

Jammin' For the Jackpot: Big Bands and Territory Bands of the 30s

New World NW 217

Today's listeners are likely to associate jazz with nightclubs and concert halls or, historically, with Chicago speakeasies and New Orleans houses of prostitution. In fact, however, the typical occupation of most jazz musicians through the 1940s was playing for dancing. For about three decades after World War I, jazz musicians were in frequent creative tension with the dance-band industry—exploiting and expanding its musical resources, learning its professional lessons, earning its wages, and chafing under its difficult working conditions and many artistic restrictions.

As dance orchestras grew steadily in number, size, and popularity through the 1930s and early 1940s, they came to be called "big bands." Like many of America's musics from the same period— Broadway and Hollywood musicals, rural blues, "folk" music—big-band music of the swing era has been weighted with a nostalgic value that is difficult to support. Since the 1950s, jazz enthusiasts have praised these years as a period of good taste, originality, and high musical standards, with correlative prominence for jazz soloists and jazz-trained arrangers. To some extent this was the case. Dance bands of the day always fed on the work of jazz soloists: their innovations in phrasing and rhythm; their repertoire, including adaptations and assimilations from "classical" music; and, perhaps most tellingly, their own self-popularizations. But though the improvising jazz musician provided inspiration for much of the music of the big bands, not all the better dance orchestras were strongly jazz-oriented (Ray Noble's band was one of the better examples of a musically interesting group with a low jazz quotient); and even the finest jazz bands some of the time played straightforward versions of not always memorable popular tunes.

At times a piece of orchestral material was created collectively among the members of a band; the result was called a "head" arrangement. Often these heads were largely constructed out of riffs (short phrases repeated exactly or varied very slightly). But in most cases the transformation of soloistic thought was effected by a composer-orchestrator, usually called an arranger. The early history of jazz orchestral writing is still largely undocumented, but its basic direction is clear. Where dance orchestras of the 1910s usually played identical stock arrangements, commissioned and sold in numbers by music publishers, prominent bandleaders of the 1920s followed the lead of Paul Whiteman, a great success early in that decade, in emphasizing their own special arrangements. These were usually not the product of a single author, but a band's repertoire usually incorporated a trademark sound—a musical style that was adaptable but also identifiable. The leading arrangers of the 1920s included Don Redman for Fletcher Henderson and McKinney's Cotton Pickers, Bill Challis for Paul Whiteman and Jean Goldkette, and Duke Ellington for his own group.

Between the aesthetic impetus of jazz and the economic prompting of widespread prosperity, the dance-band business bloomed in the 1920s, and late in the decade the Music Corporation of America (MCA) was already becoming the first national talent-booking agency specializing in dance bands. But the 1930s began with a major depression, which for several years grew worse. Rising unemployment slashed away at the nation's disposable income, and every form of entertainment suffered. Furthermore, those who wanted to hear music could choose among several new ways to do so without attending a performance or even purchasing a record. Radio had become fully established, and the disc jockey was familiar in local broadcasting. From 1933 on, national networks carried performances by popular orchestras from the largest jazz centers; now a listener could bring a first-rate band into his parlor at no greater expense than initial investment in a receiving set. For those interested in a night on the town there was the jukebox, which supplanted musical performers in public places by means of an extraheavy tone arm hitched to a huge speaker that dwarfed those of home Victrolas. (Coin-operated phonographs had existed since the turn of the century but only became widespread in the early 1930s.)

Under the impact of radio and the Depression, the recording industry collapsed and nearly died. Statistics from the period vary, but at best the record industry's gross sales in 1933 were a tenth of what they had been five years earlier. Small companies merged, sold out, or went bankrupt. Large companies absorbed the smaller companies' catalogues, cut back repeatedly on recording budgets, pressed fewer copies of most selections, and began catering to jukebox programmers as they would later bow to "top-forty" radio executives in the 1950s.

"Race records" had an even worse fate. These records, intended for sale to blacks (though they did not exclusively feature black performers), had preserved most of the worthwhile jazz of the 1920s. As the Depression bore down on black income, race-record sales declined, and jazz documentation as well.

Halfway through the decade this decline abruptly reversed in a manner that neither the small economic recoveries of those years nor the propagation of dance bands through radio can fully explain. The Benny Goodman orchestra's well-known story was the earliest and most dramatic example of the new craze for swing music. When Goodman organized his group in the spring of 1934 (with encouragement from MCA's Willard Alexander and jazz promoter John Hammond), he had already spent half his twenty-five years as a professional clarinetist, mostly with top dance bands or in demanding recording- and radio-studio work. With few jobs to offer, he had to struggle to hold his group together through the fall; but in December it was selected as the "hot" band for a weekly three-orchestra national broadcast series that ran for six months. When it ended, the band's situation hardly appeared better than before. Over the summer of 1935, which culminated in a monthlong cross-country tour, the Goodman band continued to meet rejection from listeners and employers; but in California, at the end of the tour, audiences suddenly began to respond with enthusiasm. Before heading back to New York in the fall, Goodman stopped for a scheduled one-month job at a major Chicago hotel; the engagement lasted *six* months. By the summer of 1936 the Goodman band was making a feature movie, and the band's popularity was already great enough to allow Goodman to flout racial taboos by publicly featuring black musicians Teddy Wilson and Lionel Hampton in small groups otherwise drawn from Goodman's larger (and all-white) band. Early 1937 found Goodman at the center of a major popular music craze when his opening at New York's Paramount in February nearly resulted in a riot as tens of thousands of fans milled about outside, unable to get in. Other such incidents would occur over the next few years, as would a more decorous and prestigious appearance at Carnegie Hall. Thus in less than three years a group on the verge of disbanding had become a nationwide sensation.

It was hardly alone. In those same years, bands led by Tommy Dorsey, Artie Shaw, and Bob Crosby—all newly organized, and all following similarly jazzy musical policies—scored major successes. The established groups of Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Andy Kirk, Chick Webb, Jimmie Lunceford, and Count Basie also gained far larger audiences. By 1939 the bands of Charlie Barnet, Woody Herman, and Glenn Miller—all formerly minor attractions—had runaway hit records, as did new bands led by two ex-Goodman musicians, Harry James and Gene Krupa. (Lionel Hampton, still with Goodman in 1939, would start his own orchestra in the following year.) The weekly schedules of the three major radio networks included broadcasts by as many as seventy top bands. The swing era was at its peak.

Like most other New World jazz reissues, this record is intended to represent the music of an era through worthwhile but neglected selections—usually by historically or artistically undervalued orchestras—that for the most part are otherwise unavailable. Understandably, this approach gives little attention to the better-known groups of the time. In the period of the present album, the greatest influence was Fletcher Henderson's orchestra. It was the preeminent black band of 1930, still a style setter though its first major arranger, Don Redman, had left more than two years earlier and the "Henderson style" that so many would copy had not yet evolved. Through the early 1930s, with assistance from his brother Horace and saxophonist Benny Carter, Henderson developed a style exemplified by "Down South Camp Meetin'," "Big John Special," "Wrappin' It Up," and his version of Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton's "King Porter Stomp." These were principally distinguished by close call-and-response phrasing between brass and saxophone choirs, similar to responsorial patterns in black American sacred music. Many of Henderson's arrangements were purchased by Benny Goodman from late 1934 on and made a great contribution to the younger man's success. Henderson's own band broke up in November, 1934, though he regrouped with other musicians almost immediately and had another vogue before disbanding in 1939 to work for Goodman as a staff arranger and pianist. (Among the selections here, "Jamm' for the Jackpot" and "Madhouse" are perhaps closest to the classic Henderson style.)

Duke Ellington, however, was the dominant artist of the 1930s, and a remarkable example of creative growth. His work and career defy description in a brief space, since he led an orchestra for fifty years beginning in 1924, and few of these years were insignificant. Yet as of 1930 much of his work was still ephemeral, distinctive yet unexceptional beside the best of Henderson, Charlie Johnson, Luis Russell, or McKinney's Cotton Pickers. By the end of the decade Ellington's synthesis of Afro-American musical thought and tradition was so complex that few orchestras

made serious attempts to copy it. (Charlie Barnet was an exception.) Instead, rival bands picked up Ellington's muted brass growls, performed their own versions of his many popular compositions (Edgar Hayes's "Caravan" is an example here), or lifted the background riffs from his pieces for main themes of their own. Ellington's subtle voicings, carefully built up with regard for each musician's tone; his unusual harmonies; his often daring approach to form—these escaped frequent emulation into the 1970s.

Starting in 1926 Jimmie Lunceford, a Tennessee high-school teacher, led a parttime band with local college students. In 1929 the group became professional, and in 1933 moved to New York. It was increasingly popular until the war years. Though it had lost most of its best musicians and its audience by the time of Lunceford's death in 1947, several of his sidemen continued to lead it into the early 1950s. Lunceford was at first identified with difficult "flagwavers" (demonstration pieces too fast for dancing, like "Sensational Mood" in this volume), but under trumpeter-arranger Sy Oliver there appeared a highly eclectic style with an unusual degree of contrast—sudden shifts from hard swinging to deliberately corny dotted rhythms, extreme variations in dynamics, and odd juxtapositions of tone color. ("Caravan" in this volume is somewhat in this manner.) A relaxed and reassuring two-beat drum pulse (emphasizing the back beats—the second and fourth beats of each measure) usually underlay these unsettling abruptnesses. In some ways Lunceford's was the major orchestra that best represented the swing era; for while all the bands we have mentioned were to an extent versatile traveling entertainment troupes with solo singers, vocal groups, and more or less elaborate stage shows, Lunceford's recordings were more likely than most to reflect this aspect of their work.

Count Basie's was the last major group of the 1930s to gain public favor. In 1936 Basie was leading a nine-piece group in Kansas City and was persuaded to expand that group and move it to New York, where he soon established himself. Except briefly in the early 1950s, he has led a big band ever since. The 1930s Basie style was grounded in an effective simplification of Henderson's call-and-response phrasing and relied heavily on the band's soloists: apparently many of its scores were heads, or adapted from preexisting Eddie Durham works for Bennie Moten. ("Pickin' the Cabbage," "Toby," and "Blues of Avalon" in this volume resemble Basie's 1930s output.) Later, Basie's music took on a more formal and arranged quality.

We have so far mentioned only some of the more significant bands of the 1930s. Any comprehensive survey of the period would discuss Louis Armstrong, whose large orchestras from 1929 to 1947 were the first to be built essentially around the talents of a single soloist; and Bob Crosby, vocalist and front man for a cooperative group that from 1935 to 1942 specialized in a kind of big-band Dixieland (usually arranged by Bob Haggart or Matty Matlock) that recalled 1920s large-band efforts by Joe "King" Oliver and Jelly Roll Morton. And we have only briefly touched on Benny Carter, who in addition to composing led many bands in the United States and Europe but never really gained a popular reputation as a bandleader. Perhaps most neglected in jazz histories have been the "territory bands," based away from the main recording centers of Camden, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York. Often these groups were recorded by a mobile unit on a field recording trip for one of the major companies. These periodic trips, which began in 1923, were intended to gather work by blues singers, "old-timey" (later "country") musicians, local ethnic specialists (like the Cajuns of Louisiana), and other musicians not commonly found in the largest cities. Much of this material was meant for local or regional distribution in small pressings, and in the economic crush of the early 1930s this became unprofitable. No major company made any field trips during the two years beginning in the spring of 1932.

Still, as before, bands could travel from their area to a major recording city, and many did; some, like the Count Basie and Andy Kirk groups, even moved on to national acclaim. But usually there was little demand for them in these cities, whether for recording or live work, and often bandleaders feared that they would lose their best musicians to better-paying established leaders or simply to the attractions of big-city life. Thus the territory bands were far more sporadically documented than their New York or Chicago counterparts, and many groups with distinguished rosters passed into history without recording a note. The second side of this record concentrates on territory bands from across the country: Moten from Kansas City, Boots and His Buddies from San Antonio, Hunter from Omaha, Moore from Milwaukee, Montgomery from Atlanta, Whyte from Kentucky and Ohio. But bands with formidable reputations—however justified we do not always know—were found around the country, from Boston's Sabby Lewis and Mal Hallett to California's Les Hite and Sonny Clay.

Territory bands of the twenties and early thirties displayed a considerable range of style: some were capable (like Lloyd Hunter here, or Alphonso Trent on NW 256, *Sweet and Low Blues*) of a large and challenging variety of music, and others were less versatile. But thanks to the phonograph record, none was out of touch with New York or Chicago trends by more than a year or two, and some—Moten and Hunter in particular— were not only abreast of those trends but able to use them in original ways.

The later swing era was perhaps even more homogeneous. The 1934 Dorsey Brothers Orchestra deemphasized trumpets in favor of the coleaders' principal instruments, trombone and saxophone; but each man had greater success later leading separate bands with conventional instrumentation: three (later four) trumpets, two or three trombones, four (later five) saxophones, and piano, guitar, double bass, and drums. Artie Shaw's first attempt at bandleading in 1936 found him at the head of three winds, a string quartet, and a rhythm section; in less than a year he broke up this group and reorganized along conventional lines. Much of the diversity that did exist in the late 1930s was probably due only to the indiscriminating nature of overwhelming mass demand.

The big-band years were also not unduly kind to many of their most distinguished figures. Even with a major band, a musician's life was often difficult. Frequent one-night stands were part of most bands' routine; travel between those stands was usually by car or bus, often at night, and sometimes involved jumps of several hundred miles when highways were far less developed than now. The good wages enjoyed by the best musicians must have seemed less generous after several weeks of town-hopping.

Conditions for black musicians were considerably worse. Since even the best-known black bands could not get long residencies at hotel ballrooms, they were forced into lengthy road trips; one Lunceford musician has estimated that at its peak that band did about two hundred one-nighters a year. Itineraries often included cities with no hotel or restaurant facilities open to blacks, and nearly every black musician of the period has stories about white patrons, police officers, or mere passersby who insulted or even physically threatened them in the course of their travels. Almost invariably, black musicians were paid less than their comparably gifted colleagues— and for an Ellington, a Benny Carter, a Lester Young (Basie's main tenor saxophone soloist), and quite a few other black musicians, there were no comparably gifted whites. The artistic leaders of the day struck a blank wall of racially based rejection from most white listeners, including many who were more than willing to hear similar music from white groups. The consequences of that rejection cannot be undone by the most judicious attempts at historical perspective.

1939 marked a high point in the public furor over big bands, a height that could hardly be sustained. By the early 1940s, though Ellington and others continued to produce major work, a number of musical directions away from the Henderson dominated 1930's tradition appeared. Benny Goodman began emphasizing the coloristically muted and harmonically involved scores of Eddie Sauter over the work of Henderson and Jimmy Mundy. Goodman's small groups and the John Kirby Sextet forecast the lightweight small-group sound of bop. Harry James added a string section to his band for Mantovani style ballads, and others followed suit. Lionel Hampton and other leaders advanced a simplified Basie style that was a strong influence on early rock 'n' roll. Tommy Dorsey's band became the first of many to concentrate on a simplified version of the Lunceford style (with arrangements by Sy Oliver himself), a trend that in the hands of Stan Kenton and others would dominate the last years of the big-band craze.

The end of that craze was hardly as sudden as its beginning. 1942 was the decisive year—a year of wartime draft, wartime shortages, a wartime entertainment tax, and wartime travel restrictions, and the beginning of a two-year recording strike imposed by officials of the American Federation of Musicians. Although bands grew steadily larger and musicians' salaries steadily higher, by the late forties the continued existence of an industry of large dance bands in large ballrooms was in doubt, and by the early 1950s that industry was moribund. The big bands had outlived their time perhaps artistically, perhaps economically. And though their time was not of incomparable richness that has often been painted, it was fertile enough that a great deal of its interesting work is still unheralded after many years—as the present volume clearly shows.

Side One

Band 1

Caravan

(Juan Tizol, Duke Ellington, and Irving Mills)

Edgar Hayes and His Orchestra: Henry Goodwin, Bernie Flood, and Leonard Davis, trumpets; Robert Horton, Clyde Bernhardt, and Joe Britton, trombones; Rudy Powell, clarinet and alto saxophone; Crawford Wethington, clarinet and tenor saxophone; Roger Boyd, alto saxophone; Joe Garland, tenor saxophone; Edgar Hayes, piano; Andy Jackson, guitar; Elmer James, bass; Kenny Clarke, drums.

Recorded May 25, 1937, in New York. Originally issued on Decca 1338 (mx # 62217- A).

"Caravan" is here done more playfully—and voiced more conventionally—than in the earlier Ellington versions by large and small groups. But careful use of dynamics over a tight rhythm section—paced by the drumming of Kenny Clarke, then only a few years away from his pioneering work as a modern-jazz percussionist— skillfully builds and releases suppressed energy. Even so, well-played solos by muted trumpet (Henry Goodwin) and trombone (probably Robert Horton) lack the gravity yet flexibility of similar work by Ellington's Cootie Williams and Joe Nanton. The Hayes band existed only at the peak of the swing era. After working around the Midwest through the 1920s, Hayes spent five years as pianist, arranger, and musical director for the Mills Blue Rhythm Band (see below). His own group (formed in 1937, and originally including several other Blue Rhythm defectors) was not especially successful, despite a trip to Europe in 1938. Hayes disbanded in 1941 and since has lived in southern California, leading small groups and playing solo engagements into the 1970s.

Band 2

Casa Loma Stomp

(Gene Gifford)

Casa Loma Orchestra: Joe Hostetter, Frank Martinez, and Bobby Jones, trumpets; Walter "Pee Wee" Hunt and Billy Rauch, trombones; Glen Gray and Ray Eberle, clarinets and alto saxophones; Pat Davis, clarinet and tenor saxophone; Joe Hall, piano; Gene Gifford, guitar; Stanley Dennis, bass; Tony Briglia, drums.

Recorded December 6, 1930, in New York. Originally issued on Okeh 41492 (mx # 404569-B).

The Casa Loma Orchestra is all but forgotten today, but in the early 1930s it was very popular with college audiences and influential among musicians. It sprang from the Orange Blossom Band, a Detroit-based 1920s group managed by the prominent bandleader and entrepreneur Jean Goldkette. In 1929 several of the Orange Blossoms declared themselves a cooperative, changed their name, and elected saxophonist Glen Gray Knoblauch (who dropped his last name and eventually came to be billed as bandleader) as their president. Their succeeding fame rested on their versions of popular ballads (sung beginning in 1931 by saxophonist Kenny Sargent) and on specially composed arrangements by guitarist Gene Gifford.

"Casa Loma Stomp" was the first of these originals to be recorded, and it represents Gifford's style well. Many of its written melodies (particularly for saxophones) are intricate, but they are almost always symmetrical and unsyncopated. The overall texture, despite an echoing between brass and saxes in the next to last chorus, is basically single-voiced, so that when a clarinet (probably Pat Davis) enters against a simple saxophone riff, the comparative lightness is heady indeed. Thus an evident complexity masks simplicity—or outright simplism, never the enemy of popularity. Nevertheless, the most important element in Casa Loma's early success may have been the band's underlying beat—not subtle, but featuring an unusually well recorded double bass (instead of tuba) that must have made Casa Loma fans in many urdiscotheques of the 1930s.

Fletcher Henderson and other leaders often purchased or traded for Gifford's arrangements. Jimmie Lunceford, the Mills Blue Rhythm Band, and Benny Goodman (who has recalled that Casa Loma was "the band we had started out to buck") all used some Giffordlike scores by other authors, and Will Hudson made a career as an arranger in a similar style. After Gifford left in 1935, the Casa Loma audience declined, but the orchestra was still popular in the early 1940s and did not disband until 1950.

Band 3

Dallas Blues

(Hart Wand and Lloyd Garrett)

Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy: Billy Massey, vocal; Harry Lawson and Edgar Battle, trumpets; Allen Durham, trombone; John Harrington, clarinet and alto saxophone; John Williams, alto and baritone saxophone; Lawrence Freeman, tenor saxophone; Mary Lou Williams, piano; William Dirvin, banjo; Andy Kirk, tuba; Edward McNeil, drums.

Recorded October 9, 1930, in Chicago. Originally issued on Brunswick 6129 (mx # C-6430).

Andy Kirk took over Terence "T" Holder's Dark Clouds of Joy Orchestra early in 1929. This Texas-born band soon took Kansas City for home base; in 1932 and 1933 they hardly played anywhere else, though earlier they had traveled as far east as Philadelphia. In 1936 the Clouds established themselves as a major attraction with "Until the Real Thing Comes Along," a ballad sung by Pha Terrell. Unlike any other Kansas City group, Kirk's band held two distinctly different reputations until its breakup in 1948—as a blues-based jazz band and as a commercial "sweet" orchestra. Their jazz performances were bolstered by many fine soloists, including the neglected tenor saxophonist Dick Wilson; but the principal soloist and arranger was Mary Lou Williams, wife of Kirk saxophonist John Williams. She began recording with the Clouds in 1929 when their regular pianist missed a rehearsal for their first recording session, and she began her eleven years of live performance with Kirk in 1931.

"Dallas Blues," probably arranged by Williams, was an early published blues (1918) and a hit record for Louis Armstrong in 1930. Trumpet by Harry Lawson and clarinet by John Harrington (both featured with Kirk to good effect into the 1940s) are pleasant in a stiff and now rather dated way, but Mary Lou Williams' eclectic offering is more impressive (note the ambitious break that concludes her solo). The tight ensemble is notable for those passages that combine the cutting tone of a single trumpet with several reeds—a device much refined by Williams, and almost her trademark as an arranger in the 1930s.

Band 4

Madhouse

(James Mundy and Earl Hines)

Earl Hines and His Orchestra: Charlie Allen, George Dixon, and Walter Fuller, trumpets; James "Trummy" Young, Louis Taylor, and William Franklin, trombones; Darnell Howard, clarinet and alto saxophone; Omer Simeon, clarinet and alto and baritone saxophone; Cecil Irwin, clarinet and tenor saxophone; Jimmy Mundy, tenor saxophone; Earl "Fatha" Hines, piano; Lawrence Dixon, guitar; Quinn Wilson, tuba; Wallace Bishop, drums.

Recorded March 26, 1934, in Chicago. Originally issued on Vocalion 3379 (mx # 15003-A).

Apart from a layoff through much of 1940, Earl "Fatha" Hines led large groups from the end of 1928 until 1947, performing so frequently at Chicago's Grand Terrace Cafe that his groups are still recalled collectively as "the Grand Terrace Band." Hines had a long list of distinguished soloists: trombonist Trummy Young (heard briefly here), tenor saxophonist Budd Johnson, and others less well known. And in 1943 a Hines group featuring Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker foreshadowed the arrival of modern jazz. But in the 1930s Hines's own virtuosity was usually in the spotlight, along with his band's driving renditions of work by a number of talented arranger-members, including Johnson, Cecil Irwin, Quinn Wilson, and particularly Jimmy Mundy.

Mundy's arrangement of "Madhouse" is typically complex and unmechanical in its use of call-and-response phrasing, yet the brass and saxes are always responsive not only to one another but to the needs of dancers as well. (From 1935 to 1939 Mundy was Benny Goodman's most prolific arranger. Goodman tended to play Mundy's pieces—including "Madhouse"—at more exhibitionistic tempos.) Hines is featured at length, flourishing his generous technique and musical ideas that were avantgarde by comparison with those of every other pianist of the day—except Art Tatum. Other soloists are Walter Fuller and Omer Simeon.

Finally, and more than incidentally, note the effect of Quinn Wilson's use of a tuba bass—instead of the more flowing double bass, which he also played—unusual for a 1932 Hines recording, or indeed for any major jazz group of that year.

Band 5

Heebie Jeebies

(Boyd Atkins)

Chick Webb and His Orchestra: Louis Bacon, Shelton Hemphill, and Louis Hunt, trumpets; Jimmy Harrison, trombone; Benny Carter and Hilton Jefferson, clarinets and alto saxophones; Elmer Williams, clarinet and tenor saxophone; Don Kirkpatrick, piano; John Trueheart, guitar; Elmer James, bass; Chick Webb, drums.

Recorded March 30, 1931, in New York. Originally issued on Vocalion 1607 (mx # E-36432).

Chick Webb came to Harlem from his native Baltimore in 1925, at about age sixteen. For six years he struggled to establish himself against older and more experienced bandleaders who regularly raided his small groups for musicians like Johnny Hodges, Bobby Stark, Hilton Jefferson, and Benny Carter. Late in 1931 Webb began regular work at the Savoy Ballroom, where his Fletcher Henderson-style orchestra quickly became the clear favorite of the Savoy's demanding audience of dancers. A showmanly drummer with a flair for solo work, Webb created the accepted 1930s style for big-band drumming; and from the mid-1930s on his popularity rose steadily, paralleling that of his band singer, Ella Fitzgerald. But he died in 1939 from the same spinal tuberculosis that had dwarfed him as a child. Fitzgerald continued to front the band for two years after his death.

"Heebie Jeebies" can of course be compared to Louis Armstrong's 1926 Hot Five version of the same piece—his first hit record. Benny Carter's arrangement reconceives the piece, voicing it for full ensemble, and adding background riffs for soloists and a chorus for saxophones (enhanced by his own performance of the lead part) that reflects an intimate knowledge of the instrument. The soloists are generally close students of major figures: gracefully poised Louis Bacon, after Armstrong; Elmer Williams, floating away from the beat, after Coleman Hawkins; and Don Kirkpatrick, after Fats Waller. Jimmy Harrison, a major jazz trombonist, who was basically an Armstrong follower, is in excellent form on his last record session— only four months before his death at thirty from a stomach ailment.

Band 6

Pickin' the Cabbage

(Dizzy Gillespie)

Cab Calloway and His Orchestra: Dizzy Gillespie, Mario Bauza, and Lammar Wright, trumpets; Tyree Glenn, Quentin Jackson, and Keg Johnson, trombones; Jerry Blake, clarinet and alto saxophone; Hilton Jefferson, alto saxophone; Andrew Brown, alto and baritone saxophone; Chu Berry and Walter Thomas, tenor saxophones; Bennie Paine, piano; Danny Barker, guitar; Milton Hinton, bass; Cozy Cole, drums.

Recorded March 8, 1940, in Chicago. Originally issued on Vocalion/Okeh 5467 (mx # WC-2983-A).

In 1930 singer and ex-drummer Cab Calloway began fronting the Missourians, a band originally from St. Louis but based in New York from 1924 on. By 1932 he had become a major celebrity— perhaps the black entertainment celebrity of the 1930s— and the Missourians had become "His Orchestra." Calloway's commercial identity did not encourage groundbreaking work from his arrangers, but his band improved steadily in the 1930s—largely through replacement of musicians— until in potential, at least, it was unexcelled.

"Pickin' the Cabbage" was recorded by Calloway's finest group, which held together with few changes from 1939 (when Dizzy Gillespie and the juggernaut drummer Cozy Cole joined) until 1941. Gillespie is the central figure here, not only as trumpet soloist but as composer-arranger. By 1940 he was well versed in Roy Eldridge's trumpet work and sometimes brought to that style a relaxation its creator usually lacked. Gillespie's setting for this simple minor- 7 key riff piece (later recorded by Count Basie as "Rock-a- Bye-Basie") is imaginatively atmospheric in its contrast of muted trumpets with baritone sax. He was already beginning harmonic exploration beyond Eldridge in private sessions with Danny Barker and Milt Hinton. This "Chinese music" was not to Calloway's taste, and Gillespie got fewer and fewer solos during 1941, his last year with the band.

Band 7

Ebony Silhouette

(Benny Payne and Milt Hinton)

Same group as the preceding.

Recorded January 16, 1941, in Chicago. Originally issued on Okeh 6192 (mx # C-3522- 1).

Historians have rightly emphasized Jimmy Blanton's role in bringing the double bass to prominence as a solo instrument in the early 1940s, but have neglected several important bassists who established themselves earlier, including the formidable Milt Hinton.

When he joined Calloway in 1936 at the age of twenty-one, Hinton was already a veteran of the Chicago music scene and had toured as far as California with violinist Eddie South. After fifteen years with Calloway (the last three mostly with small groups) he became the most demanded of New York's many freelance bassists, a position he has yet to relinquish.

The reflective "Ebony Silhouette" (arranged by Andy Gibson) shows the bassist's pizzicato and arco skills almost equally. (The 1939 "Pluckin' the Bass" featured the high-speed Hinton pizzicato alone.) Hinton's clear touch and flexible phrasing are remarkable, and the smoothness of his bowed tone is unrivaled in jazz recordings of the period.

Band 8

Jammin' for the Jackpot

(Eli Robinson)

The Mills Blue Rhythm Band: Lucky Millinder, leader; Charlie Shavers, Carl Warwick, and Harry Edison, trumpets; Alfred Cobbs and Wilbur DeParis, trombones; Tab Smith, alto saxophone; Eddie Williams, Ben Williams, and Harold Arnold, tenor saxophones; Billy Kyle, piano; Danny Barker, guitar; John Williams, bass; Lester Nichols, drums.

Recorded July 1, 1937, in New York. Originally issued on Variety 634 (mx # M-545-1).

"Jammin' for the Jackpot" exemplifies the Mills Blue Rhythm Band, an eclectic group that combined skill and tremendous enthusiasm with variable quality of arrangement. The first chorus is clearly the source of Count Basie's "Jumpin' at the Woodside," recorded in August, 1938; and the final chorus is an improved version of a riff from Joe Garland's "In the Mood" (earlier recorded by the Blue Rhythm Band as "There's Rhythm in Harlem"). Between these choruses there is good solo work by Billy Kyle, Harry Edison (who probably carried the "Jammin'" riff to Basie), Wilbur DeParis, and Harold Arnold; but the writing ranges from the fresh and effective background for Arnold's solo to the flatfooted clichés of the second chorus.

The Blue Rhythm Band apparently evolved out of a late-1920s New York group of similar personnel. The band as such definitely existed early in 1930, when it played the Cotton Club under the leadership of drummer Willie Lynch. Later that year the influential promoter Irving Mills took over the band's management and used it as a backup for his two main orchestras, Duke Ellington's and Cab Calloway's. Several entertainers fronted the band—first Sonny Nichols, then "Baron Lee" (Jimmy Ferguson), and from 1934 on Lucius "Lucky" Millinder—but Edgar Hayes (see Side One, Band 1) was musical director for six years starting in late 1930. The breakup of the Fletcher Henderson band in 1934 sent several of its stars to the Mills group, including trumpeter Henry "Red" Allen; the band improved markedly, and Allen was offered (but declined) leadership in 1935. At the end of 1936 came an all but complete personnel turnover, with only Millinder and recent joiners Tab Smith and Billy Kyle remaining; six months after recording "Jammin'" the group broke up entirely. After going bankrupt with another big band in 1939, Millinder had a successful career as a leader in the 1940s.

Side Two

Band 1

Toby

(Eddie Barefield and Buster Moten)

Bennie Moten's Kansas City Orchestra: Oran "Hot Lips" Page, Joe Keyes, and Dee Stewart, trumpets; Eddie Durham, trombone and guitar; Dan Minor, trombone; Eddie Barefield, clarinet and alto saxophone; Jack Washington, alto and baritone saxophone; Ben Webster, tenor saxophone; Count Basie, piano; Leroy Berry, guitar; Walter Page, bass; Willie McWashington, drums.

Recorded December 13, 1932 in Camden, N.J. Originally released on Victor 23384 (mx # 7484661).

Bennie Moten led Kansas City's foremost band during the mid-1920s. By 1928, however, he was suffering from local competition, particularly from Walter Page's Blue Devils (represented on NW 256, *Sweet and Low Blues*, by their only two recordings). Moten responded by hiring away some of Page's best men, and by the end of 1929 arranger-trombonist-guitarist Eddie Durham, singer Jimmy Rushing, pianist William "Count" Basie, and trumpeter Oran "Hot Lips" Page had all gone to Moten. Walter Page himself followed in 1931. Nevertheless, Moten's following continued to shrink, despite his best efforts—including the purchase of Benny Carter and Horace Henderson arrangements—to keep his band abreast of current trends. Ironically, he might have done better to hold to his rhythmically dated 1920s style, and the audience that went with it. Moten died after a tonsillectomy in 1935, and his group broke up shortly. Several of its musicians soon formed the nucleus of Count Basie's first band.

"Toby" was recorded at a marathon session in the midst of a disastrous road trip to the East. The urgency of the saxophones is exciting as they strive to hold the murderous tempo, but not so exciting as the three concluding choruses. Here the brass and saxes riff against one another for a chorus and change to different riffs for a second chorus; in the final chorus, as the brass hold their riff, the saxes return to their riff of two choruses before—but delayed by a full bar of strettò. (Similar extensions of the riff principle were the basis of many of Count Basie's best 1937-39 works.) The tempo allows a total of eight choruses and six soloists: in order, Durham (later the first recorded electric guitarist) on guitar, Lips Page, Webster, Barefield, Basie, Barefield again, Basie again, Webster again, Minor (probably), and finally (probably) Durham again, this time on trombone. Basie's mastery of the stride style is in marked contrast to his later spare solo work.

Band 2

Blues of Avalon

(Unknown)

Boots and His Buddies: Charles Anderson, C. H. Jones, Percy Bush, and L. D. Harris, trumpets; George Corley, trombone; Alva (or Alvin) Brooks and Artie Hampton, alto saxophones; Baker Millian and David Ellis, tenor saxophones; A. J. Johnson, piano; Jeff Thomas, guitar; Walter McHenry, bass; Boots Douglas, drums.

Recorded September 17, 1937, in San Antonio, Texas. Originally released on Bluebird B-7187 (mx # 014292-1).

Southwestern bands of the 1930s are often associated with fast or medium-tempo jump selections, but "Blues of Avalon" (not a twelve-bar blues, by the way) is another sort of regional specialty—dark, massive, almost despairing, reminiscent in mood of the Basie of "Blues in the Dark" and "I Left My Baby." The soloists here are very much in the Basie manner, as Charlie Anderson embroiders on Buck Clayton's muted style and the remarkable Baker Millian presents a slightly more florid version of Herschel Evans' style. But Alva Brooks is close to Ellington's Johnny Hodges, in the more famous altoist's then fast-developing ballad style.

"Boots," the leader and not too assured drummer here, was born Clifford Douglas. He organized the Buddies in 1932. They recorded copiously from 1935 to 1938—forty-two selections in all, more than many good New York bands in the same period—and remained together into the 1940s.

Band 3

Sensational Mood

(Henri Woode and Horace Floyd)

Hunter's Serenaders: Lloyd Hunter, Reuben Floyd, and George Lott or Ted Frank, trumpets; Elmer Crumbley or Joe Edwards, trombone; Horace "Noble" Floyd and Archie Watts, alto saxophones; Harold Arnold or Dick Lewis, tenor saxophone; George Madison, piano; Herbert Hannas (or Hannah), banjo; Robert Welch (or Welsh) or Wallace Wright, bass; Pete Woods or Jo Jones, drums.

Recorded April 21, 1931, in New York. Originally issued on Vocalion 1621.

Lloyd Hunter led bands out of Omaha from about 1923 until his death in 1961 but recorded only once, near the beginning of a ten-month national tour with then prominent blues singer Victoria Spivey.

Henri Woode was Hunter's sometime accordionist. The impressively theatrical "Sensational Mood" is based on the chord progression of "I've Found a New Baby." (Earl Hines recorded it in 1932, less precisely but with generally better solos.) Like much of Don Redman's influential work for Fletcher Henderson, "Sensational Mood" superimposes 3/4, 3/8, and even 5/4 figures on a steady 2/4 beat—figures that are hard to swing and thus all but disappeared from jazz during the 1930s, reviving only late in the 1950s. Most orchestras of the 1930s had at least one of these flagwavers in their repertoires, hopefully enhanced by solos as good as this trombone spot (probably by Elmer Crumbley, who later joined Jimmie Lunceford).

Band 4

Original Dixieland One-Step

(J. Russell Robinson, George Crandall, D. J. [Nick] La Rocca, and Joe Jordan)

Grant Moore And His New Orleans Black Devils: Robert Russell and Ellis Whitlock, Sylvester Friel, or Bill Martin, trumpets; Elmer Crumbley and Thomas Howard, trombones; Earl Keith and Grant Moore, alto saxophones; Willard Brown, tenor saxophone; J. Norman Ebron, piano; Harold Robbins, banjo; Lawrence Williams, tuba; Harold Flood (or Floyd) or Jo Jones, drums.

Recorded May 6, 1931, in Chicago. Originally issued on Vocalion 1622.

Grant Moore's career is almost as obscure as a career can be. His Black Devils played out of Milwaukee and through Minnesota, Iowa, and the Dakotas from 1926 until at least 1935. They got as far west as Idaho and as far south as Oklahoma but no farther east than Chicago, where they recorded only two selections.

Though "Original Dixieland One-Step" (initially recorded in 1917 by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band as "Dixie Jass Band One-Step" and released on the reverse of their first hit, "Livery Stable Blues") was anachronistic and ragtimey material by 1931, the Black Devils' treatment recasts its ending into a series of contemporary riffs. There are several good short solos, particularly by the muted trombone (probably Elmer Crumbley) and the exuberantly high trumpet (probably Robert Russell). But the close-knit arrangement is the real focus of interest here. Its final choruses build seamlessly to a climax as a unison passage by the full band over tomtom back beats (itself a paraphrase of a previous passage for saxophones alone) releases into a half chorus of brass/saxophone interplay. Then brass and saxes regroup into a single rhythmic figure, move apart once more into call-and-response wails, then join again in a powerfully static two-note riff whose tension is broken by a final superimposed 3/4 figure. Theoretically these transitions are hardly more complex than those at the end of "Casa Loma Stomp," but this final chorus must have sent dancers rebounding from the ceiling and the walls.

Bands 5 and 6

Atlanta Low Down

(Henry Mason)

J. Neal Montgomery and His Orchestra: Henry Mason and Karl Burns, trumpets; unidentified, trombone; George Derigotte and (unknown) Puckett, clarinets and alto saxophones; (unknown) Brown, clarinet and tenor saxophone; J. Neal Montgomery, piano; unidentified, banjo Jesse Wilcox, tuba; Ted Gillum, drums.

Recorded March 14, 1929, in Atlanta. Originally issued on Okeh 8682 (mx # 402313-B).

Auburn Avenue Stomp

(Henry Mason)

Same group and recording data as preceding. Originally released on Okeh 8682 (mx # 402314-C).

Little is known of J. Neal Montgomery, though he was a prominent leader around Atlanta through the 1920's. His band of 1929 had a single star-trumpeter Henry Mason. "Atlanta Low Down" and "Auburn Avenue Stomp" are both Mason's arrangements, and each has its attractions. But Mason's exciting and assured climatic solos in each piece (the first trumpet solo in "Auburn Avenue Stomp" is by Karl Burns) outshine even the best of his arranged passages, such as the brass trios in "Atlanta Low Down." Mason never realized his early promise. He spent most of the early 1930's with Blanche Calloway's band: like her brother Cab, she led a talent-filled group that was usually subjugated to its leader's personality. By 1936 Mason was working in Paris with Willie Lewis, leader of a band of American musicians.

Bands 7 and 8

West End Blues

(Joe Oliver and Clarence Williams)

Zach Whyte's Chocolate Beau Brummels: Sy Oliver Bubber Whyte, and Henry Savage, trumpets; Floyd Brady, trombone; Earl Tribble, "Snake" Richardson, and Clarence Page, alto saxophones; Al Sears, tenor and baritone saxophone; Herman Chittison, piano; Zach Whyte, banjo; Montgomery Morrison, tuba; Williams Benton, drums.

Recorded February 26, 1929, in Richmond, Indiana. Originally issued on Gennett 33010 (mx # 14837-A).

Good Feelin' Blues

(Unknown)

Same group as the preceding, except Fred Jackson, tenor saxophone, and Charlie Anderson, banjo.

Recorded December 19, 1929, in Richmond, Indiana. Originally issued on Gennett 7086 (mx # 16005-A).

Some bands had to make do without soloists of great ability. The 1929 Beau Brummels did have one fairly strong player in Herman Chittison, who later spent time in Europe and North Africa before returning to the United States to work as a superior jazz based cocktail pianist. But more typical of the soloists here is the growl trumpeter in the midst of "West End Blues" and at the end of "Good Feelin' Blues," who alternates between playing safe and playing a bit over his head.

It is Whytes arranging that draws attention in "West End Blues"- another of the compositions in this album that inspired a hit record from Louis Armstrong. The best moments of Whyte version reflect the Armstrong classic without actually copying it; note the intricate trumpet trio in the first chorus (based on Armstrong's own first chorus) or the tuba/saxophones exchange (based on Armstrong's scat singing with Jimmy Strong's clarinet). The brighter tempo of "Good Feelin' Blues" brings into focus the firm but flexible Whyte rhythm section, led by William Benton's parade-steady press rolls. Chittison solos here in restrained Earl Hines style.

Whyte began as an arranger and banjoist with Horace Henderson's Wilberforce College bands of the early 1920's. His own band leading through Kentucky and Ohio began in the mid 1920's and apparently continued at least

through the 1930's. At various times he hired trumpeter Bill Coleman; arranger trumpeters Sy Oliver and Andy Gibson; trombonists J. C. Higginbotham, Quentin Jackson, Elmer Crumbley, and Vic Dickenson; saxophonists Al Sears, Eddie Barefield, and Dick Wilson; pianist Herman Chittison; and arranger-pianist Tadd Dameron, all more prominent with later employers. Whyte's most distinctive period was probably 1931-33, when Sy Oliver was reputedly developing the arranging style he later used with Jimmie Lunceford, but no recordings survive from those years.

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Side One

Total time 23:10

- 1 **CARAVAN** (Juan Tizol, Duke Ellington, and Irving Mills) 3:03
(publ. American Academy of Music)
Edgar Hayes and His Orchestra
- 2 **CASA LOMA STOMP** (Gene Gifford) 3:16
(publ. Morley Music Co.)
Casa Loma Orchestra
- 3 **DALLAS BLUES** (Hart Wand and Lloyd Garrett) 2:41
(publ. Edwin H. Morris & Co., Inc.)
Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy
- 4 **MADHOUSE** (Earl Hines, arr. James Mundy) 2:45
(publ. Edwin H. Morris & Co., Inc.)
Earl "Fatha" Hines and His Orchestra
- 5 **HEEBIE JEEBIES** (Boyd Atkins) 3:00
(publ. Leeds Music Corp.)
Chick Webb and His Orchestra
- 6 **PICKIN' THE CABBAGE** (Dizzy Gillespie) 2:45
(publ. John Gillespie)
Cab Calloway and His Orchestra
- 7 **EBONY SILHOUETTE** (Benny Payne and Milt Hinton, arr. Andy Gibson) 2:35
(publ. unknown)
Cab Calloway and His Orchestra
- 8 **JAMMIN' FOR THE JACKPOT** (Eli Robinson) 2:30
(publ. unknown)
The Mills Blue Rhythm Band

Side Two

Total time 25:27

- 1 **TOBY** (Eddie Barefield and Buster Moten) 3:26
(publ. unknown)
Bennie Moten's Kansas City Orchestra
- 2 **BLUES OF AVALON** (unknown) 3:25
(publ. unknown)
Boots and His Buddies
- 3 **SENSATIONAL MOOD** (Henri Woode and Horace Floyd) 3:14
(publ. Southern Music Publishing Co., Inc.)
Lloyd Hunter's Serenaders
- 4 **ORIGINAL DIXIELAND ONE-STEP**
(J. Russell Robinson, George Crandall, D. J. (Nick) LaRocca, and Joe Jordan) 2:40
(publ. Edward B. Marks Music Corporation)
Grant Moore and His Black Devils

5 ATLANTA LOW DOWN (Henry Mason)	3:03
(publ. unknown)	
J. Neal Montgomery and His Orchestra	
6 AUBURN AVENUE STOMP (Henry Mason)	3:00
(publ. unknown)	
J. Neal Montgomery and His Orchestra	
7 WEST END BLUES (Joe Oliver)	3:10
(publ. MCA Music)	
Zach Whyte's Chocolate Beau Brummels	
8 GOOD FEELIN' BLUES (unknown)	2:54
(publ. unknown)	
Zach Whyte's Chocolate Beau Brummels	

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