

THE RECORDINGS OF GENE MIKELL

An Annotated Tentative Personnel - Discography

MIKELL, Eugene Jr., 'Gene', clarinet, alto sax

No personal data accessible

Son of famous and successful music teacher in the early years of the Jenkins Orphanage of Charleston, South Carolina, F. Eugene Mikell, Sr., and brother of reed player Otto Mikell of Savoy Bearcats and Fess Williams fame. Eugene 'Gene' Mikell worked with Arthur Gibbs and Joe Steele and their orchestras in the Harlem scene, before joining Mills Blue Rhythm Band in mid-1932 until late 1935. In 1936 he still worked with Henry 'Red' Allen at two recording sessions, but his general whereabouts seems to be unknown. No later recordings could be discovered. Gene Mikell was a fine 'legitimate' musician with very good technique – a typical graduate of his father's teaching abilities, and was therefore mainly part of reading dance bands of the late 1920s in Harlem, culminating in three years with 'Mills Blue Rhythm Band', one of the leading jazz/dance bands of Harlem, New York. The very few hot solo attributions to his recordings show him as a skilled and secure soloist on alto, clarinet and baritone sax, yet without a decent individuality of his own to identify his playing.

STYLISTICS CLARINET

STYLE

Mikell plays with a strong tone well constructed jazz solos on alto – and sometimes “dirty” clarinet spots

STONE

On clarinet Mikell likes to use a “dirty” tone, but he as well plays with a sharp and strong straight tone. But he can also use a voluminous reedy tone when playing in low register.

VIBRATO

His vibrato is moderate – of little amplitude and with medium duration.

TIME

His time is strict and exact, as needed by a first part/lead reed player.

PHRASING

Mikell's phrasing on clarinet is trumpet-like and could well be influenced by Louis Armstrong (clear half- or quarter-note phrasing at start and finishing by fast runs with high amplitude movements).

STYLISTICS ALTO SAX

STYLE

Mikell plays well constructed jazz solos on alto, using straight forward trumpet-like phrases and fast multi-toned phrases, also using bluesy phrases in slow titles.

STONE

His tone is strong and sharp, not very voluminous

VIBRATO

His vibrato is moderate – of little amplitude and with medium duration.

TIME

His time is strict and exact, as needed by a first part/lead reed player.

PHRASING

Mikell's phrasing on alto sax (clear half- or quarter-note phrasing at start and finishing with fast runs with high amplitude movements or frequent sustained trills).

These same qualities apply for his baritone sax playing.

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

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.

GENE MIKELL

001 FOWLER'S FAVORITES

Leonard Davis, cnt; George Washington, tbn;

Gene Mikell, clt, alt; Happy Caldwell, ten, sop;

Lem Fowler, pno, voc (1); Arthur Gibbs – pno (2); Paul Burnett, bjo; Billy Taylor, bbs; Sammy Hodges, dms.

144627-1 Percolatin' Blues

144628-3 Hot Strut

New York,

Jul. 05, 1927

Col 14230-B,

Col 14230-B,

Frog DGF 66

Frog DGF 66

- The trumpet player of the FAVORITES shows a very exact and clean-cut, no-nonsense playing, with good and clean tone and a good range, but little vibrato. He plays very secure and seems to be a good reader as these two titles certainly were not recorded by a working band – at least there is no one known as Lem Fowler's. At the time of working on the June Clark article I tended to attribute this trumpet work to Clarence Wheeler who can be heard on the Fowler's Washboard Wonders sides of August/September 1925. Clarence Wheeler recorded with Alex Jackson's Plantation Orchestra on September 16, 1927 in Richmond for Gennett, thus only less than three months after the Fowler's Favorites session. He certainly would have been capable to lead the FOWLER'S FAVORITES through the arrangements. As an alternate possibility I noted Leonard "Ham" Davis in my files, taking into account the very clear, strong and legitimate style of this player. Only the rather thin – or subdued – tone made me wonder and this would not fit to Davis' style of performance (compare Eddie's Hot Shots, February 8, 1929!).

- On trombone we hear a musician with a rather shallow growl tone – not as voluminous and deep as Nanton's or Irvis' – and a nearly motionless expression and phrasing on the first title, whereas very agile and technically profound on the second title, yet here playing without mute, but with good range and speed, although fluffing a note.

- Although Rust has three reed players in his editions from *3, on there certainly are only two of them, just as you might expect: an alto player who obviously doubles on clarinet, and a tenor player who doubles on soprano. There might even be the possibility that in the second half of chorus A1 of "Percolatin' Blues" the clarinet is played by the tenorist and the soprano played by the altoist! Be that as it may, the altoist is a hell of a reed player, very advanced – more so on alto than on clarinet, and it is unbelievable that Rust listed so limited a player as Ernest Elliott as clarinetist. As I see it, Rust found himself in a dilemma when he became aware that the altoist was much too good to be Elliott, and so he had to invent a third reed player – on alto – and gave him the name of Charlie Holmes, obviously of stylistic reasons. Only that Charlie Holmes moved to New York (together with Harry Carney) in early 1927 – at about the time of this session - and it is to be questioned whether he would have been engaged for a recording session at that early stage of his career – the more so for only one half-chorus. (His earliest documented recording being with Oliver's Dixie Syncopators in November 1928 - his questioned participation with James P. Johnson's Orchestra of June 1928 seems to be unfounded.) At no place of these two sides can you hear clarinet and alto played simultaneously, which certainly is further proof that both reeds are played by one player.

- The tenorist certainly is remarkable a player as is the altoist. And it is understandable that the author of the FROG CD-booklet assumed him to be Benny Waters. But this player here is a lot smoother and more swinging than Waters in his early years, and there is ample reason to suggest that this man is a "western" player. (When thinking of other jazz tenor players in Harlem of the time it is interesting to note that there were not many distinct tenorists - apart from Hawkins, Prince Robinson, Benny Waters and a small couple of others fewer than might be expected!)

- On piano – and on vocal – we certainly hear Mr. Lem Fowler himself, he very probably hailing from the mid-west, judging from his piano style. (The FROG CD-booklet offers a couple of details known of his life that shall not be repeated here.)

- In the rhythm section we hear a capable banjo player, a remarkably capable tuba player, and a drummer playing the traps that were allowed him to play in this early state of recording technology – Andrew Hilaire of J.R. Morton's Red Hot Peppers already used the bass drum clearly on the Victor recordings of half a year earlier.

These then are the players heard, not in any way those as listed in the discographies above! The most consistent name found in the discos is Ernest Elliott, and I have to report that after compiling a listing of all his recordings and non-recordings – yet listed in the discos to encompass him – I have found him not to be present on these sides. But then: who were these capable and impressive players?

The cardinal point of my recognition was the trombone player. This one-dimensional growl playing I knew from George Washington, trombonist with the Charlie Johnson band of 1928/9 (see my articles on Charlie Johnson in N&N57 and N&N63), and later the Mills Blue Rhythm Band and Louis Armstrong's Orchestra of the late 30s and early 40s. On Ch. Johnson's "Harlem Drag" a very similar growl solo by Washington can be heard, and – as I have attempted to show in N&N60 – he can also be heard on a couple of Clarence Williams items of late 1929 – obviously borrowed from the Ch. Johnson band. This player certainly can be heard on these two Fowler's Favorites sides!

My second acknowledgement was that there weren't so many tenor saxophonists in Harlem at that time playing "western" style – as said above. Checking through the few names known I came to Mr. Happy Caldwell – he coming from the Chicago jazz scene of the early twenties and thus playing in a swinging western style, to be heard with Thomas Morris' Seven Hot Babies – not Elliott here! – and Eddie Condon's Hot Shots, as well as possibly shown in my article on the Georgia Strutters in N&N73.

In L. Wright's article on Caldwell – "Happy Horn" in Storyville 99 – Happy recalls: "*One of the bands I worked with in New York was Arthur Gibbs – that would be around 1927, or maybe 1926. I've played so many places ... night clubs and cabarets, that I just can't remember. I know we made records with Arthur Gibbs, that was in the Victor (sic!) studio downtown. We had Leonard Davis on trumpet, Gene Mikell and myself were the reeds, we had to double on clarinet and soprano sax. George Washington was the trombone player ... Bob Bennett (sic!) on guitar and ... Billy Taylor, that's the father of Billy Taylor, on bass and tuba and Sammy Hodges on drums. He was no relation of Johnny or of Tommy. We also worked the Savoy, and the guys had made records before I joined them.*"

With these two distinct players in mind, I remembered a very interesting photo in Timme Rosenkrantz's beautiful book "Is This To Be My Souvenir?" of the Arthur Gibbs band of 1927/8, a band which is not commonly known, but which played the Savoy and Arcadia ballrooms in New York mid 1927 to mid 1928. (A different photo of this elusive band can be found in "thereisjazzbeforetrane.blogspot.de). Washington and Caldwell both were members of that band. The trumpet player of this band then was Leonard 'Ham' Davis, a musician I had earlier assumed to be a candidate for the trumpet player (see above) on the Fowler sides. 'Ham' Davis can also be heard majestically on the Condon's Hot Shots sides, and with the Charlie Johnson band (also with Jackson's Southern Serenaders, a Ch. Johnson pseudonym). On this photo Davis shows a cornet, not a trumpet, as his instrument, and this might be a hint as to his rather thin tone on the Fowler sides. His tone is much more voluminous on the Condon's Hot Shots and the Charlie Johnson sides, where he plays a trumpet!

Having now found three musicians that were in an appropriate class as those heard on the Fowler sides – and who could very well be the musicians searched for – it became urgent to see who the clarinetist/altoist could be. As it was often the case with musicians of the Harlem scene who had contracts with recording companies, but no steady band, did they hire parts of other bands or even complete units to use them for recording under their own name. So, it was necessary to check if one of the two reedmen on the photo – Edgar Sampson and Eugene Mikell – could be our altoist.

Eugene Mikell certainly is a very well-known name in early big bands of the Harlem scene, but he is not distinctly known as a soloist or improviser. He seems to have been more a reliable section man, not so much of a soloist, and in his reminiscences in the Storyville yearbook 1998/9 he only talks about others plying the solos. I myself would get into trouble to tell the reader where Mikell could be heard soloing, except for the baritone parts on the Joe Steele Orchestra sides! But following Happy Caldwell's report above, Mikell very probably is the clarinet/alto player here on the Fowler's Favorites sides, and it is really astonishing how he handles the clarinet part and – even more so – the alto solo breaks in Chorus B1 of "Hot Stuff". I have to admit that I thought of Sampson as alto/clarinet player because of this player's fine craftsmanship before getting aware of Happy Caldwell's remembrance.

On piano then we certainly hear the leader himself, Lem Fowler. The compositions are his, showing typical piano pieces that he played as piano solos otherwise, with a row of different strains. The Columbia people obviously were interested to attribute him a qualified band for his last recording session showing no further interest in recording him. And it is my firm suggestion that they made use of the just then forming Arthur Gibbs band, possibly offered by Gibbs himself, a way of recruiting musicians that was common in the 20s and – as I have shown in several cases (see also N&N 73, Georgia Strutters of May 23, 1927) – employed by Clarence Williams, Perry Bradford and others. If I am right, the rhythm players would certainly also be found in the Gibbs band: Paul Burnett, banjo, Billy Taylor, tuba, and Sammy Hodges, drums.

ADDITION 08-06-2021: - In 'Hot Strut' we surprisingly hear a different pianist, then, using Harlem stride pianistic techniques, such as single-note cum chord rhythm in the left hand together with broken rhythm (shifted bass beats), and chordal playing in the right hand. Because of this I believe that on this side the factual leader of this band, Arthur Gibbs, has taken over the piano stool. This, after all that we have got to know of Lem Fowler's piano possibilities, is not he himself! This pianist owns a much superior pianistic technique.

Billy Taylor is no unknown, and this tuba player's characteristics accord with the tuba playing on the last Charlie Johnson session and the McKinney Cotton Pickers sessions from November 1929 on. He certainly was an experienced and attentive player, even that early in his career. And obviously one of the first to play bass-lines.

Paul Burnett on banjo and Sammy Hodges on drums are not unknowns, but their styles seem not to be documented on record anywhere as they are not listed in any editions of Rust.

Burnett, yet, is mentioned as banjo player with Earle Howard in 1923 (Storyville 88-135) and with Wen Talbert and Bubber Miley in the early 1930s (Storyville 87-98/9). Bob Bennett – as reported by Caldwell above – yet, was Stuff Smith's guitarist in 1936.

Drummer Sammy Hodges' naming in the Caldwell article is the only one I could find anywhere.

Concluding, I feel very certain to have found the FOWLER'S FAVORITES personnel as explained above. Happy Caldwell's remembrance of the Victor studio can safely be ignored as – very often in recollections of jazz musicians – their memories have suffered with age and the recording of two titles sometime between job and going home for a little rest is not as significant as to remember it exactly after so many years. Suffice it to say that it was one of the leading record companies. But Caldwell's naming Mikell – and not Sampson, the more famous one – seems to be important as this kind of remembrance certainly is correct.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography, 1948: Lemuel Fowler (p & vo); other personnel unknown.*

- Carey, McCarthy, *Jazz Directory, Vol.3: Lem Fowler (p, vcl); unknown tpt; tbn; ten; alt; clt; bj; tu; d.*

- Rust*2: unknown (tpt); unknown (tbn); unknown (clt, alt); unknown (ten); Lemuel Fowler (pno, vcl); unknown (bjo); unknown (bbs); unknown (dms)

- Rust*3, *4, *6: unknown -t; unknown -tb; ?Ernest Elliott -clt -ss; ?Charlie Holmes -as; unknown -ts; Lemuel Fowler -p -v; unknown -bj; unknown -bb; unknown -d

Tunes structures:

144627-1 Percolatin' Blues (Fowler) Key of Bb / Eb Columbia 14230-D
 (Intro 4 bars clt – ens) (V1 Verse 16 bars AA' ens (tpt, tbn, clt, ten)) (V2 Verse 16 bars AA' clt/tbn 8 bars – clt 4 bars - tbn 2 bars – clt/tbn 2 bars) (A1 Chorus 32 bars ABAC tpt/ten 16 bars – sop/clt 16 bars) (A2 Chorus 32 bars ABAC voc – acc tpt/tbn) (V3 Verse AA' 16 bars ens (tpt, tbn, clt, ten)) (Bridge 4 bars ens modulation Bb to Eb) (B1 Chorus 18 bars AA' tbn) (B2 Chorus 18 bars AA' alt/ten in harmony) (B3 Chorus 18 bars AA' ens) (coda 2 bars cymbal)

144628-3 Hot Strut (Fowler) Key of Bb / Eb Columbia 14320-D
 (Intro 4 bars ens) (A1 Chorus 18 bars AA' ens (tpt, tbn, clt, ten)) (A2 Chorus 18 bars AA' ten) (V1 Verse 16 bars AA' ens) (V2 Verse AA' clt/ten 8 bars – tbn 8 bars) (A3 Chorus 18 bars AA' ens) (Bridge 4 bars pno) (B1 Chorus 16 bars AA' alt/ten 8 bars – ens/alt 8 bars) (B2 Chorus 16 bars AA' pno) (B3 Chorus 16 bars AA' ens) (Coda 8 bars ens – ten-clt – tpt – ens)

002 JOE STEELE AND HIS ORCHESTRA

Wendell Culley, Ward Pinkett – tpt; Jimmy Archey – tbn;

Bobby Holmes – alt, clt; Gene Mikell – alt, clt, bar; Trenton Harris – ten, clt;

Joe Steele – pno; Percy Richardson – bjo; Frank Smith – bbs; Gerald Hobson – dms;

New York,

Jun. 04, 1929

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Benny Carter - arr | | | |
| 53808-1 | Coal-Yard Shuffle | Vic V-38066, | Frog DGF 8 |
| 53808-2 | Coal-Yard Shuffle | Vic 741057 (LP), | Frog DGF 12 |
| 53809-1 | Top And Bottom | Vic V-38066, | Frog DGF 8 |
| 53809-2 | Top And Bottom | Vic 741057 (LP), | Frog DGF 12 |

Note: Composer credits are: 53808 (Joe Steele), 53809 (F. Eugene Mikell)

Storyville 1998-9 carries a beautiful and most interesting interview with Gene Mikell by Peter Carr and Al Vollmer which tackles these sides. And nothing more you need to know to enjoy this music to the full. Both tunes have arrangements by Benny Carter – 22 years of age at the time – showing his early use of augmented chords.

Bandleader Joe Steele shines with two 8-bar piano solos in his semi-classical style, encompassing great technique and inventiveness and imagination, but not so much suited for swinging and driving big band music. His nickname ‘Professor’ certainly was not un-justified. His most complex solo spots certainly are settled beforehand.

There is much hot soloing by – above all – Ward Pinkett (all tpt solos), and Jimmy Archey, Gene Mikell, and Bobby Holmes (6 bars only). Pinkett and Holmes – Bobby, not Charlie! – were not regular members of the band.

Notes:

- Storyville 56-80: “Peter Carr says that Freddie White, the banjo player on the Savoy Bearcats sides, and who is now working as a pianist at Saronac Lake, New York, told him that the banjo player on the Joe Steele Victor is Percy Richardson.”

- Storyville 80-80: “Gene Mikell told Peter Carr that he is the baritone sax on the Joe Steele Victor. Bobby Holmes rather than Charlie (to whom he was not related) is the alto, tenor sax is Trenton Harris and the trumpets Ward Pinkett and Wendell Culley. Both tunes are Benny Carter arrangements. Gene Mikell, and several other musicians have commented that not only did Bobby and Charlie share their surname, but that their sound was so alike that both were frequently misidentified even by their closest friends when heard broadcasting – a sort of amusement to them both!”

- Rust*2: Ward Pinkett, Jack Wilson or Langston Curl (tpt); James Archey (tbn); Charlie Holmes (alt); F. Eugene Mikell (ten); Harry Carney (bar); Joe Steele (pno, ldr); unknown (bjo); Frank Smith (bbs); unknown (dms).

- Rust*3: Ward Pinkett, Jack Wilson or Langston Curl -t; James Archey -tb; Charlie Holmes -cl -ss -as; F. Eugene Mikell -ts; Joe Garland -bar; Joe Steele -p -ldr; unknown -bj; Frank Smith -bb; Gerald Hobson -d.

- Rust*4,*6: Ward Pinkett, Jack Wilson or Langston Curl, t; James Archey, tb; Charlie Holmes, cl, ss, as; F. Eugene Mikell, ts; Joe Garland, bar; Joe Steele, p, dir; Percy Richardson, bj; Frank Smith, bb; Gerald Hobson, d.

Tunes structures:

Coal-Yard Shuffle Key of Bb / C Victor

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Strain A1 32 bars AA' ens)(Tag 2 bars ens)(Strain B 16 bars AB ens)(Strain A2 32 bars AA' ens 8 – GM bar 8 – ens 8 – GM bar 8)(Strain A3 32 bars AA' ens 8 – WP o-tpt 8 – ens 8 – WP o-tpt 8)(Strain A4 32 bars AA' JS pno 8 – ens 8 – BH alt 6 – ens 2)(Tag 2 bars ens modulation)(Strain A5 32 bars AA' JA o-tbn 8 – saxes 8 – ens 16)

Top And Bottom Key of F / C / F Victor

(Intro 8 bars WP o-tpt + ens)(Strain A1 16 bars AABA WP o-tpt + ens)(Interlude 8 bars WP o-tpt + ens modulation)(Strain B1 16 bars AA' saxes 8 – ens 8)(Strain A2 16 bars AABA JS pno 8 – WP m-tpt 8)(Interlude 8 bars ens 5 – WP o-tpt 3)(Strain A3 16 bars AABA JA o-tbn 8 – GM bar 4 – ens 4)(Tag 2 bars ens)

Notable differences of takes:

53808-1: WP first 8-bar o-tpt solo: tpt plays jumping trills in bars 1 and 6

53808-2: WP first 8-bar o-tpt solo: tpt plays jumping trills in bars 5 and 8

53809-1: Pace c. 100 bpm / WP m-tpt solo after pno solo starts with: 3 quarter-notes a, eighth-note a, dotted eighth-note bb, sixteenth-note f, 2 quarter-notes d

53809-2: Pace c. 134 bpm / WP m-tpt solo after pno solo starts with: 2 quarter-notes d, half-note d, dotted-eighth-note d, sixteenth-note c, quarter-note bb

003 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

72561-1 Mighty Sweet Vic 23399, Classics 969

72562-1 Minnie The Moocher's Weddin' Day Vic 24027, Classics 969

72562-2 Minnie The Moocher's Weddin' Day Vic unissued, but test exists not on LP/CD

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)

004 BARON LEE AND THE MILLS BLUE RHYTHM BAND

New York,

Aug. 17, 1932

Baron Lee – dir;

Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson – tpt;

Harry ‘Father’ White, Henry Hicks – tbn;

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

Edgar Hayes – pno; (*Thomas Fats Waller?*) – pno (3); Benny James – gtr; Hayes Alvis – sbs; O’Neil Spencer – dms;

Chuck Richards – voc; Harry White – arr (1,3)

12181-1 Sentimental Gentleman From Georgia

Ban 32531,

Chronological Classics 676

12182-1 You Gave Me Everything But Love

Ban 32531,

Chronological Classics 676

12203-1 Old Yazoo

Mt M-12480,

Chronological Classics 676

12204-2 Reefer Man

Mt M-12464,

Chronological Classics 676

Composer credits: 12181 (*Parish - Perkins*); 12182 (*Koehler – Arlen*); 12203 (*Waller*); 12204 (*Razaf – Robinson*)

Very easy to recognise here are Crawford Wethington with his sweet and silken tone on alto playing the first parts with schmalz, and Gene Mikell with a stronger and straight tone playing well constructed jazz solos on alto – and sometimes “dirty” clarinet spots.

- All Rust editions name trombonist George Washington for this session, yet, the authors of the Storyville series still have White. It is my firm opinion that we still hear Harry ‘Father’ White here with seven typical and exemplary bars of trombone solo in ‘Old Yazoo’. George Washington – in opposition – can be heard with 16 bars solo in ‘Jazz Cocktail’ of the next MBRB session of 23 September 1932, with a much

mellow tone, more legato phrasing and a typical jumping-trill, not heard in White's presentations. This then would also meet with my identification of Harry White in the Billy Banks session of the next day - 18 August 1932 – for which I initially thought to have heard George Washington.

From this session on Eugene Mikell, son of a very highly esteemed music teacher and instructor to young musicians of colour in the early 1900s in the Jenkins Orphanage, South Carolina, and later assistant leader for Jim Europe's 369th Infantry Band, plays second alto in the MBRB, and had this to say about "doubling" among musicians in the MBRB: "See, on all those things you sent me, those cassettes of the Blue Rhythm Band. I'm playing baritone and alto, but most of the clarinet work was done by Joe Garland" (Storyville 1998-9, p.90).

- Storyville 1998/99 features a great and voluminous interview with Gene Mikell, alto sax player with MBRB for about three years. In this Mikell analyses a couple of titles recorded by the MBRB, sent to him by way of cassettes by the indefatigable interviewers Peter Carr and Al Vollmer. The first title they talk about is not 'Swanee Lullaby' as they suppose (page 100), but certainly has to be 'You Gave Me Everything But Love' as can be deduced from the given structure and the factual one as listed below under 'Soloists'! Gene Mikell is "pretty sure" that the singer is Chuck Richards, while Chick Bullock is supposed by others – the interviewers? Gene Mikell reports in Coda 11/75 p.25: "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."

- As noted below (Storyville 109, MBRB), Billy Banks remembered Fats Waller's presence in the recording studio and playing a solo spot in his own composition 'Old Yazoo'. And I (the author) think that there is a remarkable – and obvious - difference to Edgar Hayes' style in the 8-bar piano solo in 'Old Yazoo'. I could well imagine Waller – in the studio – being invited to play just this short piano passage to everyone's delight. The style is not as impressive and powerful as Hayes, but wears Waller's exact and sober left-hand playing, much different from Hayes' opulence, but he only solos in the middle-eight (B part) of the third chorus, otherwise shared by Garland on tenor sax and Ed Anderson on his "Southern" trumpet (after vocal chorus by Banks and a 20-bars interlude). But: Storyville 110, p. 67, says: "(Billy Banks is probably remembering that Fats wrote 'Old Yazoo' and that he had been in the studio with Fats for the Rhythm Makers session of 26 July (only a few days before Waller's departure) (to Europe – KBR), and bringing the two items together in his memory years later – L.W.). And Storyville 2002/03 carries a letter from a British reader/listener who states: "With reference to the question of Fats Waller being on the Mills Blue Rhythm Band recording of 'Old Yazoo' as recalled by Billy Banks (see Storyville 110 pp 66/7), I wonder if the explanation is that, as Laurie mentioned, Banks had recorded with The Rhythm Makers just a few days prior to his departure for Europe and one of the numbers was 'Yellow Dog Blues'. The lyrics include the line "He's gone where the Southern cross the Yellow Dog." 'Yellow Dog' is, of course, the nickname for the Yazoo Delta railway and I feel is probably the origin of the mistaken memory by Billy Banks." Very nice, but: did this man not listen? My explanation is that there is Thomas Fats Waller very probably at the keyboard for eight - admittedly moderate – bars of solo. But: following Mr. Onslow's note in Storyville 110 (see below) it cannot be! Given, that his dates of Waller's departure and/or return are correct! And: who might this be else? Not Edgar Hayes, at least.

- And listen with relish to Alvis' four splendidly slapped bass triplets in bar 16 of the interlude in 'Old Yazoo' and also in the last A-part of the last chorus of 'You Gave Me Everything But Love'! Great!

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography 1948*: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Edward Anderson (tp); George Washington, Henry Hicks (tb); Crawford Wethington, Gene Michael, Joe Garland (s); Edgar Hayes (p); Benny James (g); Hayes Alvis (b); O'Neil Spencer (dm)

- Rust*2: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Ed Anderson (tpt); George Washington, Henry Hicks (tbn); Crawford Wethington (alt, bar); Charlie Holmes (alt); Joe Garland (ten); Edgar Hayes (p); Benny James (bjo); Hayes Alvis (sbs); O'Neil Spencer (dms); Billy Banks (vcl)

- Rust*3,*4: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Ed Anderson -t; George Washington, Henry Hicks -tb; Crawford Wethington -as -bar; Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar; Edgar Hayes -p; Benny James -bj; Hayes Alvis -sb; O'Neil Spencer -d; Billy Banks -Chick Bullock -v; Baron Lee -dir

- Rust*6: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Ed Anderson, t; George Washington, Henry Hicks, tb; Crawford Wethington, as, bar; Gene Mikell, cl, as; Joe Garland, cl, ts, bar; Edgar Hayes, p, a; Benny James, bj, g; Hayes Alvis, sb; O'Neil Spencer, d; Billy Banks, v; Baron Lee, dir

- Storyville 109, MBRB: Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson, t; Harry White, Henry Hicks, tb; Crawford Wethington, as/cl; Gene Mikell, cl/as/bar; Joe Garland, cl/ts/bar; Edgar Hayes, p; Benny James, bj/g; Hayes Alvis, sb; O'Neil Spencer, d; Billy Banks, v; Fats Waller, p. replaces Hayes on first title only. "In 1952 Billy Banks appeared for a week at the Shepherd's Bush Empire, London, and Dave Carey and Arthur Taylor went back stage to have a chat with him on general, rather than discographical matters. The MBRB was mentioned and Banks asked if they realised that the pianist on Old Yazoo was Fats Waller and not Edgar Hayes, adding that it was Waller's tune and, as he was in the studio, it was agreed that he should sit in on this number only. The short piano solo is unlike Hayes' other work and enough like Waller for us to accept this as correct."

- Storyville 110-66, Doug Onslow: "I was surprised to see the old story of FATS Waller being present on 'Old Yazoo' being aired again in the MBRB solography in issue 109 (of Storyville – KBR). I would also question the date assigned to it by the team as, according to my files, it was recorded on the 17th August. I have checked this out with Brian Rust who agrees my date and confirms that no MBRB sides were made on 26th August. 'Old Yazoo' was reviewed in a January 1933 Melody Maker and that made no mention of Fats Waller being present on piano – presumably because Fats was then in France! He sailed from New York on 5th August 1932, spent about six weeks in Paris and, when his "funds ran out", borrowed some money and returned to the U.S.A. in mid-September and almost immediately on his return (29th September) recorded two numbers with Monette Moore. So, whatever Billy Banks was recalling, his memory on this was obviously a little confused. Waller certainly did write 'Old Yazoo' – for the Boswell Sisters, when they needed an extra number for one of their shows, and they had recorded it in June 1932, but I can't throw any light on which recording it might have been that Billy banks recalled – perhaps not a recording at all, but a broadcast?"

Soloists ad-lib:

12181-1: EA m-tpt obl over voc 8; JG clt 4; EA o-tpt 4; HH o-tbn 6; EA o-tpt 3 + 3; EH pno 8

12182-1: SH m-tpt 16; HH m-tbn 8; SH m-tpt 6; EH pno 16; GM alt 8

12203-1: HW o-tbn 7; EA m-tpt obl over voc 8; JG ten 2 + 2; JG ten – EA o-tpt chase 16; TFW? pno 1+8; JG ten – EA o-tpt chase 8; HH o-tbn 4

12204-2: GM alt 2; GM clt 2+8; JG ten 6; WJ m-tpt obl over voc 14; HH m-tbn 2+16; HH m-tbn obl 10; HH o-tbn coda 3; ?EA o-tpt coda 3

005 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 'Do In' 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 obl 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-tp + BB scat voc 16 – HFW m-tbn + BB scat voc 8 – WPJ m-tp + 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)

006 **BARON LEE AND THE MILLS BLUE RHYTHM BAND**

New York,

Sep. 23, 1932

Baron Lee – dir;

Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson – tpt;

George Washington, Henry Hicks – tbn;

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

Edgar Hayes – pno, arr; Benny James – bjo, gtr; Hayes Alvis - sbs; O'Neil Spencer – dms;

Benny Carter – arr (2); Gene Gifford – arr (3)

12356

Maniac's Ball

ARC unissued

not on LP/CD

12357-1

Jazz Cocktail

Ban 32608,

Chronological Classics 676

12358-1

Smoke Rings

Ban 32608,

Chronological Classics 676

Composer credits: 12357 (Benny Carter); 12358 (Gene Gifford)

In 'Jazz Cocktail' we now definitely hear the soloistic work of new trombonist George Washington, very much influenced by the trombone playing of the late Jimmy Harrison. Garland attributes hot half-chorus solos in both issued titles. And, please, listen to that very much overlooked - but really great - bassist Hayes Alvis.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography 1948: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Edward Anderson (tp); George Washington, Henry Hicks (tb); Crawford Wethington, Gene Michael, Joe Garland (s); Edgar Hayes (p); Benny James (g); Hayes Alvis (b); O'Neil Spencer (dm)*

- Rust*2: *Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Ed Anderson (tpt); George Washington, Henry Hicks (tbn); Crawford Wethington (alt, bar);*

Charlie Holmes (alt.); Joe Garland (ten); Edgar Hayes (p); Benny James (bjo); Hayes Alvis (sbs); O'Neil Spencer (dms); Billy Banks (vcl)

- Rust*3,*4: *Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Ed Anderson -t; George Washington, Henry Hicks -tb; Crawford Wethington -as -bar; Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar; Edgar Hayes -p; Benny James -bj -g; Hayes Alvis -sb -bb; O'Neil Spencer -d; Benny Carter -a; Baron Lee -dir*

- Rust*6: *Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Ed Anderson, t; George Washington, Henry Hicks, tb; Crawford Wethington, as, bar; Gene Mikell, cl, as; Joe Garland, cl, ts, bar, a; Edgar Hayes, p, a; Benny James, bj g; Hayes Alvis, bb, sb; O'Neil Spencer, d; Benny Carter, a; Baron Lee, dir*

- Storyville 109, MBRB: *Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson, t; George Washington, Henry Hicks, tb; Crawford Wethington, as/cl; Gene Mikell, cl/as/bar; Joe Garland, cl/ts/bar; Edgar Hayes, p; Benny James, bj/g; Hayes Alvis, sb; O'Neil Spencer, d; Billy Banks, v. Soloists ad-lib:*

12357-1:

EA o-tpt 1+16; GW o-tbn 16; HA sbs 16; JG ten 16; EH pno 16

12358-1:

HH m-tbn 15; JG ten 16; HH m-tbn 1+6

007 **THE BLUE RHYTHM BAND**

New York,

Mar. 01, 1933

Baron Lee – dir;

Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson, *Eddie Mallory* – tpt;

George Washington, Henry Hicks – tbn;

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

Edgar Hayes – pno; Benny James – gtr; Hayes Alvis - sbs; O'Neil Spencer – dms;

Joe Garland – arr (1); Edgar Hayes – arr (2)

265074-3

Ridin' In Rhythm

Col CB-734,

Chronological Classics 676

265075-2

Weary Traveller

Par R-2366,

Chronological Classics 676

265076-2

Buddy's Wednesday Outing

Col CB-734,

Chronological Classics 676

Composer credits: 265074 (Hayes); 265075 (Hughes); 265076 (Hughes)

Storyville 109, p.7: "The titles on the above session contain no trumpet solos by Anderson or Jones, they are therefore tentatively ascribed to Mallory, though they do not seem similar in style." Mallory usually is not seen as a competent jazz trumpet player/soloist! Yet, he is known to have fronted the band for some short time in 1933 and is shown as such with his trumpet in a photo (see McCarthy, *Big Band Jazz* p. 255). A possible alternate candidate for the trumpet solos ascribed to him by the authors of MBRB Discography/Solography might be first trumpet man Hemphill, although I am not aware of his individual style and the vibrato does not seem to be his. But for the muted trumpet solo in 'Buddy's Wednesday Outing' I maintain that Wardell Jones with his smooth and horizontal modern style should be the originator.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography 1948: probably: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Edward Anderson (tp); George Washington, Henry Hicks (tb); Crawford Wethington, Gene Michael, Joe Garland (s); Edgar Hayes (p); Benny James (g); Hayes Alvis (b); O'Neil Spencer (dm)*

- Rust*2: *Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Ed Anderson (tpt); George Washington, Henry Hicks (tbn); Crawford Wethington (alt, bar);*

Charlie Holmes (alt.); Joe Garland (ten); Edgar Hayes (p); Benny James (bjo); Hayes Alvis (sbs); O'Neil Spencer (dms); Billy Banks (vcl)

- Rust*3,*4: *Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Ed Anderson, Eddie Mallory -t; George Washington, Henry Hicks -tb; Crawford Wethington -as -bar; Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar; Edgar Hayes -p; Benny James -bj -g; Hayes Alvis -sb -bb; O'Neil Spencer -d; Joe Garland -a; Edgar Hayes -a; Baron Lee -dir*

- Storyville 109, MBRB: *Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Eddie Mallory, Ed Anderson, t; George Washington, Henry Hicks, tb; Crawford Wethington, as/cl; Gene Mikell, cl/as/bar; Joe Garland, cl/ts/bar; Edgar Hayes, p; Benny James, bj/g; Hayes Alvis, sb; O'Neil Spencer, d; Billy Banks, v. „The titles on the above session contain no trumpet solos by Anderson or Jones, they are therefore tentatively ascribed to Mallory, though they do not seem similar in style.“*

- Rust*6: *Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Eddie Mallory, Ed Anderson, t; George Washington, Henry Hicks, tb; Crawford Wethington, as, bar; Gene Mikell, cl, as; Joe Garland, cl, ts, bar, a; Edgar Hayes, p, a; Benny James, bj, g; Hayes Alvis, bb, sb; O'Neil Spencer, d; Baron Lee, dir*

Soloists ad-lib:

265074-3:

HH m-tbn 30; EH pno 2+16; JG clt 8; EH pno 6; GM alt 2+16; EH pno 6; GM alt 2+6; ?EM o-tpt 8; JG ten 8

265075-2:

GM alt 16 + 6; JG ten 8; EH pno 8; ?EM o-tpt 1+8; JG ten 8

265076-2:

JG ten 32; WJ m-tpt 32; EH pno 32; HH m-tbn 16; JG ten 8

008 **BARON LEE AND HIS BLUE RHYTHM BAND**

New York,

c. Mar. 1933

Baron Lee – dir;
 Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson – tpt;
 George Washington, Henry Hicks – tbn;
 Crawford Wethington – alt, clt; Gene Mikell – alt, clt, bar, Joe Garland – ten, clt;
 Edgar Hayes – pno; Benny James – gtr; Hayes Alvis - sbs; O'Neil Spencer – dms;
 Star Dust
 Ridin' In Rhythm

copyright date Aug. 08, 1933
 Film soundtrack Paramount Productions
 'The World At Large'

www.youtube.com
 www.youtube.com

Thanks to Franz Hoffmann's great services we have admittance to this Paramount Pictorial on You Tube.
 The whole affair – Calloway with Ellington and Baron Lee – is an advertisement of Irving Mills to praise the three best known bands of his stable. Musical segments are very short, but give good sketches of the bands.
 With little brilliance we see and hear Mills Blue Rhythm conducted by Baron Lee with fake baton-waves and constant smiling. But what a great aggregation this much too little known and praised unit this was, really.

Notes:

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

- Rust*2,*3,*4,*6: not listed

- Stratemann, *Negro Bands on Film, Vol. 1: Lammar Wright, Doc Cheatham, Edwin Swayzee -tp; DePriest Wheeler, Harry White -tb; Eddie Barefield, Andrew Brown, Arville Harris, Walter Thomas -reeds; Bennie Payne -p; Morris White -g; Al Morgan -b; Leroy Maxey -dm*

Soloists ad-lib:

Star Dust: no solos

Ridin' In Rhythm: 8 bars only, no solos

009 THE BLUE RHYTHM BAND

New York, Aug. 31, 1933

Baron Lee – dir;
 Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson – tpt;
 George Washington, Henry Hicks – tbn;
 Crawford Wethington – alt, clt; Gene Mikell – alt, clt, bar, Joe Garland – ten, clt;
 Edgar Hayes – pno; Benny James – gtr; Hayes Alvis - sbs; O'Neil Spencer – dms;
 Joe Garland – arr (1,2)

13929-1 Harlem After Midnight

Voc S-6, Chronological Classics 676

13930-1 Jazz Martini

Mt M-12793, Chronological Classics 676

13931-1 Feelin' Gay

Mt M-12793, Chronological Classics 676

13932 Out Of A Dream

ARC unissued not on LP/CD

Composer credits: 13929 (J. Garland); 13930 (J. Garland); 13931 (Mills Blue Rhythm Band)

We also hear Joe Garland as an arranger, here, practising full four-part voicing and uneven over four-beat-rhythm. Also, he provides enough soloistic space for himself. Thus, this whole session is a distinct jazz session, leaving out sentimental songs.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography 1948: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Edward Anderson (tp); George Washington, Henry Hicks (tb);*

Crawford Wethington, Gene Michael, Joe Garland (s); Edgar Hayes (p); Benny James (g); Hayes Alvis (b); O'Neil Spencer (dm)

- Rust*2: *Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Ed Anderson (tpt); George Washington, Henry Hicks (tbn); Crawford Wethington (alt, bar);*

Charlie Holmes (alt.); Joe Garland (ten); Edgar Hayes (p); Benny James (bj); Hayes Alvis (sbs); O'Neil Spencer (dms); Billy Banks (vcl)

- Rust*3,*4: *Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Ed Anderson, Eddie Mallory -t; George Washington, Henry Hicks -tb; Crawford Wethington -*

as -bar; Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar; Edgar Hayes -p; Benny James -bj -g; Hayes Alvis -sb -bb; O'Neil Spencer -d; Joe

Garland -a; Baron Lee -dir

- Rust*6: *Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Eddie Mallory, Ed Anderson, t; George Washington, Henry Hicks, tb; Crawford Wethington, as,*

bar; Gene Mikell, cl, as; Joe Garland, cl, ts, bar, a; Edgar Hayes, p, a; Benny James, bj, g; Hayes Alvis, bb, sb; O'Neil Spencer, d; Baron Lee,

dir

- Storyville 109, MBRB: *Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson, t; George Washington, Henry Hicks, tb; Crawford Wethington, as/cl;*

Gene Mikell, cl/as/bar; Joe Garland, cl/ts/bar; Edgar Hayes, p; Benny James, bj/g; Hayes Alvis, sb; O'Neil Spencer, d.

Soloists ad-lib:

13929-1: EH pno 8; JG ten 8; GW o-tbn 8; JG clt 1+8; EA o-tpt 16

13930-1: WJ m-tpt 16; GM bar 8; WJ m-tpt 8; JG clt 16; EH pno 8; JG clt 8; GW m-tbn 16; GM alt 8; GW m-tbn 8

13931-1: EA o-tpt 8; JG ten 2; HH o-tbn 2; JG ten 2; GM alt 8; GW o-tbn 8; JG ten 8; GM bar 16; WJ m-tpt 16; GW o-tbn 16;

EH pno 16

010 MILLS BLUE RHYTHM BAND

New York, Oct. 05, 1933

Baron Lee – dir;
 Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson – tpt;
 George Washington, Henry Hicks – tbn;
 Crawford Wethington – alt, clt; Gene Mikell – alt, clt, bar, Joe Garland – ten, clt;
 Edgar Hayes – pno; Benny James – gtr; Hayes Alvis - sbs; O'Neil Spencer – dms;
 Joe Garland – arr (4)

78093-1 Break It Down

Vic 24482, Chronological Classics 676

78094-1 Kokey Joe

Vic 24482, Chronological Classics 676

78095-1 Love's Serenade

Vic 24442, Chronological Classics 676

78096-1 Harlem After Midnight

Vic 24442, Chronological Classics 676

Composer credits: 78093 (Rose); 78094 (---); 78095 (Kurtz – Hayes – Mills); 78096 (J. Garland)

The Mills Blue Rhythm Band with the Victor Recording Company, now. As before, there is much jazz soloistic work on this session. What a great jazz band the MBRB were. There are good solos by everybody, with the exception of the first trumpet player and the guitarist, in fact. And listen to Hayes Alvis' fast triplets break after the unison sax section at the start of 'Kokey Joe'! Absolutely great and beautiful.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography 1948: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Edward Anderson (tp); George Washington, Henry Hicks (tb);*

Crawford Wethington, Gene Michael, Joe Garland (s); Edgar Hayes (p); Benny James (g); Hayes Alvis (b); O'Neil Spencer (dm)

- Rust*2: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Ed Anderson (tpt); George Washington, Henry Hicks (tbn); Crawford Wethington (alt, bar); Charlie Holmes (alt.); Joe Garland (ten); Edgar Hayes (p); Benny James (bjo); Hayes Alvis (sbs); O'Neil Spencer (dms); Billy Banks (vcl)
 - Rust*3: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Ed Anderson or Eddie Mallory -t; George Washington, Henry Hicks -tb; Crawford Wethington -as -bar; Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar; Edgar Hayes -p; Benny James -bj -g; Hayes Alvis -sb -bb; O'Neil Spencer -d; Joe Garland -a;
 - Storyville 109, MBRB: Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson, t; George Washington, Henry Hicks, tb; Crawford Wethington, as/cl; Gene Mikell, cl/as/bar; Joe Garland, cl/ts/bar; Edgar Hayes, p; Benny James, bj/g; Hayes Alvis, sb; O'Neil Spencer, d
 - Rust*4: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Ed Anderson, Eddie Mallory -t; George Washington, Henry Hicks -tb; Crawford Wethington -as -bar; Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar; Edgar Hayes -p; Benny James -bj -g; Hayes Alvis -sb -bb; O'Neil Spencer -d; Joe Garland -a; Baron Lee -dir
 - Rust*6: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Eddie Mallory, Ed Anderson, t; George Washington, Henry Hicks, tb; Crawford Wethington, as, bar; Gene Mikell, cl, as; Joe Garland, cl, ts, bar, a; Edgar Hayes, p, a; Benny James, bj, g; Hayes Alvis, bb, sb; O'Neil Spencer, d; Baron Lee, dir

Soloists ad-lib:

78093-1: JG ten 4; GM bar 16; GW o-tbn 8; GM bar 6; WJ m-tpt 2+16; EH pno 8; WJ m-tpt 6; JG ten 16; JG ten 4
 78094-1: JG ten 32; HH o-tbn 16; EH pno 8; GW o-tbn 8; JG clt 30; GM bar 2+32; EA m-tpt 8
 78095-1: EH pno 4; JG clt 16; EH pno 8
 78096-1: EH pno 7; JG ten 8; GW o-tbn 8; GM clt 8; WJ m-tpt 16

011 MILLS BLUE RHYTHM BAND

New York, Oct. – Dec. 1933

Baron Lee – dir;

copyright date Feb. 06, 1934

Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson – tpt;

Vitaphone film ‘Mills Blue Rhythm Band’

George Washington, Henry Hicks – tbn;

(or ‘Rent Party’)

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

Edgar Hayes – pno; Benny James – gtr; Hayes Alvis – sbs, bbs; O'Neil Spencer – dms;

Sally Gooding – voc; The Three Deuces – tap dance

Underneath The Harlem Moon

www.youtube.com

I Would Do Anything For You

www.youtube.com

There Goes My Headache

www.youtube.com

Tony's Wife

www.youtube.com

The Peanut Vendor

www.youtube.com

Love Is The Thing

www.youtube.com

Blue Rhythm

www.youtube.com

This film presents the Mills Blue Rhythm Band together with singer Sally Gooding, a little-known, good looking singer/actor who, yet, performed with the Calloway and the Ellington bands in the 1930s and recorded with a Teddy Wilson unit in 1937.

Soloists:

UTHM: EA o-tpt 8

IWDAFY: no solos

TGMH: SG voc, no solos

TW: EA o-tpt 16; JG ten 8; EA o-tpt 8

TPV: WJ m-tpt 16

LITT: SG voc, EH pno 8

BR: HH o-tbn 4 + 4; JG ten 16

012 MILLS BLUE RHYTHM BAND

New York,

Dec. 04, 1933

Lucky Millinder – dir;

Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson – tpt;

George Washington, Henry Hicks – tbn;

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

Edgar Hayes – pno; Benny James – gtr; Hayes Alvis - sbs; O'Neil Spencer – dms;

Adelaide Hall – voc

78827-1 Drop Me Off In Harlem

unissued on 78, RCA FXM1 7228 (LP)

78827-2 Drop Me Off In Harlem

unissued on 78, Retrieval RTR79045-1

78828-1 Reaching For The Cotton Moon

unissued on 78, RCA FXM1 7228 (LP)

78828-2 Reaching For The Cotton Moon

unissued on 78, Retrieval RTR79045-1

78828-3 Reaching For The Cotton Moon

unissued on 78, Retrieval RTR79078

78829-? Love Is The Thing

unissued on 78, Retrieval RTR79045-1

78829-? Love Is The Thing

unissued on 78, not on LP/CD

Composer credits: 78827 (Ellington – Kenny); 78828 (Stept – Green); 78829 (Young – Washington)

Under the Victor roof now, Irving Mills used the MBRB to accompany singer Adelaide Hall. Luckily, a good batch of alternate takes are preserved, their dissimilarities listed below. There is not so much band music in the first two titles, but Joe Garland shines with beautiful clarinet performances in titles 2 and 3. And there is great semi-classical piano by Edgar Hayes in the last title. The arrangements are rather untypical for the MBRB! This is Henry Hicks' last known recording. And Lucky Millinder now is the front-man of the band.

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

- Rust*2: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Ed Anderson (tpt); George Washington, Henry Hicks (tbn); Crawford Wethington (alt, bar); Charlie Holmes (alt.); Joe Garland (ten); Edgar Hayes (p); Benny James (bjo); Hayes Alvis (sbs); O'Neil Spencer (dms); Lucky Millinder (dir); Adelaide Hall (vcl)

- Rust*3,*4,*6: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Ed Anderson -t; George Washington, Henry Hicks -tb; Crawford Wethington -as -bar; Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar; Edgar Hayes -p; Benny James -bj -g; Hayes Alvis -sb -bb; O'Neil Spencer -d; Adelaide Hall -v; Lucky Millinder -dir

- Storyville 109, MBRB: Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson, t; George Washington, Henry Hicks, tb; Crawford Wethington, as /cl; Gene Mikell, cl/as/bar; Joe Garland, cl/ts/bar; Edgar Hayes, p; Benny James, bj/g; Hayes Alvis, sb; O'Neil Spencer, d; Adelaide Hall, v.

Soloists ad-lib:

78827-2: ?EA m. tpt obl 4; GW o-tbn obl 3
 78828-2: JG clt obl 32
 78809-?: EH pno intro 4; JG clt 7; EH pno 30

Discernible differences of takes:

78827-1: Band starts 4-bar intro pno – cymbal - gtr
 AH sings in the first four bars of the second chorus (after verse): “Please, won’t you drop me off in Harlem”
 78827-2: Band starts 8-bar intro full band for 4 bars, then 4 bars pno – cymbal - gtr
 AH sings in the first four bars of the second chorus (after verse) scat-vocal without words
 78828-1: Last chorus, break in bars 19/20: clt 4 eighth-notes sequence g – f# – a – c
 78828-2: Last chorus, break in bars 19/20: clt sequence 3 eighth-notes c – a – c, eighth-triplet g-f-d
 78828-3: Last chorus, break in bars 19/20: clt sequence 4 eighth-notes c – g – c -g, eighth-triplet f-d-c
 78829: One take of this title has been issued on Retrieval, but it is not known which one. Thus, comparison impossible.

013 MILLS BLUE RHYTHM BAND

Chicago, Feb. 20, 1934

Lucky Millinder – dir;
 Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson – tpt;
 George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham – tbn;
 Crawford Wethington – alt, clt; Gene Mikell – alt, clt, bar, Joe Garland – ten, clt;
 Edgar Hayes – pno; Benny James – gtr; Hayes Alvis - sbs; O’Neil Spencer – dms;
 Harry White – arr (2)

80278-1 The Stuff Is Here (And It’s Mellow) BB B-5688, Retrieval RTR79045-1
 80279-1 The Growl BB B-5688, Retrieval RTR79045-1

Composer credits: 80278 (Smith – Bishop – Williams); 80279 (White)

Trombone star J.C. Higginbotham has joined the band now, replacing Henry Hicks, but not yet soloing.

From Gene Mikell’s own statements in Storyville 1989/9 we know that he was responsible for baritone solo parts played (see session 016). Thus, Richard Sudhalter’s assumption re baritone soloist of the MBRB (see CD booklet to Retrieval CD 79045) must be wrong. It is not Crawford Wethington, who must have been a very good lead-part player, rather than a soloist. And it is decidedly Gene Mikell who plays that growl clarinet in ‘The Growl’.

(The interested listener and reader is advised not to believe in the number of bars of components of the titles of this and the next sessions, given in the Gene Mikell interview in Storyville 1998-9. They are mostly given half as long as in reality!)

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography 1948*: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Edward Anderson (tp); George Washington, Henry Hicks (tb); Crawford Wethington, Gene Michael, Joe Garland (s); Edgar Hayes (p); Benny James (g); Hayes Alvis (b); O’Neil Spencer (dm)
 - Rust*2: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Ed Anderson (tpt); George Washington, Henry Hicks (tbn); Crawford Wethington (alt, bar); Charlie Holmes (alt); Joe Garland (ten); Edgar Hayes (p); Benny James (bjo); O’Neil Spencer (dms)
 - Rust*3: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Ed Anderson -t; George Washington, Henry Hicks -tb; Crawford Wethington -as -bar; Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar; Edgar Hayes -p; Benny James -bj; O’Neil Spencer -d
 - Storyville 109, MBRB: Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson, t; George Washington, Henry Hicks, tb; Crawford Wethington, as/cl; Gene Mikell, cl/as/bar; Joe Garland, cl/ts/bar; Edgar Hayes, p; Benny James, bj/g; Hayes Alvis, sb; O’Neil Spencer, d. „According to *Jazz Records*, Hayes Alvis is omitted from the above session. However, a bass is not only clearly heard, but is featured in a solo.“
 - Rust*4, *6: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Ed Anderson -t; George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham -tb; Crawford Wethington -as -bar; Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar; Edgar Hayes -p; Benny James -bj -g; Hayes Alvis -sb -bb; O’Neil Spencer -d

Soloists ad-lib:

80278-1: HA sbs 8; GW o-tbn 8; EH pno 1+8; WJ m-tpt 8; EH pno 8; EA o-tpt 8; JG ten 1+7
 80279-1: WJ m-tpt 22; GW o-tbn 12; GM clt 12; JG ten – WJ m-tpt chase 10; GM bar 22; EH pno 12; WJ m-tpt 20

014 CHICK BULLOCK AND HIS LEVEE LOUNGERS

New York, Apr. 19, 1934

Chick Bullock – voc, ldr;
 Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson – tpt;
 George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham – tbn;
 Crawford Wethington – alt, clt; Gene Mikell – alt, clt, bar, Joe Garland – ten, clt;
 Edgar Hayes – pno; Benny James – gtr; Hayes Alvis – sbs; O’Neil Spencer – dms;
 O’Neil Spencer – voc answers

15084-1 Frankie And Johnny Ban 33050, Retrieval RTR 79035
 15085-1 I Can’t Dance (I Got Ants In My Pants) Ban 33050, Retrieval RTR 79035

Composer credits: 15084 (Traditional); 15085 (Gaines – Williams)

This is the tamest MBRB, under Chick Bullock’s name. And Bullock certainly is not the singer to make them cook. But they still swing. Arrangements may be from Chick Bullock’s book.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography 1948*: not listed
 - Rust*2, *3: no personnel
 - Storyville 109, MBRB: Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson, t; George Washington, Henry Hicks, tb; Crawford Wethington, as/cl; Gene Mikell, cl/as/bar; Joe Garland, cl/ts/bar; Edgar Hayes, p; Benny James, bj/g; Hayes Alvis, sb; O’Neil Spencer, d
 - Rust*4, *6: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Ed Anderson or Eddie Mallory -t; J.C. Higginbotham, George Washington -tb; Crawford Wethington -as -bar; Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar; Edgar Hayes -p; Benny James -bj -g; Hayes Alvis -sb -bb; O’Neil Spencer -d (Mr Bullock states Mills Blue Rhythm Band was used for this session).

Soloists ad-lib:

15084-1: ?EA m-tpt 12; GW o-tbn 12; JG ten 12
 15085-1: GW o-tbn 16 + 8

015 MILLS BLUE RHYTHM BAND

New York, Oct. 04, 1934

Lucky Millinder – dir;

Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Henry Red Allen – tpt;

George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham – tbn;

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

Edgar Hayes – pno; Lawrence Lucie – gtr; Elmer James – sbs; O'Neil Spencer – dms;

Chuck Richards – voc (3); George Washington – arr (1); Alex Hill – arr (2); *Edgar Hayes* – arr (3)

CO-16035-A Swingin' In E Flat Col 3038-D, Retrieval RTR 79045

CO-16036-A Let's Have A Jubilee Col 2963-D, Retrieval RTR 79045

CO-16037-A Out Of A Dream Col 2963-D, Retrieval RTR 79045

Composer credits: CO-16035 (Washington); CO-16036 (Hill – Mills); 16037 (Washington – Hayes)

With this session, Hayes Alvis apparently has changed over to band-manager duties to be ordered into the Ellington band in May 1935 (there exists a small snippet of paper with “*You join band Philadelphia, Friday 31. Duke.*” on it.) This certainly with approval or even instigation of Irving Mills. Mills wanted to strengthen the MBRB and cannibalized Fletcher Henderson's band - at that time also managed by Mills - and in a bad state following their rejection to being presented by the Cotton Club. Thus, we suddenly find a good part of Henderson's men in the MBRB: Henry 'Red' Allen, J.C. Higginbotham, Lawrence Lucie, and Elmer James.

Gene Mikell is on soprano sax in 'Swingin' In E Flat', on baritone and growl-clarinet (from his own testimony) on 'Let's Have A Jubilee'.

Mikell was responsible for growl parts on the clarinet. (All identification of soloists by Gene Mikell in Storyville 1989-9 for sessions 026, 028, 029.)

Notes:

- *Ch. Delaunay, New Hot Discography 1948: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Henry Allen (tp); George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham (tb); Buster Bailey (cl); Crawford Wethington (as); Joe Garland (ts&arr); Edgar Hayes (p); Lawrence Lucie (g); Elmer James (b); O'Neil Spencer (dm); Chuck Richards (vo)*

- *Rust*2: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Henry Allen (tpt); George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham (tbn); Buster Bailey (clt); Crawford Wethington (alt); Joe Garland (ten); Edgar Hayes (p); Lawrence Lucie (gtr); Elmer James (sbs); O'Neil Spencer (dms); Lucky Millinder (dir); Chuck Richards (vcl)*

- *Rust*3: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill -t; Henry Allen -t -v; George Washington -tb -a; , J.C. Higginbotham -tb; Buster Bailey, Crawford Wethington -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar -a; Edgar Hayes -p; Lawrence Lucie -g; Elmer James -sb; O'Neil Spencer -d; Lucky Millinder -dir; Chuck Richards -v; Alex Hill -Will Hudson -a*

- *Rust*4,*6: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Henry Allen -t; George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham -tb; Crawford Wethington -cl -as; Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar -a; Edgar Hayes -p; Lawrence Lucie -g; Elmer James -sb; O'Neil Spencer -d; Lucky Millinder -dir; Chuck Richards -v; George Washington -Alex Hill -a*

- *Storyville 109, MBRB: Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson, t; George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham, tb; Crawford Wethington, as/bar/cl; Gene Mikell, ss/as/bar/cl; Joe Garland, ts/bsx/cl; Edgar Hayes, p; Lawrence Lucie, g; Elmer James, sb; O'Neil Spencer, d; Chuck Richards, v.*

Soloists ad-lib:

CO-16035-A: JG ten intro 4; JG ten 18; GM sop 2+5; JG ten 7; HRA o-tpt 1+22; EH pno 2+18

CO-16036-A: HRA o-tpt 1+8; GM bar 2+16; EH pno 14; GW o-tbn 8; HRA o-tpt 8; GM clt 16 + 8; JG ten 8

CO-16037-A: JG ten intro 4; ?JCH m-tbn 32; EH pno 2; WJ m-tpt 8

016 MILLS BLUE RHYTHM BAND

New York,

Dec. 05, 1934

Lucky Millinder – dir;

Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Henry Red Allen – tpt;

George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham – tbn;

Crawford Wethington – alt, clt; Gene Mikell – alt, bar, clt, sop; Joe Garland – ten, clt; Buster Bailey – clt;

Edgar Hayes – pno; Lawrence Lucie – gtr; Elmer James – sbs; O'Neil Spencer – dms, vib;

Chuck Richards – voc (2); *Edgar Hayes* – arr (1); *Will Hudson* – arr (3)

CO-16271-1 African Lullaby Col 3036-D, Retrieval RTR 79045

CO-16272-1 Solitude Col 2994-D, Retrieval RTR 79045

CO-16273-1 Dancing Dogs Col 3044-D, Retrieval RTR 79045

Composer credits: CO-16271 (Hayes - Mills); CO-16272 (Ellington – DeLange – Mills); 16273 (Hudson)

The saxophone section at the start of 'African Lullaby' is led by a soprano sax, thus Gene Mikell. In this title we find the first Higginbotham solos with the MBRB. He is subdued in all titles here. Hemphill is remarkable on his strong and sweet first trumpet in 'Solitude', and Red Allen is amazing as always and everywhere. Elmer James plays a more modern bass than Hayes Alvis did. Mikell on soprano sax in 'Dancing Dogs' shows himself a fantastic musician, much better than his relative obscurity would allow.

Now, with the advent of the Henderson men, the period of Father White's arrangements seems to be over. And what a pity for that! They made the sound of the classic Mills Blue Rhythm Band. From now on, the MBRB will be just one of the big bands in uptown New York, technically better, but with less individuality.

Notes:

- *Ch. Delaunay, New Hot Discography 1948: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Henry Allen (tp); George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham (tb); Buster Bailey (cl); Crawford Wethington, Gene Michael (as); Joe Garland (ts&arr); Edgar Hayes (p); Lawrence Lucie (g); Elmer James (b); O'Neil Spencer (dm); Chuck Richards (vo)*

- *Rust*2: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Henry Allen (tpt); George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham (tbn); Buster Bailey (clt); Crawford Wethington, Gene Michaels (alt); Joe Garland (ten); Edgar Hayes (p); Lawrence Lucie (gtr); Elmer James (sbs); O'Neil Spencer (dms); Lucky Millinder (dir); Chuck Richards (vcl)*

- *Rust*3: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill -t; Henry Allen -t -v; George Washington -tb -a; , J.C. Higginbotham -tb; Buster Bailey, Crawford Wethington, Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar -a; Edgar Hayes -p; Lawrence Lucie -g; Elmer James -sb; O'Neil Spencer -d; Lucky Millinder -dir; Chuck Richards -v; Alex Hill -Will Hudson -a*

- *Storyville 109, MBRB: Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson, t; George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham, tb; Buster Bailey, cl/as; Crawford Wethington, as/bar/cl; Gene Mikell, ss/as/bar/cl; Joe Garland, ts/bsx/cl; Edgar Hayes, p; Lawrence Lucie, g; Elmer James, sb; O'Neil Spencer, d; Chuck Richards, v. „In the two sessions above we have reversed the positions of Mikell and Bailey as given in „Jazz Records‘ for the following reasons: There are solos by Mikell, but none by Bailey on the October session, and reports in the contemporary press such as those quoted in ‘Hendersonia‘ show that at the time of the October session Bailey was still with Fletcher Henderson.“*

- *Rust*4,*6: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Henry Allen -t; George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham -tb; Crawford Wethington -cl -as; Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar -a; Edgar Hayes -p; Lawrence Lucie -g; Elmer James -sb; O'Neil Spencer -d; Lucky Millinder -dir; Chuck Richards -v.*

Soloists ad-lib:

CO-16271-1: JCH m-tbn 12; BB clt 12; GM alt - JCH m-tbn chase 12; HRA o-tpt 1+2; WJ m-tpt 2 + 2 + 2; BB clt coda 1
 CO-16272-1: BB clt obl 30; HRA o-tpt 8; SH m-tpt 8
 CO-16273-1: GM sop 24; WJ m-tpt 2+22; JG ten 12; BB clt 12; EH pno 12; BB clt over ens 10

017 MILLS BLUE RHYTHM BAND

New York,

Dec. 11, 1934

Lucky Millinder – dir;

Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Henry Red Allen – tpt;

George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham – tbn;

Crawford Wethington – alt, clt; Gene Mikell – alt, bar, clt; Joe Garland – ten, clt, bsx; Buster Bailey – clt;

Edgar Hayes – pno; Lawrence Lucie - gtr; Elmer James - sbs; O'Neil Spencer – dms, vib;

Chuck Richards – voc (1,3); *Edgar Hayes* – arr (1); *Joe Garland* – arr (2)

CO-16465-1 Love's Serenade

Voc 2867,

Retrieval RTR 79045

CO-16466-1 Keep The Rhythm Going

Col 2994-D,

Retrieval RTR 79045

CO-16467-1 Like A Bolt From The Blue

Voc 2867,

Retrieval RTR 79045

Composer credits: CO-16465 (Hayes – Kurtz - Mills); CO-16466 (Garland); 16467 (Oakland – Paris – Mills)

Now, that the MBRB have become more “modern” and “professional”, their titles are more of the “schmalz” variety and, for that reason (?) issued on Vocalion.

A collection of unfamiliar sax combinations can be detected at this session! Gene Mikell on soprano sax leads the reeds in the first two titles. And on ‘Keep The Rhythm Going’ we find Joe Garland on bass-sax, and later on tenor-sax, and then bass-sax again.

Notes:

- *Ch. Delaunay, New Hot Discography 1948: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Henry Allen (tp); George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham (tb); Buster Bailey (cl); Crawford Wethington, Gene Michael (as); Joe Garland (ts&arr); Edgar Hayes (p); Lawrence Lucie (g); Elmer James (b); O'Neil Spencer (dm); Chuck Richards (vo)*

- *Rust*2: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Henry Allen (tpt); George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham (tbn); Buster Bailey (clt); Crawford Wethington, Gene Michaels (alt); Joe Garland (ten); Edgar Hayes (p); Lawrence Lucie (gtr); Elmer James (sbs); O'Neil Spencer (dms); Lucky Millinder (dir); Chuck Richards (vcl)*

- *Rust*3: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill -t; Henry Allen -t -v; George Washington -tb -a; , J.C. Higginbotham -tb; Buster Bailey, Crawford Wethington, Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar -a; Edgar Hayes -p; Lawrence Lucie -g; Elmer James -sb; O'Neil Spencer -d; Lucky Millinder -dir; Chuck Richards -v; Alex Hill -Will Hudson -a*

- *Storyville 109, MBRB: Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson, t; George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham, tb; Buster Bailey, cl/as; Crawford Wethington, as/bar/cl; Gene Mikell, ss/as/bar/cl; Joe Garland, ts/bsx/cl; Edgar Hayes, p; Lawrence Lucie, g; Elmer James, sb; O'Neil Spencer, d; Chuck Richards, v.*

- *Rust*4,*6: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Henry Allen -t; George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham -tb; Crawford Wethington -cl -as; Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar -a; Edgar Hayes -p; Lawrence Lucie -g; Elmer James -sb; O'Neil Spencer -d; Lucky Millinder -dir; Chuck Richards -v.*

Soloists ad-lib:

CO-16465-1: EH pno 2; EH pno 8

CO-16466-1: WJ m-tpt 16; JG bsx 14; WJ m-tpt 2+14; JG ten 4

CO-16467-1: EH pno intro 4; EH pno 2+16; HRA o-tpt 8; SH m-tp 4

018 MILLS BLUE RHYTHM BAND

New York,

Jan. 25, 1935

Lucky Millinder – dir;

Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Henry Red Allen – tpt;

George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham – tbn;

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

Edgar Hayes – pno; Lawrence Lucie - gtr; Elmer James - sbs; O'Neil Spencer – dms;

Chuck Richards – voc (3); Alex Hill – arr (1); Will Hudson – arr (2); *Joe Garland* - arr (3)

CO-16700-1 Back Beats

Col 3020-D,

Retrieval RTR 79045

CO-16701-1 Spitfire

Col 3020-D,

Retrieval RTR 79045

CO-16702-1 Brown Sugar Mine

Col 3044-D,

Retrieval RTR 79045

Composer credits: CO-16700 (Hill - Mills); CO-16701 (Hudson); 16702 (Garland – Mills - Kurtz)

‘Back Beats’ is a solid swinger arranged by Alex Hill, giving room for solo piano and further good solos by Allen, Higginbotham and Garland. There are nice parts of clarinets with Henry Red Allen’s trumpet in the second title. In the third title, “schmalz” reigns supreme, again. But there are thick four-part reed-sections.

Notes:

- *Ch. Delaunay, New Hot Discography 1948: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Henry Allen (tp); George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham (tb); Buster Bailey (cl); Crawford Wethington, Gene Michael (as); Joe Garland (ts & arr); Edgar Hayes (p); Lawrence Lucie (g); Elmer James (b); O'Neil Spencer (dm); Chuck Richards (vo)*

- *Rust*2: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Henry Allen (tpt); George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham (tbn); Buster Bailey (clt); Crawford Wethington, Gene Michaels (alt); Joe Garland (ten); Edgar Hayes (p); Lawrence Lucie (gtr); Elmer James (sbs); O'Neil Spencer (dms); Lucky Millinder (dir)*

- *Rust*3: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill -t; Henry Allen -t -v; George Washington -tb -a; , J.C. Higginbotham -tb; Buster Bailey, Crawford Wethington, Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar -a; Edgar Hayes -p; Lawrence Lucie -g; Elmer James -sb; O'Neil Spencer -d; Lucky Millinder -dir; Chuck Richards -v; Alex Hill a*

- *Storyville 109, MBRB: Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson, t; George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham, tb; Buster Bailey, cl/as; Crawford Wethington, as/bar/cl; Gene Mikell, ss/as/bar/cl; Joe Garland, ts/bsx/cl; Edgar Hayes, p; Lawrence Lucie, g; Elmer James, sb; O'Neil Spencer, d; Chuck Richards, v.*

- *Rust*4,*6: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill -t; Henry Allen -t -v; George Washington -tb -v; J.C. Higginbotham -tb; Crawford Wethington -Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar -a; Edgar Hayes -p; Lawrence Lucie -g; Elmer James -sb; O'Neil Spencer -d; Lucky Millinder -dir; Chuck Richards -v*

Soloists ad-lib:

CO-16700-1: EH pno 2+32; HRA m-tpt 16, JCH o-tbn 8; HRA m-tpt 8; EH pno 6 + 6 + 4; HRA o-tpt 8; JG ten 8

- CO-16701-1: HRA o-tpt 8 + 8; BB clt 1 + 1; JG ten 8; BB clt 1 + 1; JG ten 6; BB clt 6; GM alt 8 + 8; BB clt 2
 - CO-16702-1: JCH o-tbn 7; EH pno 1+6

019 MILLS BLUE RHYTHM BAND

New York,

Jul. 02, 1935

Lucky Millinder – dir;

Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Henry Red Allen – tpt;

George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham – tbn;

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

Edgar Hayes – pno; Lawrence Lucie - gtr; Elmer James - sbs; O'Neil Spencer – dms;

Lucky Millinder, band members – voc (1); Chuck Richards – voc (3);

Will Hudson – arr (1,2); Joe Garland – arr (3)

CO-17759-1 Ride, Red, Ride

Col 3087-D,

Retrieval RTR 79045

CO-17760-1 Harlem Heat

Col 3071-D,

Retrieval RTR 79045

CO-17761-1 Once To Every Heart

Br 7534,

Retrieval RTR 79045

Composer credits: CO-17759 (Millinder - Mills); CO-17760 (Hudson); 17761 (Kurtz – Mills - Garland)

'Ride, Red, Ride' is a very fast and effective solo spot for 'Red' Allen, arranged by white arranger Will Hudson on the 'Tiger Rag' chorus chords, changing between a basic time of c. 175 bpm and its doubled time of c. 350 bpm, the harmonics keeping their basic pace. And 'Red' Allen reigning above all this haste with his glorious trumpet also keeping the ground rhythm. This hurly-burly starts with a tightly set trombone duet expertly played in this tempo. Followed by Wethington on baritone and Garland on tenor sax, and then a soft and slow (!) chorus of - what I think is - Wardell Jones on muted trumpet. And then Bailey takes over at a pace of c. 350 with one chorus (of the basic tempo), followed by Allen with two choruses riding in glory, followed by a final riff-chorus with Buster Bailey in the background producing a mass of notes.

'Harlem Heat' with its arrangement of Mr. Hudson's customary use of simple and mechanical riffs brings good soloing by Allen and Garland, and two choruses of muted J.C. Johnson trombone, a somewhat silly Bailey chorus and a great chorus of 4 clts in riffs.

The session is ended by a Chuck Richard schmalz vocal, and an even-so arrangement with trashy piano parts.

It seems that the Mills Blue Rhythm Band management had developed a "two hot tunes and one corn tune" politic for their recording sessions.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography 1948: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Henry Allen (tp); George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham (tb); Buster Bailey (cl); Crawford Wethington, Gene Michael (as); Joe Garland (ts&arr); Edgar Hayes (p); Lawrence Lucie (g); Elmer James (b); O'Neil Spencer (dm); Chuck Richards (vo)*

- Rust*2: *Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Henry Allen (tpt); George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham (tbn); Buster Bailey (clt); Crawford Wethington, Gene Michaels (alt); Joe Garland (ten); Edgar Hayes (p); Lawrence Lucie (gtr); Elmer James (sbs); O'Neil Spencer (dms); Lucky Millinder (vcl)*

- Rust*3: *Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill -t; Henry Allen -t -v; George Washington -tb -a; , J.C. Higginbotham -tb; Buster Bailey, Crawford Wethington, Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar -a; Edgar Hayes -p; Lawrence Lucie -g; Elmer James -sb; O'Neil Spencer -d; Lucky Millinder -dir; Chuck Richards -v; Will Hudson -a*

- *Storyville 109, MBRB: Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson, t; George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham, tb; Buster Bailey, cl/as; Crawford Wethington, as/bar/cl; Gene Mikell, ss/as/bar/cl; Joe Garland, ts/bsx/cl; Edgar Hayes, p; Lawrence Lucie, g; Elmer James, sb; O'Neil Spencer, d; Chuck Richards, Lucky Millinder, unknown band member, v.*

- Rust*4,*6: *Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill -t; Henry Allen -t -v; George Washington -tb -v; J.C. Higginbotham -tb; Crawford Wethington -Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar -a; Edgar Hayes -p; Lawrence Lucie -g; Elmer James -sb; O'Neil Spencer -d; Lucky Millinder -dir -v; Chuck Richards -v; Will Hudson -a*

Soloists ad-lib:

- CO-17759-1: BB clt 2; GM bar 8; JG ten 7; ?WJ m-tpt 1+16; BB clt 32; HRA o-tpt 64; HRA o-tpt 4 + 8

- CO-17760-1: EH pno intro 6; HRA o-tpt 2+16; JG ten 14; JCH m-tbn 4+28; BB clt 32

- CO-17761-1: EH pno 1+12; ?GW m-tbn 1+11

020 MILLS BLUE RHYTHM BAND

New York,

Jul. 09, 1935

Lucky Millinder – dir;

Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Henry Red Allen – tpt;

George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham – tbn;

Crawford Wethington – alt, clt; Gene Mikell – alt, bar, clt; Joe Garland – ten, clt, bsx; Buster Bailey – clt;

Edgar Hayes – pno; Lawrence Lucie - gtr; Elmer James - sbs; O'Neil Spencer – dms;

Joe Garland – arr (1,2); Edgar Hayes – arr (3)

CO-17796-1 Congo Caravan

Col 3087-D,

Retrieval RTR 79045

CO-17797-1 There's Rhythm In Harlem

Col 3071-D,

Retrieval RTR 79045

CO-17798-1 Tallahassee

Br 7534,

Retrieval RTR 79045

Composer credits: CO-17796 (Garland); CO-17797 (Garland); 17798 (Hayes – Kurtz - Mills)

'Congo Caravan' is a not so "exotic" jungle number, with some whole-tone phrases in the melody and restricted but well inserted solo-work and Joe Garland's developing arranging skills. And there is some 'In The Mood' in the introduction of 'There's Rhythm In Harlem', and we become witnesses of Garland's way to the arrangements of the Edgar Hayes band of two years later, including the frequent use of the low-pitched saxophones – baritone and bass. 'Tallahassee' fits in perfectly in this sort of styling. So, in short: this is an outlook to the later Edgar Hayes Band. Very interesting and nice!

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography 1948: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Henry Allen (tp); George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham (tb); Buster Bailey (cl); Crawford Wethington, Gene Michael (as); Joe Garland (ts&arr); Edgar Hayes (p); Lawrence Lucie (g); Elmer James (b); O'Neil Spencer (dm)*

- Rust*2: *Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Henry Allen (tpt); George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham (tbn); Buster Bailey (clt); Crawford Wethington, Gene Michaels (alt); Joe Garland (ten); Edgar Hayes (p); Lawrence Lucie (gtr); Elmer James (sbs); O'Neil Spencer (dms)*

- Rust*3: *Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill -t; Henry Allen -t -v; George Washington -tb -a; , J.C. Higginbotham -tb; Buster Bailey, Crawford Wethington, Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar -a; Edgar Hayes -p; Lawrence Lucie -g; Elmer James -sb; O'Neil Spencer -d; Lucky Millinder -dir; Chuck Richards -v*

- Storyville 109, MBRB: *Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson, t; George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham, tb; Buster Bailey, cl/as; Crawford Wethington, as/bar/cl; Gene Mikell, ss/as/bar/cl; Joe Garland, ts/bsx/cl; Edgar Hayes, p; Lawrence Lucie, g; Elmer James, sb; O'Neil Spencer, d; Chuck Richards, v.*

- Rust*4,*6: *Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill -t; Henry Allen -t -v; George Washington -tb -v; J.C. Higginbotham -tb; Crawford Wethington -Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar -a; Edgar Hayes -p; Lawrence Lucie -g; Elmer James -sb; O'Neil Spencer -d; Lucky Millinder -dir -v*

Soloists ad-lib:

- CO-17796-1: BB clt 2; HRA o-tpt 16; JG ten 8; JCH m-tbn 8
 - CO-17797-1: GW m-tbn 16; WJ m-tpt 7; JG bsx 1+6; WJ m-tpt 8
 - CO-17798-1: JG ten 2+16 + 8; BB clt 32; GM alt 16; EH pno 8; HRA o-tpt 8

021 MILLS BLUE RHYTHM BAND

New York,

Aug. 01, 1935

Lucky Millinder – dir;

Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Henry Red Allen – tpt;

George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham – tbn;

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

Edgar Hayes – pno; Lawrence Lucie – gtr; Elmer James – sbs; O'Neil Spencer – dms;

Chuck Richards – voc (1,2,3); Henry Red Allen – voc (4)

CO-17922-1 Waiting In The Garden

Col 3083-D,

Retrieval RTR 79045

CO-17923-1 Dinah Lou

Col 3083-D,

Retrieval RTR 79045

CO-17924-1 Cotton

Col 3078-D,

Retrieval RTR 79045

CO-17925-1 Truckin'

Col 3078-D,

Retrieval RTR 79045

Composer credits: CO-17922 (Koehler - Bloom); CO-17923 (Koehler - Bloom); CO-17924 (Koehler - Bloom); CO-17925 (Koehler - Bloom)

OK, I would have done without that terrible schmalz in “the Garden”! (The MBRB directory had been busy, again!)

‘Dinah Lou’ is better only with Red Allen’s and Higginbotham’s solos. ‘Cotton’ is of equal quality. But again, Red Allen rescues things a bit with his solo, as does Higginbotham. ‘Truckin’ sounds very similar, but contains nice vocal and trumpet solos by Allen. Not to forget Higginbotham’s 8 bars of trombone solo.

R. M. Sudhalter, booklet to Retrieval RTR 79045: “Allen’s presence is obvious in ‘Waiting In The Garden’, ‘Sweet Dinah Lou’, ‘Cotton’, and ‘Truckin’ (on which he sings). His solos are strong, impassioned easily recognized. He’s even better on ‘Eb Stride’, bringing to mind Whitney Balliett’s description of “sustained legato phrases that undulate like a calming sea ... linked by jumpy connective notes – full of seven-league intervals and slightly flattened notes – that may or may not land on their feet.”

The Retrieval booklet tells us that all four tunes of this session have composer-credits as “Koehler – Bloom”, a familiar combination in the 1930s. But this makes me wonder whether these two guys were also responsible for the arrangements and their similarity?

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography 1948: Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Henry Allen (tp); George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham (tb); Buster Bailey (cl); Crawford Wethington, Gene Michael (as); Joe Garland (ts&arr); Edgar Hayes (p); Lawrence Lucie (g); Elmer James (b); O'Neil Spencer (dm); Chuck Richards (vo)*

- Rust*2: *Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill, Henry Allen (tpt); George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham (tbn); Buster Bailey (clt); Crawford Wethington, Gene Michaels (alt); Joe Garland (ten); Edgar Hayes (p); Lawrence Lucie (gtr); Elmer James (sbs); O'Neil Spencer (dms);*

Chuck Richards -v (3); Henry Allen -v (4)

- Rust*3: *Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill -t; Henry Allen -t -v; George Washington -tb -a; , J.C. Higginbotham -tb; Buster Bailey, Crawford Wethington, Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar -a; Edgar Hayes -p; Lawrence Lucie -g; Elmer James -sb; O'Neil Spencer -d; Lucky Millinder -dir; Henry Allen -v (4); Chuck Richards -v (1,2,3)*

- Storyville 109, MBRB: *Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson, t; George Washington, J.C. Higginbotham, tb; Buster Bailey, cl/as; Crawford Wethington, as/bar/cl; Gene Mikell, ss/as/bar/cl; Joe Garland, ts/bsx/cl; Edgar Hayes, p; Lawrence Lucie, g; Elmer James, sb; O'Neil Spencer, d; Chuck Richards, v.*

- Rust*4,*6: *Wardell Jones, Shelton Hemphill -t; Henry Allen -t -v; George Washington -tb -v; J.C. Higginbotham -tb; Crawford Wethington -Gene Mikell -cl -as; Joe Garland -cl -ts -bar -a; Edgar Hayes -p; Lawrence Lucie -g; Elmer James -sb; O'Neil Spencer -d; Lucky Millinder -dir; Chuck Richards -v*

Soloists ad-lib:

- CO-17922-1: no solos
 - CO-17922-1: EH pno 6; HRA o-tpt 4+14; JCH o-tbn 2+8; GM clt 8
 - CO-17922-1: EH pno 15; JG ten 1+8; EH pno 6; GM alt 4; HRA o-tpt 15; JCH m-tbn 1+8
 - CO-17922-1: EH pno 8; HRA o-tpt 16; JCH o-tbn 8

022 HENRY ALLEN AND HIS ORCHESTRA

New York,

Nov. 08, 1935

Henry “Red” Allen – tpt, voc; J. C. Higginbotham – tbn;

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

Edgar Hayes – pno; Lawrence Lucie – gtr; Elmer James – sbs; O'Neil Spencer – dms

18253-2 I Found A Dream

Voc 3097,

Collector’s Classics COCD-13

18254-1 On Treasure Island

Voc 3098,

Collector’s Classics COCD-13

18255-1 Red Sails In The Sunset

Voc 3097,

Collector’s Classics COCD-13

18256-1 Take Me Back To My Boots And Saddle

Voc 3098,

Collector’s Classics COCD-13

Composer credits: 18253 (Gorney – Hartmann); 18254 (Leslie - Burke); 18255 (Williams - Kennedy); 18256 (Powell – Whitcup – Samuels)

Here, 'Red' Allen makes use of the personnel of Mills Blue Rhythm Band, of which 'Red' Allen was a member, too (see elsewhere at this web-site!).

Hot trumpet star in Harlem Henry 'Red' Allen was a lure for the African-American young public all over New York and vicinity for the record market, and he was given compositions and songs to record that were not seen suited for the top rank bands. Thus, we today find a lot of nice and even rewarding titles in his recorded repertoire that were not recorded again by anybody in later times.

The model of the music made here is the same all the time: 'Red' Allen is the bandleader, and he performs in his fantastic Southern trumpet style, with much off-beat rhythm, much blues-drenched phrasing, and always driving and swinging. In that same manner he uses to sing. Higginbotham is his year-long friend and colleague, and he performs adequately with his robust and rousing style. Mikell and Garland were the hot saxophone soloists of the Mills band, and the rhythm section is transposed without any change. As before, the drummer is restrained to brush-work – obviously without the bass-drum and cymbals, and the string-bass plays a strict one-three two-beat rhythm. This certainly is not what they played when performing publicly.

Notes:

- *Ch. Delaunay, New Hot Discography, 1948: Henry Allen (tp & vo); J. C. Higginbotham (tb); Gene Michaels (as); Joe Garland (ts); Edgar Hayes (p); Lawrence Lucie (g); O'Neil Spencer (dm)*

- *Rust*2: Henry Allen (tpt, vcl); J. C. Higginbotham (tbn); Gene Michaels (alt); Joe Garland (ten); Edgar Hayes (pno); Lawrence Lucie (gtr); Elmer James (sbs); O'Neil Spencer (dm)*

- *Rust*3,*4,*6: Henry Allen -t -v; J. C. Higginbotham -tb; Gene Mikell -as; Joe Garland -ts; Edgar Hayes -p; Lawrence Lucie -g; Elmer James -sb; O'Neil Spencer -d*

Solos ad-lib:

18253: EH pno + LL gtr 4; HRA o-tpt 24; JCH o-tbn 8; HRA voc + EH pno obl 31; EH pno 4; HRA o-tpt 16

18254: HRA o-tpt 5; HRA o-tpt 24; JCH o-tbn 8; HRA voc 31; EH pno 1+16; GM clt 8; EH pno 6; GM alt 2+2; HRA o-tpt 22

18255: HRA m-tpt 4 + 31; GM alt 2+2; HRA voc + EH pno obl 32; JCH o-tbn 15; JG ten 1+8; JCH o-tbn 1+6; EH pno 1; HRA o-tpt 36+6

18256: EH pno 4; HRA o-tpt 32 + 8; JCH o-tbn 16; HRA voc + EH pno obl 1+32 + 22; GM alt 2+4; JCH o-tbn 4; EH pno 4, JCH o-tbn 4 ten 1+8; HRA o-tpt 16

023 HENRY ALLEN AND HIS ORCHESTRA

New York,

Oct. 12, 1936

Henry Red Allen – tpt, voc;

Gene Mikell – alt; Tab Smith – alt; Ted McRae – ten;

Clyde Hart – pno; Danny Barker – gtr; John Kirby – sbs; Cozy Cole - dms

20049-1 Midnight Blue

Voc 3339, Collectors Classics COCD-15

20050-1 Lost In My Dreams

Voc 3340, Collectors Classics COCD-15

20051-1 Sitting On The Moon

Voc 3340, Collectors Classics COCD-15

20052-1 Whatcha Gonna Do When There Ain't No Swing?

Voc 3339, Collectors Classics COCD-15

Composer credits: 20049 (Leslie - Burke); 20050 (Mitchell - Stept); 20051 (Mitchell - Stept); 20052 (Neiburg)

It is surprising to note that Allen obviously favours Chick Webb's tenor sax player Ted McRae, as he gets more solo space than anybody else, except for Allen himself. And he reveals himself as a very tasteful and sensitive jazz tenor sax soloist, while with the Webb band he gets very little occasion to show off. And then there is Tab Smith again with his exiting fast staccato runs. Gene Mikell – if he is with our group here listed as clarinetist – is not identifiable, but might be present as first reed player. And on guitar we hear Danny Barker, one of the younger musicians from New Orleans, just like 'Red' Allen himself.

Notes:

- *Ch. Delaunay, New Hot Discography, 1948: Henry Allen (tp); Gene Michaels (cl); Tab Smith (as); Ted McRae (ts); Clyde Hart (p); Danny Barker (g); John Kirby (b); Cozy Cole (d)*

- *Rust*2: Henry Allen (tpt, voc); Gene Michaels (clt); Tab Smith (alt); Ted McRae (ten); Clyde Hart (pno); Danny Barker (gtr); John Kirby (sbs); Cozy Cole (dms)*

- *Rust*3,*4,*6: Henry Allen -t -v; Gene Mikell -cl; Tab Smith -as; Ted McRae -ts; Clyde Hart -p; Danny Barker -g; John Kirby -sb; Cozy Cole -d*

Solos ad-lib:

20049: HRA o-tpt 8; CH pno 2; HRA voc + CH pno obl 32; TMR ten 16; HRA o-tpt 1+20

20050: HRA o-tpt 16; HRA voc 31; TMR ten 16; HRA o-tpt 16

20051: CH pno 4; HRA o-tpt 31; CH pno 1; HRA voc 30; TS alt 2+30; HRA o-tpt 2+32

20052: HRA o-tpt 30; CH pno 2; HRA voc 32; CH pno 1+8; TS alt 8; HRA o-tpt 8

024 HENRY ALLEN AND HIS ORCHESTRA

New York,

Nov. 17, 1936

Henry Red Allen – tpt, voc;

Gene Mikell – alt, clt; Tab Smith – alt; Cecil Scott – ten;

Clyde Hart – pno; Danny Barker – gtr; John Kirby – sbs; Cozy Cole - dms

20267-1 Did You Mean It?

Voc 3377, Collectors Classics COCD-15

20268-1 In The Chapel In The Moonlight

Voc 3377, Collectors Classics COCD-15

20269-1 Here's Love In Your Eye

Voc 3389, Collectors Classics COCD-15

20270-1 When My Dream Boat Comes Home

Voc 3389, Collectors Classics COCD-15

Composer credits: 20267 (Dixon - Greer); 20268 (Hill); 20269 (Robin - Rainger); 20270 (Friend - Franklin)

Again, we have Allen and his previous personnel, yet with Cecil Scott on tenor sax. And they make that same sort of music. There is fine clarinet from the very under-rated Gene Mikell, a modest Tab Smith here, nice Cecil Scott, Clyde Hart on piano who does that oompah rhythm although he does not seem to like it, fine guitar by Danny Barker with a loose and flexible guitar rhythm, and great and very tasteful Cozy Cole, even using his bass-drum here. Some years later he became very obtrusive on his cymbals.

Notes:

- *Ch. Delaunay, New Hot Discography, 1948: probably: Henry Allen (tp & vo); Gene Michaels (cl); Tab Smith (as); Ted McRae (ts); Clyde Hart (p); Lawrence Lucie (g); John Kirby (b); Cozy Cole (dm)*

- *Rust*2: probably similar: Henry Allen (tpt,vcl); Gene Michaels (clt); Tab Smith (alt); Ted McRae (ten); Clyde Hart (pno); Danny Barker (gtr); John Kirby (sbs); Cozy Cole (dms)*

- *Rust*3,*4,*6: probably similar: Henry Allen -t -v; Gene Mikell -cl; Tab Smith -as; Ted McRae -ts; Clyde Hart -p; Danny Baker -g; John Kirby -sb; Cozy Cole -d*

Solos ad-lib:

20267: HRA o-tpt 4+15; HRA voc + CH pno obl 30; TS alt 2+16; GM clt 15; CS ten 1+16; HRA o-tpt 16
 20268: HRA o-tpt 4+8; HRA voc 30; CS ten 2+16; HRA o-tpt 18
 20269: HRA o-tpt 8 + 30; CH pno 2; HRA voc 31; CH pno 16; GM clt 14; TS alt 2+8; HRA o-tpt 24
 20270: CH pno 4; HRA o-tpt 30; HRA voc + CH pno obl 32; CS ten 2+30; HRA o-tpt 2+32

Unfortunately, I did not succeed in finding later recording activities by Gene Mikell.

K. – B. Rau
 01-06-2026
 17-06-2026