

# THE RECORDINGS OF BILLY BANKS AND HIS ORCHESTRA

## An Annotated Tentative Personnelo-Discography

BANKS, Billy, vocals/leader

Born: Alton, Illinois, c. 1908; Died: Tokyo, Japan, 19th October 1967

Signed with impresario Irving Mills whilst singing in Cleveland, Ohio. Recorded with all-star groups: opened at Connie's Inn, New York, on 29th June 1932, accompanied by own orchestra, returned to Cleveland during following year and helped run family shoe shop until joining Noble Sissle c- 1934, remained as vocalist-entertainer with Sissle's Band until moving into Billy Rose's Diamond Horseshoe for an unbroken residency of 7.151 performances, from December 1938 until June 1948. Appeared at Diamond Horseshoe in 1949 and 1950. To Europe in March 1952, spent several years in Holland, England, France, etc. (working mainly as a variety artist), then did extensive touring in Asia and Australia before settling in Japan.

(J. Chilton, Who's Who of Jazz)

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: **Billy Banks**
- Probable, generally agreed, but not documented identifications are listed in italics, thus: *Billy Banks*
- 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: (*Billy Banks*)

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.

The following statements and the resulting list of recordings only reflect the opinion of this writer/listener and are open to discussion. More so, discussion is eagerly invited. Corrections, amendments and controversial opinions are much appreciated.

**Singer and entertainer Billy Banks was in parts only involved in the jazz life of Harlem. And he left behind only five recording dates under his name, two of them in true black Harlem style, and three – together with Eddie Condon and friends – in some sort of early “Condon Dixieland”, yet with the exceedingly distinctive art of trumpet playing of New Orleanian Henry ‘Red’ Allen. Billy Banks made further recordings with the Mills Blue Rhythm Band and Noble Sissle and his Orchestra (see under these titles elsewhere at this web-site). He sings in a distinctive Cab Calloway manner.**

### BILLY BANKS AND HIS ORCHESTRA

#### 001 **BILLY BANKS AND HIS ORCHESTRA**

New York,

Apr. 18, 1932

Billy Banks – voc (5,6), ldr;

Henry ‘Red’ Allen – tpt; Pee Wee Russell – clt, ten;

Joe Sullivan – pno; Eddie Condon – bjo; Jack Bland – gtr; Al Morgan – sbs; Gene Krupa – dms;

Henry ‘Red’ Allen – voc (3,4)

11716-1

Bugle Call Rag

Ban 32459,

Classics 969

11716-?	Bugle Call Rag	Ban 32459,	Collectors Classics COCD 1
11717-1	Oh Peter (You're So Nice)	Col 35841,	Classics 969
11717-2	Oh Peter (You're So Nice)	Col 35841,	Collectors Classics COCD 1
11718-1	Margie	Ban 32462,	Classics 969
11719	Spider Crawl	ARC unissued	not on LP/CD

*Composer credits: 11716 (Pettis – Meyers – Schoebel); 11717 (Wiedoft – Rose – Stafford); 11718 (Davis – Conrad – Robinson)*

Among all the recordings listed in my entire web-site 'The Harlem Fuss', four of six recording sessions under Billy Banks' name are rather strange in respect of the kind of music played. This is not the jazz music we relate to the term 'Harlem Jazz'. It is a sort of free ensemble improvising, emerging from the music of coloured musicians of New Orleans origin in Chicago and carried on by white enthusiastic young musicians blending it with early swing elements. This certainly was one of the earliest jazz recording groups of mixed colour, their species being started by 'Eddie's (Condon's!) Hot Shots' of February 8, 1929, and continued by 'Eddie Condon and his Orchestra' of October 21, 1933, and many other groups of this kind. This said, it would be most interesting to get to know the initiators of this novel enterprise, Banks or Condon?, or who else?

The first two titles of the mentioned sessions do not have a singer/bandleader, and it is assumed that Mr. Banks was a bit late at the session. So, trumpet player 'Red' Allen took singing duties on the second title, the first title being an instrumental. (By the way: does anybody know any lyrics for 'Bugle Call Rag'?)

Clarinetist Pee Wee Russell hailed from Missouri and had come to New York in 1927, where he played with a lot of bands of the white jazz scene, and very often with Eddie Condon, until his death in 1969. Pianist Joe Sullivan and drummer Gene Krupa belonged to the famous Chicagoans, Krupa later being Benny Goodman's famed drummer for some years.

But the star musician here certainly is Henry 'Red' Allen, whose many recordings are found at this web-site under his own name and that of Fletcher Henderson, the Mills Blue Rhythm Band, and a couple of other Harlem bands. And let's not forget that great string bass player from New Orleans, Al Morgan, from this time on for some years with Cab Calloway's Orchestra.

#### Notes:

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

- *Rust\*2,\*3: Henry Allen (tpt, vcl); Pee Wee Russell (clt, ten); Joe Sullivan (pno); Eddie Condon (bjo); Jack Bland (gtr); Al Morgan (sbs); Zutty Singleton (dms); Billy Banks (vcl)*

- *Rust\*4,\*6: Henry Allen (tpt, vcl); Pee Wee Russell (clt, ten); Joe Sullivan (pno); Eddie Condon (bjo); Jack Bland (gtr); Al Morgan (sbs); Gene Krupa (dms); Billy Banks (vcl)*

#### Notable differences of takes:

11716-1: *Four-bar clarinet break in the fourth chorus has a sequence of cleanly played mainly eighth-notes*

11716-2: *Four-bar clarinet break in the fourth chorus has a sequence of dirty played growl mainly quarter-notes*

11717-1: *End of first and start of second vocal chorus: Banks names "Peter" five times*

11717-2: *End of first and start of second vocal chorus: Banks names "Peter" three times*

#### 002 BILLY BANKS AND HIS ORCHESTRA

New York,

May 10, 1932

Billy Banks – voc, ldr;

Ed Anderson – tpt;

Crawford Wethington – alt; Gene Mikell – alt, clt; Elmer Williams – ten;

Edgar Hayes – pno; Benny James – gtr; Hayes Alvis – sbs; Chick Webb or O'Neil Spencer? – dms

72560-1	The Scat Song	Vic 24027,	Classics 969
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72561-1	Mighty Sweet	Vic 23399,	Classics 969
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72562-1	Minnie The Moocher's Weddin' Day	Vic 24027,	Classics 969
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72562-2	Minnie The Moocher's Weddin' Day	Vic unissued, but test exists	not on LP/CD
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Given, that Crawford Wethington's confirmation in Storyville 109 is correct – which seems to be without doubt for the first session, at least – a probable small-band personnel for this session would be: *Ed Anderson* – tpt; *Crawford Wethington*, *Charlie Holmes* – alt, clt; *Joe Garland* – ten, clt; *Edgar Hayes* – pno, arr; *Benny James* – bjo, gtr; *Hayes Alvis* – sbs; *O'Neil Spencer* – dms, according to the contemporaneous personnel of the MBRB. So, let's see what we can hear and recognize:

- The trumpet player plays a distinct southern trumpet style in Louis Armstrong's footsteps, and could very well be and should therefore be identified as Ed Anderson, during this period the hot trumpet soloist with the MBRB.

- Unfortunately, we do not have any solo performance by either of the two alto saxophonists on this session which could give us a hint as to his person. According to the known personnel of the MBRB of the day we have to assume the alto players to be Wethington and Charlie Holmes.

- On 'Mighty Sweet' we find a strong and urgent 16-bars solo of "dirty" clarinet which is not the work of one of the assumed reed players. Although Garland was responsible for most of the MBRB's clarinet work, this dirty tone soloing was not his – and neither that of the alto saxophonists listed. Yet, we read that Gene Mikell – Holmes' successor with the MBRB – remarks in his interview in Storyville 1998/99: "*See, in all those cassettes of the Blue Rhythm Band you sent me, I'm playing baritone and alto, but most of the clarinet work was done by Joe Garland.*" As we know that Mikell did not join the MBRB before August 1932, his presence on this session would seem to be unlikely. Charlie Holmes was the band's alto soloist until c. August 1932, and certainly, he played clarinet as well – it was generally required from a qualified reed player in a big band. He is identified by himself in soloing on clarinet on the MBRB session of 28 April 1932 in 'Cabin In The Cotton'. But this solo does not contain any 'dirty' playing. Quite in the contrary, Holmes plays with warmth and beauty, and even more so, he is not known for dirty notes on his alto saxophone either. But from Mikell's own statement in Storyville 1998/99, p.105 we know that he was one of the few clarinetists at the time playing "growl" clarinet, the other players being Edmond Hall with the Claude Hopkins Band, and William Thornton Blue who had disappeared from the musical scene by early 1931. Another clarinetist playing "growl" solos would be Rudy Powell, but he – by his own firm statement – did not learn to play the clarinet earlier than 1932. To strengthen this statement, I'd like to cite Gene Mikell via the late Johnny Simmen of Switzerland: "*Before I joined the MBRB, all clarinet solos were played by Joe Garland. When I came in the band, Joe and I got the clarinet solos about 50/50. After Buster Bailey came in the band, it was 80% for Buster and 10/10 for Joe and me*" (Coda Nov. 1975, p. 25). So, we cannot but assume that this is Mikell here, having had earlier relations to the MBRB/Irving Mills circle and having been asked by Billy Banks to participate in this recording session. Compare Mikell's growl solos in the MBRB's 'Let's Have A Jubilee' of October 04, 1934!

- Wethington also played clarinet, but he is not known as a hot soloist – neither on alto sax nor on clarinet – and can thus be excluded from the clarinet solo work. Instead, he is responsible for the beautiful silken lead-parts of the reed section.

- ADDITION August 2025: In a recent letter to the author, Norwegian jazz collector and aficionado – and legitimate musician! – Ola Rønnow stated that my identification of the tenor sax player on these sides must be doubted, and that he should be named Elmer Williams, instead. After a short (!) and intensive listening I must admit that Ola is distinctly right in his assumption, and I gladly – and a bit ashamed –

follow him in this respect. I also must admit that I received a letter from Phil Mellick, of Charleston, WV, about a year ago, that I carelessly missed to check out. In this letter, Phil stated: “*The Billy Banks session of May 10, 1932, plainly includes Elmer Williams, the cheap little guitar sounds like the one used by Trueheart, and the strict tempo may be noticeable, something that Garvin Bushell noted about Webb. Dan Morgenstern (RIP) endorsed my suggestion that this was the Webb band at the Canadian Collectors Congress (RIP as well) years ago. (And I believe it’s the Mills Blue Rhythm Band on the other Banks Victor session.)*” There is reason to think it all over, I believe.

- The pianist definitely can be identified as Edgar Hayes on this session, recognizable by his very strong and mighty modified stride-piano style. And – of course – he was the musical leader of the MBRB.

- According to these recognitions we can be quite certain of the presence of Benny James on his light and swinging four-string guitar, the powerful and unjustly under-recognised bass playing of Hayes Alvis (Duke Ellington with his distinct liking for capable bass players certainly knew why he hired Alvis in early 1935) and the young O’Neil Spencer on drums. In contrast to his contemporaneous recordings with the full MBRB he does not use his hi-hat rhythm nor press-rolls played with sticks, but he restricts himself to brushes. This might cause some irritation as to the person’s identity, but the few audible cymbal sounds heard – hi-hat and crash-cymbals – are compatible with those heard on the MBRB sides, and would thus ascertain Spencer’s presence.

- ADDITION August 2025: Re Phil Mellick’s letter as cited above, I must agree that the drummer heard on these Banks sides and his restriction to brushes – and without any use of cymbals and bass-drum – might well be a reason to assume Chick Webb (compare with the Mezz Mezzrow sides of May 7, 1934!) Spencer mainly uses sticks on cymbals on contemporaneous MBRB recordings.

- Thus, we might in fact have a band with mixed personnel from the MBRB and Chick Webb’s Orchestra, here. Any other – and better – suggestions, somebody?

#### Notes:

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

- Rust\*2,\*3,\*4,\*6: unknown tpt; unknown, unknown alt; unknown alt; unknown ten; unknown pno; unknown gtr; unknown sbs; unknown dms; Billy Banks vcl

- B. Rust, *The Victor Master Book Vol. 2: t / 3s / p / g / b / d*; vocalist: Billie Banks.

- RCA Jazz Tribune No 58: Shelton Hemphill (tp); Charlie Holmes (cl, as); Crawford Wethington (as); Joe Garland (ts, bar sax); Edgar Hayes (p); Benny James (g); Hayes Alvis (b); O’Neil Spencer (dm); Baron Lee (ldr)

- Tom Lord, *Discography*: unknown tp, 2 as, ts, p, g, b, d

- Storyville 1998/99, L. Wright, *Did You Know*: “Two entries in the same column in the *Defender* (16/7/32 6/2) pose a small problem: The first notes Baron Lee and his Blue Rhythm band back at the Cotton Club in New York and the second reports Billy Banks leading his own orchestra at Connie’s Inn. It goes on to say that his first phonograph record for the Victor company has just been released. It is ‘Cabin In The Cotton’ and ‘The Scat Song’ on the Reverse. This coupling is not known to me and it has been assumed that the Blue Rhythm band accompanied Banks on recordings from this time. This is most likely a piece of misreporting and refers to Victor 24027, but who was in Banks’s orchestra at Connie’s Inn?”

- Storyville 1998/99, *Afterthoughts No 742*: “Billy Banks, late of Baron Lee’s orchestra, is now heading his own band at Club Madrid, Cleveland.” (PC 15/10/32 7/4) Is this a clue to the accompanying band on Victor of 18 August 1932?”

#### Tunes:

72560 *The Scat Song* Key of Eb Victor  
(Intro 4 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars BB voc + ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA BB voc + ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA BB scat-voc + ens 16 – EA m-tpt 16)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA EW ten 4 – ens 4 – EW ten 4 – ens 4 – EH pno 8 – EW ten 4 – ens 4)(Chorus 4 32 bars AABA BB voc – ens)(tag 2 ens)

72561 *Mighty Sweet* Key of F Victor  
(Intro 4 bars ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA BB voc + ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA GM clt 16 – EA o-tpt 8 – EW ten 8)(Vamp 4 bars BJ gtr)(Verse 16 bars AB BB voc + ens)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA BB voc + ens)(Coda 4 bars BB voc + ens)

72562 *Minnie The Moocher’s Weddin’ Day* Key of Ab Victor  
(Intro 4 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars BB voc + ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA BB voc + ens 16 – BB voc + choir 8 – BB voc + ens 8)  
(Interlude A 18 bars ens 1 – EW ten 1 – EA o-tpt 2 – ens 2 – EA o-tpt 2 – ens 10)(Interlude B 20 bars BB voc + ens)(1/2 Chorus 2 16 bars BA BB voc + choir 8 – BB voc + ens 8)(Tag 4 bars BB voc + ens)

### 003 BILLY BANKS AND HIS ORCHESTRA

New York, May 23, 1932

Billy Banks – voc, ldr;

Henry ‘Red’ Allen – tpt; Pee Wee Russell – clt, ten;

Joe Sullivan – pno; Eddie Condon – bjo; Al Morgan – sbs; ‘Zutty’ Singleton – dms

11717-3 Oh Peter (You’re So Nice)

Ban 32462, Classics 969

11717-4 Oh Peter (You’re So Nice)

JAR 2 (LP), Collectors Classics COCD 1

11719-4 Spider Crawl

Ban 32459, Classics 969

Composer credits: 11717 (Wiedoft – Rose – Stafford); 11719 (Bland – Condon)

For this session, the same applies as for session 001. Only, that New Orleans ace drummer Zutty Singleton replaces Gene Krupa, and he seems to correspond to Al Morgan’s swing much better than Gene Krupa. (It is my long-held opinion that Krupa lacks relaxed swing and often tends to play behind the rhythm-section’s other players.) ‘Red’ Allen is the zenith of off-beat playing. Nobody like him can play his melodic phrases so much altered by using queer and seemingly un-rhythmic rhythms. Fantastic. Russell is nice, but conventional, and does not yet show his so individual quirkiness of later.

Joe Sullivan never was one of my favourite pianists, but he plays very nice in ‘Spider Crawl’. The rest of the rhythm section are a “gas”.

#### Notes:

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

- Rust\*2,\*3,\*4,\*6: Henry Allen (tpt, vcl); Pee Wee Russell (clt, ten); Joe Sullivan (pno); Eddie Condon (gtr); Jack Bland (gtr); Al Morgan (sbs); Zutty Singleton (dms); Billy Banks (vcl)

#### Notable differences of takes:

11717-3: Start of second vocal chorus: Banks sings “Peter, you’re so nice” 2 quarter-notes f-f, 1 quarter-note each d-Bb-G

11717-4: Start of second vocal chorus: Banks sings “Peter, you’re so nice” 4 quarter-notes f-f-f-f, 1 half-note g

### 004 BILLY BANKS AND HIS ORCHESTRA

New York, Jul. 07, 1932

Billy Banks – voc, ldr;

Henry ‘Red’ Allen – tpt; Pee Wee Russell – clt, ten;

Joe Sullivan – pno; Eddie Condon – bjo; Al Morgan – sbs; ‘Zutty’ Singleton – dms

11881-1	Who's Sorry Now?	Per 15642,	Classics 969
11882-1	Take It Slow And Easy	Per unissued,	Classics 969
11883-1	Bald-Headed Mama	Per 15642,	Classics 969

Composer credits: 11881 (Kalman – Ruby - Snyder); 11882 (Bland – Condon); 11883 (Bland - Condon)

All Rusts list these three titles as recorded at session 003 above. The Classics 969 (formerly Chronological (sic) Classics!) CD booklet instead gives a recording date of July 07, 1932, which would much more sense, as the matrix numbers do not belong to the May 23 session!

Al Morgan from the New Orleanian musicians' family generates an un-believable drive and swing which half of the entire band rhythm. The wind instrument players almost remain in the background. There is nice Joe Sullivan again in the second and third titles, together with great drumming by 'Zutty' Singleton. And listen to the call-and-response chorus of Allen and Russell in the last title! And now I start liking Joe Sullivan's piano!

Notes:

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

- Rust\*2,\*3,\*4,\*6: Henry Allen (tp, vcl); Pee Wee Russell (clt, ten); Joe Sullivan (pno); Eddie Condon (gtr); Jack Bland (gtr); Al Morgan (sbs); Zutty Singleton (dms); Billy Banks (vcl)

## 005 THE RHYTHMAKERS

New York,

Jul. 26, 1932

Billy Banks – voc, ldr;

Henry 'Red' Allen – tpt; Jimmy Lord – clt; Pee Wee Russell – ten;

Thomas 'Fats' Waller – pno, voc; Eddie Condon – bjo; Jack Bland – gtr; Al Morgan – sbs; 'Zutty' Singleton - dms

12119-1	I Would Do Anything For You	Mt M-12457,	Classics 969
12119-2	I Would Do Anything For You	Or 3234,	Collectors Classics COCD 1
12120-1	Mean Old Bed Bug Blues	Ban 32502,	Classics 969
12120-2	Mean Old Bed Bug Blues	Col 35882,	Collectors Classics COCD 1
12121-2	Yellow Dog Blues	Col 35882,	Collectors Classics COCD 1
12121-3	Yellow Dog Blues	Ban 32502,	Classics 969
12122-1	Yes Suh!	JA 2 (LP),	Collectors Classics COCD 1
12122-2	Yes Suh!	Ban 32530,	Classics 969

Composer credits: 12119 (Hill – Williams - Hopkins); 12120 (Wood); 12121 (Handy); 12122 (Razaf - Dowell)

This recording band is named 'The Rhythmakers' and not 'Billy Banks and his Orchestra', but as their personnel is identical with the 'Billy Banks and his Orchestra' session of May 23, 1932 (above), it is included here in this list of Billy Banks recording sessions. Here we have – together with our players of the above sessions - little-known Chicagoan clarinetist Jimmy Lord and "Little Fatsy-Watsy" Waller, the king of Stride piano. And the music is absolutely wonderful!

Notes:

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

- Rust\*2,\*3,\*4,\*6: Henry Allen (tp); Jimmy Lord (clt); Pee Wee Russell (ten); Fats Waller (pno, vcl); Eddie Condon (bjo); Jack Bland (gtr); Pops Foster (sbs); Zutty Singleton (dms); Billy Banks (vcl)

Notable differences of takes:

- 121119-1: Start of Banks' second vocal chorus: he sings "I would swim the ocean wide" with a sequence of 6 quarter-notes eb-eb-eb-eb-bb-eb, 1 half-note eb
- 121119-2: Start of Banks' second vocal chorus: he sings "I would swim the ocean wide" with a sequence of 6 quarter-notes bb-eb-eb-eb-eb-eb, 1 half-note eb
- 121120-1: Russell starts his tenor solo with a sequence of eighth-notes ab-a-f-d, 1 quarter-note c
- 121120-2: Russell starts his tenor solo with a single somewhat growled half-note f
- 121121-2: Fats Waller's piano intro has two bars each of F major – G dim – C# dim – C7 (this last with horns)
- 121121-3: Fats Waller's piano intro has one bar each of F major – F# dim and two bars of C 7, one bar each of F major – F# dim and two bars of C 7 (these last with horns)
- 121122-1: Start of Banks' first vocal chorus: he sings "Does my Baby call me honey" with a sequence of 7 quarter-notes f-f-f-f-ab-f-c, 1 half-note c
- 121122-2: Start of Banks' first vocal chorus: he sings "Does my Baby call me honey" with a sequence of 2 quarter-notes f-f, 1 eighth-note f, 1 quarter-note f, 2 quarter-notes f-f, 1 eighth-note f, 1 quarter-note -a

## 006 BILLY BANKS AND HIS ORCHESTRA

New York,

Aug. 18, 1932

Billy Banks – voc, ldr;

Wardell 'Preacher' Jones – tpt; Harry 'Father' White – tbn;

Crawford Wethington – alt; Gene Mikell – alt, clt; Joe Garland – ten, clt;

Edgar Hayes – pno; Benny James – gtr; Hayes Alvis – sbs

73306-1	Oh! You Sweet Thing	Vic 24148,	Classics 969
73307-1	It Don't Mean A Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)	Vic 24148,	Classics 969
73309-1	You Wonderful Thing	Vic 23399,	Classics 969

Composer credits: 73306 (Banks – Hayes); 73307 (Ellington); 73309 (Parish - Perkins)

The only discography at hand listing part of a personnel for this session is Tom Lord, 'The Jazz Discography'. It is assumed that Lord got his information on participating musicians from the Bruyninckx discography. And we assume that the Bruyninckx informant got his inspiration from Storyville 107, where there is a nice photo of the Luis Russell band of 1932, showing Bill Coleman as one of the trumpeters, together with drummer 'Cripple' Joe Smith. This photograph was shot in Philadelphia, but nothing is known of Banks' presence there at this time. Instead, we know that Banks appeared at the Lafayette Theatre „leading Luis Russell's great band" (New York Age, Sat. July 16, 1932). Also at this time Banks is reported to „making a hit with his own orchestra at „Connie's Inn in Harlem" (Pittsburgh Courier, Sat. July 16, 1932). Storyville 1998/99 p.217 has a note that „Billy Banks, late of Baron Lee's orchestra, is now heading his own band at Club Madrid, Cleveland" (Pittsburgh Courier Oct. 10, 1932). His last recording session with the MBRB had been of August 17, 1932, and it might therefore justifiably be assumed that he still used MBRB men for his own recording session.

A reasonable small-band personnel for this session would be: the MBRB rhythm section as before, Gene Mikell on alto sax having replaced Charlie Holmes since the prior session, and two of the MBRB brass players, but not Ed Anderson, for stylistic reasons.

- Even more so, the trumpet man here has none of Bill Coleman's (as in Tom Lord disco!) sharp and crystal-clear intonation, nor does he

have his high reaching phraseology and his downward ending notes. This man, instead, prefers to perform in a growl style using a cup-mute. In the Mills Blue Rhythm Band Disco- and Solography in Storyville 108 / 109 the authors attribute all growl solos to trumpeter Wardell 'Preacher' Jones, second-chair trumpet player in the MBRB. We do not know the source of this identification, but we assume that the authors had information in this respect. And certainly, a second trumpet player of the MBRB had a high degree of solo ability, even if he did not have to show it excessively. Only, that we do not know the very characteristics of his personal style. Our man here plays in an "Eastern" style, with fast fingering and more fluent phrases, this in contrast to Ed Anderson on the above session.

- The trombonist with his shallow growl tone could well have been George Washington, as can be heard on his earlier recordings. He was just about to join the ranks of the MBRB. But after intensive listening to the MBRB recordings of this year we now firmly think to have identified Harry 'Father' White, who at that time still was a member of the MBRB. We do not agree with Jan Evensmo's identification of Henry Hicks for these sides in his excellent 'Jazz Solography'. Hicks certainly could be seen as a possibility, but he had a rougher and more exuberant yet conservative style – and more staccato - not that elegant and swing-oriented one heard here. Unfortunately, we only have little and uncertain knowledge of White's trombone style, and 'Storyville's' great discography/ solography of 'Mills Blue Rhythm Band' has a weakness in not consequently trying to distinguish White from Hicks. Storyville 140, p.80, says: "*Léon Demeuldre writes that although Messrs. Dutton and Townley in their solography gave the trombone solo on MBRB 'Doin' The Shake' as by Henry Hicks, Hugues Panassié said in a pre-war 'Jazz Hot' that it was by Harry White who also wrote the arrangement.*" This then would give us one of the few firmly known solo efforts recorded of Harry 'Father' White – and crucial for our evaluation.

- Then there are some most interesting clarinet solos, not dirty as on the session before, but strong, melodious and expertly played, yet a bit academical, and they are congruent with the little solo outing of the alto saxophonist in the last chorus of 'Oh! You Sweet Thing'. Style-wise, they obviously are played by a saxophone player, and should thus be the work of Gene Mikell as well – not "growling" here - whose work on the 'Fowler's Favorites' of some years before had been incorrectly identified as that of Charlie Holmes in the discographies (see KBR's article in N&N 74!). We would not attribute this clarinet work to Joe Garland.

- In contrast to Mikell's style we hear the alto playing at the start of the first title, which might then be played by the otherwise nondescript Crawford Wethington, he sounding a bit like Charlie Holmes, which might be due to the two men's working side-by-side in the MBRB for some time before.

- On tenor sax we hear Joe Garland, a bit rough, but strong and energetic. The third title features a clarinet duo all along which probably is composed of Gene Mikell and Joe Garland, and arranged by 'Father' White, who showed a favour for the combination of trombone with clarinets in other titles of the MBRB.

- On piano we still have the most energetic stride style of the Mills Blue Rhythm Band's piano man Edgar Hayes. Listen to him taking over for the last chorus of 'Oh! You Sweet Thing', where he modulates to the final key and swings along like crazy.

- The sound of the guitar is that high-metallic sound of Benny James's four-stringed instrument heard on other MBRB recordings of this time. I cannot hear anything that would make me assume that this player is Will Johnson of the Luis Russell band, as listed in the Tom Lord disco.

- The bassist certainly is not Pops Foster as in Lord's disco. Foster kept his sharp wooden slap-bass sound for all his life, and it is also heard on Luis Russell's recording session of August 1934 and all the subsequent recordings under Louis Armstrong's name. The player heard here also plucks his strings with two fingers, but he performs slap-bass technique only moderately, emphasizing a big tone and putting a minor stress on the wooden slap. He plays totally in accordance with Hayes Alvis of the MBRB, and should thus be identified as such.

- Although Rust's Victor Master Book, Vol. 2 lists a drummer, there is nothing that would indicate any at this session, no bass drum, no cymbal crashes, no brushes, and no high-hat. And 'It Don't Mean A Thing' has a strong final G from the piano, not a final cymbal-crash!

- And, please, pay attention to the last chorus of 'You Wonderful Thing', which is beautifully arranged for two clarinets – Mikell and Garland probably - and 'Father' White's muted trombone. The arranger very probably is Harry White himself – „with his glasses on“! The first and the third titles obviously are transcribed to CD too fast, so that they sound like played in E natural, which would be most unusual for a jazz ensemble. They most probably were played – and arranged – in Eb major.

#### Notes:

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

- Rust\*2,\*3,\*4,\*6: unknown tpt; unknown tbn, unknown clt, alt; unknown alt; unknown ten; unknown pno; unknown gtr; unknown sbs; unknown dms; Billy Banks vcl

- B. Rust, *The Victor Master Book Vol. 2*: t / tb / 3s / p / g / b / d; vocalist: Billie Banks.

- RCA Jazz Tribune No 58: Shelton Hemphill (tp); Charlie Holmes (cl, as); Henry Hicks (tb); Crawford Wethington (as); Joe Garland (ts, bar sax); Edgar Hayes (p); Benny James (g); Hayes Alvis (b); O'Neil Spencer (dm); Baron Lee (ldr)

- Tom Lord, *Discography*: Billy Banks (vcl); Bill Coleman (tp); unknown (tb); unknown (cl, as); unknown (as); unknown (ts); Edgar Hayes (p); Bill Johnson (bj, g); Pops Foster (b); Joseph Smith (d)

- Storyville 1998/99, *Afterthoughts No 742*: "Billy Banks, late of Baron Lee's orchestra, is now heading his own band at Club Madrid, Cleveland." (PC 15/10/32 7/4) Is this a clue to the accompanying band on Victor of 18 August 1932?"

#### Tunes:

**73306 Oh! You Sweet Thing Key of Eb / F Victor**  
(Intro 4 bars ens 2 – CW alt 2)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA BB voc + CW alt obbl 30 – WPJ m-tpt end-b 2)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA WPJ m-tpt 16 – EH pno 8 – WPJ m-tpt 8)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA BB scat-voc 16 – BB voc 14 – HFW m-tbn bk 2)(Chorus 4 32 bars AABA HFW m-tbn 16 – GM clt 8 – GW m-tbn 14 – EH pno bk modulation to F 2)(Chorus 5 32 bars AABA EH pno 16 – GM alt 8 – ens ad-lib 8)

**73307 It Don't Mean A Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing) Key of Bb (Gm) Victor**  
(Intro 10 bars WPJ m-tpt)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA WPJ m-tpt 16 – HFW m-tbn 8 – WPJ m-tpt 8)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA BB voc)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA BB voc 4 – WPJ m-tpt 4 – BB voc 4 – WPJ m-tpt 4 – BB voc 2 – WPJ m-tpt 2 – BB voc 2 – WPJ m-tpt 2 – BB voc 4 – WPJ m-tpt 4)(Bridge 12 bars JG ten + ens)(Chorus 4 32 bars AABA BB voc 4 – GM clt 4 – BB voc 4 – GM clt 4 – BB voc 2 – GM clt 2 – BB voc 2 – GM clt 2 – BB voc 4 – GM clt 4)(Coda 16 bars WPJ m-tpt + BB voc chase)

**73306 You Wonderful Thing Key of Eb Victor**  
(Intro 4 bars GM clt + ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA BB voc + 2 clts 16 – BB voc + EH pno 8 – BB voc + 2 clts 8)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA WPJ m-tpt + BB scat voc 16 – HFW m-tbn + BB scat voc 8 – WPJ m-tpt + BB scat voc 6 – EH pno 2)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA BB voc + 2 clts 16 – BB voc + EH pno 8 – BB voc + 2 clts 8)

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