

ORIGINAL JAZZ HOUNDS

An Annotated Tentative Personelo - Discography

The ORIGINAL JAZZ HOUNDS - A Case of Complete Misidentification

K.-B. Rau with Dave Brown and Michael Rader

Among the recordings of early Harlem Jazz of the 1920s are quite a number of recordings that have been organized and directed by Perry Bradford. Only a small part of them bear Bradford's name on the record label as they are mostly accompaniments to singers by Perry himself or by an accompanying band under his aegis. But there are also some that are made by groups lead by Perry. The best known of these certainly is the single record by Perry Bradford's Jazz Phoofs of November 1925 which features a fantastic All-Star-Band of Fletcher Henderson alumni with an out-of-this-world young Louis Armstrong on cornet, "blowing his ass off". There are also groups with names as the Georgia Strutters, the Gulf Coast Seven, Perry Bradford and his Gang, or – as accompanying groups – Perry Bradford's Mean Four. They all owe their existence to Mr. Bradford's restless talent for finding new talent, organizing, in a lesser way his compositional abilities and even less his own musicianship, let alone his singing efforts. Yet, for the record collector all these recordings have their own charm and offer a very interesting insight of what had been happening in Harlem in the 1920s behind the bright surface of theatres, ballrooms and night-clubs. Here we can listen to units exemplary for the music that had been played in taxi-dance-halls, after-hours-joints and other cheap venues.

As it has been my observation for a very long now leave their listings in the discographies on hand – Rust in all his editions resp. – much to be desired! The record numbers m certainly are mostly correct, the matrix-numbers as well and even the recording dates, but the personnels are in a miserable state. It is my aim – as in a couple of articles I have been allowed to publish in N&N in recent times – to shed some better light on these beautiful recordings combining what has been published in recent decades and what I am able to hear and discriminate.

I hope to be able to tackle all these Perry Bradford groups in the future, if your editor Coen Hofmann gives me enough room in Names & Numbers. And I also think that there are a lot of recordings outside of the Bradford circle, that are worthy of further consideration.

Let's start with one of Perry Bradford's recording groups with the name of: ORIGINAL JAZZ HOUNDS.

The band name "Original Jazz Hounds" had been used for quite some time by Mamie Smith for her accompanying group from 1920 on, by Edith Wilson for her recordings accompanied by Johnny Dunn and his group 1921 to 1922, and also by trumpet player Johnny Dunn himself for all his recordings 1921 to Feb. 1923 (one of these records named thus even did not contain Dunn at all, but a band probably under Sam Wooding's leadership). These recordings feature a kind of early Harlem jazz that has not been influenced by Louis Armstrong's playing, as Armstrong did not reach New York earlier than November 1924 to join Fletcher Henderson's band and change the course of jazz development drastically to follow his own New Orleans style.

This early Harlem music certainly is not easy to listen to. It does not have the easy swing of the southern musicians that we all love to hear from Armstrong, Morton, Dodds e.a.. Instead it shows strong influences of two-beat ragtime music, military music and all sorts of gimmicks, gas-pipe devices and vaudeville elements, that are not pleasant to our ears tuned to later styles of jazz music.

Perry Bradford was part of this early period of Harlem jazz music, and he seems to have had a hand in recording all these "Jazz Hounds" named groups and bands.

Then in 1925 appeared a series of recordings with the sole band name of "Original Jazz Hounds". These recordings did not enjoy a wide spreading, which might have been the cause, that they had not been reissued earlier than 1977 by VJM in England.

This beautiful LP, also containing the "Gulf Coast Seven" sides, also a Perry Bradford organized group, listed a personnel for the "Jazz Hounds", which had been shown completely different in Rust*2. In this 2nd edition the personnel had been listed as: Bubber Miley – cnt; Jimmy Harrison (?) – tbn; Herschel Brassfield (?) – clt, alt; Coleman Hawkins – ten; Leroy Tibbs (?) – pno; Gus Horsley or Samuel Speed – bjo; Perry Bradford – voc for the "Original Jazz Hounds" sessions of 1925.

In retrospect it would be most interesting to know, who identified these men/names and forwarded them to be listed in Rust*2, because these names are mainly decidedly wrong. But, as we know, very many of these early identifications suffer from little experience and a lack of aural memory. Instead, musicians out of a limited group of generally known names seem to have been inserted wherever a musician could not be identified easily or was completely unknown. Therefore we find the name Ernest Elliott, wherever a corny clarinet can be heard playing. But it certainly is not that easy, and with the advent of CDs nearly everything of jazz and blues issued in the 1920s has been reissued in the last decades, which gives us a far better possibility to gain aural knowledge of all the musicians that ever tooted in one of those big recording horns.

This VJM LP listed a personnel derived from Rust*4, which seemed to have a better foundation than the personnel from Rust*2. It obviously reflected the find of an advertisement in the Afro-American press of the 1920s.

Yet, earlier on, Record Research issue 93 of November 1968 brought a notice about the Original Jazz Hounds recordings: “For the first Columbia coupling, 14086-D, under this band name, Rust names Bubber Miley as cornetist, but does not divulge his source. Now, from the Chicago Defender of Sept. 5, 1925, p. 10, we learn that the cornetist was Thornton G. Brown, formerly of Lois Deppe’s Serenaders, and now director of the Original Jazz Hounds, under management of Perry Bradford, and that their first record, No. 14086-D, was already recorded.”

The Chicago Defender of Sep. 19, 1925 shows a note that “Thornton G. Brown is directing the ‘Original Jazz Hounds’ with the ‘Seven-Eleven’ burlesque show” (Storyville 1996/7 p.218). Obviously this note had been known as early as Rust’s 4th edition to be included there. The resulting personnel from then on had been: Thornton G. Brown – cnt; Jake Frazier – tbn; Bob Fuller – clt, alt; Ernest Elliott – clt, ten; Mike Jackson – pno; Samuel Speed – bjo; Perry Bradford – voc, as listed on the LP sleeve. (Thornton G. Brown was a name unknown to me before.) This personnel was “state-of-the-art” then for many years then. Close and intensive listening could have shown, that it was only marginally better than the first one. At least it presented a name for the trumpet player, that was hitherto unknown, as was this trumpeter’s style of playing.

But the Chicago Defender of Sep. 5, 1925 contained a note, that “John Howell, saxophonist and clarinetist with the 7-11 company’s jazz hounds writes that the show ... in Bridgeport Conn. After the week they will go into the Columbia Theater, New York City. Six pieces of the band are recording for the Columbia Record company under the name of the Original Jazz Hounds. Their numbers will be released this month” (Storyville 1996/7 p.218). This advertisement seems to have slipped off his contributors and thus been unknown to Rust.

But herewith we have a completely new situation, and these data have to be applied to what we hear.

Regrettably only two names have been listed so far, but the Pittsburgh Courier of Sep. 5, 1925 helps us further: “Thornton Brown, formerly with Lois Deppe, now directing ‘Original Jazz Hounds’ under Perry Bradford, also with 7-11 company” (Storyville 1998/9 p.170).

This now tells us more about the personnel and may enable us to state a probable personnel.

And yet another note cited in Storyville 1996/7 p.191/2 from the Chicago Defender of 2 January 1926 might be of interest regarding our subject: “Stanley Bennet’s Orchestra – with Seven-Eleven Company on Columbia Wheel. Played Star & Garter Theater, Chicago last week. Personnel: Thornton Brown, Louis Prevost, c; William Paris, tb; Jess Faithful, A. Pole, sax/vn; Eugene Callaway, John Howell, sax/cl; Frank Robinson, bsx; Quinton Redd, p; William Brand (Wellman Braud!), bass; Gillie Roberts, bj; Joe Wynn, d. (all sic).”

ORIGINAL JAZZ HOUNDS

Thornton G. Brown – cnt; unknown (*William Paris?*) – tbn;
unknown (*John Howell*) – alt, clt; unknown – ten;

Perry Bradford – pno; *Sam Speede* (or *Gus Horsley?*) – bjo

140760-1 Fo’ Day Blues

140760-3 Fo’ Day Blues

140761-2 1620 To 1865 (Uncle Eph’s Dream)

Composer credits are: 140760: Bradford / 140761: Horsley and Bradford

New York,

Jul. 14, 1925

Col 14086-0,

Frog DGF 56

Col 14086-0,

Frog DGF 56

Col 14086-0,

Frog DGF 56

From the above sources Brown on trumpet and very probably Howell on clarinet and saxophone are given. The only other instance of Thornton G. Brown’s playing can be heard on Ethel Water’s session of 29 July 1926!

There is no report that Jake Frazier was part of the 7-11 show, and his presence has to be strongly doubted for stylistic reasons. In fact, after listening to a long row of recordings with the participation of Jake Frazier (after Rust*6) – quite a number have proved to contain other trombonists! – I have to report, that this trombone player here on the Jazz Hounds has nothing in common with Jake Frazier. Frazier throughout plays in a strong staccato style, linear and horizontal, using short, blues-oriented, often repeated phrases, played with a rather dry tone. Our trombone man here has a very melodic, mainly legato style. In contrast to Frazier he owns a perfect sense for harmonic refinement. He knows exactly how and where to use the right chord tone to good effect – and he owns a warm and voluminous tone. He is a much better musician than Frazier and I only would wish to know his name. I did not succeed in finding him elsewhere on record. Stylistically Gene Bud Aiken and Herb Flemming come to mind by comparison, but Flemming was in Europe at this time and Aiken is not known to have been part of the 7-11 burlesque show at any time. So, we seem to have one of those unsung masters of jazz music here, whose names are unreported and unremembered. A note from the Chicago Defender of 2 January 1926 cited in Storyville 1996/7 p. 192 names William Paris as trombonist of the Seven-Eleven Company band of January 1926, and our player here might be this man of whom we do not have any known recorded evidence, but he obviously was trombonist with Chick Webb’s Harlem Stompers recording one unissued title for Vocalion in August 1927. (Rust*6 lists the personnel for this early Webb recording. But he lists William Paris as alto player together with Johnny Hodges. This certainly is a mistake as no alto player of that name has been listed anywhere, and a dance band with a personnel of tpt, 2 altos, tenor and rhythm does not make sense at that time. The usual personnel was tpt, tbn, alt, ten, pno, bjo, bbs, dms.)

As will be seen, the clarinetist of this first session plays with a completely different vibrato than the clarinetist of the second and third sessions. Therefore I believe these to be two different musicians. So, it might be Howell on this first session, if not on the later ones. If we consider the time between recording a record and issuing might be rather 6 weeks or more than 3 or 4, it certainly should rather be Howell on this first session! As the tenor sax player plays tenor throughout, Howell has to be the alto man doubling clarinet. He obviously is a jazz musician of the first degree, and it is very sad that he did not record more often. He plays with a strong tone and a wide vibrato, somewhat between Bechet and Dodds. Moreover does he play beautiful blues solos, urgent, down-to-earth, no-nonsense and very musically.

The tenor saxophonist seems to hail from an archaic period in Afro-American music. He sounds as if playing into a bucket, his attack and time are pedestrian and completely unswinging and have very limited musical value. He almost exclusively plays straight parts, possibly arranged on the spot. I have no memory having heard this man anywhere else. Following the above mentioned note in the Chicago Defender the tenor saxophonist’s name might be searched for in the line of the named musicians there: Jess Faithful, A. Pole, Eugene Callaway. I suspect that our tenorist here might have been a long-serving member of the band who could easily have stayed on with the band for a couple of years. Perhaps one of the doubling sax and violin musicians?

On piano we definitely hear Mr. Perry Bradford himself. His own very distinct style of ‘tinkle-tinkle-plink’ in the treble part of the piano without distinct bass notes of the left hand can be heard on many Bradford recordings – and only there. Bradford is named as composer of both recorded titles and thus further identified.

The banjo player Gus Horsley is named as co-composer of the second title, and the banjo part stylistically fits into what is known of him. So, here we have a completely different personnel – except for Brown – than those given in all the discographies. There definitely is no sign of Bob Fuller or even Ernest Elliott on these sides!

ORIGINAL JAZZ HOUNDS

Thornton G. Brown – cnt; unknown (*William Paris?*) – tbn;

New York,

Aug. 11, 1925

unknown (*John Howell?*) – alt, clt; unknown – ten;
unknown (*Quinton Redd?*) – pno; *Sam Speede* (or *Gus Horsley?*) – bjo;
Perry Bradford – voc; band – voc (2)

140840-2	I Ain't Gonna Play No Second Fiddle	Col 14094-D,	Frog DGF 56
140841-3	Slow Down	Col 14094-D,	Frog DGF 56

Composer credits are: 140840:Perry Bradford / 140841: Perry Bradford

Trumpet player, trombonist, tenor sax player and banjo player are aurally the same men as on the first session one month ago. But Bradford in command of the session possibly had to replace the clarinet soloist – probably Howell – from the former personnel with another man. This new clarinet/saxophone player is stylistically rather akin to Howell, but he plays with a completely different vibrato, so much so that I suggest him not to be Howell. This new player displays a very fast, narrow and almost whining vibrato which could be a hint to Bob Fuller as listed in all earlier discographies. And he obviously plays with a different mouth-piece than the first clarinetist (Howell?) does. Yet, for my knowledge, this man here plays a much more essential and tasteful style than Bob Fuller did on his own solo recordings which were more on the corny and gas-pipe side. So more probably he should be looked for among the other reed players of the 7-11 band as listed above, provided that these men had been members of the band half a year ago. (Dave Brown thinks that there is only one clarinet player responsible for the sessions of 1925 despite differences of tone and vibrato! He also adds that these Original Jazz Hounds recordings must be some of the earliest electric recordings made, which could be the cause of different studio sounds because of experimentation on balance and mike placement. Michael Rader adds that the different clarinet sounds might nevertheless have been made by one person as the clt player of the first session also tends to a tighter vibrato when playing in ensemble. The differences might then have been caused by using a different instrument. The author does not entirely agree!)

On piano another man has replaced Bradford, feeding the band with a much better foundation and rhythm than Perry could provide. Rust*6 lists Mike Jackson, but I feel unable to identify any distinct piano player from stylistic elements here. As far as I know of Mike Jackson he had a lighter approach to piano playing than this man here. I assume that Bradford made room for the 7-11 band's regular piano player. The above note from the Chicago Defender of 2 Jan. 1926 presents the name of a certain Quinton Redd who might have been responsible. Yet the singer unequivocally is Perry Bradford with all his short-comings. And very probably do we hear Gus Horsley again.

ORIGINAL JAZZ HOUNDS

Thornton G. Brown – cnt; unknown (*William Paris?*) – tbn;
unknown (*John Howell?*) – alt, clt; unknown – ten;
unknown (*Quinton Redd?*) – pno; *Sam Speede* (or *Gus Horsley?*) – bjo;

140846-2	Cannon Ball Blues	Col 14124-D,	Frog DGF 56
140847-3	Vamping Lucy Long	Col 14124-D,	Frog DGF 56

Composer credits are: 140846: Balkcan / 140847: Bradford

Obviously, because it took place the following day, the same personnel are responsible as for this session.
And Perry Bradford mercifully renounces to sing!

ORIGINAL JAZZ HOUNDS

Jimmy Wade – cnt; *Bill Dover* – tbn; *Arnett Nelson* – clt;
James P. Johnson – pno; *Stanley Wilson* – bjo; *Walter Wright* – bbs; *Edwin Jackson* – dms;
Perry Bradford – voc

143657-2	All That I Had Is Gone	Col 14207-D,	Frog DGF 56
143658-3	Lucy Long	Col 14207-D,	Frog DGF 56

Composer credits are: 143657: Bradford / 143658: Bradford

Recording two years after the preceding sessions Bradford used the same band name again. This time there certainly is no connection to the personnel of 7-11 origin. Rust*6 still lists a personnel of Louis Metcalf, cnt (!); Jake Frazier, tbn; Bob Fuller, clt; James P. Johnson, pno; unkn. bjo; ? Harry Hull, bbs; unkn. dms, chimes. This certainly – with the exception – is far off the mark.

Instead, as has been shown by Christopher Hillman in preceding years, these two titles seem to belong to a series of recordings made by musicians of the Jimmy Wade band of Chicago. The Jimmy Wade band, hailing from Chicago, had a long time engagement at the Club Alabam in Harlem (June 1926 to April 1927) and used the opportunity to record under different leaderships and names (Georgia Strutters, P. Bradford Gang, Eva Taylor, poss. Okeh Melody Stars). Their trombonist W. Dover reportedly even subbed in the Fletcher Henderson band (poss. 19 November 1926).

Thus we very certainly hear Jimmy Wade on trumpet and William Dover on trombone here.

This clarinet player plays with the same vibrato and a similar style as the man on the two preceding sessions. One of the reed men of the Wade band was Arnett Nelson at the time, and he seems to be responsible for the clarinet part (see Ch. Hillman, Chicago Swingers). As there is no report and no probability of Nelson being in New York his assumed presence on the Jazz Hounds sessions of August 1925 must be denied.

The banjo man and the drummer should accordingly be from the Wade band.

The tuba man certainly is Walter Wright, compared to his playing on Perry Bradford's session of 16 February 1927.

James P. Johnson is addressed namely by Bradford on the second title.

Thus we have the same personnel here as on Perry Bradford and his Gang of Feb. 16, 1927!

All above listed titles have been reissued on CD FROG DGF 56 Perry Bradford. All titles except 140760-3 have been reissued on LP VJM VLP 45.

I would like to thank Dr. Georg Haselbek for his expert advice concerning the playing of reed instruments and the interdependence of sound, technique and construction.

THORNTON G. BROWN: St. 1996/7 p.191/2 - 1998/9 p. 170

- Member of Drake & Walker show, back in Harlem (BAA 29/8/24 10/1)
- At the Douglas Theater Baltimore (CD 27/9/24 8/3)
- Formerly with Lois Deppe, now directing 'Original Jazz Hounds' under Perry Bradford, also with 7-11 company (article PC 5/9/25 p.10)
- Stanley Bennet's Orchestra with Seven-Eleven Company on Columbia Wheel. Played Star & Garter Theater, Chicago last week.
Personnel: Thornton Brown, Louis Prevost, cnt; William Paris, tbn; Jess Faithful, A. Pole, sax/vln; Eugene Callaway, John Howell, sax/clt; Frank Robinson, bsx; Quinton Redd, pno; William Brand (sic! i.e. Braud), sbs; Gillie Roberts, bjo; Joe Wynn, dms; all sic! (CD2/1/26 7/3)
- 'Ethel Waters and her Vanities' toured in May-July 1926 and played the Grand Theater, Chicago, week 14 June. A review in the Defender criticised the Band for being too loud and named them as: Thornton Brown, cnt; Eddie Carr, tbn; Lorene Faulkner, pno/dir; Dad Stewart, dms. (CD 19/6/26 6/1). It seems likely that, since the first three are named for the Columbia session on her return to New York, that Stewart is the unknown drummer (*but there is no! KBR*).
- In Ethel Waters' 'Black Bottom Revue' at the Lafayette Th., NY week 20 Sep. (Ad NYA 11/9/26)
- With Earl Walton's Orch. at Palace de Dance, Detroit (CD 26/3/27 8/3)

JOHN HOWELL: St. 1996/7 p.191/2 + 218

- John Howell, saxophonist and clarinetist with the 7-11 company's jazz hounds writes that the show ... in Bridgeport Conn. After the week they will go into the Columbia Theater, New York city. Six pieces of the band are recording for the Columbia Record company under the name of the Original Jazz Hounds. Their numbers will be released this month" (Storyville 1996/7 p.218).
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