

# THE RECORDINGS OF PERCY JOHNSON

## An Annotated Tentative Personnel - Discography

JOHNSON, Percy 'Sleepy', drummer

no biographical dates publicly known

From Baltimore, with Josephine Baker and Claude Hopkins to Paris, France, in 1925, with Sam Wooding in Europe 1926, with Cliff Jackson and his Crazy Kats in 1930, and with Blanche Calloway and her Joy Boys in 1935. Was known for playing standing upright behind his drum-set.

- Storyville 74-46, H. P. Bergmeier, Sam Wooding Recapitulated: "On the conclusion of the Madrid engagement, George Howe left the Sam Wooding Band. Possibly in Paris but probably in Berlin, prior to entering Russia, Percy Johnson was added to replace Howe. Percy Johnson was stranded in Europe after the collapse of the 'revue Negre', with the Claude Hopkins band, after Josephine Baker had resigned from the cast."

- Storyville 1996/7, Louis Douglas, King of Dancers: "Caroline Dudley presents 'La Revue Negre' in 7 acts, by Louis Douglass. Music by Jack Palmer and Spencer Williams. Costumes by the Dudley sisters and Susan Smith. Stage decorations by Covarubias and the Dudley sisters. Director: Daniel Reagan. Assistant Direktor: Louis Douglas. The Charleston Jazz Band: Leader: Claude Hopkins, with: Henry Goodwin (trumpet), Joseph Hayman (reeds), Sidney Bechet (soprano sax, clarinet), Daniel Doy (trombone), Ernest Hill (bass), Percy Johnson (drums), Claude Hopkins (piano). The Charleston Steppers: Dance ensemble, with Marguerite Hicks, Evelyn Anderson, Lydia Jones, Marie Woods, Beatrice Foote, Hazel Valentine, Mabel Hopkins, Jap Selmons, Sadie Thompson. Cast: Josephine Baker, Maud de Forest, Joé Alex, Louis Douglas, Honey Boy, Marion Cook. Bootleggers Quartette: Spencer Williams, Sidney Bechet, Mercer Cook, Louis Douglas.

- Storyville 85-22, David Griffith, Bobby Woodlen: "Around 1930, I left Baltimore and went to Washington, D.C., where I joined Elmer Calloway's band at the Club Prudhom. We had Lester Henry, Val Valentine (actually Raymond 'Sid' Valentine), and myself on trumpets, Fred Norman on trombone - he also did the arranging. William Smith, Ray Forrest, and John Harris were in the reed section, Henry Bowen played the accordion, Joe Bailey was on piano, Al Stewart on bass, Percy Johnson on drums, and Elmer Calloway was our leader."

- Storyville 107-170, David Griffith, Greely Walton's Life Story: "Horace Langhorne had an accident and broke his jaw and I (Greely Walton - KBR) took his place up at the Lennox Club with Cliff Jackson for about four or five months. Rudy Powell was on alto, Ed Anderson on trumpet, Ed Cuffee on trombone, Jimmy Cannon on guitar, plus a drummer from Washington who stood up while playing because if he sat down he went to sleep! (*This was 'Sleepy' Percy Johnson, according to Jack Butler.*) Andy Jackson came in replacing Cannon and Henry Goodwin came in on trumpet."

- Storyville 117-94 shows a photo of Percy Johnson standing behind his drum-kit on a stage, obviously the one of the Lenox Club, regarding the standard lamp on the right, which is the kind we know from other photos of the Lenox Club. See .....  
This photo is from the collection of Glover Compston, and is inscribed: "to my friend Glover Compton best wishes from Percy" This is Percy Johnson who played drums with Cliff Jackson."

- Storyville 132-214: Arvin Bushell, Mark Tucker, On the Road with the Chocolate Kiddies in Europe and South America, 1925- 1927: That's when George Howe and his girl friend Mamie Savoy left us. ... So we picked up Percy Johnson in Paris, who had come over with Josephine Baker. Percy was a good show drummer. He used to stand up and drum ... he had to, otherwise he'd go to sleep. He was a clown, and a very nice person. You could call him anything you wanted to, and he'd always smile. But those are the kind of people you have to watch. Percy wound up killing a guy in Washington who'd taken advantage of him."

- ibid: Sides 220/221 show a band-photo of the 1926 Sam Wooding Band in Hamburg, Germany, with Percy Johnson - sitting! - on drums.

- Storyville ??? : I believe to remember to have seen a photo of Johnson's gigantic drum-set seen from the customer's view from the dance floor. But it does not show the drummer. It might thus be taken at the same time as the photo in Storyville 117 (see above).

- Photos: A. McCarthy, Big Band Jazz, page 45. / Charters, Kunstadt, Jazz - A History of the New York Scene, page 199. / Warren W. Vaché, Sr, Crazy Fingers, Claude Hopkins' Life in Jazz, page 84 f.

### STYLISTICS

Percy Johnson was a second-rank jazz drummer from Washington, D.C. Only three recording bands are known to have Johnson as their drummer. Unfortunately, we do not know of other engagements Johnson held, except for his early engagement with the Josephine Baker/Claude Hopkins band.

### STYLE

His style on drums was entirely that of his time, with the bass-drum played on first and third beats per bar or four-to-the-bar, just as required, press-rolls played on the snare-drum conventionally, but enlivened with a lot of rim-shots of both hands, and the use of the up-to-date kinds of cymbals - in the form of the newly developed hand-cymbals from the Zildjian factory, or as customary in its period as choked-cymbal (hit by the right hand stick and simultaneously choked by the left hand - or hit by both hands' sticks including the choking left hand's in a paradiddle manner) and the opportune Chinese tom-tom beat.

But only little of this can be detected on the recordings listed here. The recording engineers prevented the use of all these devices because of the fear for the damage of their cutting-needles. Thus, in 1926 Johnson is mainly silent on the Wooding sides and may only be heard with choked cymbal, and – at one time – playing the afterbeat on his woodblock instead of the snare-drum, and the occasional cymbal stroke for arrangement requirements. The Cliff Jackson of early 1930 sides have him mainly on his different cymbals and sometimes on Chinese tom-tom.

On the Blanche Calloway sides he is mainly heard with brushes on his snare drum, which was the fashion of the middle 1930s. At a few places, yet, he plays his closed high-hat with sticks, thus not yet in the swing manner as introduced by Jo Jones or O'Neil Spencer.

This personnel-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: Percy Johnson

- Probable, generally agreed, but not documented identifications are listed in italics, thus: *Percy Johnson*

- 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: (*Percy Johnson*)

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 listed 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.

**As usual in early jazz recordings the drummer's work is nearly inaudible on records. From eyewitness reports we know that drummers were forbidden to use their bass drums in the recording studios, and they were placed far from the microphone with their remaining kits. From my own (KBR) listening experience I know that snare drums were inaudible, as well. All we can hear and recognise are the cymbal crashes or woodblock sounds, the woodblock probably being played like a snare drum in early 1920s recordings. Not earlier than at the end of the 1920s, we are able to recognise a bass drum on a record, as well as a snare drum.**

**Thus, Percy Johnson's attributions to the recordings of the Sam Wooding Band are minimal. The Cliff Jackson sides then show Percy Johnson as a technically very proficient drummer, using his cymbals for accompanying the soloists on choked cymbal or high-hat cymbals with fast two-handed-strikes. As with the Sam Wooding recordings, the Cliff Jackson sides are mainly dance-music, and that's what probably mostly was played at the Lenox Club. Johnson's playing may best be heard and examined behind the bandleader's piano solos and in some solo drum breaks. With Blanche Calloway he plays strict rhythm behind the band without any soloistic exposure, at all. But his drive and punch are remarkable. We are not informed of any other engagements of his, except for his early work with Josephine Baker.**

**What was most un-usual of his performances, was that he used to play his drum-set standing up-right. When thinking of playing the bass drum with his right foot, he must have relied totally on his left foot to keep him straight. This also needed a strong sense of balance and statics.**

## PERCY JOHNSON

### 001 SAM WOODING BAND

Berlin, Germany

Sep. 1926

Bobby Martin, Maceo Edwards – tpt; Herb Flemming – tbn;

Garvin Bushell – alt, clt, sop, oboe, bsn; Willie Lewis – alt, bar, sop, clt, flt; Gene Sedric – ten, clt, bsx;

Sam Wooding – pno; John Mitchell – bjo, uku; Sumner Leslie King Edwards – bbs; Percy Johnson – dms;

Willie Lewis – voc (1,7); unknown – voc (3); W. Lewis, G. Sedric, S. Edwards – voc trio (9);

Sam Wooding (arr); also played: tin-whistle, bel

50bn Dreaming Of Tomorrow

DG 20692,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8070

51bn Dreaming Of A Castle In The Air

DG 20690,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8070

52bn Am I Wasting My Time On You ?

DG 20692,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8070

53bn Black Bottom

DG 20689,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8070

54bn Behind The Clouds

DG 20689,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8070

55bn By The Waters Of Minnetonka

DG 20690,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8070

603bk Just A Cottage Small (By The Waterfall)

DG 20693,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8070

604bk Milenburg Joys

DG 20691,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8070

605bk Lonesome And Sorry

DG 20693,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8070

606bk Tampekoe

DG 20691,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8070

*Composer credits: 50bn (Joe Sanders); 51bn (E. Wood); 52bn (Irving Bibo & Howard Johnson); 53bn (Ray Hendersson); 54bn (Benny Davis & - de Sylva); 55bn (Theo Presser); 603bk (F.J. Hanley); 604bk (Rappolo – Mares – Morton); 605 (Dewey Bergmann); 606bk (Panico – Schoebel)*

This is the jazz music the German audience was confronted with in the early 1920s, when Sam Wooding and his Orchestra toured Europe. There is little hot soloistic and – judging from these recordings – contemporary pop songs were performed with an almost equal tempo all the time, perhaps as thought to be the dancers' favourite? The band had some stock arrangements in their repertoire, others being written by bandleader Wooding. But seen with today's eyes, the music was just hot-dance music played with swing and drive. The rhythm section heard on these recordings is piano, banjo and tuba. Drummer Johnson is reduced to use his choke cymbal and his woodblock. This might be the reason that in some titles the tempo varies discernibly caused by the drummer's starting to play with the band or ceasing when drums are not wanted.

It certainly is of interest to recognise that big-band jazz music was much further developed in the U.S.A. at this time than might be found on these recordings cut in Germany.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography, 1948: The following Sam Wooding Band recording was probably made before Albert Wynn joined the band: Black Bottom (41479), Behind The Clouds (41480)*  
 - Rust\*2: Bobby Martin, Maceo Edwards (tpt); Herb Flemming (tbn); Garvin Bushell (clt, alt, oboe); Eugene Sedric (clt, ten); Sam Wooding (pno, ldr); John Mitchell (bjo); Sumner Leslie "King" Edwards (bbs); Percy Johnson (dms)  
 - Rust\*3, \*4, \*6: Bobby Martin -Maceo Edwards -t; Herb Flemming -tb; Garvin Bushell -cl -as -o; Willie Lewis -as -bar -v; Eugene Sedric -cl -ts; Sam Wooding -p -ldr; John Mitchell -bj; Sumner Leslie "King" Edwards -bb; Percy Johnson -d  
 - Horst H. Lange, *Die Deutsche 78er Diskographie der Jazz- und Hot-Dance-Musik 1903 – 1958: Sam Wooding (p, ldr, arr); Bobby Martin, Maceo Edwards (c); Herb Flemming (tb); Garvin Bushell (cl, as, oboe); Eugene Sedric (ts, cl, bass-c); Willie Lewis (as, cl, voc); John Mitchell (bj); Sumner Leslie ,King" Edwards (tuba); Percy Johnson (d)*

Soloists partly ad-lib:

50bn: WL voc+SW pno obl 32  
 51bn: JM bjo 2; GS ten 30; GB oboe 4 + 4; JM bjo 16; WL flt 30  
 52bn: ?GB alt 30; unkn. voc+SW pno obl 30; HF o-tbn 8; ?WL sop 30; ?ME o-tpt 30  
 53bn: GB alt 15; WL bar 1+8; GB alt 6; SW pno 30; GS bsn 30; SW pno obl 30  
 54bn: WL bar 30; GB bsn 14; ME m-tpt 24; HF o-tbn 8  
 55bn: SW pno obl 4+16; GB oboe 16; ME m-tpt 16; JM bjo 16; GB bsn 16; HF o-tbn 8; GB oboe 24; HF m-tbn 16  
 603bk: GS ten 2+8; WL voc 1+30; ?GB clt 8; HF m-tbn 8; WL voc+SW pno obl 30; ME m-tpt 30  
 604bk: ?GB clt obl 16 + 4 + 6; GS ten+SW pno obl 16; ME m-tpt 16; HF o-tbn 1+16; WL clt 16; ME o-tpt 16  
 605bk: voc trio 30; GS ten 2; GS ten+SW pno obl 14; GS ten 16; HF o-tbn 4; voc trio 32+1  
 606bk: ?BM o-tpt 1; SW pno obl 19 + 11; SW pno 10; SW pno obl 20 + 10; ME o-tpt 12

**002 CLIFF JACKSON AND HIS CRAZY KATS**

New York,

c. Jan. 30, 1930

Melvin Herbert, Henry Goodwin – tpt; Waymon 'Noisy' Richardson – tbn;  
 Rudy Powell – alt; Earl Evans – alt, clt; Horace Langhorn – ten, clt;  
 Cliff Jackson – pno; Andy Jackson – bjo; Chester Campbell – bbs; Percy Johnson – dms;  
 Henry Goodwin – voc (1,2)

3866-A/B Horse Feathers

GG 1839,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8037

3867-A/B Torrid Rhythm

VD 81842,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8037

*Composer credits: (3866) Smolev – Jackson; 3867 (Smolev – Jackson)*

*Note: The performances on the alternate takes of both titles are identical!*

Both these two titles recorded on the first Cliff Jackson Crazy Kats recording session are compositions of the band leader, he himself a regarded stride pianist hailing from Virginia. And as such they must be seen as piano solo numbers arranged for a big band, with peculiarities of a piano solo of the time. For instance: the titles contain very few instrumental hot solos, they are mainly based on 8-bar successions derived from ragtime music, and they include abnormalities, such as odd numbers of bars in the themes, and varying lengths of themes. In 'Horse Feathers' the tuba plays a final break in strains A2 and A3 on bars 16 and 17 of a 16-bar theme, what is decidedly strange for jazz band arrangements in that it makes them a 17-bar structure! In 'Torrid Rhythm' we find strains of 24 or 20 bars with an AAB structure, together with 8 or 16 or 24 bar parts all spread over a tune of less than three minutes.

The first title only has four 4-bar hot solo parts by Henry Goodwin on trumpet, a 16 bars tenor sax solo by Horace Langhorn, a piano solo of 16 bars by the leader, and a scat-vocal of 16 bars by Goodwin. The second title then includes two 12 bars strains of trombone solo which obviously are written down by the arranger, a 16 bars piano solo, and the "generous" number of four bars for the alto sax in the tune's bridge. Thus, most of the sounds heard are arranged parts. Yet, there is one point of surprise: the band's drummer Percy Johnson has a couple of short drum breaks performed on his extraordinary large number of cymbals, high-hat or choked, and "traps". Mr. Johnson was notorious for playing his drums standing upright, what can be discerned when watching the well-known band photos in Charters/Kunstadt 'Jazz – A History of the New York Scene', p. 199 and A. McCarthy, *Big Band Jazz*, p. 45 (other photos of Cliff Jackson bands in some photo-books on jazz have other personnels). His opulent drum-set may be examined in Storyville 117, p.94, hitherto unrealised as this very special kit used at the Lenox Club – compare the lampshade with the former photo!

These two titles certainly lack a portion of delicacy and finesse, but they show the unrestrained power the band was able to generate. In contrast to most titles recorded at the following session, this is the jazz side of the Crazy Kats.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography, 1948: Mel Herbert, Henry Goodwin (tp); Rudy Powell (cl & as); Earl Evans (as); Horace Langhorne (ts); Cliff Jackson (p); Andy Jackson (bjo); Chester Campbell (tuba); Percy Johnson (dm)*

- Carey, McCarthy, *Jazz Directory, Vol. 5: Mel Herbert, Henry Goodwin (tpt); Rudy Powell (clt, alt); Earl Evans (alt); Horace Langhorne (ten); Cliff Jackson (p); Andy Jackson (bj); Chester Campbell (tu); Percy Johnson (d)*

- Rust\*2: Melvin Herbert, Henry Goodwin (tpt); Charlie Irvis (?) (tbn); Rudy Powell (clt, alt); Earl Evans (alt); Horace Langhorne (ten); Cliff Jackson (pno); Andy Jackson (bjo); Chester Campbell (bbs); Percy Johnson (dms); Henry Goodwin (vc1)

- Rust\*3: Melvin Herbert -Henry Goodwin -t; Noisy Richardson -tb; Rudy Powell -cl -as; Earl Evans -as; Horace Langhorne -ts; Cliff Jackson -p -a; Andy Jackson -bj; Chester Campbell -bb; Percy Johnson -d; Henry Goodwin -v

- Rust\*4,\*6: Melvin Herbert -t; Henry Goodwin -t -v; Noisy Richardson -tb; Rudy Powell -cl -as; Earl Evans -as; Horace Langhorn -ts; Cliff Jackson -p -a; Andy Jackson -bj; Chester Campbell -bb; Percy Johnson -d

Tune Structures:

3866 Horse Feathers Key of Bb / Eb / C / Bb

Grey Gull

(Strain A1 16 bars ens 4 – HG o-tpt 4 – ens 4 – HG o-tpt 4)(Strain B1 16 bars AA' ens 6 – WNR o-tbn 2 – ens 8)(Strain C1 16 bars AA' HL ten)(Strain D1 35 bars AABA saxes 18 – ens 8 – saxes 9)(Strain A2 16+1 bars ens 6 – PJ dms 2 – ens 7 – CC bbs 2)(Strain A3 16+1 bars ens 15 – CC bbs 2)(Bridge 8 bars ens modulation)(Strain D1 16 bars HG scat-voc + choir)(Strain D2 16 bars CJ pno+PJ high-hat 14 – ens 2)(Strain A4 16 bars ens 4 – HG o-tpt 4 – ens 4 – HG o-tpt 4)

3867 *Torrid Rhythm* Key of Dm / D / G / Dm

Grey Gull

(Intro 4 bars saxes)(Vamp 1 8 bars ens)(Strain A1 24 bars AAB saxes 16 – ens 8)(Strain A2 24 bars AAB saxes 16 – ens 4)  
 (Vamp 2 8 bars ens)(Strain B1 12 bars WNR o-tbn)(Strain B2 12 bars WNR o-tbn)(Strain C1 16 bars CJ pno+PJ high-hat)(Strain C2  
 16 bars ens)(Bridge 6 bars ?EE alt 4 – PJ high-hat 2)(Strain A3 24 bars AAB ens)(Coda 6 bars PJ dms + ens)

Soloists ad-lib:

3866: HG o-tpt 4 + 4; WNR o-tbn 2; HL ten 16; PJ cymbals 2; HG scat-voc 16; CJ pno+ PJ cymbals 14; HG o-tpt 4 + 4

3867: WNR o-tbn 24; CJ pno+ PJ cymbals 16; ?EE alt 4; PJ cymbals 2; ?EE alt 4

Discernible differences of takes:

Both titles are issued with takes -A and -B, but are identical each as researched by the Jazz Oracle team. So: no alternate takes here!

## 003 CLIFF JACKSON AND HIS CRAZY KATS

New York,

c. Feb. 27, 1930

Melvin Herbert, Henry Goodwin – tpt; Waymon ‘Noisy’ Richardson – tbn;

Rudy Powell – alt; Earl Evans – alt, clt; Horace Langhorn – ten, clt;

Cliff Jackson – pno; Andy Jackson – bjo; Chester Campbell – bbs; Percy Johnson – dms;

Henry Goodwin – voc (1,2)

3926-A	Ring Around The Moon	GG 1850,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8037
3926-alt	Ring Around The Moon	GG 1850,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8037
3927-A	We’ll Be Married In June	GG 1853,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8037
3928-A/B	She’s Just The Baby For Me	GG 1854,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8037
3929-A	Soubrette	GG 1865,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8037
3930-A	No One But Betty Brown	GG 1865,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8037
3930-B	No One But Betty Brown	GG 1865,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8037
3931-A/B	Desert Blues	GG 1854,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8037
3932-A/B	Because I’m Lonesome	GG 1851,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8037
3933-A	Apart From You	GG 1868,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8037
3934-A	Waiting Through The Night (waltz)	GG 1880,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8037
3934-B	Waiting Through The Night (waltz)	GG 1880,	not on LP/CD
3935-A	The Terror	GG 1879,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8037
3935-B	The Terror	GG 1879,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8037

Composer credits: 3926 (Miller - Smolev – Seaman); 3927 (Marchini and Smolev); 3928 (McDaniel – Sharpe – Wilson – Raymond); 2929 (Krompart – Smolev); 2930 (Straight -Lapgold – Decimber); 3931 (McDaniel – Smolev); 3932 (Seaman – Smolev); 3933 (Goodrow – Smolev – Seaman); 3934 (Crozier – Smolev – Seaman); 3935 (Jackson – Smolev)

Note: The performances on the alternate takes of matrices 3928, 3931, and 3932 obviously are identical!

It has been passed on by musicians in earlier times, that the Fletcher Henderson band, for instance, was very popular with the audience for playing pop numbers, most of all waltzes. I, jazz lover and the author of these lines, am mostly satisfied with the choice of titles the bands have in fact recorded. But their daily programs in the ballrooms certainly were of a different kind. But here, with the recordings of Cliff Jackson and his Crazy Kats, we might perhaps recognise what the main activity of the bands were: to play music for dancing, especially pop songs – and a waltz occasionally. Thus is the choice of tunes recorded here.

As both takes of ‘Ring Around The Moon’ are originally marked as take -A, but different musically, we do not know which of both takes is -A or -B. The Jazz Oracle people have self-willed marked the two versions with -A or -B. I do follow them in their decision but mark the first take on their CD as -A and the second take on the CD as -alt. In fact, it might also be just vice versa! We will never know. This title has improvised 8-bar solos by trombonist Waymon ‘Noisy’ Richardson – his only appearance in all Rusts and unknown to other discos – and Horace Langhorn, presenting a strong but a bit unsophisticated tenor sax influenced by Coleman Hawkins. The trumpet solo in the last chorus I assume to be by Henry Goodwin, the hot trumpeter, yet with little fire and wildness here. A recognisable difference of both takes is shown below.

‘We’ll Be Married In June’ again is a heavily arranged title of dance music. There are a few solo spots by trombone, tenor saxophone and open trumpet, this played by the first – lead – trumpet player, regarding by tone and style.

The subsequent title, ‘She’s Just The Baby For Me’ features a middle-eight part obviously also played by the lead trumpet and a four-bar clarinet ad-lib sequence in what I’d call a bridge. I assume this clarinetist to be Horace Langhorn, as mostly tenor sax players were ordered to play clarinet solos, as both instruments are tuned in Bb while the alto sax is tuned in Eb. The ardent listener might object that Rudy Powell was a well-respected clarinet soloist in the 1930s. This certainly is correct, but we also know that Rudy Powell stated “*that he did not learn to play the clarinet until 1932*” (Frank Owens, Storyville 98, below). This decidedly means that Powell is not the clarinetist – and by attentive listen we can hear that the subsequent clarinet-section only includes two instruments! (This also can be realised in the clarinet-sections of the title ‘The Terror’ below!)

‘Soubrette’ seems to be a piano solo composition - exhibiting a charming girl singer of the French opera - arranged for big band, but preserving short two-bar phrases from the original setting for the pianist. Reide Kaiser, booklet to Jazz Oracle BDW 8037: “*Evidently a-mid 1920s piano novelty arranged for band, complete with novelty piano phrases executed expertly by Jackson, licks that don’t otherwise feature in his playing. If at least some of this material was not part of the band’s book, then this was a band of readers, or they were able to find some rehearsal time prior to the sessions. Whatever the story, rough edges abound.*”

‘No One But Betty Brown’ – two alternate takes here, see below – again is an entirely arranged dance band title with a strangely constructed ABAC chorus of 26 bars, a part for clarinet section and a half ad-lib chorus by the alto sax, of which I do not know whether it is played by Earl Evans or Rudy Powell – style and tone let me assume Evans.

The theme of ‘Desert Blues’ is well-known to a real mass of lovers of the European Classics to which I belong. But still I have to rely on Mr. Kaiser’s remark that it was cited from Johannes Brahms. It comes from one of Brahms’ favoured ‘Hungarian Dances’ – No. 5. A type of music he composed just for his own personal delight and for the fun of it.

‘Because I’m Lonesome’ has absolutely no solo part that could be seen as a jazz spot. It is plain playing the scores.

While ‘Apart From You’ has nice alto sax ad-lib for six bars and ad-lib trombone for 14 bars. Just after this we hear a clean open trumpet playing a sixteen-bar period with ad-lib rhythm. I believe this trumpet player – like on other titles of this recording session – to be Melvin Herbert, the first – lead – trumpeter of the band. Henry Goodwin with his exuberant hot style cannot be heard on this session as on the first session above.

With ‘Waiting Through The Night’ we have a dreary waltz which gives absolutely nothing to the jazz listener.

But after this a musical explosion becomes apparent with Jackson’s ‘The Terror’. It obviously is a piano solo tune of the bandleader given a band treating, and it is therefore arranged, like the titles of the first recording session above. ‘The Terror’ is transmitted to be Cliff Jackson’s “*nom-de-guerre*” among stride pianists. There is only one hot trumpet solo here by Henry Goodwin, and all other trumpet solo spots seem to be presented by Melvin Herbert with his clean and straight sound. And it looks like these dance arrangements played did not demand a hot

trumpet player. But very nice are Percy Johnson's drum – or rather – cymbal breaks and the use of a small chinese tom-tom in 'Desert Blues'.

There is not much jazz on these sides, but apart from the addressed hot solos as listed below, there are a couple of choruses with jazzed-up section work for saxophones/clarinets which can be found in 'We'll Be Married in June' Chorus 5, 'She's Just The Baby For Me' Chorus 3, 'No One But Betty Brown' Chorus 2 and 3. These may yet be the work of Cliff Jackson himself, or of one of the reed players to liven matters up a bit in the tedious stock arrangements. But finally it has to be stated that 'Horse Feathers', 'Torrid Rhythm', and 'The Terror' are extra-ordinary jazz recordings from these two recording sessions by a well-respected jazz band. The only ones out of twelve recorded titles. And that decidedly is too few, and a pity!

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography, 1948*: Mel Herbert, Henry Goodwin (tp); Rudy Powell (cl & as); Earl Evans (as); Horace Langhorne (ts); Cliff Jackson (p); Andy Jackson (bjo); Chester Campbell (tuba); Percy Johnson (dm)  
- Carey, McCarthy, *Jazz Directory, Vol. 5*: Mel Herbert, Henry Goodwin (tpt); Rudy Powell (clt, alt); Earl Evans (alt); Horace Langhorne (ten); Cliff Jackson (p); Andy Jackson (bj); Chester Campbell (tu); Percy Johnson (d)  
- Rust\*2: Melvin Herbert, Henry Goodwin (tpt); unknown (tbn); Rudy Powell (clt, alt); Earl Evans (alt); Horace Langhorne (ten); Cliff Jackson (pno); Andy Jackson (bjo); Chester Campbell (bbs); Percy Johnson (dms)  
- Rust\*3: Melvin Herbert-Henry Goodwin -t; Noisy Richardson -tb; Rudy Powell -cl -as; Earl Evans -as; Horace Langhorne -ts; Cliff Jackson -p -ldr -a; Andy Jackson -bj; Chester Campbell -bb; Percy Johnson -d  
- Rust\*4,\*6: Melvin Herbert -t; Henry Goodwin -t -v; Noisy Richardson -tb; Rudy Powell -cl -as; Earl Evans -as; Horace Langhorne -ts; Cliff Jackson -p -a; Andy Jackson -bj; Chester Campbell -bb; Percy Johnson -d

Tune Structures:

3926 *Ring Around The Moon* Key of Cm / Eb / C / Eb Grey Gull

(Intro 8 bars ens)(Verse 32 bars AABA ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA ens 16 – WNR o-tbn 8 – ens 8)(Bridge 4 bars ens mod.)  
(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA ens 16 – HL ten 8 – ens 8)(Tag 2 bars ens mod.)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA HG o-tpt)(Tag 2 bars ens)

3927 *We'll Be Married In June* Key of F Grey Gull

(Intro 8 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AA' ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AA' ens)(Tag 2 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars ens)(Chorus 3 32 bars AA' ens 16 – WNR o-tbn 7 – ens 1+8)(Bridge 6 bars ens)(Chorus 4 32 bars AA' ens 8 – HL ten 8 – ens 8 – HL ten 6 – ens+MH o-tpt 2)(Tag 4 bars ens+MH o-tpt 2 – ens 2)(Chorus 5 32 bars AA' saxes 16 – ens 16)(Tag 2 bars ens)

3928 *She's Just The Baby For Me* Key of F / Eb / Fm / G Grey Gull

(Intro 10 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA ens)(Tag 2 bars ens)(Verse 16+2 bars ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA ens 16 – ?MH o-tpt 16)(Bridge 8 bars ens 4 – ?HL clt 4)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA clts 16 – clts+tb+tpt 8 – CJ pno 8)(1/2 Chorus 4 16 bars BA ens)

3929 *Soubrette* Key of Bb Grey Gull

(Intro 8 bars ens+CJ pno)(Strain A1 16 bars AB ens 6 – CJ pno 2 – ens 6 – CJ pno 2)(Strain A2 16 bars AB CJ pno + ens)(Strain B1 16 bars AA EE alt+ens)(Strain B2 16 bars AA WNR o-tbn+ens)(Strain B3 16 bars AA ens)(Bridge 8 bars ens + CJ pno)(Strain A3 16 bars AB ens 6 – CJ pno 2 – ens 6 – CJ pno 2)

3930 *No One But Betty Brown* Key of Eb / C / Eb Grey Gull

(Intro 6 bars ens 4 – WNR o-tbn 1+ens 1)(Verse 16 bars ens)(Chorus 1 26 bars ABAC ens)(Chorus 2 26 bars ABAC saxes)(Bridge 6 bars ens)(Chorus 3 26 bars ABAC clts 12 – WNR o-tbn 4 – clts 10)(Tag 4 bars MH o-tpt+ens)(Chorus 4 26 bars ABAC ?EE or ?RP alt 16 – ens 10)(Tag 3 bars ens)

3931 *Desert Blues* Key of Am / Gm / Am Grey Gull

(Intro 11 bars PJ dms 3 – ens 8)(Verse 16 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AA' MH o-tpt+ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AA' HL ten 30 – ens 2)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Bridge 14 bars brass 4 – saxes 4 – ens 4 – PJ dms 2)(Chorus 3 32 bars AA' ens)(Coda 12 bars ens)

3932 *Because I'm Lonesome* Key of Ab / F / Ab / F Grey Gull

(Intro 8 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars ABCA ens)(Tag 2 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars ABCA ens)(Bridge 6 bars ens)(Chorus 3 32 bars ABCA 32 bars ABCA ens)(Tag 2 bars ens)(1/2 Chorus 4 16 bars CA ens)

3933 *Apart From You* Key of Eb Grey Gull

(Intro 8 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars ABCA' ens)(Bridge 8 bars ens 2 – ?EE alt 6)(?Vamp 14 bars ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars ABCA' ens 16 – WNR o-tbn 14 – ens 2)(Chorus 3 32 bars ABCA' ens 16 – ?MH o-tpt 14 – ens 2)(Coda 14 bars ens)

3934 *Waiting Through The Night* Key of F Grey Gull

(Intro 8 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA ens)(Verse 16 bars ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA ?EE alt + band)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA WNR o-tbn 16 – ?EE alt + band 8 – ens 8)(Tag 2 bars ens)

3935 *The Terror* Key of Dm / D / Bb / Dbm / Dm / D Grey Gull

Intro 10 bars clts 2 – ens 8)(Strain A1 22 bars AA' clts 20 – PJ dms 2) Strain A2 22 bars AA' clts 20 – PJ dms 2)(Strain B 16 bars AA CC bbs - ens)(Strain C 16 bars AA' HL ten)(Strain D 18 bars AA' WNR o-tbn 14 – ens 4)(Strain E1 16 bars AA CJ pno)(Strain E2 16 bars AA saxes - brass)(Bridge 8 bars ens 2 – PJ dms 2 – ens 2 – PJ dms 2)(Strain A3 22 bars AA' ens)(Tag 1 bar ens)

Soloists ad-lib:

3926: WNR o-tbn 8; HL ten 8; ?MH o-tpt 32  
3927: WNR o-tbn 7; HL ten 8 + 6; HG o-tpt 2 + 2  
3928: ?HL clt 4; CJ pno 8  
3929: CJ pno 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + .....  
3930: WNR o-tbn 1; WNR o-tbn 4; ?EE or ?RP alt 26  
3931: PJ dms 3; HL ten 30; PJ dms 2  
3932: no ad-lib solos  
3933: ?EE alt 6; WNR o-tbn 1+14; ?MH o-tpt 14  
3934: no ad-lib solos  
3935: PJ dms 2 + 2; HL ten 16; WNR o-tbn 14; CJ pno 16; PJ dms 2 + 2

Discernible differences of takes:

3926-A: Tenor sax solo in Chorus 2 starts 1 quarter-note c upbeat, then 1 half-note c  
3926-B: Tenor sax solo in Chorus 2 starts 1 quarter-note upward glissando C - c, then 1 half-note c  
3930-A: Intro: one-bar tbn break plays clear sequence of 6 eighth-notes g-g-g-eb-c-ab  
3930-B: Intro: one-bar tbn break plays slightly fluffed sequence of 6 eighth-notes g-ab-bb-(eb)-c-ab  
3934: A second take of 'Waiting Through The Night' exists, but has not been issued on CD as it is nearly identical to the one included in the Jazz Oracle CD, and neither are of any jazz interest anyway.  
3935-A: Start of tenor sax solo: HL plays 1 eight-note Eb and 3 quarter-notes Eb-G-Bb  
3935-B: Start of tenor sax solo: HL plays 2 quarter-notes upward glissandos Bb – Eb and 1 quarter-notes upward glissando Bb – G

004 **BLANCHE CALLOWAY AND HER JOY BOYS**

New York,

Nov. 06, 1935

Blanche Calloway – voc, ldr;

Richard Jones, Tommy Stevenson, Archie Johnson – tpt;

Eli Robinson, Vic Dickenson – tbn;

Joe Eldridge, Billy Bowen – alt, clt; Prince Robinson – ten, clt; Ernest Purce – bar;

Clyde Hart – pno; Earl Baker – gtr; Abie Baker – sbs; Percy Johnson – dms;

Clyde Hart - arr

18239-1 You Ain't Livin' Right

Voc 3113, Chronological Classics 783

18240-1 Louisiana Liza

Voc 3112, Chronological Classics 783

18241-1 I Gotta Swing (King Porter Stomp)

Voc 3112, Chronological Classics 783

18242-1 Line-A-Jive

Voc 3113, Chronological Classics 783

*Composer credits: 18239 (Cameron – Calloway); 80240 (Stein – Calloway); 18241 (Robinson – Calloway); 18242 (Stein – Calloway)**Note: This personnel does not entirely accord with the personnel given in all Rusts, but contains some musicians having been noted lately.**Unfortunately only, I have missed to note the reliable source.*

These last recordings of Blanche Calloway's big band of the early thirties has a personnel of young musicians of Mid-Western origin, strengthened by former Harlem hero Prince Robinson on tenor sax. And the band had a lot of swing, and a very promising young pianist/arranger in the person of Clyde Hart, who died much too young to have his potentials been utilized. Also playing were high-note man Tommy Stevenson, trombonists Eli Robinson and Vic Dickenson and reed player/arranger Ernest Purce, and not to forget, Roy Eldridge's brother - and delicate alto player - Joe Eldridge. Vic Dickenson is very much in the Dicky Wells mould, here. Among this personnel, Percy Johnson might have felt a little bit mis-placed. He is mainly playing plain brushes rhythm with the incidental cymbal crash at the appropriate places. There are some spots where he uses his high-hat cymbals for a ride rhythm open or closed. And I shall not forget to name this wonderful and strong bass player Abbie Baker.

Notes:*- D. Carey, A. McCarthy, Jazz Directory, Vol. 2: unknown personnel**- Rust\*2: not listed**- Rust\*3,\*4,\*6: Richard Jones -Tommy Stevenson -Archie Johnson -t; Eli Robinson -Vic Dickenson -tb; Chauncey Haughton -Joe Eldridge -as; Alvin Campbell -Prince Robinson -ts; Clyde Hart -p -a; Earl Baker -g; Abbie Baker -sb; Percy Johnson -d; Blanche Calloway -v*Soloists ad-lib:

18239: No instrumental solos

18240: PR ten 4+32 + 8;

18241: PR clt 15; CH pno 1+24; VD tbn 16; PR ten 16

18242: VD o-tbn 14 + 6

K. – B. Rau

11-09-2023

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