he is the same player as on the named sessions. But I do not hear a distinct correspondence to the Victoria Liston session player as stated by Lord above.

Piano: Clarence Williams was an important A&R man for Okeh records in New York. In this function he introduced George McClennon to records. Judging from the simple piano pounding in 4/4 rhythm Clarence very certainly is the man on piano.

Banjo: I have no name to propose for the banjo player. Concerning this I have to lament the non-existence of a detailed study of Harlem banjo styles! Only that the banjo player tremolos very much which is completely untypical of Buddy Christian or other banjoists from Clarence Williams' stable. Accordingly Christian can simply be ruled out.

Drums: I hear frequent woodblock playing in the background and from the sound and pitch of the cymbal crashes I would suggest Piron's drummer Louis Cottrell, also because I hope to show that the Piron band had very strong hands in this and the next sessions.

Last but not least: McClennon's piping clarinet has not to be proved. He is always there.

GEORGE McCLENNON'S JAZZ DEVILS	New York,	c. May 14, 1924
<i>Peter Bocage</i> – cnt; <i>John Lindsey</i> – tbn;		
George McClennon – clt; unknown (<i>Louis Warnick</i>) – alt;		
Clarence Williams – pno; unknown – bjo; unknown (<i>Louis Cottrell</i>) – dms		
72524-B New Orleans Wiggle	OK 8150,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8022
72525-B Michigan Water Blues	OK 8150,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8022

Before discussing this recording session the reader is reminded that the Armand Piron band from New Orleans spent considerable time in New York in the hope of hitting the big time there. They certainly were in New York from November 1923 until June 1924 when they recorded for a couple of labels. In May/June 1924 they played a two-week engagement at Roseland Ballroom (the first coloured band there) and were an immediate hit. But they are also thought of being present from at least May 1923 on when they had been engaged into the fashionable Cotton Club for some time.

For this session Rust*6 lists the following personnel: ? 2 unknown - cnt; prob. John Lindsey - tbn; George McClennon - clt; unknown - alt; Clarence Williams - pno; Buddy Christian - bjo; unknown - dms. Tom Lord lists the same names and unknowns, adding a "possible" to Williams and Christian. Record Research 66 shows this session as having the same personnel as the previous one.

We know that Clarence Williams as A&R man for Okeh was busy to book the Piron band in New York. What would be more reasonable than that he tried to present the band on the Okeh label when the band was preparing for the Roseland engagement and connect them to other stars of his stable? From a photograph in Perry Bradford's book 'Born With The Blues' we know that Williams promoted the band under the name 'Williams' Ten Jazz Kings'. So, when you look at the titles recorded here and listen to the music it becomes quite obvious that musicians of the Piron band might be responsible here.

Trumpet/cornet: So, for me, it is very certainly Peter Bocage on tpt/cnt with his distinct New Orleans flavour and inner rhythm. Bocage was an immensely experienced musician from his many years of duty in the Crescent City. He could play 'legitimately', i.e. the music, and he could get hot and play all those sensitive rhythmical variations typical for musicians from the south. He also used mutes to get hot intonation and heat into the climaxes of the tunes. This can easily be heard here. He sounds a bit rougher than on the Piron recordings, but he is out of the restrictions of written music here and can let loose. Interesting to hear that he changed functions with the alto player on 'New Orleans Wiggle' as on the Piron recording. On the first strain of the McClennon recording the trumpet holds the chord tone and the alto completes the phrase whereas the Piron recording has this figure the other way around. This enables Bocage to play a very fast and expertly executed triplet break at the end of the first strain which is not on the Piron side. I am unable to follow the McClennon CD booklet attributing this fine trumpet part to the very little known (Lem Fowler) trumpet player Seymour Irick. His style is much too stiff and too much Ragtime derived than our man's here.

Trombone: If we accept all what is said above it is easy to accept John Lindsey as trombonist here - and possibly even on the former session above.

Lindsey was trombone man in the Piron band at the time. This trombonist here plays a rather weird rhythmical figure in the repeated strain C of the recording which is not typical for Lindsey I have been told, but - as his playing is nearly identical in both strains - this seems to be written down for him or have been part of the used arrangement and may therefore not be used as a counter-evidence. A most remarkable trombone break is played in strain B of 'New Orleans Wiggle' as it appears identically in King Oliver's 'Chattanooga Stomp' of October 15, 1923. (For this very recording session Ed Atkins has invariably been listed by everybody as trombonist - although with a question-mark - but this similarity or even identity should be reconsidered with regard to Lindsey's possible presence on the Oliver's, and not simply been explained as "common currency for New Orleans players" as by a very well known discographer.)

Alto sax: The alto player could accordingly then be Louis Warnick of the Piron band. And his playing is completely in Warnick's scope as known from the Piron sides.

Piano: The piano player can only be heard soloing in the short breaks in 'Michigan Water Blues'. These are straight renditions and played in perfect Clarence Williams style and rhythm. The tune is his own composition. Therefore - and because of the overall typical 4/4 pounding of both pianist's hands - definitely Clarence Williams!

Banjo: The banjo player with all his 'tremoloing' is very different from all I know of Charles Bocage (although he certainly could do it and even shows it somewhere on the Piron sides in a couple of breaks) and Buddy Christian that I would like to leave him unknown. He sounds more like a New York man.

Drums: The drummer can only be heard with a single cymbal crash at the end of the second title. But because of Cottrell being Piron's drummer he should be seen as a probability. The cymbal sound is compatible with Cottrell's on the Piron's.

HARLEM TRIO

		New York,	Jul. 16, 1924
George McClennon - clt; unknown (<i>Eddie Heywood, Sr.</i>) - pno; unknown - bjo			
72668-A	The Funny Blues	OK 8158,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8022
72669-A	The Poor Man's Blues	OK 8158,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8022

The series of the Harlem Trio continued after a year's lapse. We hear McClennon's rather simple clarinet playing in typical fashion again.

Piano player Eddie Heywood's presence has to be doubted as his characteristics can not be noticed, possibly because McClennon plays without giving room to his accompanists. But comparing this player's style to Heywood's shows that his presence is very doubtful. The banjo player plays a simple 4/4 accompaniment without individual traces. ... and drags terribly at the start of the first title.

HARLEM TRIO

		New York,	Sep. 30, 1924
George McClennon - clt; Eddie Heywood, Sr. - pno; unknown - bjo			
72863-B	Muddy Water Blues	OK 40220,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8022
72864-B	I Ain't Gonna Blame It On The Blues	OK 40220,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8022

Much better piano playing and obviously Heywood here (compare to Butterbeans & Susie sessions of the time!). And a different banjo player again. This one more solistically inclined and of the Harlem school (Sam Speed?).

HARLEM TRIO

		New York,	Oct. 18, 1924
George McClennon - clt, bcl; <i>Edgar Dowell</i> - pno; unknown - bjo			
72922-A	Bass Clarinet Blues	OK 8189,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8022
72923-B	Meddlin' With The Blues	OK 8189,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8022

And again we hear another pianist (continued eighth rhythm in the right hand). As the composer credit on the labels name Edgar Dowell I am inclined to believe this pianist present, although I have no knowledge of his stylistic characteristics. Record Research 66, by the way, names Dowell for this session, but this seems not to have found its way into the discographies! The banjo player again plays very functional without being discernible.

Rust*6 lists Eddie Heywood for all Harlem Trio sides!

GEORGE MCCLENNON

		New York,	c. May 02, 1925
George McClennon - clt; Eddie Heywood, Sr. - pno			
73343-B	Cut Throat Blues	OK 8314,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8022
73344-B	Larkin Street Blues	OK 8314,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8022

The piano introduction of the first title already shows Heywood's style very clearly. Furthermore he is named as composer of the second title on the label. Very beautiful piano playing in a southern style in contrast to the Harlem school. These two sides are great examples of a very underrated pianist.

GEORGE McCLENNON'S JAZZ DEVILS

unknown (*June Clark*) – tpt; *Jonas "Sweet Papa" Walker* – tbn;
 George McClennon – clt; unknown (*Leonard Fields*) – alt;
 Eddie Heywood, Sr. – pno; unknown – bjo
 73359-A Home Alone Blues
 73360-B Anybody Here Want To Try My Cabbage?

New York, May 07, 1925

OK 8236, Jazz Oracle BDW 8022
 OK 8236, Jazz Oracle BDW 8022

For a long time now I held the opinion that June Clark's band out of Smalls' Sugar Cane Club had been hired here to back McClennon. Later insights make me think that the band here is a mixture of the Clark and Heywood bands.

June Clark had ties with George McClennon, having worked with him in 1922 in show business, and I see the strong possibility of his presence here. June Clark was an extremely forceful player seemingly bursting with inner power and drive. He possessed a fat tone, very strong, loud and urgent. Probably resulting from his relationship with Louis Armstrong, he tried to get a similar quality of tone and thus later ruined his lip. He uses a rather wide irregular vibrato, which is a crucial criterion for Clark's playing. His vibrato starts immediately with the beginning of the tone and, not, as very often the case with other trumpet players, developing out of a straight tone, loosening up into a "terminal" vibrato. Furthermore he always plays just a split second before the beat, thus sounding hectic and erratic.

Trumpet/Cornet: Judging from the above mentioned stylistics this could easily be a subdued June Clark. On "Anybody Here ..." this trumpet player attempts to play growl trumpet with astonishing results, providing proof that he really is a top rank man.

Trombone: At times, the trombone player, although very much in the background, sounds faintly like Harrison (tone, attack, vibrato), but this man's 12 bar solo in "Anybody Here ..." is just too crude to be by Harrison! Repeated listening reveals a strong similarity to E. Heywood's trombonist on his Jazz Six session of October 1926, i.e. Jonas "Sweet Papa" Walker! Consultation with my listening friends supports my assumption here and makes Walker's presence very certain. Gunther Schuller in "Early Jazz" asserts that Jonas Walker from St. Louis was an important influence on Charlie Irviss and Tricky Sam Nanton and "to be the first to apply New Orleans 'freak' sounds to his instrument" (Schuller).

Clarinet: George McClennon He is the leader, and you hear his gas-pipe clt all the time. As he seems not to be a distinguished part of the ensemble, I assume, that he just hired part of the Clark band playing their own repertoire, with him participating somehow. He does not sing!

Alto sax: No definite style discernible. But the sweet and singing tone seems to be the same as with the Blue Rhythm Orch., which made me think of Len Fields, but other characteristics of Fields (arpeggios, double tongue work, etc.) are lacking. However in "Home Alone Blues" this musician starts a solo with a 3 bar sequence not obeying the changes but staying harmonically in the tonic, which can be heard elsewhere in Fields' playing and seems to be a characteristic though negative part of his style. Yet, Fields did not join the Clark band before the summer, replacing Benny Carter! I do not dare to think of Carter!

Piano: Eddie Heywood Sr. His name is credited on the record label as the piano soloist. He is clearly the same man accompanying McClennon on earlier recordings (May 02, 1925). Listen to his octave runs which obviously are characteristic of his style!

Banjo: unknown No suggestion as to the banjo player's identity! He plays a rather unusual and dated 6/8 style, not heard before on McClennon's recordings.

There are no drums as given in Rust*6!

GEORGE McCLENNON'S JAZZ DEVILS

George McClennon - voc;
 unknown (*June Clark*) – tpt; unknown (*Jonas Walker*) – tbn; unknown – alt, clt;
 unknown (Eddie Heywood) – pno; unknown - bbs
 73425-D Everybody But Me
 73426-C Bologny

New York, Jun. 11, 1925

OK 8337, Jazz Oracle BDW 8022
 OK 8337, Jazz Oracle BDW 8022

George McClennon was adopted by the great comedian Bert Williams in his childhood. Consequently he also started a stage career very early. On these titles here he attempts some kind of a Bert Williams copy.

The band plays a rather subdued straight accompaniment, with some hot tones here and there, but mainly playing written parts. Therefore identification of the musicians is nearly impossible, but the overall sound is very similar to the sides of May 07, 1925, and I cautiously tend to ascribe these sides to Clark. Furthermore, the accompanying trumpet player uses triple tongue at the end of "Bologny", which is also used on "Stolen Kisses" of the session of June 18, 1926.

GEORGE McCLENNON'S JAZZ DEVILS

June Clark – cnt; *Joe Williams* – tbn;
 George McClennon – clt; *Leonard Fields* or *Joe Garland* – alt, bar;
 unknown – pno; unknown (*Will Splaney Escoffery*) – bjo; unknown – bbs
 74177-A Stolen Kisses
 74178-A While You're Sneakin' Out Somebody Else Is Eazin' In

New York, c. Jun. 18, 1926

OK 8329, Jazz Oracle BDW 8022
 OK 8329, Jazz Oracle BDW 8022

Again this seems to be June Clark, maybe with Joe Williams on tbn, who was his partner after Charlie Green had left his band in c. May 1926. This is a fantastic and inspiring band if we concentrate on the band and ignore Mr. McClennon, but his playing obviously was the taste of the day.

Trumpet/Cornet: June Clark - There are a lot of Louis Armstrong's phrases and licks in this trumpet player's style, which makes me cite pianist Joe Turner: "... Then I joined the red hot band of trumpeter June Clark, who was a carbon copy of Louis Armstrong. June and Jimmy Harrison were known as the greatest brass team of that wonderful period." If any record of this period is "a carbon copy of Louis Armstrong", then it is this one. For me June Clark in full flight.

Trombone: Joe Williams - If this is the Clark band, the trombonist might be Charlie Green's successor in the Clark band, Joe Williams. We only know 3 recordings of his, accompanying Bessie Smith, but he was a trombone player with a reputation in Harlem. He played with a series of name bands, i.e. Willie Gant's band at Smalls Paradise, Billy Fowler and others, and even subbed for Charlie Green with the Henderson band because of their similarity of style. The style seems to be more Williams' ("an extra touch of tension and nastiness" G.

Schuller, EARLY JAZZ) than Green's, judging from the Bessie Smith recordings, but they have often been confused (on Williams see also STORYVILLE 87/98). However, it is not known when exactly Williams succeeded Green in the Clark band!

Clarinet, vocal: George McClennon, who else.

Alto sax, baritone sax: Leonard Fields or Joe Garland - Maybe this is still Leonard Fields, but no characteristics discernible, except for the tone. Joe Garland played with June Clark, presumably after Fields left, and he is known to have played bar and alt before concentrating on ten.

Piano: Eddie Heywood's characteristics (octave runs) are not discernible as before. If this really is the Clark band he pianist at this time could be Charlie "Smitty" Smith as on the Blue Rhythm Orchestra recordings.

Banjo: unknown - The JAZZ ORACLE CD says "possibly Buddy Christian". Maybe there is a Buddy Christian specialist somewhere, who might comment? But because for stylistic reasons I tend to "Splivey" Escoffery, the Clark band's original banjo player.

Tuba: unknown, but possibly Bill Benford who was tuba player for some time in the June Clark band.

GEORGE McCLENNON'S JAZZ DEVILS

New York,

Aug. 1926

R.Q. Dickerson - tpt; De Priest Wheeler - tbn;

George McClennon - clt, voc; George Scott - alt;

unknown (Earres Prince) - pno; Charlie Stamps - bjo; Jimmy Smith - bbs

74320-B Pig Foot Blues

OK 8397,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8022

74321-B Disaster

OK 8406,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8022

Storyville 95 of June 1981 brought the following point in 'Afterthoughts': "436. Reed-man George Scott told Johnny Heinz in 1950, or thereabouts, that he had made records with The Missouriians, Clarence Williams, Viola McCoy, George McClennon, Original Cotton Club Orchestra, Elmer Snowden, Chas. Matson, Mamie Smith and Ma Rainey. Johnny says that at the time George told him this (he wrote the artists down for John) he had barely heard of some of the names but, that in checking the list against the discographies subsequently, has naotd that Scott is seldom listed but that Ernest Elliott is shown against all of the above at some time or another! George Scott was clearly referring to issued records as he added that her had made a couple of sides with Bessie Smith with Robert Taylor on trumpet, but that he thought these were unissued." And Storyville 129 brought in 'Afterthoughts': "Juan Carlos Lopez (I certainly would like to thank him! KBR) writes that in following up 'Afterthought 436 in issue 95, he has uncovered some interesting links: a) the melody played twice after the clarinet solo in McClennon's 'Pig Foot Blues' is the same as the brass section chorus in 'Scotty Blues' by The Missouriians. b) The coda of the latter is also used on McClennon's 'Cotton Club Stomp'. c) On this the chorus after the piano/clarinet duet uses the same riff as played behind the clarinet solo on 'Scotty Blues'. d) Aurally DePriest Wheeler plays the trombone solo on 'Cotton Club Stomp' (not the Ellington tune! KBR) which uses the same pattern as in Missouri Moan. e) Aurally Scott is the alto player in the McClennons and even the brass bass sounds familiar and might be Smith."

So, what is there to add? It is amazing that the booklet writer on the Jazz Oracle CD did not follow these obvious hints. Aural comparison then conclusively shows us the personnel of this and the following session. And: Record Research 66 of February 1965 clearly states: "possibly contingent of Andy Preer's Cotton Club Orchestra."

Trumpet: as Wheeler and Scott were members of the Cotton Club Orchestra at the time an obvious candidate for the trumpet chair must be R.Q. Dickerson. As our man here certainly is not Harry Cooper and not Sidney De Paris, Dickerson remains as favourite. And comparing our man's work here with the Cotton Club Orchestra and even the Jasper Taylor Original Washboard Band recordings shows us that he is the trumpet player here. (In Storyville 2002/3 this trumpet part even is attributed to a man as far off the mark as Thomas Morris!)

Trombone: Certainly DePriest Wheeler as on the Cotton Club Orchestra, Missouriians and Cab Calloway sides. No doubt.

Clarinet, vocal: George McClennon, who else.

Alto sax: As we have seen above: George Scott. But this man here is aurally definitely the same man as on the McClennon session May 09, 1924 (the same rhythmically stiff phrasing and simple arpeggios although a little bit developed further). I now have to look for his further appearances!

Piano: As Eddie Heywood's characteristics (octave runs) are not discernible it only seems feasible to look for the Cotton Club Orchestra's pianist: Earres Prince (?). But there are no distinctive characteristics discernible.

Banjo: can be heard faintly in bars 5/6 of the clt solo chorus of (1), thus presumably Charly Stamps (?).

Tuba: Sounds just like Jimmy Smith of Cotton Club Orchestra, Missouriians and Cab Calloway fame.

GEORGE McCLENNON'S JAZZ BAND

New York,

Sep. 29, 1926

R.Q. Dickerson - tpt; De Priest Wheeler - tbn;

George McClennon - clt, voc; George Scott - alt;

unknown (Earres Prince) - pno; Jimmy Smith - bbs

74375-B Narrow Escape

OK 8406,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8022

74377-B Cotton Club Stomp

OK 8397,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8022

Aurally this is the same personnel as before only, that there is no banjo player here. So, the same remarks as before. And it certainly sounds the same.

RUST*6 lists McClennon as clarinetist with Buddy Christian's Jazz Rippers in August 1926.

This citation probably stems from a letter by Steve Lavine of Invington, New Jersey, in Storyville 59, p. 173, which says: "After some extensive listening I think I can offer a reasonable identification for the second clarinet player on those Buddy Christian Pathe sides (PA 7518). I believe it is none other than George McClennon. I arrived at this conclusion from making an exhaustive research through all my Fuller, Morris and Christian records. And what clinched it was listening to OK 8134 and OK 8397 (Pigfoot) by McClennon's Jazz Devils. The same ideas were used on these records for the clarinet as on South Rampart Street Blues, and the same Creole-type sounds are heard. Also it is interesting to note that McClennon was recording in New York in August 1926 ... the same time that the Pathe sides were cut. Now since Fuller is one of the composers of South Rampart Street, he might have invited his old friend McClennon to sit in and recreate the same effect that they had produced on OK 8143 two years earlier."

After listening intensively to McClennon when preparing this article I have to comment that this clarinet player on the Jazz Rippers is a musician of much greater calibre than McClennon. Rust*3 lists Happy Caldwell instead and indeed the clarinetist on the Buddy Christians

shows a more southern/Chicago approach. Only in one instance is he tempted to deliver one short “laughing” phrase akin to McClennon. But everything else he plays is of quality jazz-wise and swinging. Caldwell recorded with Young’s Creole Jazz Band in Chicago in late 1923 and is therefore a much better choice for the clarinet player on the Buddy Christians Jazz Rippers.

Finally I have to thank the following persons for help, advice and contradiction that went into this article: Lynn Abbott, Dave Brown, Jörg Kuhfuss, John Olivar, Michael Rader, Yves Francois Smierciak, Ray Smith (alphabetically). Without their efforts this article could not have been completed.

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