

THE RECORDINGS OF WILLIAM 'SPLIVY' ESCOFFERY

An Annotated Tentative Personnelo-Discography

ESCOFFERY, William 'Splivy', banjo player

born: ?Portugal; died: ?

Was a member of Duke Ellington's early 'Washingtonians' in Washington D.C. in 1917. No other personal data known.

STYLISTICS

STYLE

William 'Splivy' Escoffery plays a ragtime-derived early banjo style, which is not mainly aimed to give a band rhythmic and chordal foundation, but which is understood as an additional melody instrument, taking part of the melodic substance of the band's music. This consists of a lot of musical figures like permanent eighth or even sixteenth strokes, or doubling the melody with a permanent tremolo. The banjo is thus used as kind of a melody instrument. The origin of this handling might be seen in the way the banjo was used with early Afro-American techniques, and its use in the famous Clef Club Orchestra of the early 1910/20s.

TIME

Escoffery owns a driving and urgent banjo style, but, according to his prevalent melodic attempts on his banjo, lacks to swing.

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: **Will 'Splivy' Escoffery**
- Probable, generally agreed, but not documented identifications are listed in italics, thus: *Will 'Splivy' Escoffery*
- 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: (*Will 'Splivy' Escoffery*)

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.

ESCOFFERY, Will 'Splivy'

001 **LAVINIA TURNER** Jazz Band New York, Mar. 1921
 Lavinia Turner – voc;
 Gus Aiken – tpt; Jake Frazier – tbn;
 Garvin Bushell – clt; unknown – ten;
 Willie Gant – pno; Will ‘Splivy’ Escoffery – bjo; Bill Benford – bbs; Joe Banks - dms
 69168 How Many Times ? PA 020544, Document DOCD-5447
 69169 Can’t Get Lovin’ Blues PA 020544, Document DOCD-5447

Record Research 30, p.4: “Gant considered Lavinia Turner as one of the great unsung singers who just never did get her due.”
 Garvin Bushell in his ‘Jazz from the Beginning’, p. 28: “The band at Leroy’s was sensational. We had Jake Frazier on trombone, Gus Aiken on trumpet, Charlie Jackson on violin, Willie Gant on piano, Bill Benford on tuba, and Joe Banks on drums. At different times we also had Buddy Aiken or Geechie Fields on trombone, and Steve Wright on drums. Willie Gant was the boss of the band; the pianist was always the leader in cabaret bands, because he had to play behind the singers.”

Garvin Bushell in his ‘Jazz From The Beginning’ does not comment on this recording session! Accompaniment is mainly played straight, therefore impossible to discriminate personal styles. But trumpet playing (tone, time, vibrato) is strictly straight and cannot be attributed to Gus Aiken. Gus Aiken thus must be named with greatest caution – or should rather be deleted. The trombone player keeps to the background and might in fact be Frazier, but is not identifiable by his performance.

The most present musician on these two sides is the strong clarinet player, playing straight and probably ad-lib in breaks. He may well be Garvin Bushell, in comparison with this player’s work with the early Mamie Smith, but a good deal developed since. Bushell did not take up alto until 1923 although listed playing it here in Rust. What can also be recognised is a tenor sax playing from scores, obviously, and nothing but the melody.

The pianist sticks closely to the scores and displays a recognisable ragtime style, and may thus be identified as Willie Gant, in contrast to Fletcher Henderson. ‘Splivy’ Escoffery plays in a ragtime-derived banjo style with almost permanent eighth up-and-down strokes, or doubling the sung melody with a permanent tremolo.

From Bushell’s wonderful book ‘Jazz From the Beginning’ we know that Gant’s band at ‘Leroy’s’ also had Bill Benford on tuba. So, he may be heard here with his slim tuba sound sticking to the scores. At no instance, a drummer can be detected.

Notes:

- RR 30-4: “He (Willie Gant) believes that he may have recorded behind Lavinia Turner, Katie Crippen and Josie Miles, to name some.”

- BGR*2: possibly Gus Aiken, cnt; Jake Frazier, tbn; Garvin Bushell, clt, alt; Willie Gant, pno; Spivey, bjo; Joe Banks, dms.

- BGR*3: poss Gus Aiken, c; poss Jake Frazier, tb; poss Garvin Bushell, cl, as; poss Willie Gant, p; poss Spivey, bj; poss Joe Banks, d.

- BGR*4: possibly Gus Aiken, cnt; Jake Frazier, tbn; Garvin Bushell, clt; unknown, clt, alt; Willie Gant, pno; Spivey, bjo; Joe Banks, dms.

- Rust*3,*4,*6: possibly Gus Aiken -c; Jake Frazier -tb; Garvin Bushell -cl -as; Willie Gant -p; ----- Spivey -bj; Joe Banks -d.

- Bushell/Tucker, Jazz from the Beginning, p.149: “For this session, the two entries following, and the 17 May 1921 Lavinia Turner date, Martin (sic) Rust lists Bushell on alto saxophone. Bushell, however, claims he did not play the instrument until 1923.

002 **LAVINIA TURNER** Jazz Band New York, c. May 17, 1921
 Lavinia Turner – voc;
 Gus Aiken – tpt; Jake Frazier – tbn;
 Garvin Bushell – clt; unknown – ten;
 Willie Gant – pno; Will ‘Splivy’ Escoffery – bjo; Bill Benford – bbs; Joe Banks - dms
 69232 A-Wearin’ Away The Blues PA 020572, Document DOCD-5447
 69233 Sweet Man O’ Mine PA 020572, Document DOCD-5447

Garvin Bushell in his ‘Jazz from the Beginning’, p. 28: “The band at Leroy’s was sensational. We had Jake Frazier on trombone, Gus Aiken on trumpet, Charlie Jackson on violin, Willie Gant on piano, Bill Benford on tuba, and Joe Banks on drums. At different times we also had Buddy Aiken or Geechie Fields on trombone, and Steve Wright on drums. Willie Gant was the boss of the band; the pianist was always the leader in cabaret bands, because he had to play behind the singers.”

Accompaniment is mainly played straight, therefore impossible to discriminate personal styles. But trumpet playing (tone, vibrato, time) is very probably Gus Aiken’s here (as displayed in session 009 and 011 of my Gus Aiken list elsewhere at this website). The trombonist might then be Gus’ brother Eugene ‘Bud’ Aiken, judging from this player’s clear and “legitimate” playing.

Bushell did not take up alto until 1923 although listed playing it here in Rust. Thus, there must be somebody else playing the tenor sax, who entirely plays a background part and is not recognisable as a person.

Willie Gant accompanies the second chorus of the first title in a manner congruent to his playing in session 001 (above). The banjo player throughout seems to play along with the horn men, and might well be ‘Spivy’ Escoffery as before. Possibly, it is Bill Benford on the tuba again. As before, there is no drummer present on these two sides.

Notes:

- RR 30-4: “He (Willie Gant) believes that he may have recorded behind Lavinia Turner, Katie Crippen and Josie Miles, to name some.”

- BGR*2: prob similar to: poss Gus Aiken, cnt; Jake Frazier, tbn; Garvin Bushell, clt, alt; Willie Gant, pno; Spivey, bjo; Joe Banks, dms.

- BGR*3: poss Gus Aiken, c; poss Jake Frazier, tb; poss Garvin Bushell, cl, as; poss Willie Gant, p; poss Spivey, bj; poss Joe Banks, d.

- BGR*4: poss Gus Aiken, c; poss Jake Frazier, tb; unknown, cl, as; poss Willie Gant, p; poss Spivey, bj; poss Joe Banks, d.

- Rust*3,*4,*6: possibly Gus Aiken -c; Jake Frazier -tb; Garvin Bushell -cl -as; Willie Gant -p; ----- Spivey -bj; Joe Banks -d.

- Bushell/Tucker, Jazz from the Beginning: no comment on this session in the G. Bushell discography!

003 **LAVINIA TURNER** James P. Johnson’s Harmony Seven New York, c. Sep. 02, 1921
 Lavinia Turner – voc;
 June Clark – cnt; unknown – tbn;
 unknown – clt; unknown – ten;
 James P. Johnson – pno; (Will ‘Splivy’ Escoffery) – bjo; unknown - bbs
 69358 He Took It Away From Me PA 020627, Per 12034, Doc DOCD-5447
 69359 If I Were Your Daddy (And You Were A Woman To Me) PA 020627, Per 12034, Doc DOCD-5447

I hear: one trumpet, trombone, clarinet, tenor sax (?), piano, banjo, tuba.

Maybe there is a saxophone in the background – some ensemble passages sound rather fat, but it can not be detected clearly. There are beautiful piano-passages by James P. on both titles. Confirmation of June Clark's presence comes from James P. Johnson himself! He is also heard on other Johnson accompaniments made for Hytone and other labels.

James P. plays a very nice solo accompaniment with the singer for eight bars in the second chorus of the first title, and an entire solo chorus in the second title.

The banjo player's style sounds to be 'Splivy' Escoffery's with its tremolos and up-and-down strokes and copying the wind instruments' parts! Again, he plays with an urgent drive.

This is one of the records found in June Clark's uncle's house!

Notes:

- Rust*3,*4,*6: 2t; tb; cl; ts; James P. Johnson -p; bjo.

- BGR*2,*3,*4: two unknown tpts; unknown, tbn; unknown, clt; unknown, ten; James P. Johnson, pno; unknown, bjo..

Tunes structures:

He Took It Away From Me Key of F Pathé Actuelle, Perfect
(Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus A1 20 bars AA' voc+ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse B1 16 bars voc+ens)(Chorus A2 20 bars voc+pno 8 -
voc+ens 12) (Chorus A3 20 bars ens 12 - voc+ens 8)(Coda 2 bars clt - ens)

If I Were Your Daddy Key of Eb Pathé Actuelle, Perfect
(Intro 8 bars ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A1 20 bars AA' voc + ens)(Chorus B1 12 bars pno)(Chorus A2
20 bars ens)(Chorus A3 20 bars voc + ens)(Coda 1 bar ens)

004 **LAVINIA TURNER** James P. Johnson's Harmony Seven New York, c. Sep. 1921
Lavinia Turner – voc;
June Clark – cnt; unknown – tbn;
unknown – clt; unknown – ten;
James P. Johnson – pno; Will 'Splivy' Escoffery – bjo; unknown - bbs
69397 When The Rain Turns To Snow PA 020878, Per 12039, Doc DOCD-1005
69398 Who'll Drive Your Blues Away PA 020878, Per 12039, Doc DOCD-1005

I hear: one trumpet, trombone, clarinet, tenor sax (?), piano, banjo, tuba.

Maybe there is a saxophone in the background – some ensemble passages sound rather fat, but it cannot be detected clearly. The participating players seem to be the same as before. Once again: beautiful piano playing as before.

The title of the second tune is, as given by Rust, thus: 'Who Drives Your Cares (sic) Away'. L. Turner clearly sings: "Who Drives Your Blues Away"!

Notes:

- Rust*3,*4,*6: 2t; tb; cl; ts; James P. Johnson -p; bjo.

- BGR*2,*3,*4: two unknown tpts; unknown, tbn; unknown, clt; unknown, ten; James P. Johnson, pno; unknown, bjo..

Recorded Tunes:

When The Rain Turns Into Snow Key of Bb Pathé Actuelle, Perfect
(Intro 4 bars ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse A1 12 bars voc+ens)(Chorus B1 18 bars AABA' voc+ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse A2 12
bars voc+ens)(Chorus B2 18 bars voc+ens)(Chorus B3 18 bars voc+pno 12 - voc+ens 6)(Coda 2 bars clt - ens)

Who'll Drive Your Blues Away Key of D Pathé Actuelle, Perfect
(Intro 4 bars ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse A1 16 bars voc+ens)(Chorus B1 18 bars AA' voc+ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse A2 16 bars
voc+ens)(Chorus B2 18 bars voc+ens)(Coda 2 bars pno - ens)

005 **ELIZA CHRISTMAS LEE** Her Jazz Band New York, Nov. 02, 1921
Eliza Christmas Lee – voc;
Gus Aiken – tpt; Jake Frazier – tbn;
Garvin Bushell – clt; unknown – vln;
Willie Gant – pno; Will 'Splivy' Escoffery – bjo; Joe Banks – dms
3677 I Ain't Givin' Nothin' Away Gnt 4801, Document DOCD-5627
3677-A I Ain't Givin' Nothin' Away Gnt 4801, Document DOCD-5515
3678 Arkansas Blues Gnt 4801, Document DOCD-5627
3678-A Arkansas Blues Gnt 4801, Document DOCD-5515

This trumpeter's style seems to fit with the trumpet player of my Gus Aiken list elsewhere at this website, and may therefore be Gus Aiken.

His style is partly in 6/8th time and so quite out of the Johnny Dunn triplet style.

The trombone player's style is comparable to that of sessions 018 – 022 and 009 of my Bud Aiken list, thus probably

This personnel minus the violinist confirmed by Willie Gant in RR 30 p. 4!

Notes:

- RR 30 p. 4 (no violinist named! Prob. Amelia Christman Lee – 'Miss Christmas' W. Gant)

- BGR*2,*3,*4: Gus Aiken, tpt; Jake Frazier, tbn; Garvin Bushell, clt; unknown, vln; Willie Gant, pno; --- Spivey, bjo; Joe Banks, dms.

- Rust*3,*4,*6: Gus Aiken, c; Jake Frazier, tb; Garvin Bushell, cl; unknown, vn; Willie Gant, p; --- Spivey, bj; Joe Banks, d.

- Bushell/Tucker, Jazz from the Beginning: no comment on this session in the G. Bushell discography!

Charles Delaunay and Carey / McCarthy in their discographies give collective personnels for the recordings of Johnny Dunn's Original Jazz Hounds of 1921/22/23. These collective personnels list two banjo players: Cokey Spivey or John Mitchell, alternately. The banjo performances heard on these sides, however, seem to be played by one player, John Mitchell, only, and do not show the individual features of Will 'Splivy' Escoffery as apparent from his earlier sides with Lavinia Turner, above, and his later side with the Blue Rhythm Orchestra. After checking the Johnny Dunn sides, they will not be included in this 'Splivy' Escoffery list of recordings!

006 **JOSIE MILES** Long Island City, NY, c. Sep. 1922
Josie Miles – voc;
Gus Aiken or (Joe Smith?) – tpt; (Bud Aiken) – tbn; (Julian Baugh) – clt,
Willie Gant or (Fletcher Henderson?) – pno; (Ralph Escudero) - bbs

424-2	<i>If You Want To Keep Your Daddy Home</i>	BS 14130,	Document DOCD-5466
425-1	<i>You're Fooling With The Wrong Gal Now</i>	BS 14130,	Document DOCD-5466

The trumpet player - whom W.C. Allen identifies as Joe Smith, a little too hasty I think – might as well be the youthful Gus Aiken, a pupil of the Jenkins Orphanage of Charleston, SC. Many trumpet players in Harlem in the very early twenties definitely were under the spell of Johnny Dunn and copied him as well as they could. One of these was Gus Aiken who - on a couple of early recordings of Edith Wilson in 1922 - very probably has hitherto been mistaken for Johnny Dunn. But Aiken certainly excelled in playing in a closely imitated Dunn style, recognizable only by his softer tone and his looser inner rhythm (compare Edith Wilson's recordings of 1922 elsewhere on this website!). But, Joe Smith was a Dunn pupil as well and can be distinguished as such in his early recordings with Mamie Smith (compare Mamie Smith's recordings August 1922 to January 1923 elsewhere on this website). Yet, Smith is recognizably on his way to a very distinct own approach and smooth and rhapsodic style, away from the Dunn mould. And Smith was on tour with Mamie Smith all through 1922 and into 1923 and his presence on this date at least has to be seen very questionable. So, our man here – with his eighth-triplets – for me is rather Aiken.

The trombone player might well be Frazier and the clarinetist - from my knowledge - might possibly be Julian Baugh, who was one of the few reed players in the early 1920s to come close to the Western players like Johnny Dodds or Jimmy Noone. This player was assumed to be a certain Clarence Robinson by some researchers in the last decades. But this person was later recognised as a Harlem dancer without instrumental abilities. Instead, the clarinetist of Ethel Waters' touring band of the early 1920s was found to be Julian Baugh by Swedish researcher Bo Lindström, documented in his fantastic book 'Oh Joe, Play That Trombone' on George Brashear (2018)! He may well be our man, here.

The sounds from the piano are very light and I therefore could well imagine this to be Willie Gant, following his own testimony below, which, by the way, would be one of three only possibilities to have recorded with Josie Miles, besides sessions 004 and 005, perhaps. Compare Katie Crippen's session of March 1921 where Willie Gant suddenly inserts a piano solo into a tune played by a very early Henderson recording unit with Henderson on piano ('Play 'Em For Mama, Sing 'Em For Me). Gant is much lighter and airy in his approach than the strongly founded Henderson.

A banjo player can not be detected on these sides as listed in early editions of Rust and BGR which are based on the below cited excerpts of Record Research. It should, yet, be added that Spivey or Splivey could only mean Will 'Splivy' Escoffery, banjo player of the June Clark band of 1925 ('Blue Rhythm Orchestra' and 'Gulf Coast Seven' on records) and schoolfellow of the young Duke Ellington.

When considering that this personnel heard might possibly not come from the Fletcher Henderson circle, we lose the reason to suggest Ralph Escudero as tuba player, who, nevertheless, did not join the Henderson aggregation before January 1923. Lacking any stylistic idiosyncrasies of the tuba sounds we better list this player as unknown.

Notes:

- Record Research 30: "Following this recording adventure, Willie recalled doing several others behind different blues singers on various labels such as Okeh, Pathe and Black Swan with the "Leroy's" personnel. He believes that he may have recorded behind Lavinia Turner, Katie Crippen and Josie Miles, to name some." "Leroy's Band": Gus Aiken, trumpet; Garvin Bushell, clarinet; Jake Frazier, trombone; Gant, piano; Spivy or Splivy, banjo; and Joe Banks, drums.

- WC Allen, *Hendersonia*, p. 39: Joe Smith, cornet; prob George Brashear, trombone; poss Clarence Robinson, clarinet; Fletcher Henderson piano; poss Ralph Escudero, tuba. "Joe Smith is identified from his characteristic cornet breaks. The matrix numbers seem to place this somewhat later than the preceding three sessions (J. Moody, M. Straine, A. Copeland – KBR), and it may therefore actually be out of its proper chronological sequence, but is placed here because of Smith's presence."

- BGR*2: Joe Smith, tpt; Jake Frazier, tbn; Garvin Bushell, clt; prob Fletcher Henderson, pno; --- Spivey, bjo; Joe Banks, dms.

- BGR*3,*4: Joe Smith, c; Jake Frazier, tb; poss Clarence Robinson, ct; prob Fletcher Henderson, p; poss Ralph Escudero, bb.

- Rust*3: Joe Smith - c; Jake Frazier - tb; Garvin Bushell - cl; ? Fletcher Henderson - p; --- Spivey - bj; Joe Banks - d

- Rust*4: Joe Smith - c; ? George Brashear - tb; ? Clarence Robinson - cl; Fletcher Henderson - p; ? Ralph Escudero.

- Rust*6: Joe Smith - c; ? George Brashear - tb; ? Clarence Robinson - cl; Willie Gant - p; ? Ralph Escudero.

- Bushell/Tucker p. 156: personnels as by Bruyninckx/Rust*3/Rust*4. No comment by G. Bushell, which may indicate that he did not recognize himself and thus had no recollection to this recording session.

007 THOMAS MORRIS PAST JAZZ MASTERS

New York,

Feb. 1923

unknown, Thomas Morris – cnt; John Mayfield – tbn; unknown – alt;

Charles 'Smitty' Smith – pno; (William 'Splivy' Escoffery?) – bjo; unknown – bbs; unknown - dms

71306-A E Flat Blues No. 2 (Memphis, Tennessee)

OK 8055,

Chronological Classics 823

71307-B Original Charleston Strut

OK 8055,

Chronological Classics 823

Composer credits: 71306 (Morris); 71307 (Morris)

This first session under Morris' name produced two titles: E Flat Blues No. 2 (key of Eb) and Original Charleston Strut (key of F / Bb / F).

"E Flat Blues" is a normal 12-bar blues with 2-bar introduction and a short coda. On chorus 2 and 3 we hear a muted trumpet/cornet solo.

Then we have two ensemble chorus and again two chorus with breaks on bars 2 and 4 with someone shouting: "Hey!"

"Original Charleston Strut" (key in F / Bb / F) is a tune obviously derived from "Weary Blues" with five 12-bar chorus / verse in F (strain A), then three 16-bar chorus in Bb (strain B), and again three 12-bar chorus in F (strain A).

Composer credits for both numbers are "Morris".

Depart from 'Rust' the personnel is: 2 trumpets, trombone, alto sax, possibly tenor sax, piano, banjo, brass bass and drums.

Now, what do we hear?

Both tunes bear a remarkable New Orleans flavour insofar as the tunes are known today as belonging to this city's tradition. "E Flat Blues" is very similar to a New Orleans brass band tune known as "Whoopin' Blues" as recorded by the Eureka Brass Band and the Young Tuxedo Brass Band in the fifties, and probably more often later on. And "Original Charleston Strut" is derived, as I have said, from "Weary Blues".

It has first to be mentioned that "Lonesome Journey Blues" of April '23 is a solo piece for trumpet/cornet. (I shall further on only use the term trumpet for a trumpet or a cornet being heard. Thomas Morris is always listed to have played cornet! Yet, on a photo of him wearing a straw hat – on the Fountain LP and the Classics CD – he holds a trumpet as far as I can identify!) As I assume that the bandleader cum trumpet player spares such a feature for himself, it can safely be considered this to be a solo number for Mr. Morris, the band leader. Moreover, the trumpet cum mute style heard here goes well with other known Th. Morris recordings. So, this special trumpet sound is understood to be Morris'.

This solo trumpet player's – I'd call him tpt II – playing is opposed to the other trumpet player present, who plays mainly without mute throughout and in a rather "straight" style (tpt I). As you always have Bubber Miley and Thomas Morris listed as trumpeters in the discos (Bub Miley always played trumpet, not cornet!) I believe, that in the early days of discographic effort the "muted" player has been mistaken to be Miley and the other one accordingly to be Morris. Tpt I sometimes uses a straight-mute when playing third parts above Th. Morris (at the end of "Lonesome Journey Blues").

For me, though, it is absolutely clear, that the "muted" player – tpt II – is Morris playing second parts and solos, and the other trumpet player, whose identity I am unable to find out, is the lead man. And I never hear anything which reminds me of Miley! To my ears, Morris' playing is characterized by a lot of (mainly!) use of a 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. G. Bushell in his book "Jazz From The Beginning" attributes this latter quality to the lack of basic training: "Like Thomas Morris. He had some great ideas, but no lip – it just splattered all over the place." Further and most obvious examples of this lack of security you can hear on the sides by "Waller with Morris' Hot Babies". Miley - throughout his career - played in that military derived, triplet dominated staccato style of Johnny Dunn, which was common in Harlem before the advent of Louis Armstrong in late 1924. But this is not the style by this player here! Therefore, my conclusion is that Miley's name ought to be cancelled from the discs!

The New Orleans flavour crops up also when you listen to the first trumpet player who plays a strong swinging open lead on "Original", completely different from Morris' playing in the first tune. Although Morris does not play in that Johnny Dunn oriented "square" style as Miley used to do, he nevertheless is far apart from the "western" style of tpt I.

So, we have to leave the lead trumpet player - tpt I - as unknown.

Also, the trombone player plays in a New Orleans tailgate style completely different from Charlie Irvis' legato melodic playing. RUST 6th edition still lists him as Irvis, whereas I have somewhere seen John Mayfield of Clarence Williams Blue Five fame. This certainly is a much better possibility. Or is he somebody else, of whom I shall speculate below?

I hear a legato playing alto saxophonist in a style uncommon for early Harlem music, who definitely is not Ernest Elliott! There may be a tenor saxophonist, heard only with difficulty, if at all, in the ensemble. In one two-bar break at the end of "Original Charleston Strut" there is a saxophone heard playing low notes in "slap-tongue" style. This could possibly be Ernest Elliott as listed, but I have to bear in mind that Garvin Bushell in his book JAZZ FROM THE BEGINNING says that he never (!) heard Ernest Elliott play saxophone. And he should have known! Later recordings will show yet, that he nevertheless did!

I am quite uncertain about the saxophone(s). To me it sounds like alto throughout both numbers. The break in A6 of "Original" could be played by alto as well as by tenor (I have asked a proficient alto sax player about this). It is in the range of either variant. So, do we have alto and tenor, or do we hear an alto that is played very low at some places, especially at the end of "Original", or is it someone playing a C-melody-sax? Saxophone players, please, comment! My conclusion: it is only alto saxophone throughout, and not Elliott.

In the first number we can hear piano-"comping" which ascertains my conclusion for Charles "Smitty" Smith.

The style of the banjo player is typical Harlem of the first half of the twenties, doubling time in "E Flat Blues No. 2" as you can hear it in many recordings under Johnny Dunn's name, yet here in the manner of Bill 'Splivv' Escoffery.

The tuba player is listed nowhere, as far as I know. A surprise for this early time is his definite four-to-the-bar rhythm on "Original", which was absolutely uncommon in early Harlem music and again points to New Orleans jazz.

The drummer then with his cow-bell breaks in paradiddle could be from either sphere.

These observations give rise to a provocative and most daring question: Can it be that some of Piron's men (tpt I, tbn, alt, bbs) were hired by Thomas Morris?

Can anybody tell me when the Piron band arrived in New York? Their earliest documented engagement in New York was in May 1923.

But, were they in New York already in February?

There was a strong link of the Piron band to Thomas Morris, as the Piron band was managed by Clarence Williams (see photo in P. Bradford, 'Born With The Blues', where the Piron band is named Williams' Jazz Kings!) and Williams used Th. Morris as trumpet player in his recording bands.

Engelbert Wengel from Frankfurt, Germany, a noted specialist for New Orleans Jazz, though, does not think that these men are from the Piron band, but he agrees to the New Orleans flavour.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography, 1948: not listed*

- Rust*2: Tom Morris, Bubber Miley (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); unknown (ten); Willie "The Lion" Smith (pno); Buddy Christian (bjo)

- Rust*3: Tom Morris -Bubber Miley -c; Charlie Irvis -tb; unknown -ts; unknown -p; unknown -bj; unknown -d. Contrary to previous statements and suggestions, the pianist on these records is neither Willie "The Lion" Smith (who denies all knowledge of them and in any case was not in New York at the time) nor Clarence Williams.

- Rust*4: Tom Morris -Bubber Miley -c; Charlie Irvis -tb; unknown -ts; unknown -p; unknown -bj; unknown -d.

- Rust*6: Tom Morris, Bubber Miley, c; Charlie Irvis, tb; ?Ernest Elliott, ts; ?Willie "The Lion" Smith, p; unknown, bj; unknown, d.

Tunes:

71306-A E Flat Blues No 2 (Memphis Tennessee) Key of Eb OKeh
(Intro 2 bars ens)(Chorus A1 12 bars ens)(Chorus A2 12 bars tpt II muted)(Chorus A3 12 bars tpt II muted)(Chorus A4 12 bars ens)(Chorus A5 12 bars ens)(Chorus A6 12 bars ens, break voc bars 2 + 4)(Chorus A7 12 bars ens break voc bars 2 + 4)(Coda 1 bar tpts)

71307-B Original Charleston Strut Key of F / Bb / F OKeh
(Chorus A1 12 bars strain A ens break bjo bars 5+6)(Chorus A2 12 bars strain A ens break dms bars 5+6)(Chorus A3 12 bars strain A ens)(Chorus A4 12 bars strain A ens)(Chorus A5 12 bars strain A ens break tpt bars 5+6)(Chorus B1 16 bars strain B ens)(Chorus B2 16 bars strain B tpt II obligato tbn)(Chorus B3 16 bars strain B tpt II obligato tbn)(Chorus A6 12 bars strain A ens break alt (or ten ?) bars 5+6)(Chorus A7 12 bars strain A ens)(Coda 2 bars ens - dms)

008 THOMAS MORRIS PAST JAZZ MASTERS

unknown, Thomas Morris – cnt; John Mayfield – tbn; (Happy Caldwell?) – ten;
Charles "Smitty" Smith – pno; William 'Splivv' Escoffery – bjo

71531-C Lonesome Journey Blues

New York,

Apr. 1923

OK 4867,

Chronological Classics 823

71532-B When The Jazz Band Starts To Play

OK 4867,

Chronological Classics 823

Composer credits: 71531 (Morris); 71532 (Morris)

This second session under Morris' name again produced two numbers: Lonesome Journey Blues (key of G) and When The Jazz Band Starts To Play (key of Bb / Eb / Bb). Composer credits for both numbers are "Morris".

In parts depart from RUST the personnel is: 2 trumpets, trombone, tenor sax, piano, banjo. NO brass bass and drums.

"Lonesome Journey Blues" again is a normal 12 bar blues, which is a solo number for the band leader. He plays 4 chorus tpt solo, after which there are two 8 bar strains by the ensemble in call-and-response fashion.

"When The Jazz Band Starts To Play" is kind of a stomp tune of Morris' own authorship. The same tune has been recorded by Thomas Morris And His Seven Hot Babies with the title "Ham Gravy" in 1926. Verse II is very similar to the chorus of Charlie Johnson's recording of "Birmingham Black Bottom" (second strain), which might be a clue to Morris' assumed presence on this recording session.

Now again, what do we hear here?

The New Orleans flavour is gone in parts, just because there is no singing alto sax anymore, the four-to-the-bar tuba is gone, and the two tunes do not bear any particular New Orleans influence.

Trumpet II - Morris - plays "Lonesome Journey Blues" as his solo tune. There is no other trumpet soloist.

Trumpet I plays lead trumpet throughout in the ensembles.

At the end of the second blues chorus in "When The Jazz Band" there is some confusion about the trumpet players. In my estimation, Morris, who soloed on open horn on the two preceding blues choruses, grabs his mute for the last two Verses II, whereas trumpet I plays open horn further on.

The trombone player may be the same as before.

The few instances where the tenor sax can be heard (at the end of 'Lonesome Journey Blues' and in a slap-tongue break and in ensemble in '... Jazz Band ...') its player shows a very different approach to reed playing than Elliott. There is no up- and down slurring, no thin and sour tone, no repeated phrases, instead a full-bodied tenor sax by a man whose main instrument the tenor probably was, and who obviously was under influence of the young Coleman Hawkins. And we have neither heard Elliott on tenor nor even slap-tongue playing as yet! Which makes me wonder whether Bushell's comment re Elliott's saxophone playing simply meant "tenor saxophone" – not alto, as we have sufficient proof of Elliott playing the alto! So: no Elliott here again! As tenor player Happy Caldwell comes to mind as he was with Mamie Smith at the time, Hawkins' successor, and certainly under his spell! Also, this would be Caldwell's style as performed later, also with Morris' Seven Hot Babies.

In "When The Jazz Band" we can hear a piano solo, which stylistically fits exactly to what is played by Charles "Smitty" Smith in the piano breaks "Hold 'Er, Deacon" by the Blue Rhythm Orchestra (see my June Clark Discography elsewhere at this website). To my ears these 6 and 4 bars of soloing are sufficient proof of "Smittie's" presence.

The style of the banjo player seems to be a little more straightforward than that on the Feb. 1923 session. But this might also be caused by the bandleader's demands. I see the possibility that this is a different player. I have named Escoffery on banjo because of this player's style and because of Escoffery's membership in Charles 'Smitty' Smith's band.

There are neither tuba nor drums on this session!

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography, 1948: not listed*

- Rust*2: Tom Morris, Bubber Miley (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); unknown (ten); Willie "The Lion" Smith (pno); Buddy Christian (bjo)

- Rust*3,*4: Tom Morris -Bubber Miley -c; Charlie Irvis -tb; unknown -ts; unknown -p; unknown -bj

- Rust*6: Tom Morris, Bubber Miley, c; Charlie Irvis, tb; ?Ernest Elliott, ts; ?Willie "The Lion" Smith, p; unknown, bj

Tunes:

71531-C Lonesome Journey Blues Key of G (or Ab ?) OKeh

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus A1 12 bars tpt II tpt/tbn obligato)(Chorus A2 12 bars tpt II tpt/tbn obligato)(Chorus A3 12 bars tpt II tpt/tbn obligato)(Chorus A4 12 bars tpt II tpt/tbn obligato)(Chorus A5 12 bars ens)(Chorus B1 8 bars ten - ens) (Chorus B2 8 bars tpt - ens)

71532-B When The Jazz Band Starts To Play Key of Bb / Eb / Bb OKeh

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Verse I strain A AA 16 bars ens)(Verse II strain B AA' 16 bars ens middle break tbn)(Verse II strain B AA' 16 bars pno 6 bars / middle break 2 bars ten / pno 4 bars / ens 4 bars)(Chorus A1 12 bars tpt II solo)(Chorus A2 12 bars tpt II solo)(Verse II

009 BLUE RHYTHM ORCHESTRA	New York,	Oct. 29, 1925
June Clark – cnt; Jimmy Harrison – tbn; Buster Bailey – clt; Leonard Fields - alt; Charlie "Smitty" Smith – pno; Will "Splivy" Escoffery – bjo		
106358 Keep Your Temper	PA 36364, Per 14545,	Frog DGF 73
<i>Composer credits: 106358 (Smith)</i>		

Because of the obvious correlation of this and the following sessions I have taken my liberty to discuss both sessions together under the following date.

Please, note, that 'Keep Your Temper' on Frog DGF 71 does in fact play the 'Keep Your Temper' of the Gulf Coast Seven session of Nov. 05, 1925. The Blue Rhythm Orchestra 'Keep Your Temper' has then been correctly reissued on Frog DGF 73 as shown here!

010 BLUE RHYTHM ORCHESTRA	New York,	c. Nov. 04, 1925
June Clark – cnt; Jimmy Harrison – tbn; Buster Bailey – clt; Leonard Fields – alt; Charlie "Smitty" Smith – pno; Will "Splivy" Escoffery - bjo		
106381 Santa Claus Blues	PA 36350, Per 14531,	Frog DGF 71
106382 Hold 'Er, Deacon	PA 36364, Per 14545,	Frog DGF 71
<i>Composer credits: 106381 (Smith)</i>		

The quotations below make me conclude that these sides of the 'Blue Rhythm Orchestra' are in fact by 'June Clark's Creole Stompers', augmented by Buster Bailey on clarinet, if it is he. The below mentioned characteristics of the alto player and the piano player are easily recognized on the records, so that the personnel should be thus:

June Clark: aurally the cornet player is the same man as on the Gulf Coast Seven and not ?---- Thomas or (presumably Big Charlie Thomas), as given in Rust, Jazz Records. Clark owns a fat tone and a very fiery approach and attack, although sometimes retarding the opening- notes of some phrases (lip trouble? or uncertainty what to play next?), whereas --- Thomas has a lighter tone, uses a more lyrical style with high interval-jumps, very much like L. Armstrong at that time. Furthermore, Clark owns a rather erratic approach to time/rhythm, which results in a kind of hectic succession of notes.

Jimmy Harrison: interesting to hear Harrison's new concept of trombone-playing, like a second cornet as cited below. And mind his tone, vibrato, and attack, completely unlike any other trombone player at that time.

Buster Bailey: although there is no source for this suggestion known to me, the style seems to be Bailey's. Bailey is not known to have been a permanent member of the group. But do we really know? There is no soprano-sax to be heard anywhere.

Leonard Fields: this man's playing is exactly as cited below in 'Sources'. There is no soprano-sax to be heard anywhere. If the alto-player is indeed Len Fields, this should have some consequences to the personnels of Cl. Williams Blue Five of 12-15-1925 and ca. 01-22-1926 and Cl. Williams Stompers of 01-04-1926, maybe even to D. Ellington a.h. Orch. of 04-01-1926! Mentioning his name at the appropriate places in Tom Lord, Clarence Williams, seems quite reasonable! (See my Leonard Fields listing!)

Charle 'Smitty' Smith: Rust and all other discographies list Willie "The Lion" Smith as pianist. This pianist here shows nothing of "The Lion's" characteristics. The piano breaks at the end of "Hold 'Er Deacon" with their simple "oom-pah" would exactly apply for "Smitty"

Smith as quoted below. Therefore, and because Clark's piano player at the time was "Smitty" Smith I think that "Smitty" is much more probable than "The Lion". Maybe "the Lion's" name was listed in early discographic times because "Keep Your Temper" is "the Lion's" tune and "Smitty" was practically unknown!

Will 'Splivy' Escoffery: Rust and all other discographies list Buddy Christian. To me Buddy Christian does not seem to be the banjo player on these sides, comparing this man's style to that more straight-forward approach of Buddy Christian on the Clarence Williams Blue Five or the Gulf Coast Seven session of Nov. 05, 1925 (see below). Most probably this man is the said "Splivy" Escoffery (see below) as mentioned in 'Jazz Information' No.II/16 of 1941 as regular member of the June Clark band. He plays in that Ragtime derived banjo style common in Harlem in the early days as opposed to the straight 4/4 "Western" style of Buddy Christian. William "Splivy" Escoffery, who is not listed in Rust 6th ed., may yet be found in the RUST Artist index under "Spivey, -- (bj) having made recordings with Eliza Christmas Lee and with Lavinia Turner in 1921. He might even be the same man, who played bjo/gtr in Duke Ellington's first group at Armstrong High School in Washington DC in 1916, although named William Escoffery here (Lawrence, D. Ellington and his World, p. 12).

Now, just look at the notes below re the personnels as listed in the various editions of Rust! That's what I would call some development!

Notes:

- *VJM VLP 5 (LP) Cover text: probably Louis Armstrong and another (cornets); Charlie Irvis (trombone); Buster Bailey (clarinet and soprano saxophone); unknown (alto saxophone); probably Clarence Williams or Dan Parish (piano); Buddy Christian (banjo),*

- *Rust*2: June Clark ? (tpt); Jimmy Harrison ? (tbn); Buster Bailey (clt, sop); Prince Robinson (ten); Willie "The Lion" Smith (pno); Buddy Christian (bjo)*

- *Rust*3: ? --- Thomas -c; Jimmy Harrison -tb; Buster Bailey -cl -ss; Don Redman -cl -as; Clarence Williams or Willie "The Lion" Smith -p; Buddy Christian -bj*

- *Rust*4: June Clark or --- Thomas -c; Jimmy Harrison -tb; Buster Bailey -cl -ss; Prince Robinson -ts; Willie "The Lion" Smith -p; Buddy Christian -bj*

- *Rust*6: Charlie Thomas -c; Jimmy Harrison -tb; Buster Bailey -cl -ss -as; Prince Robinson -ts; Willie "The Lion" Smith -p; Buddy Christian -bj*

Recorded Tunes:

Keep Your Temper Key of F / Bb / Eb / Bb Pathé Actuelle, Perfect

(Intro 8 bars ens)(A1 Chorus 32 bars ABAC alt + ens)(Bridge 4 bars ens)(B1 Chorus 16 bars AA' (tbn 6 bars, reeds 2 bars, tbn 7 bars, ens 1 bar))(B2 Chorus 16 bars (clt 6 bars, reeds 2 bars, clt 7 bars, ens 1 bar))(Bridge 4 bars ens)(C1 Chorus 32 bars AA' (clt 28 bars, ens 4 bars))(Vamp 2 bars ens)(B3 Chorus 16 bars (ens 6 bars, reeds 2 bars, ens 8 bars))

Santa Claus Blues Key of Eb Pathé Actuelle,

Perfect

(Intro 4 bars ens)(A1 Chorus 32 bars ABAC tbn+ens, tbn middle break)(B1 Verse 16 bars ens)(A2 Chorus 32 bars alt+ens, alt middle break)(A3 Chorus 32 bars ens, cnt middle break)

Hold'er Deacon Key of C

Pathé Actuelle, Perfect

(A1 Chorus 20 bars ens, clt breaks)(B1 Verse 16 bars ens)(Bridge 4 bars ens)(A2 Chorus 20 bars alt+ens)(A3 Chorus 20 bars ens, ens middle break, bjo breaks)(A4 Chorus 20 bars ens, pno middle break, pno breaks)(A5 Chorus 20 bars ens, tbn middle break, cnt + tbn + alt breaks)

Sources:

- "Small's Sugar Cane Club: Pianist Charlie Smith had a band at the Sugar Cane in 1923. Cornetist June Clark took it over and featured Jimmy Harrison, trombone; Benny Carter, C-melody-sax; Jazz Carson, drums; Prince Robinson, sax; Will "Splivy" Escoffery, banjo; and a fellow named "Stone" on clarinet." (booklet to "The Sound of Harlem", Columbia C3L33)

- "June Clark and Jimmy Harrison used to have a band uptown at Connor's on 135th street, and all of us used to practically live in there. June was very good, but he couldn't read. They used to play some great jazz together. When Jimmy was in Fletcher's band later on, he was the best around." (Don Redman/Frank Driggs: Martin Williams, Jazz Panorama)

- "Most likely we met at Smalls' Sugar Cane on Fifth Avenue. That would be about right because I also met Jimmy Harrison and June Clark there. They were the only musicians in town playing "Western" style with the exception of Happy Caldwell, who had grown up under the influence of Joe Oliver and Louis Armstrong. Hap started teaching me the Western "get-off" style of playing, which had a heavy accented back beat on the second and fourth bars. When you soloed, it was called "taking a Boston". (Rex Stewart, 'Boy Meets Horn', p. 65)

- "Bamboo Inn: June Clark's Creole Stompers: Clark, cornet; Jimmy Harrison, trombone; Len Fields, alto sax; Harrison Jackson, tenor sax; Charlie Smith, piano; Buddy Christian, guitar; Bill Benford, bass; Joe "Jazz" Carson, drums, January 1926." (booklet to 'The Sound of Harlem', Columbia C3L33)

- "During the fall of 1925 the most exciting jazz band in Harlem, according to the many musicians who heard it, was June Clark's Creole Stompers at Ed Small's Sugar Cane Club (up until October 22nd when Small's Paradise opened on Seventh Avenue with Charlie Johnson's band). The main attraction was the brass duo of Clark and trombonist Jimmy Harrison, who modelled their choruses after the two-cornet style of King Oliver and Louis Armstrong." (booklet to 'The Sound of Harlem', Columbia C3L33)

- "I remember that in the early 'twenties, "Smalls'" was located on the south-west corner of 135th Street and 5th Avenue. Trumpeter June Clark was the band-leader and Leonard Fields (sax) and Jimmy Harris (sic) (trombone) were in the band, but I don't remember the other names. I do remember that Basie was across the street with a four-piece combo." Freddie Skerritt (Storyville 95, p.183)

- "Leonard Fields was on alto; I never heard anybody play like him, he was really fast and used to do double and triple tongue work on the saxophone." Bobby Booker's Life Story (Storyville 101, p.176)

- "We would go to cabarets and dances to hear the better players as Jimmy Harrison, trombone; Leonard Fields, alto sax." Leslie Carr Looks Back (Storyville 139, p. 28)

- "I used to go into Small's Sugar Cane Club quite often..... They had a piano player that they were just crazy about. His name was Smitty, and he was also known as Fat Smitty. He knew all the songs and all the keys and everything, and he played a lot of comp. No matter how much piano anybody else played, nobody could comp for June and Jimmy like Smitty could. So far as they were concerned, he was it. Smitty would just be there with that oompa, oompa, oompa right there behind those cats, laying it on heavy. Oompa, oompa, oompa. That's what made Smitty so great. That's why those guys liked to play with Smitty so much. Oompa, oompa, oompa. Beautiful. Just beautiful." (Count Basie/Albert Murray: 'Good Morning Blues')

011 THE GULF COAST SEVEN

New York, Nov. 05, 1925

June Clark – cnt; Jimmy Harrison – tbn;

Leonard Fields – alt; Harrison Jackson – clt, ten;

Charlie "Smitty" Smith – pno; (William 'Splivy' Escoffery?) or Buddy Christian – bjo; Joe "Jazz" Carson – dms

141245-4 Santa Claus Blues

Col 14107-D,

Frog DGF 32

141246-3 Keep Your Temper

Col 14107-D,

Frog DGF 32

Comparing these titles to the Blue Rhythm Orch. titles above, this is the same band, yet with a few changes.

June Clark, Jimmy Harrison, and Leonard Fields are present just as on the 'Blue Rhythm Orchestra' recordings before.

Rust and all other discographies list Prince Robinson. I hear alto sax and tenor sax/clarinet on these sides. The style of the tenor sax player is rather pedestrian and shows nothing of Prince Robinson's style on the Washingtonians of Sep. 07, 1925 (4 forceful bars in middle of alto chorus) or of his playing later on. So, this man here, whose clarinet playing is a little better than his tenor playing, may be the said Harrison Jackson. He later became a lawyer.

Pianist and former bandleader Charlie Smith is present as before.

Buddy Christian's banjo style seems to be logical on these two sides. This man's style is that more straight-forward and light approach of banjo playing on the Cl. Williams Blue 5 of Buddy Christian. But he may possibly still be the regular banjo player of the Charlie Smith band: William 'Splivy' Escoffery!

You hear the appropriate cymbal-crashes at the right places which could have been executed by any drummer. There is no reason to doubt "Jazz" Carson, though. There seems to be some confusion about this drummer's name. The first Rosenberg/Williams draft names him as: "Jazz" Carson Williams. This then is changed to "Jazz" Joe Carson in the second draft, possibly after rechecking the name with June Clark. (Louis Metcalf, RR46/4: "I remember Eddie Carson on drums (with Marge Creath in St. Louis! – KBR). He was Josephine Baker's father.")

I do not hear any tuba notes!

As I have constantly observed during my/our large research project on the recordings of Clarence Williams (N&N 58 – 61) it was common among composers/publishers to hire musicians from working bands for their own units playing and recording their recent compositions/publications. But very seldom did they hire more than two musicians of one distinct band. Often partnerships of trumpet / trombone players were engaged as cited above. Maybe it was not wanted to transpose the distinct sound of a working band on to the recording unit with another leader's name?! Not so Bradford. He engaged complete bands, even containing the band's leader as a playing member. So, Bradford hired one of the hottest bands in Harlem of the year 1925, residing at "Smalls' Sugar Cane Club" on 2212 Fifth Avenue, forerunner of "Smalls' Paradise". He had a photograph made of this band with himself leaning on the piano ('Pictorial History of Jazz' p. 129 and 'Born with the Blues' p. 147) which obviously was intended as a promotional photo for further use as a Bradford recording unit. So, it seems that Bradford had future plans with them. But only a handful of records resulted out of this combination, as I have shown in my comprehensive article on June Clark, which will be issued in the FROG Yearbook Vol. 4 later this year. Yet, a most interesting point should appropriately be added here: The band – June Clark's! – recorded two titles of their very own repertoire in their own arrangement here. In all other instances of the Gulf Coast Seven output the tunes and titles are Perry Bradford's!

Notes:

- Rust*2: June Clark ? (cnt); Jimmy Harrison (tbn); Buster Bailey (clt, alt); Prince Robinson (ten); Willie "The Lion" Smith (pno); unknown (dms)

- Rust*3,*4,*6: June Clark -c; Jimmy Harrison -tb; Buster Bailey -cl -ss -as; Prince Robinson -ts; ;Willie "The Lion" Smith -p; Buddy Christian -bj; ? Bill Benford -bb; "Jazz" Carson -d.

Recorded Tunes:

Santa Claus Blues Key of Eb Columbia

(Intro 4 bars ens)(B1 Verse 16 bars ens)(A1 Chorus 32 bars ABAC tbn + ens, tbn middle break)(A2 Chorus 32 bars alt + ens, alt middle break)(A3 Chorus 32 bars ens, cnt middle break)(C1 ½ Chorus 16 bars AC ens, clt breaks)

Keep Your Temper Key of F / Bb / Eb / Bb Columbia

(Intro 8 bars ens)(A1 Chorus 32 bars ABAC alt + ens)(Bridge 4 bars ens)(B1 Chorus 16 bars AA' (tbn 6 bars, reeds 2 bars, tbn 7 bars, ens 1 bar))(B2 Chorus 16 bars (ten 14 bars, ens 2 bars))(Bridge 4 bars ens)(C1 Chorus 32 bars AA' (clt + ens 28 bars, ens 4 bars))(Vamp 2 bars ens)(B3 Chorus 16 bars (ens 6 bars, clt 2 bars, ens 8 bars))(B4 Chorus 16 bars ens, cnt middle break)

012	LOUISE VANT	Perry Bradford's Mean Four	New York,	c. Jan. 04, 1926
	Louise Vant – voc;			
	June Clark – cnt; Jimmy Harrison – tbn ;			
	Charles "Smitty" Smith – pno; Will "Splivy" Escoffery – bjo			
73890-A	I'm Tired Of Everything But You	OK 8275,	Doc DOCD-5353	
73891-A	I Would Be Where I Am If You Hadn't Gone Away	OK 8275,	Doc DOCD-5353	
73892-B	Do Right Blues	OK 8293,	Doc DOCD-5353	

Once again, a Perry Bradford session, this time with cornet and trombone only, no alto sax, but piano and additional banjo.

June Clark and Jimmy Harrison are present just as on the 'Blue Rhythm Orchestra' recordings before.

Perry Bradford is the organizer of this session and might possibly be the pianist. But the discos are in doubt and therefore add a question-mark after Bradford's name.

After Rosenberg/Williams draft Perry Bradford claimed that it was this band that was photographed, but lacking any signs of Bradford's individual stylistics and the retained and essential 'comping' this must be Charles 'Smitty' Smith here.

I hear correspondence with the banjoist of the 'Blue Rhythm Band' player, therefore 'Splivy' Escoffery. Will 'Splivy' 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).

The singer is terrible! (KBR)

Notes:

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

BGR*2,*3,*4: unknown, cnt; unknown, tbn; pres Perry Bradford -pno; unknown, bjo

Tunes Structures:

I'm Tired Of Everything But You Key of Eb OKeh

(Intro 8 bars ens)(A1 Verse 16 bars voc + ens)(B1 Chorus 32 bars AA' voc + ens)(B2 Chorus 32 bars (ens 16 bars, voc + ens 16 bars))

I Would Be Where I Am If I Hadn't Gone Away Key of F OKeh

(Intro 4 bars ens)(A1 Verse 16 bars voc + ens)(B1 Chorus 20 bars AABA' voc + ens)(B2 Chorus 20 bars ens)(B3 Chorus 20 bars voc + ens)(Coda 2 bars voc + ens)

Do Right Blues Key of Bb OKeh

(Intro 4 bars ens)(A1 Chorus 12 bars voc + ens)(A2 Chorus 12 bars voc + ens)(A3 Chorus 12 bars voc + ens)(A4 Chorus 12 bars cnt)(A5 Chorus 12 bars tbn)(A6 Chorus 12 bars voc + ens)(Coda 2 bars ens)

013 **GEORGE McCLENNON'S JAZZ DEVILS**

New York,

May 07, 1925

(June Clark) – tpt; Jonas “Sweet Papa” Walker – tbn;
 George McClennon – clt; (Leonard Fields) – alt;
 Eddie Heywood, Sr. – pno; (Will ‘Splivy’ Escoffery) – bjo
 73359-A Home Alone Blues OK 8236, Jazz Oracle BDW 8022
 73360-B Anybody Here Want To Try My Cabbage? 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 Irvis 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 clarinet 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 of 1925, 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. He may thus well be Will ‘Splivy’ Escoffery from June Clark’s band, delivering a hard and driving beat.

There are no drums as given in Rust*6!

Notes:

- Record Research 66, p.5: probably Tom Morris (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); George McClennon (clt); unknown (alt); Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (?)(bjo); unknown (dms)

- Rust*2: Tom Morris (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); George McClennon (clt); unknown (alt); Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (?)(bjo); unknown (dms); George McClennon (vcl)

- Rust*3,*4,*6: unknown -c; unknown -tb; George McClennon -cl, v; unknown -as; ?Eddie Heywood -p; unknown -bj; unknown -d

014 GEORGE McCLENNON’S JAZZ DEVILS

New York,

c. Jun. 18, 1926

June Clark – cnt; Joe Williams – tbn;

George McClennon – clt; Leonard Fields or Joe Garland – alt, bar;

unknown – pno; (Will ‘Splivy’ Escoffery) – bjo; (Bill Benford) – bbs

74177-A Stolen Kisses OK 8329, Jazz Oracle BDW 8022

74178-A While You’re Sneakin’ Out Somebody Else Is Eazin’ In OK 8329, Jazz Oracle BDW 8022

Again, this seems to be June Clark, maybe now 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, the 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 “Splivy” 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.

Notes:

- Record Research 66, p.5: probably Tom Morris (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); George McClennon (clt); unknown (alt); Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (?)(bjo); unknown (dms)

- Rust*2: Tom Morris (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); George McClennon (clt); unknown (alt); Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (?)(bjo); unknown (dms); George McClennon (vcl)

- Rust*3,*4,*6: unknown -c; unknown -tb; George McClennon -cl, v; unknown -as; ?Eddie Heywood -p; unknown -bj; unknown -d

SOURCES:

- Storyville 80-46, Birth of a Band: 1917 Washington D.C. / Brass: Arthur Whetsel, t; Reeds: -- ; Rhythm: Edward Kennedy 'Duke' Ellington, p; William Escoffery, g; Otto Hardwicke, sb; Lloyd Stewart, d.
- B. Ulanov, Duke Ellington, p. 13: "Duke had it, of course; so had Otto Hardwick, the Miller brothers, Bill Escoffery, Claude Hopkins, Arthur Whetsol, Elmer Snowden, Rex Stewart, all the musicians who were born or bred in the capital; they had it, they have it. There was a Washington pattern: it involved a certain bearing, a respect for education, for the broad principles of the art of music; a desire for order, for design in their professional lives."
- Ibid, p.17: "Room 10 it was where Duke's Washingtonians took shape in '17, '18, '19. Otto Hardwick was playing bass fiddle then; William Escoffery was on guitar; the Millers, Bill, Brother, and Felix, who were "sophisticates – then drank corn and gin, but heavily," filled out the band, with Lloyd Stewart on drums."
- Ibid, p.18: "Hardwick and Whetsol, the Millers and Snowden and Escoffery, Jerry Rhea, who sometimes sang with the band, wondered why they got such choice jobs, picking up some of the Embassy work, playing almost exclusively for white folks."
- J. L. Collier, Duke Ellington, p. 25: "At the center of the group were the three Miller brothers, whose father taught music at Armstrong Tech and had got from him some training: Bill, who played saxophone and guitar; Felix, saxophone and drums; and Brother, or "Devil," who also played drums. In the group, too, were William Escoffery, guitar; Lloyd Stewart, drums; Sterling Conaway, banjo; Ted Nickerson, trombone; and a few others."
- S. Dance, The World of Duke Ellington, p. 55: "... and in 1917 the seed of the Washingtonians came to life there in Room 10. Its vitality derived from a loose-knit group of lively talents that included, besides Ellington, Arthur Whetsol (trumpet), Elmer Snowden (banjo), William Escoffery (guitar), and the Miller brothers. Bill and Felix Miller came from one of those musical families in which everybody played one or two instruments."

K.- B. Rau
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