

BLOWOUT at MARDI GRAS

COOK/ SOUNDS OF OUR TIMES long play 1084

Jazz bender for insomniacs at
the Mardi Gras Lounge
on a Saturday night
'til dawn

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Don Smith

Sid Davilla and Freddie Kohlman's Band with Sid Davilla, clarinet (longest blow on record)
Freddie Kohlman, drums • Thomas Jefferson, trumpet • Quentin Batiste, piano • Replaced by Red Camp
Camp incapacitated on line plunge through 'Stumblin' • Replaced in 3rd quarter
by Batiste with only 10 minutes left to play

Sultry Serenade
Three Thirty Three
I Never Knew
Sympathy
You Tell Me Your Dream
Sid's Sympathy
Stumblin'



Sid Davilla, Freddie Kohlman's Band

OPEN LETTER TO GEORGE SIMON—METRONOME

Some time ago you printed this:

"One of the greatest jazz bands I ever heard in my life . . . came over television from New Orleans the last night of the Mardi Gras, and it blew some of the most phenomenally spirited Dixieland I've ever heard. There was a wild, driving trumpeter, a mixture of all the good points of Louis, Roy and Muggsy, who got off literally dozens of choruses in a row . . . brilliant, scintillating choruses, each one more exciting than the next. Even the folks on the street caught it, because all of them seemed to be jumping with this stupendously exciting jazz, one of the few examples of a throng being genuinely sent. Some recording company should certainly latch on to this amazingly great group."

Thanks! We did. First pressing on way to you.

E. C.

BLOWOUT AT MARDI GRAS

It was like the night Beethoven died*—thunder, lightning and all manner of cosmic disturbances on Bourbon Street. But the cash customers were there anyway . . . adding their part to a storm brewed indoors at the Mardi Gras Lounge. Our microphones did pick up the clink of bottles and coins, the shouted requests, the audience coaching Thomas Jefferson's vocal (*You Tell Me Your Dream*). But for the most part the frenzied patrons were completely blotted out . . . by one of the biggest Saturday night blowouts to hit the Delta country.

When boss-man clarinetist Sid Davilla drops his ice buckets, climbs through the bottles onto the stage behind the bar, the band's style undergoes a kind of metamorphosis** above and beyond the call of social security. Sid's clarinet opens the session in "333"; Freddie Kohlman's drums explode exactly 2:05 minutes later and from then on it was all jet stuff until 4 A.M.

About 2 A.M. Red Camp finally eased his way over the door sill, listened a moment, brightened up and said briskly: "*My! What have we here—a jazz band? Mind if I sit down!*" He sat in on *Stumblin'*, *Three-Thirty-Three* and *You Tell Me Your Dream*. Disk-Jockey Dick Martin*** dropped in too; just by chance he brought his pencil and this is what he wrote:

In New Orleans, Dixieland music per se is only grist for the mill. It was played extensively in the saloons and sporting houses of the infamous Storyville section of the city before the Army had that district shut down in 1917. It even had the cautious recognition of upper-crust society, which danced to it in the Roaring Twenties, and Depressed Thirties. Occasionally even now a Dixie group provides the music for a "queen's supper" following one of the Carnival Season balls. For the most part it is concentrated in

Stumblin'†
Sid's Symphony
Sympathy
Sultry Serenade

Three-Thirty-Three†
I Never Knew
You Tell Me Your Dream†
(vocal by Thomas Jefferson)

Sid Davilla, clarinet
Freddie Kohlman, drums
Thomas Jefferson, trumpet
Frog Joseph, trombone
Clement Tervalon, bass
Joe Thomas, clarinet
Quentin Batiste, piano

†Red Camp, piano

bistros along Bourbon Street; one finds an eventual ennui seeping into one's consciousness after hearing frequent repetitions of tired old tunes played in one night club after another—on down the line.

That is, until you draw abreast of Sid Davilla's "Mardi Gras Lounge". Here is "dixieland" with a difference; for *versatility* is the keynote here in the band led by ex-Earl Hines drummer Freddie Kohlman. They can play *Muskrat Ramble* with as much authenticity as any band on the street; but real kicks come when proprietor Davilla picks up his clarinet and sits in. Sid has played variously with Claude Thornhill, Jimmy Dorsey, Ray McKinley (to name a few);

the Kohlman regulars' response is enthusiastic, spontaneous with this added spark.

Like confetti during Mardi Gras, the Davilla clarinet is profuse—ideas tumbling and surging through the night without end. The obligato on *Three-Thirty-Three* may well be the longest on record. Then Thomas Jefferson has his turn with some of the prettiest, most facile jazz trumpet to be heard anywhere. His knowledge of his horn and pressureless style and drive are an unceasing cause for wonder.

That versatile pianist from Texas, Red Camp sat in with the Kohlman band on some of the numbers in this album; with a stranger in their midst (a stranger who can play the bejabbers out of just about any jazz, from "ragtime" to contemporary) the regular sidemen seemed doubly determined to outdo themselves.

But the regular pianist with the group, Quentin Batiste, asked Red to relinquish the keyboard now and again however. "Specialty," he grinned briefly. *SULTRY SERENADE* has been in the Ellington repertoire for quite some time, and this "head" features the Kohlman trombonist, Waldren "Frog" Joseph. "Frog" is smooth, powerful trombone and a humorist to boot; takes no pains to hide his urge to insert innuendoes. Joe Thomas (no relation to the former Lunceford sax man) was a comparative newcomer to the group, and rounded out the "front line."

Irrepressible Clement Tervalon radiates a thorough enjoyment of the proceedings through his driving bass, and Kohlman proves his generalship with technically polished, brilliantly punctuated drumming that boots the band along in fiery, exciting style. This from the heart of Dixie: is it *Dixieland*? All we can surely say is that New Orleans is still the Cradle of Jazz.

*well anyway *some* composer died this night.

**Camp says, "Not only that, they play different, too!"

***Voted the nation's top disk jockey, METRONOME 1954.

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