

VOLUME 10

BOOGIE WOOGIE

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FJ 2810

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

EDITED BY FREDERIC RAMSEY, JR.



JAZZ

BOOGIE WOOGIE

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

FOLKWAYS FJ 2810

PROPERTY

FOLKWAYS RECORDS

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Library of Congress Catalogue Card No. RA 58-79

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JIM JACKSON'S JAMBOREE, Part 1  
 Jim Jackson, Tampa Red, Georgia Tom,  
 Speckled Red (VO 1428)  
 JIM JACKSON'S JAMBOREE (cont'd)  
 HASTINGS STREET  
 Charlie Spand, piano; Blind Blake, guitar & talking  
 (Para 12863)  
 ST. LOUIS BLUES Albert Ammons, piano (SA 12002)  
 HONKY TONK TRAIN  
 Meade Lux Lewis, piano (Para 12896)  
 BROWN SKIN GAL  
 Cripple Clarence Lofton, piano; Big Bill Broonzy,  
 guitar (MO 61166)  
 YANCEY STOMP  
 Jimmy Yancey, piano (FV 26589)

LET 'EM JUMP  
 Pete Johnson, piano (SA 12005)  
 TOBY  
 Bennie Moten's Kansas City Orchestra (FV 23384)  
 FROGGY BOTTOM  
 Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy (DE 729)  
 BOOGIE WOOGIE  
 Jones-Smith, Inc. (VO 3459)  
 HOOTIE BLUES  
 Jay McShann and His Orchestra (DE 8559)  
 LESTER LEAPS IN  
 Count Basie's Kansas City Seven (VO 5118)  
 DICKIE'S DREAM  
 Count Basie's Kansas City Seven (VO 5118)

FOLKWAYS FJ 2810



# JAZZ VOL. 10

## BOOGIE WOOGIE and JUMP AND KANSAS CITY

Introduction and Notes on the Recordings  
by Frederic Ramsey, Jr.

### SIDE I (A)

#### BOOGIE WOOGIE

Unlike the music that filtered slowly into New York from New Orleans, Chicago, and other parts of the United States, boogie woogie burst suddenly and explosively upon a public already sympathetic to swing music of the thirties, and, to some extent, ready for anything else that might come along. As it turned out, boogie woogie was it.

In a few short months, the walking bass pattern of boogie woogie had been orchestrated to a fare-thee-well into rhythm sections of almost every swing band extant; cocktail lounge pianists all became "boogie woogie" artists, and a national craze rolled on as back and front rooms across the country reverberated to an eight-to-the-bar beat.

Amidst the shouting and the tumult, a few sensible words managed to be written about boogie woogie. A pioneer in pointing to boogie woogie piano for its essential merits, William Russell had written, in the June, 1938 issue of *Le Jazz Hot* (a jazz periodical published in Paris, France), that "to analyze the Boogie style for its musical elements adds little to an understanding of its magic. Rhythmically rather more primitive than most African music it is still much more complex and polyrhythmic than the conventional piano style of Fats Waller, or even that of Earl Hines. The rapid patterns of the left hand which produce that hypnotic effect are often set against the ever changing rhythms of the right hand, causing the most exciting cross rhythms.

"Melodically built of short scale-like figures with many repeated notes emphasizing its economy of material, the Boogie style is nevertheless more chromatic than the ordinary blues. The most common motive seems to be a three-note descending scale passage; however, many times the melody for an entire chorus will consist of but one note. The usual rhythm employed in this form of variation consists of a full chord in the right hand struck on the first beat and before the fourth beat of each measure. In addition to

this fundamental Boogie rhythm we find the dotted 8th used almost as commonly in the right hand as in the bass. Since this was also the principal rhythm of pre-jazz ragtime, it can hardly be considered the determining characteristic of Boogie Woogie. The tremolo is a frequently used device and has a percussive and rhythmic function rather than a tone sustaining use as in the trumpet style piano.

"The Boogie Woogie takes almost without exception the form of the 12 bar blues, repeated with endless variation but always in the same key, and like most blues, the harmony is principally tonic and dominant. However, there is no attempt at four part harmony and the emphasis is often on the contrapuntal with frequently but two parts used. In such a case the melody may be widely separated from the bass and progress in contrary motion. Throughout there is an ignorance of conventional harmony, which amounts to a most refreshing disrespect for all rules. This is a music constructed out of the piano keyboard rather than a harmony book.

"We will probably never know the name of the actual originator of the Boogie Woogie, if indeed there was one, for being in reality a folk art it was more than likely a product of slow growth, developed by the keyboard meanderings of many an unknown and self taught amateur of the south side (Chicago) barrel houses during the first years of the prohibition era."

To Russell's early and perceptive words about boogie woogie can be added the review of that part of the concert, "Spirituals to Swing" (December, 1938) which first presented boogie woogie pianists to a larger public than that of music specialists and record collectors to whom Meade Lux Lewis and Albert Ammons were already known. "There is hardly enough room in this review to write fully about the importance of Meade 'Lux' Lewis to piano jazz," wrote Roger Pryor Dodge in the January, 1939, issue of the *Hot Record Society Rag*. "He and Albert Ammons are two extraordinary pianists. We might say that Albert Ammons has more virtuosity -- consisting in a stronger left hand and (in this concert) has more invention in his melodic improvisations. However it is not easy to evaluate invention at one hearing and Meade 'Lux' Lewis has more than proved his creative ability on his outstanding discs. If piano jazz in the Teddy Wilson manner is always a mild disappointment, I doubt very much whether in our wildest dreams we could imagine a style so apt as the boogie woogie, and a piece so significant as Honky Tonk Train Blues."



As Russell has written, the origins of boogie woogie are obscure. Definite factual information relative to early performers still remains to be unearthed. The archaeological work involved is of such scope that nothing less than institutional sponsorship, (e.g., a Guggenheim Award to a student in the field), could supply us with more information.

In the meantime, certain musicians, notably Lead Belly, have pointed the direction research might follow. In tape recordings made by this editor, Lead Belly has said: "Tell what boogie woogie come from -- long time ago -- 'fo the writers wrote this up. People didn't know what they was doin', down home. That was 'way 'bout nineteen hundred and four.... nineteen three... piano players walkin' the bass.

Walk up to a man, an' tell him: 'Walk the basses for me -- give 'm a drink, or somethin'.' They start to walkin' 'em... sounded good, the girls was jumpin', in the barrelhouse. But the men didn't know what they was doin'. I was walkin' 'em, too.

"I learned to play guitar by a piano. I play piano time, an' piano rhythm. That's the reason I like plenty o' bass 'round my music. I'd always sit on the bass side, by the piano, copy the jive the way the boys was playin' 'em that's the way I play. ... 'Cose Meade Lux Lewis, ol' James P. Johnson, he used to walk the basses for a long time -- he'd know what he was doin' .... Now, everybody can boogie them -- what readin' boogie, we was speedin' at that time, we didn't take time to read, which we wouldn't. We didn't want to read, we just speed... An' I was doin' this a long time ago, which I didn't know what I was doin', but I liked it mighty well...."

Besides testimony of the sort recorded by Lead Belly, there are random remarks which have been reported by scholars working in allied fields. When Harold Courlander was recording in western Alabama for the Folkways album, "Negro Folk Music of Alabama", (P 417, 418), an elderly Negro pricked up his ears when he heard a walking bass. "Why that goes 'way back," he said, "they used to play that when I was a kid." Just how far back that takes us remains to be discovered.

William Russell, writing of boogie woogie pianist Jimmy Yancey, has put together a thesis that may have to hold until it is disproved. "Admitting that all American Negro music is a hybrid art, with at times predominate European characteristics, and that

especially in the case of spirituals there is little evidence of African musical heritage, yet we must nevertheless, concede that Boogie Woogie contains elements not to be found in any Western music," Russell maintains. "To attempt an analysis of the purely African elements in Yancey's style and to conjecture how they got there is beyond the scope of this article; (Russell was preparing notes for the Victor album of Jimmy Yancey music -- Ed. Note) however, a few general characteristics may be noted. The late E. M. Hornbostel, leading expert on extra-European music, pointed out that in general African music is not conceivable without dancing, nor African rhythm without drumming. The piano, an invention which enables one performer to produce more than one part of rhythm is in reality our most advanced percussion instrument. The very close resemblance in many passages of Yancey's solos, both in sonority and rhythm, to the highly developed music produced by a group of African drums of definite pitch is obvious.....

"Laura Boulton... on African music... throws more light on the relation of this native music and Boogie Woogie when she suggests that some of the principal features of African music, such as rhythmic complexity, constant repetition of short phrases, and the tendency of melodies to progress downward, are present in the music of the New World Negro....

"Yancey Stomp is a dance played at such a rapid tempo that twelve choruses (variations) are contained on one ten-inch side. (Band 7 of this record) Comparable in its form to many African dances, this stomp, with its drum-like bass figure, constantly grows in rhythmic complexity as the feeling of excitement mounts to a climax. Although the 12 bar blues form is used, this piece has very little in common with vocal folk blues. Rather it suggests the convulsive dance, in which the participant is carried with frenzied passion to an exhilarant state in which all self-control is lost, and even consciousness may completely disappear. The convulsive dance, which is still found in parts of Africa and Asia in connection with hypnosis controlled religions, was common in the Shouts of American Negroes a century ago, until secular music and the dance were suppressed by Baptist and Methodist missionaries.

The 1932 recordings by the Bennie Moten Orchestra are of special interest, for it is in them that the "four heavy beats to a bar" mentioned by Basie first



appear as characteristic of the band's playing -- a characteristic later labelled "Kansas City" or "Jump" style.

But prior to this date, this rhythm simply had not been part of the Moten Orchestra's performances on record. Where did it come from? All evidence points to the keyboard man who swung the band, Count Basie. But where had Basie got it? From early influences on his style by Fats Waller and James P. Johnson? This does not seem very likely.

As William Russell has written in "Jazzmen," the boogie woogie pianist Pete Johnson had always been active in Kansas City. He had been born there March 24, 1905, and an uncle, Charles, was an "old-time" pianist. And in the nineteen thirties, Pete, who had started his musical experience as drummer in a school band at eighteen, was working "in the small three-and four-piece bands which sprung up like mushrooms in Kansas City." Pete laid out his keyboard music in boogie woogie style, with "four heavy beats to a bar and no cheating," and it seems possible that the young pianist from Red Bank found in Pete's music a few spurs to his own talent.

Thus it may be that final evolution of ragtime pianist Bennie Moten's Orchestra came about as the result of a conflict between two contrasting styles of keyboard music, ragtime and boogie woogie, with boogie woogie rhythm winning out when Basie took over the Moten Orchestra after its original leader's death in 1935.

Boogie woogie itself contained residual elements of ragtime playing: "the dotted 8th used almost as commonly in the right hand as in the bass... since this was also the principal element in pre-jazz ragtime, it can hardly be considered characteristic of boogie woogie." The emergence of the Basie Orchestra, then, circa 1936, as a strong influence on jazz in general signalized a turning, (after years of evolution and struggle between so-called ("two-beat") and "four-beat" music), from what had been characterized as "New Orleans" (two-beat ) to a different, yet equally ancient, rhythm.

Throughout jazz, there has existed much conflict and consequent confusion, between the two ways of setting up rhythm, and those who have set them up. The contrast is striking when we turn to Jelly Roll Morton's statement: "That's the way some of them

play with the dischords. They don't regard the harmony or the rules of a system of music at all. They just play anything. The main idea is, to keep the bass going. That is, they thought. By keepin' the bass goin', it gives them a sort of -- of a set rhythm. And by givin' a set rhythm, they imagine they're doing the right thing -- which is wrong."

"No real tune exists in Yancey Stomp: there are only short melodic figures whose repetition and development accelerate the rising tension. The unusual ending, with an abrupt modulation and final dissonance, need not surprise anyone who remembers that Negro improvised folk music has no fixed beginning nor definite end, and its formal length of no more consequence than the title. Such a dance as the Yancey Stomp could probably go on all night without decrease in effectiveness."

#### Record Data

##### SIDE I (A) BOOGIE WOOGIE

Band 1. (10 A 1): JIM JACKSON'S JAMBOREE, Part I (Williams), by Jim Jackson, Tampa Red, Georgia Tom, and Speckled Red. "Descriptive Novelty," recorded September 24, 1929. Vol 428.

Band 2. (10 A 2): JIM JACKSON'S JAMBOREE continued.

Band 3. (10 A 3): HASTINGS STREET, by Charlie Spand, piano, and Blind Blake, guitar and talking. (Spand) Recorded 1929, Para 12863.

Band 4. (10 A 4): ST. LOUIS BLUES (Handy), by Albert Ammons, piano. Recorded 1939. SA12003. (Solo Art).

Band 5. (10 A 5): HONKY TONK TRAIN (Lewis), by Meade Lux Lewis, piano. Recorded Chicago, 1929. Para 12896.

Band 6. (10 A 6): BROWN SKIN GAL, (Lofton), by Cripple Clarence Lofton, piano, and Big Bill Broonzy, guitar. Recorded July 18, 1935. Me 61166.

Band 7. (10 A 7): YANCEY STOMP (Yancey), by Jimmy Yancey, piano. Recorded spring, 1939. FV 26589.



## SIDE II (B)

### JUMP AND KANSAS CITY

"I don't dig that two-beat jive the New Orleans cats play," Count Basie is reported to have remarked, "because my boys and I got to have four heavy beats to a bar and no cheating." Thus does Basie point to the outstanding characteristic of his "Kansas City" jazz; its rhythmic construction, set up on a foundation different from that of traditional New Orleans jazz.

Even before the development of Kansas City as headquarters of a jazz belt that extended its influence, roughly, from Ohio to West Texas, piano ragtime had flourished here and in other cities of Missouri. A month to remember in the history of southwestern jazz and ragtime is the December in 1898 when the then young and aspiring composer, Scott Joplin, boarded a train that took him from Sedalia to Kansas City.

There, he found Carl Hoffman, a publisher who brought out Joplin's Original Rags (Jazz, Volume II, Side II, 2) in March of 1899. Another ragtime composer, James Scott, was active in the same city from the date he moved there in 1914. Bennie Moten, who was born in Kansas City November 13, 1894, turned to music at an early age because his mother, a pianist, encouraged his interest. His first piano teachers were Thomas "Scrap" Harris and Charles Watts, who in turn had studied with Joplin.

Bennie's band got under way in the twenties, and its early Okeh recordings of this period show clearly that it was getting as close to New Orleans jazz as it could. Charles Edward Smith, in The Jazz Record Book, says that theirs was "a rolling rhythm, arrived at with the help of banjo and tuba, and a loose adaptation of New Orleans style. . . . The band shows up rather poorly in contrast to the more or less contemporary Oliver group on Gennett."

As the Moten band developed, it took in talent from all over the country, in much the same way that New York pick-up bands of the thirties attracted jazzmen from all regions. The 1932 personnel of the band included, for example, Joe Keys, from Houston, Texas; Oran Hot Lips Page, from Dallas, Texas; Dan Minor, also from the Lone Star State; Eddie Durham, born in San Marcos, Texas; Eddie Barefield, born in Des Moines, Iowa, and Count Basie, from Red Bank, New Jersey. The rest were from Missouri and neighboring states, and three or four were actually born or had lived in Kansas City. Many of them, including vocalist Jimmy Rushing and pianist Basie, had played with the southwestern orchestra of Walter Page and His Blue Devils, and had but recently joined Moten.

## SIDE II (B) JUMP

Band 1. (10 B 1): LET 'EM JUMP (Johnson), by Pete Johnson, piano. Recorded 1938. SA12005.

Band 2. (10 B 2): TOBY, by Bennie Moten's Kansas City Orchestra (Buster Moten-Eddie Barefield) Joe Keyes, Dink Stewart, Oran Hot Lips Page, trumpets; Dan Minor, trombone; Eddie Durham, trombone and guitar; Eddie Barefield, Harlan Leonard, Buster Smith, Ben Webster, saxophones; Count Basie, piano; Leroy Berry, guitar; Walter Page, bass; Willie McWashington, drums. Recorded December 13, 1932. FV 23384

Band 3. (10 B 3): FROGGY BOTTOM, by Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy. (Williams ) Paul King, Earl Thomson, Harry Lawson, trumpets; Ted Donnelly, trombone; John Williams, John Harrington, saxophones; Dick Wilson, tenor sax; Andy Kirk, bass sax; Claude Williams, violin; Mary Lou Williams, piano; Ted Robinson, guitar; Booker Collins, bass; Ben Thigpen, drums and vocal. Recorded March, 1936. De729.

Band 4. (10 B 4): BOOGIE WOOGIE, by Jones-Smith Inc. (Pinetop Smith ) Carl Smith, trumpet; Lester Young, tenor sax; Count Basie, piano; Walter Page, bass; Joe Jones, drums; Jimmy Rushing, vocal. Recorded October 9, 1936. Vo3459.

Band 5. (10 B 5): HOOTIE BLUES, by Jay McShann and His Orchestra. (Jay McShann-Charles Parker) Harold Bruce, Bernard Anderson, Orville Minor, trumpets; Joe Baird, trombone; Bob Mabane, Charlie Parker, John Jackson, Harry Ferguson, saxes; Jay McShann, piano; Gene Ramey, bass; Gus Johnson, drums; Walter Brown, vocal. Recorded April 30, 1941. De8559.

Band 6. (10 B 6): LESTER LEAPS IN, by Count Basie's Kansas City Seven. (Young) Buck Clayton, trumpet; Dickey Wells, trombone; Lester Young, clarinet and tenor sax; Count Basie, piano; Freddy Green, guitar; Walter Page, bass; Joe Jones, drums. Recorded September 5, 1939. Vo5118.

Band 7. (10 B 7): DICKIE'S DREAM, by Count Basie's Kansas City Seven. (Basie-Young) Personnel and record data same as for band 6.