

CONTENT ADVISORY

FW-RF 23 - Ragtime Piano Originals: 16 Composer-Pianists Playing Their Own Works

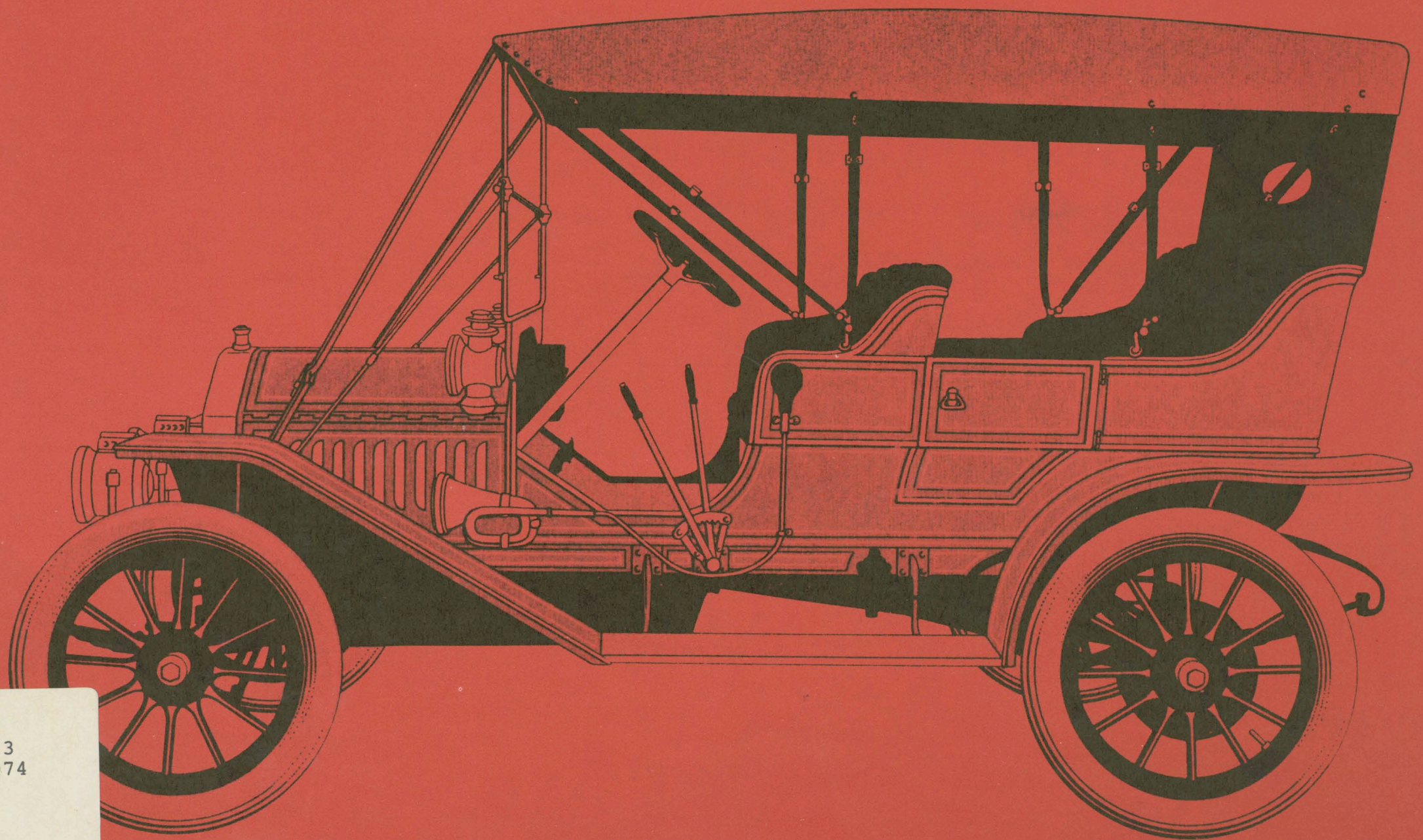
Track 104 on this album contains derogatory language in the title. While it is offensive to us, we have chosen for the song titles to remain as published and interpreted in the time period in which they were written. We believe that to do otherwise would be to change a historical document. The “n word” was commonplace for a time in history, especially during the era of Jim Crow. Its circulation and popularization through blackface minstrelsy became associated with the identity of Black people in a white supremacist society.



FOLKWAYS RECORDS RF 23

Ragtime Piano Originals

COMPILED BY DAVID A. JASEN 16 COMPOSER-PIANISTS PLAYING THEIR OWN WORKS



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R13
1974

MUSIC LP

FOLKWAYS RECORDS RF 23

SIDE 1

1. Blaze Away - Mike Bernard
2. A Classical Spasm - Harry Thomas
3. It's a Peach - Malvin M. Franklin
4. Nigger's Hop - Joseph Batten
5. Tantalizing Tingles - Mike Bernard
6. Modulation - Clarence Jones
7. Unknown Rag
8. Butter Scotch - Willy White

SIDE 2

1. Upright and Grand - Frank Banta
2. The Boston Trot - Sid Reinherz
3. Peanut Cackle - Frank Herbin
4. Whippin' The Keys - Sam Gould
5. That Futuristic Rag - Rube Bloom
6. Crooked Notes - Jean Paques
7. Fire Crackers - Donald Thorne
8. Piano Puzzle - Arthur Schutt

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

FOLKWAYS RECORDS RF 23

FOLKWAYS RECORDS Album No. RF 23

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RAGTIME PIANO ORIGINALS

COMPILED BY DAVID A. JASEN

16 COMPOSER-PIANISTS PLAYING THEIR OWN WORKS

Listeners rarely get to hear the work as the composer wanted his piece to sound. Most ragtime composers remain just names to us. They had their tunes published, and some of them were put onto piano rolls, and some had recordings made by professional musicians. This album, however, features the exciting ragtime performances of composer-pianists who fully demonstrate their double talents. They show us why that familiar phrase "...and then I wrote" means so much to us.

This album is also a documentary from the earliest known recordings of piano ragtime through the end of the ragtime era in the late twenties. The composer-pianists here run the gamut of show business, from variety accompanists to vaudeville headliners, from jazz band pianists and band leaders to recording company musical directors. With their compositions and varied approaches to performing them, we hear the effervescence of authentic ragtime during its long heyday.

RECORDINGS

Side One

The most famous of the music hall or variety pianists was Mike Bernard, who accompanied the greatest artists in vaudeville while he was resident pianist at Tony Pastor's, itself the most famous variety hall in the United States. Playing at Tony Pastor's Music Hall was to what playing the Palace - also in New York City - was to a later generation of show business folk: the highest accolade a performer could have. Only headliners played at Pastor's and Mike Bernard, often a show by himself, manned the keyboard. Well-known for his speed and flashy technique, BLAZE AWAY certainly demonstrates his whirlwind approach. TANTALIZING TINGLES, an earlier rag which was published, was the typical Tin Pan Alley rag. Its performance supports the theory that for ragtime to mean anything to its audience, the performance must incorporate his own individualized style within his rendition. Mike Bernard was a crowd pleaser for many years.

Although born in England, Harry Thomas was brought up in Canada where he spent the rest of his life. During the teens of this century, he came to this country where he played in vaudeville. It was at this time that he made his first recordings in New York City. Classical pianists in vaudeville used to take two well-known popular tunes, play them separately, and then one hand would play one melody while the other hand would play the second melody at the same time. Then it became common practice for the vaudeville virtuoso to take a familiar classical melody and jazz it up. There are several notable rags which have been taken and thus adapted. Harry Thomas in A CLASSICAL SPASM has gone one better and taken not just one tune but two. For the curious, the originals are from Scharwenka's Polish Dance and Paderewski's Minuet. This selection clearly demonstrates skill in playing and a fine musical taste in this successful rearrangement.

Malvin M. Franklin was musical director and house pianist for Emerson Records. By the time of this, his only solo recording, Malvin had become established as a leading composer of popular music. IT'S A PEACH, while bringing to a close Tin Pan Alley's long string of published ragtime successes, was a pioneer in recorded piano ragtime.

Joseph Batten, like Malvin Franklin, was the music director of Edison Bell. An Englishman, he was the first non-American to record rags on the piano. This very rare solo was re-recorded a decade later by Batten under the title PIANO MAN RAG, and using the pseudonym of Joe Bolton. Strangely, the earlier recording is the technically better one!

Fascinating things were happening in Chicago during the late teens and early twenties. It was a major recording center as well as a large city with many places for employment of professional musicians. Clarence Jones, said to have taught the great blues pianist-composer, Jimmy Blythe, was a musical paradox. He was a prominent band leader, as well as an outstanding solo pianist. In his one band recording as well as in this rare solo, he chose to record novelty rags. As East Coast Stride ragtime was the invention of black composer-pianists, Novelty ragtime was predominantly created and performed by white composer-pianists. It is, therefore, most

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unusual to find Clarence Jones, a black, not only playing but composing a rag in the Novelty idiom. MODULATION is a gem, both as a composition and as a performer.

The next selection is a mystery and so is its performer. It was probably never issued as a commercial record. It is fairly safe to assume that from the high level of performance and the sophistication of composition that the performer composed this great rag. It is one of the most thrilling musical experiences on this album.

Finishing this side is a noted vaudeville accompanist and sometime composer, Willy White. BUTTER SCOTCH, a fine original novelty rag, was one of Willy's two known solo recordings.

Side Two

Frank Banta was a professional recording pianist who made solos, performed with bands, and was most famous for accompanying the superb banjoist, Fred Van Eps. More of a performer, UPRIGHT AND GRAND finds Frank in the role of composer as well. Here, his influence is clearly Zez Confrey, creator of the Novelty rag. The use of an orchestra, not only to accompany the pianist but to play the melody as well, is an early example of scoring rags equally for piano and orchestra.

The Massachusetts composer-pianist-band leader offers his tribute to the state's capital in his original Novelty rag, THE BOSTON TROT. While Sid Reinherz had published a few novelty rags in the early twenties, he is represented on disc by only four solos, all of them his originals.


Frank Herbin was an American band pianist who recorded with the famous Savoy Orpheans orchestra in London. During this time, he recorded four piano solos, three by Zez Confrey, and PEANUT CACKLE, his original. From this recording, we hear that he is an original indeed as well as a superb performer of novelty rags.

WHIPPING THE KEYS is Sam Goold's only known recording. A legendary performer in his native Philadelphia, Sam's background was similar to that of Mike Bernard's.

The late Rube Bloom (d. 1973) has left a musical legacy of both quality and quantity. His versatility as a composer, band pianist, band leader, accompanist, and arranger was amazing. Equally so was his casual attitude toward his solo performances. THAT FUTURISTIC RAG was his first published novelty rag and his performance several years later is unforgettable.

Jean Paques, a native of Belgium, came to London in the late twenties and joined Sid Phillips in Harry Hudson's Plaza Band. As with most of the others on this album, Jean made few solo recordings and this original, CROOKED NOTES, is a novelty delight.

Another English band pianist and organist, Donald

LITHO IN U.S.A. 

Thorne, demonstrates his pianistic expertise and creativity with Novelty ragtime in this rendition of FIRE CRACKERS.

In a dramatic finish, Arthur Schutt, famous for his short breaks with such famous jazzmen as Bix Beiderbecke and Red Nichols, shows us with PIANO PUZZLE that he is really a master at playing extended pieces. His composition shows a high degree of originality and his performance sparkles with joy.

Compiled and Annotated by

DAVID A. JASEN

Credits

Special thanks to the following for their kindness in supplying the extremely rare original discs: George A. Blacker, David A. Jasen, and Edward S. Walker.

Programmed by David A. Jasen

Mastered by Nick Perls

Documentation: RECORDED RAGTIME, 1897-1958, by David A. Jasen, Archon Books, 1973 (995 Sherman Avenue, Hamden, Conn. 06514).

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design: wasserfish 