

BUSHELL, GARVIN

STYLE (pre Sam Wooding)

Bushell seems to be playing without any knowledgeable style. A strong leaning to Larry Shields' stylistics can be heard with whining and screaming parts unlike any clarinet playing of the southern manner. He does not play melodious and functional phrases and lines as usual in New Orleans music, but plays "nonsense" phrases without interdependence with the other players. There is no interchange between him and the others.

TONE

Bushell's tone seems to be rather thin when compared to Elliott's for instance. On the other hand he does have a firm in every range.

VIBRATO

His vibrato is rather wide, thus sounding whining and corny.

PHRASING

As Bushell has adequate technique, he can play eighth or sixteenth notes and faster phrases with ease. But, because of his antiquated "nonsense" and hokum style no swinging phrasing can be found in his early years. This then changed when with the Sam Wooding band and led to a beautiful stylistic delivery in the late 1920s.

ELLIOTT, ERNEST

STYLE

Ernest Elliott seems to be a relic out of archaic jazz times. But he did not spend these years in New Orleans or touring the South, but he became known playing in Detroit, changing over to New York in the very early 1920s. Thus his stylistical background is completely different from all those New Orleans players, and has to be estimated in a different way. Bushell in his book "Jazz from the Beginning" says about him: "Those guys had a style of clarinet playing that's been forgotten. Ernest Elliott had it, Jimmy O'Bryant had it, and Johnny Dodds had it."

TONE

Elliott owns a strong, rather sharp, tone on the clarinet. There are instances where I feel tempted to hear Bechet-like qualities in his playing, probably mainly because of his tone. This quality might have caused Clarence Williams to use Elliott when Bechet was not available? He does not hit his notes head-on, but he approaches them with a fast upward slur, and even finishes them mostly with a little downward slur, making his notes to sound sour.

On saxophone his tone is thin and tinny, not reedy at any rate, but can also have a silken quality as on the Bessie Smith session of Sep. 28, 1927.

VIBRATO

His vibrato is wide and irregular and has a tendency to whine.

TIME

His playing occurs nearly always on the beat. There is no off-beat playing, everything very regular and possibly Ragtime derived. He does not swing.

PHRASING

Elliott uses mainly quarter and eighth notes, even in slow tempos. Very seldom can you hear sixteenth notes (as in Virginia Liston's *Night Latch Key Blues* of Oct. 25, 1924). Obviously because of his archaic background he plays like a trumpet player would have done. On Laura Smith's *Texas Moaner Blues* of Aug. 01, 1924 he accordingly plays mostly simultaneous with Thomas Morris, which gives the band a two-cornets with trombone sound. His melodies/phrases are very much influenced by Klezmer playing, as often with clarinetists of the 1920s. Also, his melodies are confined to chord-notes with the occasional scale-derived note, but absolutely no chromatic run or phrase. He also uses occasional jump-trills. And sometimes he uses a for the early years fashionable laughing-clarinet effect.

FULLER, BOB

STYLE

Fuller's style is a mixture of straight ahead jazz playing and the use of Klezmer musical devices. Yet he does not mix them permanently, but in well ordered separated choruses or parts, each played in Jazz style or a Klezmer derived "freakish" style. He obviously lacks advanced harmonic knowledge and sensibility which leads him to play unfitting or even wrong notes in many cases. His changes of register are frequent, and here he prefers to stay in a chosen register for a separated and defined order. Although Fuller belongs to a group of early eastern clarinet players, he does not stick to a "trumpet style" of playing – as in the case of Ernest Elliott – but plays a clarinet in the manner of southern clarinetists when playing with a lead trumpet player. When playing in a trio, he inevitably has to take over the lead parts.

TONE

Fuller's tone is "reedy" and well rounded.

VIBRATO

Fuller displays a strong vibrato of rather wide and regular frequency.

TIME

His playing is rhythmically simple and mostly on the beat. His time is rather erratic thus preventing him from swinging.

PHRASING

He plays simple – sometimes rather dull – melodic phrases, using many slurs and often “laughing clarinet” devices as well as seldom slap-tongue and growl techniques. When improvising he tends to play frequent simple chordal arpeggios.