

THE RECORDINGS OF ALEX JACKSON AND HIS PLANTATION ORCHESTRA

An Annotated Tentative Personnel - Discography

JACKSON, Alex

No biographical data known

This personnel-discography is based on Rust, Jazz And Ragtime Records 1897 - 1942.

Personnel 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: **Alex Jackson**
- Probable, generally agreed, but not documented identifications are listed in italics, thus: *Alex Jackson*
- 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: (*Alex Jackson*)

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.

Although Alex Jackson's Plantation Orchestra was not of Harlem origin, but from Cincinnati, Ohio, they nevertheless were part of the Harlem jazz scene for a couple of years. A well-known poster advertises a "Battle of the Bands" at the Savoy Ballroom on May 6, 1928 a "Battle of the Bands" at the Savoy Ballroom with the bands of Alex Jackson, Fletcher Henderson, Lloyd Scott, Chick Webb, Charlie Johnson, and Fess Williams. First recordings of the Jackson band – in New York by Vocalion – were not issued. Subsequent recordings by Gennet were made in Richmond, Indiana.

ALEX JACKSON'S PLANTATION ORCHESTRA

012 ALEX JACKSON'S PLANTATION ORCHESTRA

Alex Jackson – voc, ldr;

Clarence Wheeler, Lee Golden – tpt; Joe King – tbn;

Harold Scott, Leonard Fields – alt; Raymond Martin – ten;

Lonnie Small – pno; Tommy Short – bjo; Bob Ysaguirre – bbs; Dick Ward – dms

E-4937/8

Plantation Stomp

Voc unissued

not on LP/CD

E-4939/40

The St. Louis Blues

Voc unissued

not on LP/CD

New York,

May 07, 1927

This session became apparent through the below notification in Storyville 74, but nothing more of it has appeared since, and it has to be assumed that no test of either side has been unearthed later on.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography*, 1948: not listed
- Carey, McCarthy, *Jazz Directory*, Vol. 5: unknown 2 tpt; tbn; 3 sax; p; g; tu; d.
- Storyville 73: "The sleeve of *Arcadia 2007 (LP)* when discussing the *Alex Jackson Plantation Orch.* says that ,it was based in Cincinnati and toured as far East as New York'. Among the personnel quoted is *Len Fields* on alto sax, a name which has cropped up in listings of *Clarence Williams's* work. When *Eva Taylor* first visited us we played a number of items to her which supposedly included this said *Fields*, but the name meant nothing to her, and all she could tell us was that there was a bandleader whom *Clarence* admired who came into New York from time to time, and when he did, *Clarence* would use some of his men for recording purposes."
- Storyville 74: „*Hans Larsen* sends details from the *Vocalion New York* file of an unissued *Alex Jackson* session which pinpoints one visit of the band to the city, but later than the period in question. It is shown as follows: E4937w / E4938w *Plantation Stomp* (*Alonzo Smalls* and *Lee Golden*); E4939w / E4940w *The St. Louis Blues* (*W.C. Handy*) 10 men 3 hrs. *Alex Jackson* – leader."
- Rust*2,*3: not listed
- Rust*4,*6: *Alex Jackson* -v -dir; *Clarence Wheeler* -*Lee Golden* -t; *Joe King* -tb; *Len Fields* -*Harold Scott* -as; *Raymond Martin* -ts; *Lonnie Smith* -p; *Tommy Short* -bj; *Bob Ysaguirre* -bb; *Dick Ward* -d.

013 ALEX JACKSON'S PLANTATION ORCHESTRA

Richmond, In.,

Sep, 16, 1927

Alex Jackson – voc, ldr;
Clarence Wheeler, *Lee Golden* – tpt; *Joe King* – tbn;
Harold Scott, *Leonard Fields* – alt; *Raymond Martin* – ten, clt;
Lonnie Small – pno; *Tommy Short* – bjo; *Bob Ysaguirre* – bbs; *Dick Ward* – dms;
 unknown – voc chorus (2)

13080 Chinese Blues

Gnt unissued

not on LP/CD

13081 Jackass Blues

Gnt 6249,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8008

Composer credits: 13081 (---)(recte: *Stitzel* – *Kassel*)

Unfortunately, one of these sides had not been issued, and no test of it is known.

'Jackass Blues' is the well-known mid-1920s tune, recorded by *King Oliver*, *Fletcher Henderson*, *Clarence Williams*, and others. The *Jackson* men have added a hitherto unknown 8-bars introduction, leaving out the usual trombone cadence. Soloistic performance is not exceptional, although the trombone player plays a lazy solo with full-bodied sound. The clarinet solo might be by the tenor sax player, as the tenor sax is pitched Bb as well as the clarinet, and thus, most tenorists double on clarinet. The clarinet solo artistically is much below *Len Fields's* possibilities.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography*, 1948: not listed
- Carey, McCarthy, *Jazz Directory*, Vol. 5: unknown 2 tpt; tbn; 3 sax; p; g; tu; d.
- Storyville 73: "The sleeve of *Arcadia 2007 (LP)* when discussing the *Alex Jackson Plantation Orch.* says that ,it was based in Cincinnati and toured as far East as New York'. Among the personnel quoted is *Len Fields* on alto sax, a name which has cropped up in listings of *Clarence Williams's* work. When *Eva Taylor* first visited us we played a number of items to her which supposedly included this said *Fields*, but the name meant nothing to her, and all she could tell us was that there was a bandleader whom *Clarence* admired who came into New York from time to time, and when he did, *Clarence* would use some of his men for recording purposes."
- Rust*2: 2 unknown tpt; unknown tbn; 3 unknown reeds; unknown pno; unknown bjo; unknown bbs; unknown dms; *Alex Jackson* voc
- Rust*3: *Clarence Wheeler* -*Lee Golden* -t; *Joe King* -tb; *Len Fields* -*Harold Scott* -as; *Raymond Martin* -ts; *Lonnie Smith* -p; *Tommy Short* -bj; *Bob Ysaguirre* -bb; *Dick Wood* -d; *Alex Jackson* -ldr -v.
- Rust*4,*6: *Alex Jackson* -v -dir; *Clarence Wheeler* -*Lee Golden* -t; *Joe King* -tb; *Len Fields* -*Harold Scott* -as; *Raymond Martin* -ts; *Lonnie Smith* -p; *Tommy Short* -bj; *Bob Ysaguirre* -bb; *Dick Ward* -d.

Tune Structure:

13081 Jackass Blues Key of Bb (blues changes)

Gennett

(Intro 8 bars ens)(Chorus 1 12 bars ?LG o-tpt)(Chorus 2 12 bars ens)(Chorus 3 12 bars JK o-tbn 10 - ? tpt 2)(Chorus 4 12 bars ?RM clt)(Chorus 5 12 bars LS pno + ens10 – DW dms 2)(Chorus 6 12 bars ens 2 - ?LG m-tpt 4 – ens 4 – voc chorus 2)

014 ALEX JACKSON'S PLANTATION ORCHESTRA

Richmond, In.,

Oct, 27, 1927

Alex Jackson – voc, ldr;
Clarence Wheeler, *Lee Golden* – tpt; *Joe King* – tbn;
Harold Scott, *Leonard Fields* – alt, clt; *Raymond Martin* – ten;
Lonnie Small – pno; *Tommy Short* – bjo; *Bob Ysaguirre* – bbs; *Dick Ward* – dms;
Alex Jackson – voc, kazoo (3,4)

13180 I Call You Sugar

Gnt 6296,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8008

13180-A I Call You Sugar

Ch 15402

not on LP/CD

13181 When Erastus Plays His Old Kazoo

Ch 15386,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8008

13181-A When Erastus Plays His Old Kazoo

Sil 5502

not on LP/CD

13182 Missouri Squabble

Gnt 6296,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8008

Composer credits: 13180 (*Baxter* – *Bowles*); *13181* (*Coslow* – *Spier* – *Fain*); *13182* (*Holst* – *Kretznus*)

Note: Although the cover-notes of Arcadia 2007 (LP) pretend to carry 'When Erastus Plays His Old Kazoo' 13181-A, this take is identical with 13181 of the Jazz Oracle CD!

While the first session of *Alex Jackson's* *Plantation Orchestra* was recorded in New York, but unissued, the second and third sessions were recorded in Richmond, Indiana. This band may be seen as part of the large group of "Territory Bands", supplying the Mid-Western states with hot and swinging dance/jazz music. But obviously, *Jackson* and his band were regular visitors to New York. They may be the band *Eva Taylor* believed to remember in later years when asked about the musicians of 'Clarence Williams and his Blue Moaners' Edison sides. Soloistic performance is of a "rural" quality, with a strong and hot solo trumpet player using different mutes, a trombonist with voluminous tone, a pianist recognizably from the West, and an alto saxophonist who may be *Leonard Fields*, but a bit sub-standard when compared with his renditions in the *June Clark* band. He also seems to be the clarinet soloist on 'When Erastus Plays His Old Kazoo'. And the drummer is allowed to play his bass-drum in two-beat one-three manner. There may have been daring recording engineers in Richmond in 1927!

Notes:

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

- Carey, McCarthy, *Jazz Directory*, Vol. 5: unknown 2 tpt; tbn; 3 sax; p; g; tu; d.

- Rust*2: 2 unknown tpt; unknown tbn; 3 unknown reeds; unknown pno; unknown bjo; unknown bbs; unknown dms; Alex Jackson voc

- Rust*3: Clarence Wheeler -Lee Golden -t; Joe King -tb; Len Fields -Harold Scott -as; Raymond Martin -ts; Lonnie Smith -p; Tommy Short -bj; Bob Ysaguirre -bb; Dick Wood -d; Alex Jackson -ldr -v.

- Rust*4,*6: Alex Jackson -v -dir; Clarence Wheeler -Lee Golden -t; Joe King -tb; Len Fields -Harold Scott -as; Raymond Martin -ts; Lonnie Smith -p; Tommy Short -bj; Bob Ysaguirre -bb; Dick Ward -d.

- John Wilby, *Jazz Oracle CD BDW 8008*, booklet: see above!

Notable differences of takes:

13180 / 13181: Much to my regret, no double takes are issued on LP or CD. Thus, comparison is just not possible.

Tune Structures:

13180 *I Call You Sugar* Key of Eb

Gennett

(Intro 2 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AA AJ voc 30 – ens 2)(Bridge 4 bars ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AA ens)(Bridge 4 bars ens)

(Chorus 3 32 bars AA ?LG m-tpt 16 – LF alt 14 – DW dms 2)(Chorus 4 32 bars AA ens 2 – TS bjo 2 – ens 2 TS bjo 2 – JK o-tbn 8 – ens 16)(Coda 6 bars ens)

13181 *When Erastus Plays His Old Kazoo* Key of Ab / Eb

Champion

(Intro 8 bars ens 2 – ? kazoo 2 – ens 2 – ? kazoo 2)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA ens 6 – TS bjo 2 – ens 6 – TS bjo 2 – ens 16)(Verse 16 bars

AA ?LG m-tpt 6 – ens 2 – ?LG m-tpt 6 – ens 2)(Bridge 12 bars ens modulation)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA ?RM clt 6 – ? kazoo 2 – ?RM clt

6 – DW dms 2 – ? kazoo 14 – ?LG m-tpt 2)(Tag 2 bars ?LG m-tpt)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA JK o-tbn 16 – LS pno 8 – LF alt 8)(Chorus 4

32 bars AABA ens 4 – ?CW o-tpt 4 – ens 4 – ?CW o-tpt 4 – RM ten 6 – JK m-tbn 2 – ens 6 – ? kazoo 2)(Tag 2 bars ? kazoo 2 – AJ voc 2 – voc chorus 2)

13182 *Missouri Squabble* Key of F / D / F

Gennett

(Intro 8 bars ?CW o-tpt + ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AA' ens)(Bridge 8 bars TS bjo)(Chorus 2 32 bars AA' ?LG m-tpt 16 – ?LF alt 14)

(Bridge 8 bars ens modulation)(Verse 1 16 bars saxes 8 – ?RM ten 6 – ens 2)(Verse 2 16 bars LS pno)(Verse 3 16 bars ?LG m-tpt)

Chorus 3 32 bars AA' ens)(Tag 2 bars ens)

K. - B. Rau

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