

New Orleans Jazz: The 'Twenties

Compiled and Edited by Samuel Charters RBF 203



NEW ORLEANS JAZZ: THE 'TWENTIES

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RBF 203

RBF 203

VOLUME ONE

SIDE 1

- Band 1. BLACK RAG
Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra
Band 2. RED MAN BLUES
Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra
Band 3. BOUNCING AROUND
KISS ME SWEET
Band 4. KISS ME SWEET
Pittori's New Orleans Orchestra
Band 5. EVERYBODY LOVES SOMEBODY
Pittori's New Orleans Orchestra
Band 6. DIPPY
Brownlee's Orchestra of New Orleans
Band 7. MAPLE LEAF'S CALL
Johnny Bayardofffer and his
Jazzola Novelty Orchestra

SIDE 2

- Band 1. FRANKLIN STREET BLUES
Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra
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Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra
Band 3. SHORT DRESS GALS
Jazzola Eight
Band 4. DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE
MOBILE STOMP
Band 5. Sam Morgan's Jazz Band
Band 6. FRANKIE AND JOHNNY
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Band 7. MY DEARHEARTED
Billy Mack and Mary Mack,
with Punch Miller

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Albert Bonolis and his Half Way
House Orchestra
Band 3. MEAT ON THE TABLE
Albert Bonolis and his Half Way
House Orchestra
Band 4. CREOLE BLUES
Anthony Parenti and his Famous
No-Lady Boys
Band 5. SAN SEE STOMP
Johnny DeDroit and his New Orleans
Orchestra
Band 6. MEAT ON THE TABLE
Albert Bonolis and his Half Way
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Band 7. PICKABILLITY
New Orleans Owls

SIDE 2

- Band 1. IT'S SATISFIED YOU LOVE ME
Celestin's Original Tuxedo Jazz
Orchestra
Band 2. IT'S JAM UP
Celestin's Original Tuxedo Jazz
Orchestra
Band 3. ALLIGATOR BLUES
Celestin's Original Tuxedo Jazz
Orchestra
Band 4. PAVANA
Johnny Miller's New Orleans
Proclaimers
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Mook Hazel and his Bienville
Jazz Orchestra
Band 6. DAME MARCH
Mook Hazel and his Bienville
Jazz Orchestra
Band 7. DUST STOMP
Jones and Collins Astoria
Hot Eight

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH: BUDDIE PETIT'S ORCHESTRA, 1920

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NEW ORLEANS JAZZ THE '20'S

Compiled & Edited by
SAMUEL CHARTERS

VOLUME ONE

SIDE ONE

- Band 1 BLACK RAG
Original Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra
- Band 2 RED MAN BLUES
- Band 3 BOUNCING AROUND
- Band 4 KISS ME SWEET
Piron's New Orleans Orchestra
- Band 5 EVERYBODY LOVES SOMEBODY
Original New Orleans Rhythm Kings
- Band 6 DIRTY RAG
Brownlee's Orchestra of New Orleans
- Band 7 WAFFLE MAN'S CALL
Johnny Bayersdorffer and his Jazzola
Novelty Orchestra

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- Band 2 TO-WA-BAC-A-WA
Louis Dumaine's Jazzola Eight
- Band 3 SHORT DRESS GAL
- Band 4 DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE
- Band 5 MOBILE STOMP
Sam Morgan's Jazz Band
- Band 6 FRANKIE AND JOHNNY
Fate Marable's Society Syncopators
- Band 7 MY HEARTBREAKIN' GAL
Billy Mack and Mary Mack, with Punch
Miller

VOLUME TWO

SIDE THREE

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Johnny DeDroit and his New Orleans Jazz
Orchestra
- Band 2 LET ME CALL YOU SWEETHEART
- Band 3 MAPLE LEAF RAG
Albert Brunies and his Half Way House
Orchestra
- Band 4 CREOLE BLUES
Anthony Parenti and his Famous
Melody Boys
- Band 5 SANS SUE STRUT
Arcadian Serenaders

- Band 6 MEAT ON THE TABLE
- Band 7 PICADILLY
New Orleans Owls

SIDE FOUR

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Celestin's Original Tuxedo Jazz
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- Band 3 ALLIGATOR BLUES
John Hyman's Bayou Stompers
- Band 4 PANAMA
Johnny Miller's New Orleans Frolickers
- Band 5 SIZZLING THE BLUES
Monk Hazel and his Bienville Roof
Orchestra
- Band 6 DAMP WEATHER
- Band 7 DUET STOMP
Jones and Collins Astoria Hot Eight

An Introduction

Samuel Charters

No city in the United States means as much to most jazz enthusiasts as New Orleans. It is difficult, now, to trace the early developments of jazz, but a style of hot instrumental music did begin in the city very early, probably as early as 1893 or 1894, with the playing of the legendary cornetist, Buddy Bolden, and it was a New Orleans band, the Original Dixieland Jass Band, which was the first to record using the title "jass" band in 1917. New Orleans' exotic setting, and the colorful history of the red-light district, Storyville, have contributed, too, to the nostalgia felt for early jazz, and the city's place in the legends of jazz is permanently fixed.

Earlier histories of jazz tended to show a movement from New Orleans to Chicago in the years following the closing of Storyville in 1917, but it is now clear that the situation was more complex. Few New Orleans musicians were employed in the district by this time, and there were many other jobs, especially in a growing cabaret area along Burgundy Street in the French Quarter. The story of early jazz in Chicago is, however, dominated by New Orleans musicians. Freddie Keppard, King Oliver, Kid Ory, Sidney Bechet, Johnny Dodds, Kid Ory, Louis Armstrong, and dozens of others, in cities as separate as Los Angeles and New York, had a strong influence on both the white and Negro musicians who heard them play, and bands like the Original Dixieland Jazz Band or the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, especially their clarinet players, Larry Shields and Leon Rapollo, were to give an early impetus to musicians as diverse as Bix Beiderbecke and Frank Teschemaker. There were, however, even more musicians who never left New Orleans, but who stayed in the city playing much in the same style, and continuing the traditions of the older bands. They were usually the less talented, but among them

were older men like the clarinetist Lorenzo Tio Jr. who taught Jimmy Noone, Johnny Dodds, and Sidney Bechet, younger men like Lee Collins who were to leave the city the moment their first recording reached the ear of an out of town band leader, and men almost forgotten, like Monk Smith, who would put aside his tenor sax and join the other guitarist of the New Orleans Owls in string jazz choruses that recalled the little groups they had played in before the first World War.

There were two periods of recording interest in these local bands; the first in the twenties, when the major record companies sent field units out to record music everywhere in the United States, and the second since the beginning of the second World War, when the effort was begun to "revive" the older styles. Much of this recorded material from the revival period is well known, and musicians like George Lewis have reached enthusiastic audiences in many parts of the world, but the recordings from the '20's have long been among the rarest and least known of early jazz performances. Sales were generally poor outside of the city, and the records had, often, little more than local distribution. They have generally been overlooked in re-issue programs, too, and it is for this reason that this group of early recordings, representing nearly every New Orleans group to be recorded in the city in the 1920's, has been assembled.

Musically, many of these early recordings leave much to be desired. The best musicians generally left for the first important job that was offered to them, and the bands often include men who played only occasionally. There was little strong competitiveness in the city and the standards tended to be low. As was often the situation with bands in cities like New Orleans the rhythm sections tended to be weak, and New Orleans had a particular difficulty in finding trombone players, both white and colored. The recordings, too, are not representative. Most of the white musicians active in New Orleans during the '20's were recorded, but there was a group of Negro bands, reputed to be the hottest in the city, those of Chris Kelly, Buddy Petit, Punch Miller, and Kid Rena, who were never recorded. Prejudice and discrimination made it impossible for them to have a hearing. The music at its best, however, is exultantly vigorous and creative. Sam Morgan's Jazz Band, the Half Way House Orchestra, the Jones-Collins Astoria Hot Eight, the better performances by the New Orleans Owls, by Celestin's Tuxedo Jazz Band, Louis Dumaine's Jazzola Eight, and Piron's New Orleans Orchestra, have all a musical as well as a historical interest. There is, too this cross section of musicians of the older schools who haven't chosen to leave, and younger men taking the first steps toward a major career in jazz to give the recordings an additional interest. They have, too, a flavor which only New Orleans has given to its musicians, a lingering sweetness and a good natured lack of pretense. If they do not express the richness of jazz as an intense, creative music, they do capture its quality of sincere delight in much that life has to offer.

I would like to thank Walter C. Allen and Jack Phelan who made available to me recordings not in my collection.

Band 1. BLACK RAG

Original Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra

Oscar Celestin, Shots Madison, cornet; Bill Ridgely, tbn; Willard Thourmy, clt; Paul Barnes, alto; Emma Barret, pno; John Marrero, bjo; Simon Marrero, bss. Abbie Foster, dms.

New Orleans, January, 1925.

The Original Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra was organized by Oscar Celestin and Bill Ridgely about the end of the first World War. They had played together in the dance orchestra at the old Tuxedo Dance Hall, in Storyville, and were with an orchestra that Clarence Williams tried to take on a vaudeville tour in 1916. Ridgely ran a pressing shop, and a customer suggested that he organize an orchestra, dress them in tuxedos, and try to get some society jobs. The idea was a successful one, and when their first recordings were made the band was one of the most popular in New Orleans. Celestin was not a "hot" cornet player, and played the lead, leaving the more intense second part to young Shots Madison. The Marreros, John and Simon, were brothers of the banjo player, Lawrence Marrero, who was to become well known with George Lewis's band.



THE ORIGINAL TUXEDO JAZZ BAND, 1923

Kneeling, left to right: Paul Barnes, John Marrero, William Ridgely; Standing, l.-r.-Bill Willigan, Simon Marrero, Oscar Celestin.
Photo courtesy William Ridgely.

Band 2. RED MAN BLUES

Piron's New Orleans Orchestra

Armand J. Piron, vln; Lorenzo Tio Jr., clt; Peter Bocage, cnt; Louis Warneke, alto; Steve Lewis, pno; Charlie Bocage, bjo; Henry Bocage, tuba; Louis Cottrell Sr., drums.

New Orleans, March 25, 1925

Band 3. BOUNCING AROUND

Piron's New Orleans Orchestra

add John Lindsay, tbn.

New York, December, 1923

Band 4. KISS ME SWEET

Piron's New Orleans Orchestra

As above, with Lindsay.

New York, December 1923.

Armand Piron, like Oscar Celestin, played largely for the New Orleans society audience. The orches-

tra was organised by Piron and Peter Bocage in the fall of 1918, when Bocage left his job on the S.S. Capitol, turning the cornet chair over to young Louis Armstrong. They organised the group for Tranchina's Restaurant, at the Spanish Fort Resort area on Lake Ponchartrain, and were the house orchestra there until 1928. The Werlein Music Company arranged for them to record for Victor in New York in 1923, and once there they were induced to take a short engagement at the Cotton Club - the first Negro group to play in the club. There was a second New York trip the next year, with a short engagement at the Roseland Ballroom, but their other recordings were made in New Orleans. Although the group has an easy swinging rhythm, and their arrangements, for the period, are generally tasteful, it is the playing of Lorenzo Tio Jr., which is the most interesting aspect of their recordings. Tio was a very active clarinet instructor, and he influenced most of the younger musicians, among them Sidney Bechet, Johnny Dodds, and Jimmy Noone. His last series of breaks on Bouncing Around make it evident that there should have been other recordings in which he would have had more of an opportunity to play in a freer style.

Band 5. EVERYBODY LOVES SOMEBODY

Original New Orleans Rhythm Kings

Paul Mares, tpt; Santo Pecora, tbn; Charles Cordella, clt; Red Long, pno; Bill Eastwood, bjo; Chink Martin, tuba; Leo Adde, drums.

New Orleans, March 26, 1925

Paul Mares, leader of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, was one of the early New Orleans musicians to lead a jazz band in Chicago. His white band at the Friar's Inn was one of the most important influences on younger white Chicago musicians, whose experience with jazz had been largely limited to phonograph records. When he returned to New Orleans in 1925 Mares organised another band, almost all of them from the younger New Orleans group. The dominant member of the older band was the clarinet player, Leon Rapollo, but he had suffered a mental breakdown, and Mares used Charlie Cordella in his place. Most of the New Orleans bands had difficulties with rhythm section, and the rhythm on EVERYBODY LOVES SOMEBODY is even more sluggish than usual, with the horns unable to break out of its heavy grip.

Band 6. DIRTY RAG

Brownlee's Orchestra of New Orleans

Sharkey Bonano, cnt; Tom Brown, tbn; Harry Shields, clt; Norman Brownlee, pno; Behrman French, bjo; Alonzo Crumby, drums.

New Orleans, January, 1925

Brownlee's Orchestra was an Algiers group, playing mostly in the colorful section of New Orleans on the other side of the Mississippi. Tom Brown, the trombone player, was the same man who had taken the first white group from New Orleans to Chicago in 1915. It was his band that had been given the name "jass" band. The clarinet player, Harry Shields, was the younger brother of Larry Shields, who had recorded in 1916 and 1917 with the Original Dixieland Jass Band. Until a few months before the recording was done Brownlee's cornet player had been young Emmett Hardy, the semi-legendary musician from Algiers who has been described by many New Orleans men as the greatest of the early white musicians. He is even remem-

bered taking a contest from Louis Armstrong on the S.S. Sidney about 1921, and so many musicians remember the place and the details that there may be a basis for the story. Charlie Cordella definitely remembers going into a colored neighborhood with an advertising band that included Hardy. After they had played for a few moments before a growing crowd an elderly reached up onto the wagon where they were standing and pulled at Hardy's trouser leg. Looking up at him he asked, "Boy, are you sure there isn't a touch of black in you?" After Hardy's premature death Brownlee replaced him with young Sharkey Bonano, whose clear tone and easy lyricism are already evident, despite a momentary nervous tremor during his solo.



BROWNLEE'S ORCHESTRA OF NEW ORLEANS

L.-R. Alonzo Crombie, George Barth, Bill Braun, Norman Brownlee, Emmett Hardy, Billy Eastwood.

Band 7. WAFFLE MAN'S CALL

Johnny Bayersdorffer and his Jazzola Novelty Orchestra

Johnny Bayersdorffer, cnt; Charlie Scagleona, clt; Tom Brown, tbn; Johnnie Miller, pno; Chink Martin, tuba; Steve Loyocano, bjo; Leo Adde, drums.

New Orleans, March 25, 1924

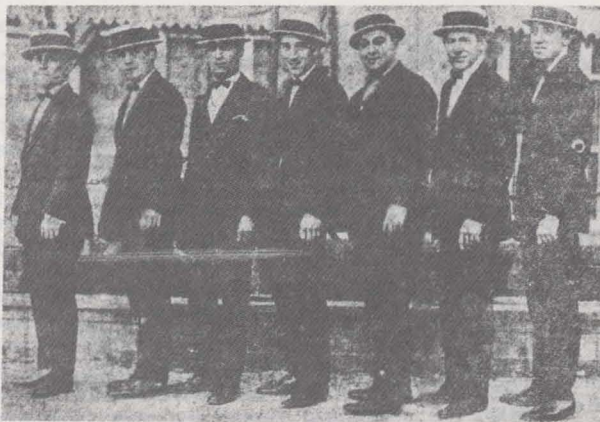
Already, by 1924, there was a divergence of style among the New Orleans white musicians. Some of them, like Sharkey Bonano, were turning to a less intense style, with many elements of Italian street music which was to become the present day "dixieland" music of New Orleans. Others, among them Bayersdorffer, Cordella, and Abbie Brunies, were turning to the rougher styles of the popular Negro bands like Buddy Petit's, Punch Miller's, or Kid Rena's. Bayersdorffer's band has an almost uncomfortable breathlessness to their playing, but there is a determined energy in the ensemble, and Bayersdorffer himself plays with a pungent tone and drive. By the musical standards of other bands recording in 1924, including Chicago and New York bands, the Jazzola Novelty Orchestra could have held its own without difficulty. The band opened in the "Tokio Gardens" at the Spanish Fort Resort area on May 9, 1924, a month and a half after their recording, and played for dancing at the resort for the rest of the summer. Bayersdorffer still plays for occasional dances and concerts in New Orleans, often with the clarinetist Raymond Burke.

SIDE TWO

Band 1. FRANKLIN STREET BLUES

Louis Dumaine's Jazzola Eight

Louis Dumaine, tpt; Willie Joseph, clt; Earl Humphrey, tbn; Lewis James, tenor; Morris Rouse, pno and vocal; Leonard Mitchell, bjo; Joe Howard,



JOHNNY BAYERSDORFFER'S JAZOLA NOVELTY ORCHESTRA, 1924
1. to r. Martin Abraham, Leo Adde, Steve Loyocano,
Johnny Miller, Charley Scagliona, Tom Brown, and
Bayersdorffer.

Courtesy N. O. Public Library

tuba; James Willigan, drums.
New Orleans, March 5, 1927

Band 2. TO-WA-BAC-A-WA

Louis Dumaine's Jazzola Eight
As Above.

Louis Dumaine was a well known Negro orchestra leader and music teacher in New Orleans for many years. His orchestra represented a stylistic compromise between the hotter bands, who were generally restricted to the Negro dance halls, and dance orchestras like the Piron Orchestra at Tranchina's Restaurant. Dumaine himself worked many jobs in brass bands and in the dance halls with the city's best blues trumpet player, Chris Kelly, and the beautiful restraint and delicacy of his solo on FRANKLIN STREET BLUES may reflect some of Kelly's style. There is a tenseness in the rhythm section, probably due to Leonard Mitchell's tendency to rush the beat, and TO-WA-BAC-A-WA has an awkwardly phrased opening melody, but there are moments when the band's elements fuse together and the music comes alive. The trombone player, Earl Humphrey, is almost inaudible, but he was highly regarded in the city. He is a brother of the trumpet player Percy Humphrey and the clarinet player Willie Humphrey, both of whom are still active.

Band 3. SHORT DRESS GAL

Sam Morgan's Jazz Band

Sam Morgan, Isaiah Morgan, cornets; Earl Fouche, alto; Andrew Morgan, tenor and clt; Walter Decou, pno; Johnny Dave, bjo; Sidney Brown, bss; Roy Evans, drums.

New Orleans, October 22, 1927

Band 4. DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE

As Above.

Band 5. MOBILE STOMP

Tink Baptiste, pno; and Nolan Williams, drums;
replace Decou and Evans.

New Orleans, April 14, 1927

The Negro musical life in New Orleans in the '20's revolved around five men; the cornet players Buddy Petit, Chris Kelly, Punch Miller, Kid Rena, and Sam Morgan. Their bands set the style for the rest of the bands in the city, and at one time or another nearly every young musician worked at least a job or two for them. They were hot bands, playing a style of jazz that was entirely local to New Orleans. The rhythm was a surging pulse of four unaccented beats to the measure, there were no arrangements, and the melody was sustained in the freely voiced polyphony of the three lead instruments. It was a style that left imprint on musicians like Johnny Bayersdorffer, and on bands like the early Half Way House Orchestra, but the rest of white New Orleans was only vaguely aware that it existed. It was difficult for any Negro group to get work for the white society functions, and bands like these, hard drinking, flashily dressed, their music an intensely brilliant expression, had little chance even to be heard. They had so little chance with this audience that the little that is known of their music has to be inferred from the style of Sam Morgan band, from musician's descriptions, and from the music of the first revival recordings made in New Orleans in the 1940's. There is only a pitiful handful of recordings from the 1920's. Buddy Petit and Chris Kelly are not known to have recorded at all; although there is a remarkable recording made in Dallas 1928 by "Frenchie's String Band" that includes a cornet player who will probably never be identified but whose playing fits some of the early descriptions of Petit's style. Kid Rena has long been thought to have made a recording with his band in Chicago in 1923, but nothing definite has been established about it. Punch Miller didn't record with his band, although he did make a rare blues accompaniment in New Orleans in 1925. His solo chorus on MY HEARTBREAKIN' GAL (Side 2, Band 7) is a glimpse of what the music must have been like, but it is a brief glimpse. It is only the eight titles recorded by Sam Morgan's band, enlarged to suit changing styles of music, which remain from this wealth of music.



SAM MORGAN'S JAZZ BAND, 1927

L.-r. Nolan Williams, Isaiah Morgan, Jim Robinson,
Sam Morgan, Earl Fouche, Andrew Morgan, Sidney Brown,
Johnny Dave.

Photo courtesy Andrew Morgan

Sam Morgan had been leading a band in New Orleans for many years, but in 1925 he suffered a stroke. He was just thirty years old, but

the New Orleans musician's life was a frantic one. Both Petit and Kelly were dead before the Depression, and although Rena lived long enough to make a series of revival recordings in 1940 he had been unable to play well for several years. Sam's younger brothers, Isaiah and Andrew, were leading their own band, and when Sam recovered in 1926 he took over the band, and an alto player who had been living in New York, Earl Fouche, was added. Oscar Celestin's band was recording during this period and it is thought that someone from Celestin's band suggested the Morgan band as a possibility for recording. There were two sessions, the first in April, 1927; the second in October, 1927. The last number of the first session was the spiritual "SING ON", and the recording director liked the idea. It seems to be the first recording of a jazz band playing a religious piece. For the second session two more spirituals were done, one of them the DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE. There was a "re-issue" in the early '30's of SING ON and OVER IN THE GLORYLAND placed together on a new pressing.

This New Orleans music seems to be closer to the purity and restraint of a folk style than to the virtuosity and competitive ferocity of jazz. There was less concern with the solo, little interest in arrangements, not even too much attention to the ensemble style. The jobs were long and hard, the bands usually sweating in balcony band stands for hours at a time. For jobs in the street parades they were expected to be able to march in the hot sun for eight or nine hours; then play for dancing until the next morning. In the ensembles there was considerable resting. The melody was left to wander from one horn to another, one picking it up when the other stopped. This meant that the melody was always being played, but as it was repeated over and over it changed with each musician and each instrument. Usually they were playing for dancing, and it meant that there didn't have to be the dominating solo choruses, usually in the upper register, which gave to jazz in cities like New York or Chicago its fiery excitement. There was an excitement to this New Orleans folk jazz style, but it was an excitement of sustained lyric statement or tightening ensemble development. In the rhythm, too, there was a relaxed pulse that somehow had a stern quality to it, and that could sweep a hall full of dancers along with it.

Much of this style is in the Sam Morgan recordings. The rhythm section has all the strut of a brass band or the swing of a country guitar player, the horns concerned with melodic movement rather than solo brilliance. The contrasts come in the subtle interplay of Sam's muted and expressive cornet against his brother Isaiah's tighter tone and attack, in the expressiveness of Fouche's alto in the hymns and his more vigorous attack in MOBILE STOMP. In MOBILE STOMP there is a stop chorus, a standard solo device of the period, but the two saxophones take it together, even in this solo section continuing the ensemble style. There is nothing in recorded jazz even vaguely similar to these performances, and they make it discouragingly clear that the other recordings of Negro orchestras in New Orleans in the 1920's give a misleading picture of the city's music, and of its most vigorous jazz styles.

Band 6. FRANKIE AND JOHNNY

Fate Marable's Society Syncopators
Sidney Desvigne, Amos White, cornets; Harvey

Lankford, trombone; Norman Mason, Bery Bailey, Walter Thomas, saxes; Fate Marable, pno; Willie Foster, gtr; Henry Kimball, bass; Zutty Singleton, drums.

New Orleans, March, 1924

Fate Marable's Society Syncopators were the house band on the Streckfus Lines riverboat the S.S. Capitol. The steamer spent the winter months in St. Louis and the summers in New Orleans, giving nightly dances and regular excursions. The Streckfus owners were difficult to work for, and Fate was never popular with his musicians, but the job was a steady one, and over the many years that he ran the orchestra a number of New Orleans men worked for him, including Louis Armstrong, Johnny Dodds, Manuel Perez, Pops Foster, Johnny St. Cyr, and Peter Bocage. The one recording that the band made, one of the rarest jazz records, is of little more than historical interest, but both the cornet players were New Orleans men. Sidney Desvigne was one of the promising younger New Orleans men, and his solo on FRANKIE AND JOHNNY, his only recording, is the record's most exciting moment. Some of the older musicians were of the opinion that the Streckfus Orchestras brought the unaccented 4/4 of the New Orleans bands to the city from Memphis, and older drummers sometimes referred to the rhythm as "Memphis time."

Band 7. MY HEARTBREAKIN' GAL

Billy Mack and Mary Mack, with Punch Miller
New Orleans, January, 1925

Billy and Mary Mack were Negro vaudeville performers who took small shows out of New Orleans for several years. They usually included New Orleans men in their bands, and this recording is the only example of the playing of one of the best New Orleans cornet players from this early period. Punch Miller was to go on to a lasting success in Chicago, but here he is still a young, growing musician. There is already the acid quality to the tone and the sudden passages of rapidly executed notes that were to become part of his mature style. The pianist was the usual accompanist for the show, Edgar Brown.

SIDE THREE

Band 1. NEW ORLEANS BLUES

Johnny DeDroit and his New Orleans Jazz Orchestra
Johnny DeDroit, cornet; Russ Papalia, tbn; Henry Raymond, clt; Rudolph Levy, alto; Frank Guny, pno; George Potter, bjo; Paul DeDroit, drums.

New Orleans, 1923

Until the introduction of Vitaphone sound systems in New Orleans theatres in the late '20's put most of the theatre musicians out of work Johnny DeDroit led pit orchestras in many of the city's theatres. His bands were expected to play popular music and light classical selections between showings, but there were often jazz musicians included in the band. Although the hotter young white musicians didn't find much theatre work DeDroit sometimes used even the Brunies brothers and Tony Parenti. The group that recorded NEW ORLEANS BLUES is not an outstanding one, but it is interesting as an example of a commercial New Orleans jazz band of 1923.



THE HALF WAY HOUSE ORCHESTRA

Charlie Cordella is at far left, Abbie Brunies, cornet and leader, center.

Band 2. LET ME CALL YOU SWEETHEART

Albert Brunies and his Half Way House Orchestra
Abbie Brunies, cornet; Charlie Cordella, clt;
Mickie Marcour, pno; Bill Eastwood, bjo; Leo
Adde, drums.

New Orleans, September 25, 1925

Band 3. MAPLE LEAF RAG

Albert Brunies and his Half Way House Orchestra
As Above.

There were few white bands anywhere in the country in 1925 that could have matched the Half Way House Orchestra in brusque energy and determined drive. The group, with replacements and additions, made a number of recordings, but nothing quite matched their LET ME CALL YOU SWEETHEART or MAPLE LEAF RAG or NEW ORLEANS SHUFFLE, recorded at the same session. The Half Way House was a restaurant not far from the end of Canal Street, toward the end of the new Louisiana Avenue extension. It was about half way between downtown New Orleans and Lake Ponchartrain, which was the reason for the name. There were three Brunies brothers, Merrit and Abbie, both cornet players, and their brother George, who switched from alto horn to trombone. George and Merrit both went to Chicago, George with the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, and Merrit following him into Friar's Inn with his own band. Abbie was asked to join the Rhythm Kings when they first reached Chicago in 1920, but he was already at the Half Way House and sent Paul Mares instead. Leon Rapollo was with him before going north, and when he returned to New Orleans in 1925, his mind shattered, Brunies tried to keep him with the band. Charlie Cordella played the solos and the ensemble clarinet, with Rapollo playing some clarinet and saxophone. Rapollo was finally forced to leave the band, after two recordings in January, 1925, and the band that recorded in September was a smaller, tighter ensemble. There is still a constraint in the rhythm section, there is never the relaxed impetus which the bands were to develop a few years later, and both Brunies and Cordella have limitations in their melodic ideas, but there is a conscious stylistic unity and a remarkable ease in the tossing back and forth of solos, particularly in the closing choruses of MAPLE LEAF RAG. The Half Way House Orchestra is often overlooked in the histories of jazz, but they have still a colorful sound, rich in its overtones of musical ideas that were derived from the Negro bands in New Orleans during these years. New Orleans white bands were finally to

fall into the meaningless cliché's of "dixieland", but the Half Way House Orchestra represented a vigorous and intent approach to the jazz style. Abbie Brunies is still active as a musician, leading a band in Biloxi, Mississippi, where he now lives.

Band 4. CREOLE BLUES

Anthony Parenti and his Famous Melody Boys
Anthony Parenti, clt and alto; Leon Prima, cornet;
Russ Paplia, tbn; Tony Papalia, tenor; Vic
Lubowski, pno; Mike Holloway, bjo; Mike Holloway,
bjo; Mario Finazzo, tuba; George Trie, drums.
New Orleans, March 24, 1925

Although Tony Parenti was to develop in New York as one of the most traditional of the New Orleans white clarinetists, while he was in New Orleans his playing, and the style of the groups he was working with, was influenced by recordings of bands like Ted Lewis and Isham Jones. He was a good looking young musician of Italian background, and he regarded the music almost as a popular novelty. There was such a strong Italian-American jazz tradition in New Orleans, with the high trumpet sound, the excited rhythm sections, and the general lack of emotional involvement, that musicians like Parenti never had to give much thought to their music. He led orchestras for some of the best jobs in the city, including the Liberty Theatre, and the La Vida Cabaret. It was only after the Vitaphone had finished the job at the Liberty that he left New Orleans for New York, late in the '20's.

Band 5. SAN SUE STRUT

Arcadian Serenaders
Wingy Mannone, cornet; Avery Loposer, tbn; Cliff
Holman, clt. and alto; Eddie Powers, tenor;
Johnny Riddick, pno; Slim Hall, bjo; Felix
Guarino, drums.

St. Louis, October, 1924

New Orleans bands were hired away from the city by dance hall owners and cabaret managers throughout the '20's, and one of the gustier groups to leave was a band called the Crescent City Jazzers, who had recorded in March of 1924. They were hired for the Arcadia Ballroom in St. Louis and were there for over a year, using the Ballroom's name for recording. The band's original cornet player, Sterling Bose, was unable to leave for St. Louis, and he was replaced with Wingy Mannone, a twenty year old musician who had lost his right arm as the result of an accident when he was still a child. SAN SUE STRUT is Mannone's first recording, and with it he began a long and successful career in the commercially oriented "dixieland" music. Like other New Orleans bands there was a stiffness and lack of creative excitement in the solos, but the rhythm section was more energetic than that of bands like Parenti's Famous Melody Boys or Johnny DeDroit's Orchestra. The pianist, Johnny Riddick, was the older brother of the pianist still active in New Orleans, Jeff Riddick.

Band 6. MEAT ON THE TABLE

New Orleans Owls
Bill Padron, cornet; Frank Neito, tbn; Pinky
Vidacovitch, clt; Benji White, alto; Lester
"Monk" Smith, tenor and guitar; Rene Gelpi,
bjo; Zefried Christensen, pno; Dan LeBlanc,
tuba; Earl Crumb, drums.

New Orleans, April 15, 1927

Band 7. PICADILLY

New Orleans Owls

As Above.

New Orleans, April 14, 1926

Although most of the jazz recordings of the '20's were done by pick-up studio groups, there were orchestras in many cities which managed to play both dance music and jazz specialties with considerable style and authority. The best of the bands, like Fletcher Henderson, Duke Ellington, or Charlie Johnson, were in New York, but in other parts of the country there were a number of large bands whose recordings are of considerable interest in the study of regional jazz styles. Among them were bands like Tiny Parham's and Earl Hine's in Chicago, Zack Whyte in Cincinnati, Charlie Creath, Bennie Moten, and George E. Lee in St. Louis and Kansas City, and the young white dance orchestra in New Orleans, the New Orleans Owls. The Owls were the most successful large jazz group in New Orleans during the '20's, and they were highly regarded by both the white and Negro musicians in the city. Although their recordings are often disappointing they play with considerable musicality and with an ingratiating nonchalance. The band was the result of an early string band turning to dance music; then picking up new musicians from another small orchestra. They kept their affection for the string jazz sound, and often the tenor player Monk Smith puts down his tenor, which he had learned for the dance band, and goes back to his guitar to join Rene Gelpi in delightful guitar duets, sometimes with Pinky Vidacovitch, the clarinetist, joining them for a chorus. Veteran Negro musicians who worked on the S.S. Susquehanna, a Lake Ponchartrain excursion boat, still remember how they enjoyed hearing the sound of the Owls, playing in a dance hall in Milneburg, as their own excursion boat came into the Milneburg dock.

The Owls took their music seriously, and they often tried arrangements that were as complex as anything being done in New York or Chicago. The difficulty was in the lack of outstanding soloists and in the generally inadequate rhythm sections. Their music has a distinctive charm, however, and in a recording like PICADILLY the arrangement is interesting in itself. If the Owls did not have an overpowering rhythmic drive or brilliant soloists they had a sensitive musicality and genuine sincerity that has given their recordings a continued popularity not only among collectors, but among older people in New Orleans who still remember them with considerable affection.

SIDE FOUR

Band 1. I'M SATISFIED YOU LOVE ME

Celestin's Original Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra
Oscar Celestin, cornet; August Rousseau, tbn;
Paul Barnes, alto; Earl Pierson, tenor;
Jeanette Salvant, pno; John Marrero, bjo;
Simon Marrero, bass; Abbie Foster, drums.

New Orleans, April 13, 1926

Within a few months of their first recording session, which produced the BLACK RAG on Volume 1, Band 1, Celestin and Bill Ridgely had difficulties, and they split the Original Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra between them. The second cornet player, Shots Madison, stayed with Ridgely, as well as the pianist, Emma Barnes, but the rest of the rhythm

section stayed with Celestin, as did the alto player, Paul Barnes. Celestin continued to be popular with the white dancing audience, and he had a large share of the fashionable work along St. Charles Avenue. The band has a cohesive sound, and there is a strong jazz tone to much of what they recorded, but the music seems to be more theatrical than it does creative. Foster's jangling percussion is a distracting element, and Celestin's own playing is without much excitement, but there is a lack of pretention and a robustness that lifts the band a step above the conventional dance orchestras of the time.

Band 2. IT'S JAM UP

Celestin's Original Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra

Oscar Celestin, Richard Alexis, trumpets; Bill Mathews, tbn; Clarence Hall, Robert Hall, Joe Rouson, saxes; Jeanette Salvant, pno; Henry Kimball Jr., bjo; Simon Marrero, bss; Josiah Frazier, drums.

New Orleans, October 25, 1927

When Celestin recorded a year and a half later he was able to use an additional brass as well as an additional reed, and he had replaced most of the band that was with him for I'M SATISFIED YOU LOVE ME. The Hall brothers, from a musical family in Reserve, Louisiana, that included the well known clarinet player Edmond Hall, had been with Ridgely's Tuxedo Orchestra, and when they left to join Celestin they took with them the drummer, Bill Mathews, who had switched to trombone. Richard Alexis was a strong young trumpet player, and his first solo, as well as his breaks during Celestin's muted chorus, are high points of these later Celestin recordings. His jaw was broken in a street robbery some months later, and he was forced to learn the bass, although he made a half hearted effort to pick up the trumpet again in 1954.

Band 3. ALLIGATOR BLUES

John Hyman's Bayou Stompers

John Hyman, cornet; Charles Hartman, tbn; Elry Maser, clt; Alvin Gauthreaux, harmonica; Horace Diaz, pno; Nappy Lamare, gtr; Monk Hazel, drums.

New Orleans, March 10, 1927

As the twenties passed New Orleans musicians were more and more influenced by the recordings of jazz being made in Chicago and New York. The Bayou Stompers, a young white group, represent, as Orrin Keepnews has mentioned in a discussion of the band, a completed circle in the wavering line of jazz's development. The band is obviously, and often painfully, trying to sound like one of the Bix Beiderbecke recording groups, with Hyman playing in Bix's style, the trombone player trying to sound like the usual Beiderbecke trombone player, Bill Rank, and the rhythm section, like most of the pick-up sections that Beiderbecke used, relentless in its inadequacy. Beiderbecke had begun as an imitator of the New Orleans cornet player Nick LaRocca; so it is clear that already, only ten years after the first recordings by LaRocca's Original Dixieland Jazz Band, New Orleans jazz has begun to lose its direction. Hyman is still an active musician, playing under the professional name of Johnny Wiggs.

Band 4. PANAMA

Johnny Miller's New Orleans Frolickers

Sharkey Bonano, trumpet; Sidney Arodin, clt; Hal Jordy, alto; Johnny Miller, pno; Steve Brieux, bjo; Chink Martin, tuba; Leo Adde, dms.

New Orleans, April 25, 1928

Johnny Miller had first recorded as the pianist with Johnny Bayersdorffer's band, but this later recording represents a sharp turn from the musical style of the earlier band. With this performance of PANAMA the dixieland style has reached a musical maturity, and with "dixieland" the development of a white jazz style in New Orleans, despite the efforts of the Half Way House Orchestra and the New Orleans Owls, virtually comes to an end. Much of the music in the city today still sounds as this band did in 1928. This "dixieland" style, which these New Orleans men did so much to develop, is often regarded as a jazz music, because it has some of the instrumental and ensemble technique of jazz, but it is without creative emotion, or even much spontaneity. It is possible to make a living playing "dixieland" in New Orleans; so many young musicians find themselves involved in the music, but it was already, by the time that Sharkey Bonano, Johnny Miller, and Sidney Arodin recorded PANAMA, a series of musical tricks, on the same level of creativity as the polka music popular in the mid-West. It is unfortunate that its associations with the nostalgia for the '20's have enabled the style to retain some popularity; since it has tended to divide the jazz audience and to limit the opportunity of many musicians. It is certainly true however, that the young musicians on this recording had little idea that with their cheerful, uncomplicated music they were turning one path of jazz's development into a cliché.

Band 5. SIZZLING THE BLUES

Monk Hazel and His Bienville Roof Orchestra
Sharkey Bonano, trumpet; Sidney Arodin, clt and tin whistle; Hal Jordy, saxes; Freddy Newman, pno; Joe Cupero, gtr; Luther Lamar, bss; Monk Hazel, drums.

New Orleans, December, 1928

The Bienville Roof was a supper garden on the top of the Bienville Hotel, and it had both white and colored orchestras playing for dancing for several years. This white group, like John Hyman's Bayou Stompers, has been influenced by recordings, in this instance those of the Eddie Lang groups. The guitarist, Joe Cupero, was highly skilled, and there are interesting moments of contrast between the bass and the guitar in the arrangement. Although the record is one of the more rare jazz performances the band was musically very successful, and in both Bonano's and Arodin's playing there is a charming sensitivity.

Band 6. DAMP WEATHER

Jones and Collins Astoria Hot Eight
Lee Collins, trumpet; Sidney Arodin, clt; Ted Purnell, alto; Davey Jones, tenor; Joe Robeclaux, pno; Emmanuel Sales, bjo; Al Morgan, bass; Albert Martin, drums.

New Orleans, November 15, 1929

Band 7. DUET STOMP

Jones and Collins Astoria Hot Eight
As Above.

With this session the recording of New Orleans jazz in the 1920's comes to an end, and it represents in many ways a summation of the musical developments in the city. Danny Barker, who was during these years a young banjo player just

beginning to work with the more important bands, has said that by the late years of the decade the older figures, Chris Kelly, Buddy Petit, Kid Rena, and Sam Morgan, were no longer setting the musical style. Kelly died in 1927, Petit was succumbing to alcoholism, Punch Miller had gone to Chicago, and Rena wasn't keeping up with the hurrying pace of jazz's development. Barker remembers that they thought of the Sam Morgan band as playing music for the "old folks." There were three younger Negro trumpet players who developed in New Orleans in the late '20's, Red Allen, Guy Kelly, and Lee Collins, but the city was no longer as separate from the entertainment business as it had been, and each of them left the city as soon as he had reached a measure of musical achievement. All three of them had similarities to the style which was emerging in the playing of the rapidly maturing Louis Armstrong, but they had grown up hearing the same musicians Armstrong had, playing in the same bands, and in the same environment. They were not overwhelmed by Armstrong in the way that nearly every trumpet player was in 1929 and 1930.

The Astoria is still in business as a bar, restaurant, and pool room on S. Rampart Street, although the dance floor has been shut down. It is still owned by Beansie Fourier, who remembers the band that was to record as the Astoria Hot Eight as one of the best that ever worked for him. Ray Bauduc, the New Orleans drummer who was working with Ben Pollack's very successful band at New York's Park Central Hotel, heard the band and suggested to one of the recording companies that they should be recorded. The session, finally, was a mixed one, the first in the city. Collins had worked for some time with Edmond Hall, the fine clarinet player, but Hall had left him to join the Alonzo Ross band in Savannah, and none of the other Negro clarinet players in New Orleans met his high standards. Sidney Arodin, in many ways the best of the white clarinet players, and certainly the most experienced, with some work in New York and other cities in the early '20's, was added to the band for the session. The regular trombone player was Earl Humphrey, who had recorded with Louis Dumaine two years before, but he had to be out of the city; so Jones sketched out arrangements for three reeds and Collins' trumpet.

It is true that much of New Orleans jazz in the 1920's was hampered by the city's distance from the country's musical centers, and by the continual drain of the most talented men to other bands, but the Jones and Collins Astoria Hot Eight reached a brilliant level of professionalism. Arodin played at his best, the rhythm section, with another Morgan brother, Al Morgan on bass, and Emmanuel Sales on banjo, had an incisive beat, both the saxes were tasteful and competent, and Lee Collins played with a dominating, fiery eloquence. The recordings made such an impression that both Collins and Al Morgan were immediately hired by New York bands, and the others found themselves turning down offers to leave New Orleans.

It was unfortunate that the depression ended New Orleans recording for nearly ten years. A new generation of musicians was developing, and they were to have an extended period to mature in both musicianship and imagination. In many of the later "revival" recordings done in New Orleans it is possible to hear moments of brilliant music that not only recaptured some of the early styles but also suggested new lines of development within the traditional framework, but there is no way of knowing what New Orleans music might have achieved if the line of continuity had not been broken by the long years of the Depression, which not only ended the recordings, but also limited the musical activity in this most musical of American cities.

RF-203 A

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NEW ORLEANS JAZZ: THE 'TWENTIES

Compiled and Edited by Samuel Charters
VOLUME ONE

SIDE 1
33 1/3 rpm

RF-203 A

- Band 1. BLACK RAG
Original Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra
- Band 2. RED MAN BLUES
- Band 3. BOUNCING AROUND
- Band 4. KISS ME SWEET
Piron's New Orleans Orchestra
- Band 5. EVERYBODY LOVES SOMEBODY
Original New Orleans Rhythm Kings
- Band 6. DIRTY RAG
Brownlee's Orchestra of New Orleans
- Band 7. WAFFLE MAN'S CALL
Johnny Bayersdorffer and his Jazzola
Novelty Orchestra

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NEW ORLEANS JAZZ: THE 'TWENTIES

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VOLUME ONE

SIDE 2
33 1/3 RPM

RF-203 B

- Band 1. FRANKLIN STREET BLUES
Band 2. TO-WA-BAC-A-WA
Louis Dumaine's Jazzola Eight
Band 3. SHORT DRESS GAL
Band 4. DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE
Band 5. MOBILE STOMP
Sam Morgan's Jazz Band
Band 6. FRANKIE AND JOHNNY
Fate Marable's Society Syncopators
Band 7. MY HEARTBREAKIN' GAL
Billy Mack and Mary Mack, with Punch Miller