

COMPILED AND ANNOTATED BY DAVID JASEN

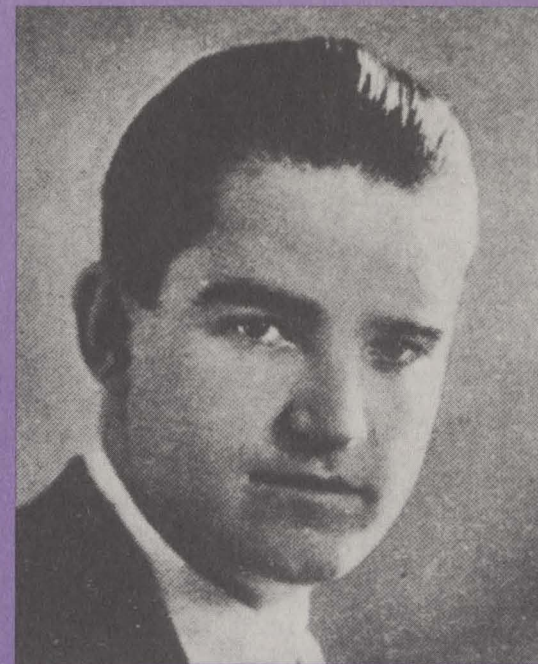
SECOND VOLUME

THE PIANO ROLL ARTISTRY OF ZEZ CONFREY

FOLKWAYS RECORDS RBF 45



FOLKWAYS RECORDS RBF 45



SIDE 1

1. Grieving For You (Coslow)
2. Turkestan (Stern)
3. Tricks (Confrey)
4. Ah-Ha! (Monaco)
5. Karavan (Wiedoeft-Olman)
6. Stuttering (Pinkard)
7. That Thing Called Love (Bradford)
8. Blue (Handman)
9. The Red Lantern (Fisher)

SIDE TWO

1. My Gal (Nelson-Cooper)
2. Keep On Building Castles in the Air (Wenrich)
3. Sahara (Romberg-Schwartz)
4. Gee But I Hate To Go Home Alone (Hanley)
5. The Japanese Sandman (Whiting)
6. It's All Over Now (A. Von Tilzer)
7. Flower Garden Blues (White)
8. Underneath the Palms (Golden-Olman)
9. In Soudan (Osborne)

Remastering: Carl Seltzer
Engineer: Joel Markowitz

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43 W. 61st ST., N.Y.C., U.S.A. 10023

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SECOND VOLUME

THE PIANO ROLL ARTISTRY OF ZEZ CONFREY

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET.

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

FOLKWAYS RECORDS RBF 45

THE PIANO ROLL ARTISTRY OF ZEZ CONFREY

COMPILED AND ANNOTATED BY DAVID A. JASEN

Zeze Confrey, in addition to creating the Novelty rag (see ZEZ CONFREY: CREATOR OF THE NOVELTY RAG, Folkways RBF-28), was the premier arranger-performer for piano rolls. His productions spanned the golden years of piano roll manufacturing (1917-1927) and his sparkling arrangements were such that not one of his 174 hand-made rolls has not got something of musical interest whether it be a fancy introduction or an unusual break. This statement cannot be made about any other roll artist.

Confrey's entry into the world of piano roll artists was tentative at best. The MUSICAL TRADE REVIEW announced his first roll on Imperial in their March, 1917 issue. This was followed by another roll a few months later. Nothing more was heard of Confrey until QRS announced his joining their staff with the release in July, 1918 of his pioneering Novelty rag, MY PET (see RBF-28). He made 128 rolls for QRS from 1918-1924. In late 1924, Confrey joined Ampico for the next three years turning out a total of 44 rolls, but during these later years, his arranging style changed radically and became more cocktail-smooth and almost unsyncopated than the earlier raggy manner which is thoroughly documented in this album.

For the years 1919-1922, Tin Pan Alley featured a Far-Eastern fad in songs. As the composer of TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALL GAME hadn't seen one at the time he wrote this outstanding hit, so the boys who wrote about Dardanella, Egyptland, Tents of Arabs, Afghanistan, The Sheik, etc. hadn't travelled beyond the Brill Building. At QRS, it seemed that anytime one of these songs surfaced, they gave it to Zeze to arrange and perform. He became so adept at

this type of song that today, they are the ones collectors go after the most. This album offers six of the best of this type of tune. Truly, what Zeze does to these flimsy songs is to make mountains out of molehills. You'd think that he would run out of ideas after doing so many of the same kind of song, but each time he was faced with one, his creativity was challenged and he successfully met each and every such challenge.

Our survey of Confrey's mastery of the art of the piano roll goes from the exciting year of 1919 which started the pseudo-Arabian song to 1925, the year that the Charleston defined the entire Roaring Twenties.

SIDE ONE

GRIEVING FOR YOU boasts a trio of writers, none of whom actually wrote the song. In one of his last interviews, pop hit songwriter Sam Coslow confessed that he wrote it and was the first of his many songs to be published. In order to become established, he had to give up his authorship to others who had the contacts with the publishers. It is a common enough story in Tin Pan Alley and it should not surprise anyone that a composer of quality wrote this lovely tune. It is, in my opinion, Confrey's tour-de-force in piano roll arrangements. In this 1920 song, Confrey created a single two-measure break with two distinct rhythmic patterns - the first time anyone thought of such a device!

TURKESTAN was composed in that banner year 1919 by Jack Stern. It was Broadway Music Corporation's try in the Far-Eastern sweepstakes. Far from typical, the chorus actually carries through the theme and atmosphere. Confrey sustains it with his carefully constructed introduction and bridges between the verse and chorus.

TRICKS is Confrey's own 1922 answer to his runaway best seller, STUMBLING. Filled with every roll device, there is never a dull musical moment or cliché in the entire rendition. He even quotes briefly from his ragtime standard of the year before, KITTEN ON THE KEYS.

AH-HA! is Jimmy Monaco's 1925 winner. Confrey inserts his mysterious airs as well as his novelty breaks. The highspot comes with the last repeat of the chorus after a particularly fetching modulation. That repeat is filled with the complex novelty rag rhythms which made Confrey's name a by-word in pianistic gymnastics.

KARAVAN was written in 1919 in Chicago by that alto saxophone virtuoso Rudy Wiedoeft and songwriter-publisher Abe Olman. While the verse is typical of the phoney atmosphere, the chorus is a lovely syncopated melody. Confrey's introduction (which he also used as his ending) is a masterpiece of mood-setting.

STUTTERING (whose full title is really I'M ALWAYS STUTTERING) was composed by the fabulous melodist of the teens and twenties, Maceo Pinkard, in 1922. It was inspired by Confrey's own STUMBLING. You can bet Confrey realized this "sincerest form of flattery" and took full advantage in his revealing arrangement.

THAT THING CALLED LOVE was one of Perry Bradford's glorious blues creations in 1920. He had it published by Pace & Handy's Music Company which is perhaps why Confrey's introduction uses part of Handy's own by-then famous ST. LOUIS BLUES. Zez adds his distinctive touches by way of advanced harmonies.

BLUE (AND BROKEN HEARTED) was another 1922 hit. Undoubtedly one of the prettiest melodies ever created, Zez surrounds it with his unique imprint. Lou Handman, who composed this elegant tune, kept on turning out memorable tunes throughout the twenties.

THE RED LANTERN was the brainchild of composer-publisher Fred Fisher in 1919. He wrote it for Nazimova's silent film of the same title. Confrey creates what is probably his most flamboyant Introduction.

SIDE TWO

MY GAL was another 1919 tune, this one by Ed Nelson and Bud Cooper, which Zez turned into a spectacular rendering. The Introduction is usually treated as a throwaway, yet, here as in most of the other performances, Zez treats it as something very special.

KEEP ON BUILDING CASTLES IN THE AIR by Percy Wenrich in 1922, came from Wenrich's only theatrical presentation, Castles in the Air. Wenrich, more commonly known for his rags and pop songs of a decade before, was still at it and, as we can hear, very melodiously, too.

Confrey has plenty of room to add his special breaks while allowing the beautiful melody to be heard to its fullest advantage.

SAHARA was still another 1919 entry in the Far Eastern sweepstakes. Confrey sinks his teeth into this one, adding tango rhythms, the mysterious feeling, advanced harmonies and plenty of raggy syncopation.

GEE BUT I HATE TO GO HOME ALONE was written by songwriter James F. Hanley in 1922. It is another beautiful ballad which became a hit when it was published, a favorite with romantics on the dance floor and one Confrey enhances with his creative imagination.

THE JAPANESE SANDMAN came from the talented pen of composer Richard A. Whiting in 1920. A strange thing happened at QRS. Confrey was assigned to make this roll and he did so. Brilliantly, magnificently. It was issued. Someone was dissatisfied, the roll was recalled and Confrey was asked to make a simpler arrangement. He did and it was issued with the same catalog number as the first version. This second version became a million-selling roll and everyone was then happy. However, it was Confrey's first arrangement which is so intriguing and the one we have the pleasure of offering on this album. It is also incredibly scarce, its existence coming to light only a couple of years ago.

IT'S ALL OVER NOW was composer-publisher Albert Von Tilzer's pretty one-step of 1920. It wasn't much of a hit then but it is such a lovely tune with Confrey adding the touches to make it memorable.

FLOWER GARDEN BLUES is the earliest Confrey roll on this album. It was written by James White in Chicago and published by the lyricist, Roger Graham, in 1919. The QRS Blues specialists were Pete Wendling and J. Russel Robinson, so it was a surprise that they should assign Zez to this one. He more than holds his own and turns in another winner. It is thus the more surprising that Zez did only one more blues for the company, concentrating instead on those Far Eastern numbers.

UNDERNEATH THE PALMS was composed in 1920 by bandleader Ernie Golden and composer-publisher Abe Olman. It seems that Olman didn't quite get the Far Eastern idea out of his system the year before when he co-wrote KARAVAN. Confrey, such a clever man, inserted a section of Olman's 1914 super hit, DOWN AMONG THE SHELTERING.

FOLKWAYS Records

AND SERVICE CORP., 43 W. 61st ST., N.Y.C. 10023
Long Playing Non-Breakable Micro Groove 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ RPM

**THE PIANO ROLL ARTISTRY OF
ZEZ CONFREY — Vol. 2**

Compiled and Annotated by
DAVID A. JASEN

SIDE 1

RF 45 A

1. GRIEVING FOR YOU (Coslow)
2. TURKESTAN (Stern)
3. TRICKS (Confrey)
4. Ah-Ha! (Monaco)
5. KARAVAN (Wiedoeft-Olman)
6. STUTTERING (Pinkard)
7. THAT THING CALLED LOVE (Bradford)
8. BLUE (Handman)
9. THE RED LANTERN (Fisher)

Total Time: 23:25

Remastering: CARL SELTZER
Engineer: JOEL MARKOWITZ

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SIDE 2

RF 45 B

1. MY GAL (Nelson-Cooper)
2. KEEP ON BUILDING CASTLES IN THE AIR (Wenrich)
3. SAHARA (Romberg-Schwartz)
4. GEE BUT I HATE TO GO HOME ALONE (Hanley)
5. THE JAPANESE SANDMAN (Whiting)
6. IT'S ALL OVER NOW (A. Von Tilzer)
7. FLOWER GARDEN BLUES (White)
8. UNDERNEATH THE PALMS (Golden-Olman)
9. IN SOUDAN (Osborne)

Total Time: 25:03

Remastering: CARL SELTZER
Engineer: JOEL MARKOWITZ

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