

# THE RECORDINGS OF FATS WALLER AND HIS BUDDIES

## An Annotated Tentative Personnel - Discography

This personnel-discography is based on RUST, JAZZ AND RAGTIME RECORDS 1897 - 1942.

Personnel are taken from this source, but modified in the light of earlier or subsequent research or on the strength of my own listening, discussed with our listening group or other interested collectors.

- Documented, most certain and aurally absolutely obvious identifications are listed thus: **Fats Waller**
- Probable, generally agreed, but not documented identifications are listed in italics, thus: *Fats Waller*
- Not attributable identifications – although the musician in question might be an otherwise well-known person – are listed thus: unknown
- If a possible identification for an otherwise unknown musician is suggested by the author without the possibility to prove the factual evidence, it is listed thus: (*Fats Waller*)

When feeling certain without a musician's documented presence, I have not refrained from altering Rust's statements without using italics. In any case, my statements are open to discussion and I would appreciate any contribution - pro or contra!

As always in my discographies on this website I have written recording sessions with their headings, dates, titles and names of musicians in italics, whenever I am convinced that the eponymous musician of this discography is not part of the accompanying group of this session! Documented names of musicians if known – in recording ledgers or on record labels – are listed in bold letters.

This discography still is - and will certainly be - a work in progress for a long time, if not eternally. Yet, on the way to a definite discography of all jazz recordings before 1942 - which certainly will never be possible - it is intended to fill some gaps that have not been treated before.

**Thomas Fats Waller is known in the whole jazz world as a piano virtuoso 'par excellence', singer, composer/song-writer, leader of 'and his Rhythm', comedian, entertainer, gourmet and gourmand. His issued recordings amount to the number of ca. 500. Most of these recordings were made with his band 'and his Rhythm' in the 1930/40s, but a very small number of them were made in early 'Harlem' style under the name of 'Fats Waller and his Buddies'. These three recording sessions are the subject of this list.**

### FATS WALLER AND HIS BUDDIES

#### 001 **FATS WALLER AND HIS BUDDIES**

New York, Mar. 01, 1929

Charlie Gaines – tpt; Charlie Irvis – tbn; Arville Harris – clt, ten;  
Thomas Fats Waller – pno; Eddie Condon – bjo

|         |                 |              |                            |
|---------|-----------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| 49759-1 | Handful Of Keys | Vic V-38508, | Chronological Classics 689 |
| 49760-2 | The Minor Drag  | Vic V-38050, | Chronological Classics 689 |
| 49761-2 | Harlem Fuss     | Vic V-38050, | Chronological Classics 689 |
| 49762-2 | Numb Fumblin'   | Vic V-38508, | Chronological Classics 689 |

*Composer credits: 49759 (T. Waller); 49760 (Thomas Waller); 49761 (Thomas Waller); 49762 (T. Waller)*

*Note: 49759 and 49762 are un-accompanied piano solos by Fats Waller*

This is one of the all-time classic jazz sessions of Harlem times, known to everyone interested in the music. From Eddie Condon's narration we have a true and dependable documentation of the participating musicians and the circumstances the session was arranged. Apart from that we here have one of the funniest stories about jazz music and musicians (see below). This session then can serve as reference for the playing of any participant. Charlie Gaines, trumpet player from Philadelphia with a close relationship to the Clarence Williams organisation, was with the Charlie Johnson in Atlantic City in 1920, already. (He played the jazz solo parts in this band as a successor of Freddie

Keppard!) Charlie Irvis was a seasoned New York trombonist who also was part of the Washingtonians in the early 1920s. Arville Harris was a Southern musician who made many recordings with Clarence Williams bands was part of the New York big band scene in later years. He does not play alto sax on these sides. Eddie Condon, banjo player and guitarist of world-wide fame in the 1930s/40s, was a white musician and was part of the group at his own surprise, only. And the one-and-only 'Fatsy-Watsy' Waller was leader (!?) of the group and their "spiritus rector".

The most hilarious story of this recording session has been reported by Eddie Condon in his book 'We Called It Music' and copied below. I – KBR – thought it to be inevitable to know for any lover of Jazz!

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography, 1948*: Charlie Gains (tp); Charlie Irvis (tb); Arville Harris (cl & as); Fats Waller (p); Eddie Condon (bj)

- Rust\*2: Charlie Gains (tpt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); Arville Harris (clt, alt, ten); Fats Waller (pno); Eddie Condon (bjo)

- Rust\*3,\*4,\*6: Charlie Gains -t; Charlie Irvis -tb; Arville Harris -cl, as, ts; Fats Waller -p; Eddie Condon -bj

- L. Wright, "Fats in Fact": Charlie Gains, t; Charlie Irvis, tb; Arville Harris, cl/as; Fats Waller, p; Eddie Condon, bj

Tune Structures:

49760-2 *The Minor Drag* Key of Cm / Eb Victor

(Intro 10 bars TFW pno)(Strain A1 16 bars AB AH clt)(Strain A2 16 bars AB CG m-tpt)(Strain A3 16 bars AB CG m-tpt)  
(Strain A4 16 bars AB CI o-tbn)(Strain A5 16 bars AB TFW pno - mod.)(Strain B1 16 bars AB TFW pno)(Strain B2 16 bars AB ens  
- mod.)(Strain A6 16 bars AB ens)(Strain B3 AB ens)(Strain B4 16 bars AB ens)(Tag 2 bars ens)

49761-2 *Harlem Fuss* Key of Eb Victor

(Intro 4 bars TFW pno)(Vamp 4 bars TFW pno)(Chorus 1 12 bars AH ten)(Chorus 2 12 bars CG o-tpt)(Chorus 3 12 bars CI o-  
tbn)(Chorus 4 12 bars TFW pno)(Chorus 5 12 bars AH clt)(Chorus 6 12 bars ens)(Chorus 7 12 bars ens)

**002 FATS WALLER AND HIS BUDDIES**

New York, Sep. 30, 1929

Henry Red Allen – tpt; Jack Teagarden – tbn, vib;

Otto Hardwick, Albert Nicholas – alt, clt; Larry Binyon – ten;

Fats Waller – pno; Eddie Condon – bjo; Pops Foster – sbs; Gene Krupa – dms;

The Four Wanderers (Herman Hughes, Charles Clinkscapes, Maceo Johnson, Oliver Childs) – voc

56727-2 Lookin' Good But Feelin' Bad Vic V-38086, Chronological Classics 702

56728-1 I Need Someone Like You Vic V-38086, Chronological Classics 702

Composer credits: 56727 (Santley - Waller); 56728 (Thomas Waller)

Here now, the Victor people – or Mr. Adams of the Southern Music Company, respectively – continue their series of recordings with a Fats Waller band that had begun so satisfactory and delightful for everybody with session 001 above.

For this session – half a year after the first one – Waller had collected some top rank musicians from the Harlem scene – and a vocal quartet, the necessity of which I shall never understand.

The band consisted of the rising trumpet star from New Orleans Henry 'Red' Allen with his off-beat trumpet style, the up-coming white trombonist Jack Teagarden, famous for his smooth and "lazy" instrumental style. The 'reeds' were Otto Hardwick on alto sax, free-lancing in New York after his four-years stay with the Washingtonians and a period in Europe, great New Orleans clarinetist Albert Nicholas on alto, too, and a young white tenor sax player in Hawkins-style from the Ben Pollack band, Larry Binyon. The rhythm section has Eddie Condon on banjo again (see above – Eddie and Fats seem to have become good friends by now), white Gene Krupa on drums, and Pops Foster from the Luis Russell band – just as Red Allen – on string bass. It is astonishing that leader Waller collected a "racially" mixed personnel, but we know that racial barriers were almost non-existent for most of the black and white musicians of New York.

On both titles the vocal trio gets too much room to perform, for my taste and opinion. This may have been on demand or as a condition of the recording company. We do not know. For me, it was wasted space in the grooves. Yet sympathetic waste.

Steven Lasker pointed me to the fact that Al Morgan, who is listed as bassist in earlier discographies, could not have participated in this session as he still was a member of the Jones-Collins Hot Eight in New Orleans at this time. Instead, Pops Foster is remembered as bassist by Henry Red Allen for this session.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography, 1948*: Charlie Gains (tp); Jack Teagarden (tb); Albert Nicholas (cl); Otto Hardwick (as); Fats Waller (p); Eddie Condon (bjo); Al Morgan (b); Gene Krupa (dm)

- Rust\*2: Charlie Gains (tpt); Jack Teagarden (tbn); Albert Nicholas, Otto Hardwick (alt); Larry Binyon (ten); Fats Waller (pno); Eddie Condon (bjo); Al Morgan (sbs); Gene Krupa (dms); The Four Wanderers (vcl quartet).

- Rust\*3,\*4,\*6: Henry Allen -t; Jack Teagarden -tb -vib; Albert Nicholas, Otto Hardwick -as; Larry Binyon -ts; Fats Waller -p; Eddie Condon -bj; Al Morgan -sb; Gene Krupa -d; The Four Wanderers (Herman Hughes – Charles Clinkscapes -tenors; Maceo Johnson -baritone; Oliver Childs -bass) -v.

- L. Wright, "Fats in Fact": Henry Allen, t; Jack Teagarden, tb/vb; Albert Nicholas, Otto Hardwick, as; Larry Binyon, ts; Fats Waller, p; Eddie Condon, bj; Al Morgan, sb; Gene Krupa, d; The Four Wanderers, v.

Tune Structures:

56727-2 *Lookin' Good But Feelin' Bad* Key of F Victor

(Intro 84 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA TFW voc)(Bridge 8 bars TFW voc)(Chorus 3 32 bars  
AABA HRA o-tpt 16 – JT o-tbn 8 – HRA o-tpt 8)(Chorus 4 32 bars AABA TFW pno 16 bars – ens 16)(Tag 4 bars ens)

56728-1 *I Need Someone Like You* Key of Eb Victor

(Intro 6 bars TFW pno 2 – ens 2 – TFW voc 2)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA OH alt + ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA TFW voc)(Chorus 3  
32 bars AABA HRA o-tpt 8 – JT o-tbn 8 – ens 8 – TFW voc 8)

**003 FATS WALLER AND HIS BUDDIES**

New York, Dec. 18, 1929

Leonard Davis, Henry Red Allen – tpt;

Jack Teagarden, J. C. Higginbotham – tbn;

Otto Hardwick, Albert Nicholas – alt, clt; Larry Binyon – ten;

Thomas Fats Waller – pno; Will Johnson – bjo; Pops Foster – sbs; Kaiser Marshall – dms;

Orlando Roberson – voc (1,4)

57926-1 Lookin' For Another Sweetie Vic V-38110, Chronological Classics 720

57927-3 Ridin' But Walkin' Vic V-38119, Chronological Classics 720

57928-1 Won't You Get Off It, Please? Vic V-38119, Chronological Classics 720

57929-2 When I'm Alone Vic V-38110, Chronological Classics 720

Composer credits: 57926 (Chick Smith – Sterling Grant); 57927 (Waller); 57928 (Waller); 57929 (Chick Smith)

This is a very loose and softly swinging big band session under Fats Waller's leadership, and thus mirrors Fats' easy approach to our music. There aren't so much arrangements and those used or very sketchy ones, mostly restricted to written background harmonies. Little can be recognized of Leonard Davis here. He is mainly with the saxes to deliver the background and some short ensemble parts. Henry Red Allen is the main soloist on open-trumpet, both trombonists have a single solo chorus each, Otto Hardwick shines in his romantic manner leading the saxophones in two melody choruses in the first and fourth titles. Clarinet and the alto solo in 'When I'm Alone' are by Albert Nicholas – all earlier discographies list Charlie Holmes instead, but falsely (see below), while white tenorist Larry Binyon has two solos – obviously influenced by Coleman Hawkins – in two titles (see "Tune Structures" below).

This again is a "racially" mixed band recording, nearly a year after the first of its kind (see session 001 above). And its organizer – the ebullient genius of stride-piano, composer, performer on piano and organ, singer, and lover of life – is a model of modesty here in taking 16 bars of solo only in the last tune. The rhythm section itself is a model of hard-swinging but modest function for the band, with Kaiser Marshall offering a phantastic example of how a drummer had to propel a band, using what tools, and where. And it is very nice to hear the banjo player of the Luis Russel band – Will Johnson – on these sides. A most un-assuming and moderate but hard-swinging banjo player. Oh yes, the singer!?

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography*, 1948: *Charlie Gains; Leonard Davis or Henry Allen (tp), Jack Teagarden, Charlie Green or J.C. Higginbotham (tb), Albert Nicholas (cl); Otto Hardwick, Larry Binyon (s), Fats Waller (p), Bernard Addison or Eddie Condon (g), Pops Foster (b), Kaiser Marshall or Gene Krupa (dm)*

- Rust\*2: *Henry Allen, Leonard Davis (tpt), J.C. Higginbotham or ?Charlie Green, Jack Teagarden (tbn), Albert Nicholas, Charlie Holmes (clt, alt); Larry Binyon (ten), Fats Waller (pno), Will Johnson (bjo), Pops Foster (sbs), Kaiser Marshall (dms), Orlando Roberson (vcl)*

- Rust\*3, \*4, \*6: *Henry Allen -Leonard Davis -t; Jack Teagarden -tb -vib, J.C. Higginbotham -tb; Albert Nicholas -Charlie Holmes -cl -as; Larry Binyon -ts; Fats Waller -p; Will Johnson -bj; Pops Foster sb; Kaiser Marshall -d; Orlando Roberson -v*

- L. Wright, "Fats in Fact": *Henry Allen, Leonard Davis, t; Jack Teagarden, tb/vb; J.C. Higginbotham, tb; Albert Nicholas, cl/as; Charlie Holmes, cl/as; Larry Binyon, ts; Fats Waller, p; Will Johnson, bj; Pops Foster, sb; Kaiser Marshall, d; Orlando Roberson, v.*

- Storyville 162-216: "Al Vollmer writes that he played the 18 December 1929 Buddies sides to Charlie Holmes who said that the alto was not by himself and that he had never recorded with Larry Binyon. Without any prompting he suggested Otto Hardwick. Al also mentions that he thinks the trombone solo on 57928 is Higgy rather than Teagarden and that when he played it for Higgy, Higgy thought it was by himself but was not absolutely positive saying: "You know my style better than I do."

Tune Structures:

57926-1 *Lookin' For Another Sweetie* Key of Ab Victor

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA OH alt + ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA OR voc)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA ens 16 – HRA o-tpt + ens 16)(Tag 2 bars HRA o-tpt + ens)

57927-3 *Ridin' But Walkin'* Key of F (blues changes) Victor

(Intro 4 bars LB ten + ens)(Chorus 1 12 bars ens)(Chorus 2 12 bars AN clt)(Chorus 3 12 bars HRA o-tpt)(Chorus 4 12 bars LB ten)(Chorus 5 12 bars JT o-tbn)(Chorus 6 12 bars ens)

57928-1 *Won't You Get Off It, Please?* Key of F Victor

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA ens 16 – AN alt 8 – ens 8)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA HRA o-tpt)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA LB ten)(Chorus 4 32 bars AABA JCH o-tbn)(Chorus 5 32 bars AABA HRA o-tpt + ad-lib ens)(Tag 3 bars ens)

57929-2 *When I'm Alone* Key of F Victor

(Intro 6 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA OH alt + ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA OR voc)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA TFW pno 16 – AN alt 8 – HRA o-tpt 8)(Chorus 4 32 bars AABA ens 16 – HRA o-tpt 8 – ens 8)(Tag 2 bars ens)

SOURCES:

- Nat Shapiro, Nat Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin' To Ya*, Charlie Gains: "While at *Connie's Inn* at 132nd Street and Seventh Avenue in Harlem, Eddie Condon and Fats Waller came in one night. They had a date for Victor next morning (1 March 1929) and wanted me to play on it. They wanted to talk more about it so I waited till I finished at four. By then, Fats, who had been drinking gin, was in wild shape. We never discussed arrangements or ideas and ended up making the sides cold next morning.

Fats arrived in high spirits, still without any ideas of what we would play. He just sat down and kicked off in E-flat and we used our own ideas. We had no rehearsals whatever. Didn't even have a name for the sides. Later they called them 'Harlem Fuss' and 'Minor Drag', and they were under the name of Fats Waller and his Buddies. Besides Fats, Condon, and myself, we used Charlie Irvis, trombone; Arville Harris, clarinet and alto; but didn't have a drummer. Years later, Herman Autrey told me plenty of those pops for Victor were made the same way, without hardly any rehearsal at all."

- E. Condon, *We Called It Music*: "Shortly afterward Mr. Peer called me to his office and introduced me to Mr. Adams. Mr. Adams had a mustache and a problem. The problem was Fats Waller, my favorite piano player. The Southern Music Company had an interest and an investment in Fats; Fats, who was having alimony trouble, had become indifferent to his Victor recording dates – he didn't get what he earned so he didn't care. Either he didn't keep the appointments or he arrived with a band which was unrehearsed. The Southern Music Company was disturbed, Mr. Adams said. It had advanced Fats some money.

"Mr. Peer has recommended you as a reliable and enterprising young man," he went on. "We would like you to undertake the task of finding Waller and delivering him to the studio on time and with a well-rehearsed band."

It sounded difficult. I hadn't yet met Waller; why should he let me discipline him for the sake of the Southern Music Company?

"We'll pay you seventy-five dollars if you can do it" Mr. Adams said. At the moment I would have attempted to produce Herbert Hoover in a soft collar. "I'll try," I said. "Fine," Mr. Adams said. "We know where you can locate Waller. He's at *Connie's Inn* in Harlem rehearsing a new floor show. You can find him there this afternoon. The date is four days from now; that will give you time to assemble a band and rehearse it."

*Connie's Inn* was at 131st Street and Seventh Avenue, a corner inhabited also by the Lafayette Theater and by the Wishing Tree, a sidewalk totem pole which entertainers stroked for good luck. There were also an all-night barbershop, a rib joint, and, above *Connie's Inn*, a barrel-house café called the Performers and Entertainers Club. Waller was at *Connie's Inn* as predicted; the floor show, "Hot Chocolates," was being rehearsed. The score was by Fats and Andy Razaf, and included 'Ain't Misbehavin'' and 'Black And Blue'. Later it went downtown to Broadway, with Fats Waller and Louis Armstrong in the cast.

I waited for a pause in the rehearsal; then I introduced myself to Fats. "Earl Hines told me to look you up," I explained. "Ol' Earl?" Fats said. "Well, that's fine. How's ol' Earl? I'm so glad to hear about him. Sit down and let me get a little gin for you. We'll have to talk about Earl." He was so amiable, so agreeable, so good-natured, that I felt almost ashamed of my mission; but I performed it; I asked Fats about making a record. A recording date? He'd be delighted, he'd be proud; just any time. In four days? Fine. At Liederkrantz Hall? Wonderful. At noon? Perfect.

I telephoned Mr. Adams. "Very good" he said. We shall expect you at noon on Friday. You had better stay close to Waller."

I did, but every time I opened my mouth to say something about getting the band together or discussing the numbers to be played, Fats said, "Fine! Wonderful! Perfect" and handed me another belt of gin. We were in perfect accord on everything. Nothing happened.

At the end of the first day I was not overly worried except in the matter of my capacity for gin. Obviously it was suicide to match Fats drink for drink. I began to duck and sidestep. All during the second day and the second night I kept trying. "Fine! Wonderful! Perfect!" Fats said whenever I mentioned the recording date. "Now let's have a little gin and talk about it." The third day I was desperate; as night came on I kept talking and Fats kept handing me drinks. There was still no band. "After we get the band together what shall we play?" I asked. "Why, we'll play music," Fats said. "Now let's have some little drink and talk about it."

Things grew faint and finally dark. When I awoke I was lying on the wall cushions at Connie's Inn, fully dressed. It was half past ten in the morning. On another cushion Fats was curled up, also fully dressed, asleep. I staggered over to him. He opened his eyes and smiled. It's half past ten," I croaked. "We're due at the studio at noon."

He sat up, stretched, and yawned. "That's fine! That's wonderful! That's perfect!" he said. Now we've got to see about that band. Look around for some nickels so I can make that telephone go." He went to the phone booth and made three calls. By the time we finished washing and straightening our clothes three musicians had arrived: Charlie Gains (sic - KBR), a trumpet player; Charlie Irvis, a trombonist; and Arville Harris, who played clarinet and alto saxophone.

"What are you going to play?" I asked, though by now I figured it didn't matter. Mr. Adams would throw me out after the first note. "You mean what are we going to play?" Fats said. "Man, you're with us. Where's your banjo?" "But I'm not supposed to play with you," I said, "I only came to make the date and help you get the band together."

Fats looked hurt. "You mean you don't want to play with us?" he said. "I would love to play with you," I said. "My banjo is at the Riverside Towers." "We'll stop and get it," Fats said. "Charlie, get a taxi." We piled into a taxi and headed down Seventh Avenue. "Now here is what we are going to play," Fats said suddenly. He hummed a simple, basic pattern of rhythm and melody, a blues in a minor key.

When we had it memorized he explained what each of us had to do. "You ot that, Charlie?" he said. Both Charlies said yes. They had it.

We stopped at the Riverside Towers and I got my< banjo. At ten minutes before twelve we walked into Liederkrantz Hall at Fifty-eighth Street and Lexington Avenue. Mr. Adams was waiting for us. "I see you are punctual," he said to me. "Congratulations." To Fats he said, "Well, Mr. Waller, what is it to be this morning?" "Well, Mr. Adams," Fats said, "this morning I think we'll start with a little thing we call 'The Minor Drag'. It's a slow number. Then we got a little ol' thing for the other side we call" - he hesitated - "'Harlem Fuss'."

"Excellent," Mr. Adams said. "Let's begin with 'The Minor Drag'." We set up our instruments and Fats repeated his instructions. He played the theme for us; as soon as I heard him I knew why we didn't need drums - his left hand would take care of the bass. "Ready?" Fats said. "Let's go," one of the Charlies said. The warning lights flashed and we took off, every man for himself, with Fats holding us together. When we finished Mr. Adams came out of the control room. He didn't say anything. We listened to the playback. I had a difficult time believing what I heard because it sounded wonderful. I looked at Mr. Adams. He was smiling.

"You see," he said to me, "what careful rehearsal will do? You have performed your job excellently." I walked over to Fats. "What are we going to play for the other side?" I whispered. "What is 'Harlem Fuss'?" "It's just a little blues in a major key," he said. We made it.

When the master was cut Mr. Adams was delighted. "I wonder, Mr. Waller," he said, "if we could have some piano solos now?"

"Wonderful!" Fats said. "Perfect! We'll have some piano solos." Without moving from the bench he made 'Handful Of Keys' and 'Numb Fumblin'. 'Handful Of Keys' turned out to be the most popular of all his recorded piano solos. "We must have some more of these dates," Mr. Adams said. "This is an excellent example of the wisdom of planning and preparation."

After that the Southern Music Company, with careful planning and preparation, brought out the record on a Victor label with the titles reversed: 'Harlem Fuss' was called 'The Minor Drag' and 'The Minor Drag' was called 'Harlem Fuss'. I got my seventy-five dollars."