

THE RECORDINGS OF LOUISE VANT

An Annotated Tentative Name-Discography

by K.-B. Rau (www.harlem-fuss.com)

LOUISE VANT

Most recent and most easily accessible CD releases have been listed after each original record release number.

001	LOUISE VANT		New York,	Dec. 04, 1925
	Louise Vant – voc;			
	<i>Gus Aiken</i> –cnt; Bud Aiken – tbn;			
	Dan Wilson – pno			
73811-B	Show Me The Way To Go Home	OK 8264,		RST-1526-2
73812-A	Save Your Sorrow For Tomorrow	OK 8264,		RST-1526-2

Only for this recording session in this period – and except for the Clara Smith session of July 30, 1925 - Gus Aiken and his brother have been named as accompanying musicians. And Gus Aiken only with a question mark. Denying the question mark, I have taken this session as reference for Gus Aiken's style in my investigation on this remarkable musician in lack of any other determined example (see Gus Aiken elsewhere on this website!). Gus Aiken still is under spell of the very influential Johnny Dunn. He is accompanied by his trumpeter/ trombonist brother Eugene 'Bud' Aiken, he himself a wonderful musician – hear his elegant trombone solo on the second title! They both alumni of Jenkins Orphanage of Charleston, SC. Dan Wilson is accepted as pianist without distinct knowledge of his style following Rust and BGR.

Notes:

- Rust*3,*4,*6: ? Gus Aiken -c; Bud Aiken -tb; Dan Wilson -p
- BGR*2,*3,*4: prob Gus Aiken -c; Bud Aiken -tb; Dan Wilson -p

002	LOUISE VANT	Perry Bradford's Mean Four	New York,	c. Jan. 04, 1926
	Louise Vant – voc;			
	June Clark – cnt; Jimmy Harrison – tbn;			
	<i>Perry Bradford</i> – pno; <i>Will 'Splivey' Escoffery</i> – bjo			
73890-A	I'm Tired Of Everything But You	OK 8275,		Doc DOCD-5424
73891-A	I Would Be Where I Am If You Hadn't Gone Away	OK 8275,		Doc DOCD-5424
73892-B	Do Right Blues	OK 8293,		Doc DOCD-5424

Not very surprisingly do we hear the top brass men in Harlem at this time, June Clark and Jimmy Harrison, in Bradford's services. Both men were some sort of "dream-team" at the time in Harlem which soon was to be dissolved because of Jimmy Harrison's fast growing reputation and attractiveness as trombone star and Clarks increasing difficulties with his lips because of continued attempts to copy Armstrong's high notes. Harrison left the band at Tango Gardens in April 1926 to join Billy Fowler's band for a time, later to become Fletcher Henderson's star performer on the slide-horn.

Perry Bradford himself seems to be the unobtrusive background piano player. But lacking his typical tinkle-tinkle-plink piano phrases it is difficult to detect distinct signs of his personal style.

Will 'Splivey' Escoffery was banjo player with the June Clark band at the time, and this banjo player's style is compatible to Escoffery's known playing. This definitely is not the style of Buddy Christian, who can be heard on the Gulf Coast Seven (pseudonym of the Clark band!) session of Nov. 05, 1925 (see also Names&Numbers 69 p 16).

Notes:

- Rust*3,*4,*6: unknown c; unknown tb; ? Perry Bradford p; unknown bj
- BGR*2,*3,*4: unknown c; unknown tb; presumably Perry Bradford p; unknown bj

003	LOUISE VANT	Perry Bradford's Mean Four	New York,	c. Jan. 15, 1926
	Louise Vant – voc;			
	<i>Gus Aiken</i> –tpt; <i>Bud Aiken</i> – tbn; unknown (<i>Ernest Elliott</i>) – clt, alt;			
	<i>Perry Bradford</i> – pno			
73924-B	Just A Little Bit Bad	OK 8281,		Doc DOCD-5353
73925-B	I've Learned To Do Without You Now	OK 8293,		Doc DOCD-5353
73926-A	Want A Little Lovin'	OK 8281,		Doc DOCD-5353

The Aiken brothers seem to have become – under Bradford’s guidance -some sort of “house band” at OKeh now, and we hear them both again here. Gus Aiken and the reed man (possibly Ernest Elliott) from the last Mean Four session, and that beautiful trombone player Eugene ‘Bud’ Aiken with his very musical style, from which it is easily to recognize that he also performed as a trumpet player. Listen to his noble and sophisticated performance in the last title! He certainly had listened to Harrison by now, and certainly was on his way to becoming a later trombone star, a career sadly cut short by his early death in August 1927.

The pianist seems to be a bit better and stronger than Bradford, but it might as well be him, since he certainly gained more experience on the keys in the course of time. In contrast to Rust and Godrich/Dixon I am unable to hear a banjo on these sides, and I am certain there isn’t any.

Notes:

- Rust*3,*4,*6: unknown c; unknown tb; ? Perry Bradford p; unknown bj
- BGR*2,*3,*4: unknown c; unknown tb; presumably Perry Bradford p; unknown bj

004	LOUISE VANT		New York,	c. Mar. 16, 1926
	Louise Vant – voc;			
	Roy Banks – pno			
74051-A	The Man I Love Is Oh! So Good To Me	OK 8341,		RST JPCD-1526-2
74052-A	Daddy, Don’t You Try To Pull That Two-Time Thing On Me	OK 8341,		RST JPCD-1526-2

Roy Banks is documented on the record label. He is a competent and workman-like accompanist in a blues modified Harlem stride style. He did also record with Alberta Jones and with George Williams and Bessie Brown (unissued).

Notes:

- Rust*3,*4,*6: Roy Barnes -p
- BGR*2: Roy Barnes, pno
- BGR*3,*4: Roy Banks, p.

005	LOUISE VANT	Perry Bradford’s Mean Four	New York,	c. Mar. 18, 1926
	Louise Vant – voc;			
	Gus Aiken – tpt; Bud Aiken – tbn; unknown (Ernest Elliott) – clt;			
	Perry Bradford – pno			
74055-A	Pensacola Blues	OK 8310,		Doc DOCD-5353
74056-A	New Crazy Blues	OK 8310,		Doc DOCD-5353

As it seems do we have the same accompanying musicians here. Just listen and compare! Assured Gus Aiken here, beautiful full-toned and harmonically exemplary Bud Aiken, and again the last heard clarinetist, who might possibly be Ernest Elliott. And the boss on piano. But then there certainly remains the mystery as to how Miss Vant could have been elected to record five recording sessions for a renowned record company such as OKeh. Did she pay for it or was she an executive’s sweetheart? Her singing simply is awful.

Notes:

- Rust*3,*4,*6: unknown c; unknown tb; unknown cl; ? Perry Bradford p
- BGR*4: unknown c; unknown tb; unknown cl; presumably Perry Bradford p

006	BUDDY CHRISTIAN’S CREOLE FIVE		New York,	c. Mar. 23, 1926
	Harry Cooper – tpt; John Mayfield – tbn; Albert ‘Happy’ Caldwell – clt;			
	Charlie ‘Smitty’ Smith – pno; Buddy Christian – bjo; unknown – dms;			
	Louise Vant – voc (1,2)			
74057-A	Sunset Blues	OK 8311,		Hot’n Sweet 151222
74058-A	Texas Mule Stomp	OK 8311,		Hot’n Sweet 151222
74059-A	Sugar House Stomp	OK 8342,		Hot’n Sweet 151222

Louise Vant performs as band singer here with Buddy Christian’s Creole Five. This certainly is a beautiful band and it is worthy of note that no unequivocal and coherent personnel have been suggested up to now (Dec. 2016).

The cornet/trumpet player certainly – for all I know – is not Thomas Morris. Chris Hillman in his record review of the Herwin 107 LP ‘New Orleans Sounds in New York 1924 – 1926’ (Jazz Journal Okt. 1975) writes: “I am certain that the Creole Five cornetist is Harry Cooper.” And I shall gladly follow Mr. Hillman’s well-founded and correct identification. Comparison with what can be heard on the Seminole Syncopators and the Harry’s Happy Four show us that Cooper is our man here.

But the other musicians obviously need new consideration. On trombone I hear the trombonist of Clarence Williams Blue Five of 1923, a man playing a partly legato and partly staccato style. He must be John Mayfield, and to my ears this is clearly recognizable. The clarinetist – ever since the advent of discography – identified as Bob Fuller to my ears is most probably Albert Happy Caldwell, playing in a modernized Johnny Dodds derived style. The pianist shines in pure comping without any soloistic ambition, and only behind the singer he plays some three to four figures which I know from Charlie Smith, at this time pianist of the June Clark Creole Stompers at Smalls’ Sugar Cane Club. This band recorded under the pseudonyms of Blue Rhythm Orchestra and the Gulf Coast Seven.

The strong banjo is played by the leader, Buddy Christian, banjo player and pianist from New Orleans. Only on ‘Sugar House Stomp’ 14 cymbal strokes can be heard at appropriate places – no other drum features – and it has to be asked whether a drummer was participating on this last title of the session or somebody of the recording staff, or perhaps one of the other band players. But, as the cymbal strokes are choked by hand, no other participating musician would have been able to fulfil this special task and still playing on his own instrument.

Notes:

- Rust*2: Tom Morris ? (cnt); Jake Frazier ? (tbn); Bob Fuller (clt); Louis Hooper or Mike Jackson (less likely Clarence Williams)(pno); Buddy Christian (bjo); unknown (dms)
- Rust*3: ? Charlie Gaines -t; ? Charlie Irvis -tb; Bob Fuller -cl; Louis Hooper (or poss Mike Jackson) -p; Buddy Christian -bj; unknown -d; Louise Vant -v (1,2)
- Rust*4,*6: ? Tom Morris -c; ? Jake Frazier -tb; Bob Fuller -cl; ? Porter Grainger (part composer of the first two titles) or Louis Hooper or Mike Jackson -p; Buddy Christian -bj; unknown -d; Louise Vant -v (1,2)
- BGR*2: poss Tom Morris (or any one of the three cnts from earlier L. Vant sessions); poss Jake Frazier or Charlie Irvis, tb; Bob Fuller, cl; poss Louis Hooper or Mike Jackson, p; Buddy Christian -bj; unknown, d; Louise Vant, v (1,2)

- BGR*3,*4: poss Tom Morris, c; poss Jake Frazier or Charlie Irvis, tb; Bob Fuller, cl; poss Louis Hooper or Mike Jackson, p; Buddy Christian -bj; unknown, d; Louise Vant, v (1,2)

This is what our listeners group of some years ago had to say about the personnel of this last session:

KBR: for this session Thomas Morris has formerly been listed as cnt player, but this probably is not a Th. Morris item!

The presumable identification of the trumpet player as Harry Cooper comes from a record review by Christoffer Hillman in *Jazz Journal* October 1975: "I am certain that the Creole Five cornetist is Harry Cooper." I – KB – have no better identification, but there is much to be searched about Cooper's activities at the time. (R. Rains in *Frog Yearbook* Vol. I also gives Cooper as tpt player here!)

JO: The overall character of *Sugar House Stomp* resembles the Five Musical Blackbirds output, although this may simply reflect the input of Fuller and Hooper on both sessions.

Hooper: "The name Buddy Christian means something to me although I can't recall him." (*Record Research* 77, June 1966).

Again, Harry Cooper's Pathé session with Ellington this same month sounds inconclusive to me... Nor do I hear very much similarity on Cooper's own records of the previous year (on *Frog* DGF 69).

Comparing the cornet work on instrumental choruses at the end of *Sunset Blues* to that on *Who's Dis Heah Stranger* (session 059) following the comedic speech: it seems like the same musician. Also perhaps illustrative: a comparison between *Sugar House Stomp* and *The Mess* (session 069, 39962-3).

I'd recommend: *Thomas Morris* – cnt

DB: I well rehearsed this in my studies of Big Charlie. I found no evidence in contemporary Cooper that it was him – quite the reverse.

This player shows some Louis influence which I do not associate with Tom but the fragile tone is quite similar. I think this really belongs with the Big Charlie issue as yet another unknown early Louis stylist.

MR: The cornet sounds wobbly enough to be Morris at times, but is definitely consistent with Cooper's work. I think this was discussed at least on *RedHotJazz* (Yves Francois) and the consensus was that this is Cooper.

It is very sad only that Miss Vant does have such severe problems with her pitch!