

# THE RECORDINGS OF JAMES P. JOHNSON AND HIS RECORDING BANDS

## An Annotated Tentative Personnel - Discography

JOHNSON, 'James P.' James Price, piano, arranger, composer

Born: New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1<sup>st</sup> February 1894; Died: New York, 17<sup>th</sup> November 1955

Originally taught piano by his mother. Moved with family to Jersey City, then to New York. Played at local rent parties during his early teens, first professional work at Coney Island in summer of 1912. Subsequently played solo piano in various clubs in New York and Atlantic City, after touring Southern vaudeville circuit he returned to New York and played residencies at Leroy's, Barron Wilkin's, The Clef Club, etc., c. 1918. Again did theatre tour, left to play a residency in Toledo, Ohio (1919). In 1921 he began his prolific recording career, also worked as musical director for Dudley's 'Black Sensations/Smart Set' revues, led own Harmony Seven in New York (1922). To England with 'Plantation Days' show in March 1923. During the 1920s did many recording sessions with bands and accompanied singers (including Bessie Smith, Ethel Waters, etc.). By then he was firmly established as a successful composer, having written many tunes: 'Charleston', 'If I Could Be With You', 'Carolina Shout', etc.. For the rest of his life he devoted a great deal of his time to composing. In 1923 he scored his own 'Runnin' Wild' revue; he premiered his extended work 'Yamecrow' at Carnegie Hall in July 1928. Worked in 'Keep Shufflin'' with Fats Waller in 1928, during following year directed the orchestra for Bessie Smith's film 'St. Louis Blues'. During the 1930s he concentrated on composing, writing his 'Symphony Harlem' in 1932, and several works for the stage including the one-act work 'De Organizer' in collaboration with the famous poet Langston Hughes. He did, however, regularly lead his own orchestra during the early 1930s, also played occasionally in other bands (Fess Williams, 1936-37, etc.). In 1939 he began playing again regularly, did solo spot at Café Society (August), played for 'Swingin' the Dream' show (November), and led own band at Café Society (December). In 1940 he led at Elk's Rendezvous and Café Society, New York, until taken ill in summer of 1940. Returned to music the following year as musical director for 'Pinkard's Fantasies'. With Wild Bill Davison in Boston (early 1943), then led own band (and solos) in New York (1944). Took part in Eddie Condon's New York Town Hall concerts and also was featured as solo artist-composer at Carnegie Hall. Led at the Pied Piper (1945). Played at Eddie Condon's Club (1946) until suffering a stroke in October of that year. Active again in spring 1947. In 1949 worked in California production of his revue 'Sugar Hill'. Also played occasionally with Albert Nicholas Quartet. He returned to New York and continued working until suffering a severe stroke in 1951. He was an invalid for the rest of his life. He remained at his home for three years, but spent his last days in Queen's Hospital. *'James P. Johnson' by Scott E. Brown (discography by Robert Hilbert) was published in 1986.*

(J. Chilton, Who's Who of Jazz)

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: **James P. Johnson**
- Probable, generally agreed, but not documented identifications are listed in italics, thus: *James P. Johnson*
- 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: (*James P. Johnson*)

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.

**James P. Johnson, most influential pianist of the early Harlem jazz scene, mainly worked as solo pianist, composer, accompanist for singers, and band pianist, but not as noted bandleader. Yet, in the history of the music of Harlem he appears as leader of recording bands on and off, but only once as a leader of a working band. This list only includes band recordings issued under his name.**

JAMES P. JOHNSON BANDS

001 ALICE LESLIE CARTER	Jimmie Johnson's Jazz Boys	New York,	c. Aug. 1921
Alice Leslie Carter – voc;			
June Clark, unknown – cnt/tpt; (Jimmy Harrison) – tbn;			
unknown – clt; unknown – ten;			
James P. Johnson – pno (no pno audible); unknown – bbs, unknown – bells (3)			
	Dangerous Blues	Arto 9086,	Doc DOCD-5508
	I Want Some Lovin' Blues	Arto 9086,	Doc DOCD-5508
	The Also-Ran Blues	Arto 9095,	Doc DOCD-5508
	Cry Baby Blues	Arto 9095,	Doc DOCD-5508
	You'll Think Of Me Blues	Arto 9096,	Doc DOCD-5508

The Band is named as Jimmie Johnson's Jazz Boys, but you won't hear any piano. So, James P. might only be conducting. Or he does also play bass parts on the piano, inaudible on these early recordings. Apart from James P. Johnson, the only musician listed by name in the discographies is June Clark. But very interesting is the note in B. Kernfeld's 'New Grove Dictionary of Jazz' re the trombonist as cited below!

The instrumentation given by Rust, Brown/Hilbert, Trolle is: cornet, trombone, clarinet, violin, piano, brass-bass, plus "possibly other instruments on some sides". So, two of the above mentioned discographers seem to have copied the third, presumably Rust. I hear: 2 cornets (or trumpets), trombone, clarinet, tenor sax, brass bass. On "Cry Baby Blues" there seems to be an alto or a second clarinet, maybe additionally, but it might also be a tenor sax doubling alto sax or clarinet. But there certainly is no violin! Although all these tunes are titled "Blues" only the fifth "You'll Think Of Me Blues" has 12-bar blues changes.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography, 1948: personnel of early James P. Johnson recording groups included: Gus Aiken, Russell Smith (tp); Bud Aiken, Charlie Irvis, Jack Frazier (tb); Walter Watkins (ts); etc.*

- Carey, McCarthy, *Jazz Directory, Vol. 2: June Clark (tpt) included*

- BGR\*2,\*3,\*4: June Clark, cnt; unknown, tbn; unknown, clt; unknown, vln; James P. Johnson, pno; unknown, bbs, poss others on some sides.

- Rust\*3,\*4,\*6: June Clark -t; unknown -tb; unknown -cl; unknown -vn; James P. Johnson -p; unknown -bb; possibly others on some sides

- Brown/Hilbert, 'James P. Johnson A Case of Mistaken Identity': June Clark, cornet; unknown trombone, clarinet, and violin; Johnson, piano; unknown brass bass, drums; possibly other instruments on some sides.

- The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz, p. 217: Clark, June: "... where the two (June Clark and James P. Johnson – KBR) met Jimmy Harrison and invited him to join them; the group accompanied the blues singer Alice Leslie Carter on recordings made in New York in 1921."

Tunes Structures:

Dangerous Blues Key of F Arto, Bell, Globe, Hy-Tone  
(Intro 4 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A1 32 bars AA' voc + ens)(Chorus A2 32 bars (ens 28 bars, voc + ens 4 bars))(Coda 2 bars cnt – ens)

I Want Some Lovin' Blues Key of C Arto, Bell, Globe, Hy-Tone  
(Intro 7 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A1 18 bars AA' voc + ens)(Chorus A2 18 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A3 18 bars ens)(Coda 2 bars cnt – ens)

The Also-Ran Blues Key of F Arto, Bell, Globe, Hy-Tone  
(Intro 4 bars bells – ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A1 18 bars voc + ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A2 18 bars voc + ens)

Cry Baby Blues Key of Ab / Db Arto, Bell, Globe, Hy-Tone  
(Intro 4 bars ens)(Vamp 4 bars reeds – ens)(Verse 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A1 20 bars AA' voc + ens)(Vamp 4 bars reeds – ens)(Verse 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A2 20 bars voc + ens)(Coda 4 bars ens)

You'll Think Of Me Blues Key of F / Bb Arto, Bell, Globe, Hy-Tone  
(Intro 4 bars ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Chorus A1 12 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A2 12 bars voc + ens)(Verse 8 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A3 12 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A4 12 bars ens)(Chorus A5 12 bars voc + ens)(Coda 2 bars clt – ens) (This is the only 12-bar blues in the series!) This last item is one of the records found in June Clark's uncle's house!

002 ALICE LESLIE CARTER	Jimmie Johnson's Jazz Boys	New York,	c. Sep. 1921
Alice Leslie Carter – voc;			
June Clark – cnt; (Jimmy Harrison) – tbn;			
unknown – clt; unknown – alt;			
James P. Johnson – pno (no pno audible); unknown – bbs			
	Aunt Hagar's Children Blues	Arto 9103,	Doc DOCD-5508
	Down Home Blues	Arto 9103,	Doc DOCD-5508

Mainly the same of the above mentioned applies to this session. But on 'Aunt Hagar's Children Blues' and 'Down Home Blues' I hear: cornet, trombone, clarinet, alto sax, brass-bass. Certainly no violin and no piano as in Rust.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography, 1948: personnel of early James P. Johnson recording groups included: Gus Aiken, Russell Smith (tp); Bud Aiken, Charlie Irvis, Jack Frazier (tb); Walter Watkins (ts); etc.*

- Carey, McCarthy, *Jazz Directory, Vol. 2: June Clark (tpt) included*

- BGR\*2,\*3,\*4: June Clark, cnt; unknown, tbn; unknown, clt; unknown, vln; James P. Johnson, pno; unknown, bbs, poss others on some sides.

- Rust\*3,\*4,\*6: June Clark -t; unknown -tb; unknown -cl; unknown -vn; James P. Johnson -p; unknown -bb; possibly others on some sides

- Brown/Hilbert, 'James P. Johnson A Case of Mistaken Identity': June Clark, cornet; unknown trombone, clarinet, and violin; Johnson, piano; unknown brass bass, drums; possibly other instruments.

Tunes Structures:

Aunt Hagar's Children Blues Key of C Arto, Bell, Globe, Hy-Tone

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Vamp 2 bars ens)(Chorus A1 12 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A2 12 bars voc + ens)(Verse B1 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A3 12 bars voc + ens)(Vamp 2 bars voc + ens)(Verse B2 16 bars voc + ens)(Coda 2 bars clt – ens)  
*Down Home Blues* Key of Ab Arto, Bell, Globe, Hy-Tone  
 (Intro 4 bars ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse A1 16 bars voc + ens)(Vamp 8 bars voc + ens)(Chorus B1 12 bars voc + ens)(Verse A2 16 bars ens)(Vamp 8 bars ens)(Chorus B2 12 bars voc + ens)(Coda 2 bars clt – ens)

003 **LAVINIA TURNER** James P. Johnson's Harmony Seven New York, c. Sep. 02, 1921  
 Lavinia Turner – voc;  
 June Clark, unknown – cnt/tpt; unknown – tbn; unknown – clt;  
 James P. Johnson – pno; unknown – bjo  
 69358 He Took It Away From Me PA 020627, Per 12034, Doc DOCD-5447  
 69359 If I Were Your Daddy (And You Were A Woman To Me) PA 020627, Per 12034, Doc DOCD-5447

I hear : trumpet/cornet, trombone, clarinet, alto sax, piano, and banjo. Maybe there is a saxophone in the background – some ensemble passages sound rather fat, but it can not be detected clearly. There are beautiful piano-passages by James P. on both titles. Confirmation of June Clark's presence comes from James P. Johnson himself ! He is also heard on other Johnson accompaniments made for Hytone and other labels.

This is one of the records found in June Clark's uncle's house !

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography, 1948: personnel of early James P. Johnson recording groups included: Gus Aiken, Russell Smith (tp); Bud Aiken, Charlie Irvis, Jack Frazier (tb); Walter Watkins (ts); etc.*

- BGR\*2,\*3,\*4: two unknown tpts; unknown, tbn; unknown, clt; unknown, ten; James P. Johnson, pno; unknown, bjo..

- Rust\*3,\*4,\*6: 2t; tb; cl; ts; James P. Johnson -p; bjo.

- Brown/Hilbert, 'James P. Johnson A Case of Mistaken Identity': two unknown cornets; unknown trombone, clarinet, tenor sax; Johnson, piano; unknown banjo, xylophone.

Tunes Structures:

*He Took It Away From Me* Key of F Pathé Actuelle, Perfect  
 (Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus A1 20 bars AA' voc + ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse B1 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A2 20 bars (voc + pno 8 bars, voc + ens 12 bars)) (Chorus A3 20 bars (ens 12 bars, voc + ens 8 bars))(Coda 2 bars clt – ens)

*If I Were Your Daddy* Key of Eb Pathé Actuelle, Perfect  
 (Intro 8 bars ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse A1 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus B1 20 bars AA' voc + ens)(Chorus C1 12 bars pno)(Chorus B2 20 bars ens)(Chorus B3 20 bars voc + ens)(Coda 1 bar ens)

004 **LAVINIA TURNER** James P. Johnson's Harmony Seven New York, c. Sep. 26, 1921  
 Lavinia Turner – voc;  
 June Clark, unknown – cnt/tpt; unknown – tbn; unknown – clt;  
 James P. Johnson – pno; unknown – bjo  
 69397 When The Rain Turns To Snow PA 020878, Per 12039, Doc DOCD-5447  
 69398 Who'll Drive Your Blues Away ? PA 020878, Per 12039, Doc DOCD-5447

I hear : trumpet/cornet, trombone, clarinet, piano, and banjo. Maybe there is a saxophone in the background – some ensemble passages sound rather fat, but it cannot be detected clearly. Once again beautiful piano playing.

The title of the second tune is, as given by Rust: "Who Drives Your Cares (sic) Away". L. Turner clearly sings: "Who Drives Your Blues Away"!

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography, 1948: not listed*

- BGR\*2,\*3,\*4: two unknown tpts; unknown, tbn; unknown, clt; unknown, ten; James P. Johnson, pno; unknown, bjo..

- Rust\*3,\*4,\*6: 2t; tb; cl; ts; James P. Johnson -p; bjo.

- Brown/Hilbert, 'James P. Johnson A Case of Mistaken Identity': two unknown cornets; unknown trombone, clarinet, tenor sax; Johnson, piano; unknown banjo.

Tunes Structures:

*When The Rain Turns Into Snow* Key of Bb Pathé Actuelle, Perfect  
 (Intro 4 bars ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse A1 12 bars voc + ens)(Chorus B1 18 bars AABA' voc + ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse A2 12 bars voc + ens)(Chorus B2 18 bars voc + ens)(Chorus B3 18 bars (voc + pno 12 bars, voc + ens 6 bars))(Coda 2 bars clt – ens)

*Who'll Drive Your Blues Away* Key of D Pathé Actuelle, Perfect  
 (Intro 4 bars ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse A1 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus B1 18 bars AA' voc + ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse A2 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus B2 18 bars voc + ens)(Coda 2 bars pno – ens)

005 **JIMMY JOHNSON'S JAZZ BOYS** New York, c. Oct. 1921  
 (June Clark) – cnt; unknown – tbn;  
 unknown – clt; possibly unknown – alt;  
 James P. Johnson – pno; unknown – bjo  
 Carolina Shout Arto 9096, Frog (E) DGF 73

This seems to be the same band that accompanies Alice Leslie Carter and Lavinia Turner. To my ears, the personnels on all these 1921 recordings are very similar, so I think that this is James P. Johnson's regular recording band at that time.

I don't hear a tuba or drums, and there is no soprano sax and only possibly an alto sax on this nice side. The assumption that June Clark might be the trumpet player comes from the Swedish Classic Jazz Masters LP.

This is one of the records found in June Clark's uncle's house! And it might be assumed that June only gave records with his own presence to his uncle as gifts. What might be a strong hint as to his presence. The flip-side is Alice Leslie Carter's "You'll Think Of Me Blues". (See my June Clark list elsewhere on this website!)

Notes:

- McCarthy, Carey, *Jazz Directory: not listed*

- Rust\*2: unknown cnt, tbn, clt, clt/sop/alt, James P. Johnson (pno), unknown bjo, bbs, dms.

- Rust\*3: unknown c; tb; cl-as; or ts; James P. Johnson -p; bj; d..

- Rust\*4,\*6: James P. Johnson -p dir. c/tb/cl-ss-as/bj/bb/d..

- Brown/Hilbert, 'James P. Johnson A Case of Mistaken Identity': unknown cornet (June Clark?), trombone, clarinet, alto sax; soprano sax; Johnson, piano; unknown banjo, brass bass, drums.

Tune Structure:

Carolina Shout Key of G/C Arto, Bell, Cleartone, Globe, Hy-Tone  
(Intro 4 bars ens)(strain A1 16 bars AA' ens)(strain A2 16 bars clt + ens)(strain B1 16 bars AA' ens)(strain C1 16 bars AA' ens)(strain C2 16 bars ens)(strain D1 16 bars AA' ens)(strain D2 16 bars clt + ens)(strain D3 16 bars AA' ens)(Coda 4 bars pno - ens)

006 **ALICE LESLIE CARTER** Jimmie Johnson's Jazz Boys New York, c. Nov. 1921  
Alice Leslie Carter - voc;

June Clark, poss. unknown - cnt/tpt; (Jimmy Harrison) - tbn;

unknown - clt; unknown - ten (1,2);

James P. Johnson - pno (3,4); unknown - bbs

Decatur Street Blues

Arto 9112,

Doc DOCD-5508

Got To Have My Daddy Blues

Arto 9112,

Doc DOCD-5508

Heart Broken Blues

Arto 9118,

Doc DOCD-5508

I Want My Daddy Now

Arto 9118,

Doc DOCD-5508

Mainly the same of the above mentioned applies to this session. But on 'Decatur Street Blues' and 'Got To Have My Daddy Blues' I hear: (possibly) 2 cornets, trombone, clarinet, tenor sax, brass bass. Certainly no violin and no piano. On 'Heart Broken Blues' and 'I Want My Daddy Now' I hear: cornet/trumpet, trombone, clarinet, piano, brass bass, no violin and no tenor sax. So there might have been two sessions, but lacking matrix-numbers, this is only my assumption.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography, 1948: personnel of early James P. Johnson recording groups included: Gus Aiken, Russell Smith (tp); Bud Aiken, Charlie Irvis, Jack Frazier (tb); Walter Watkins (ts); etc.*

- Carey, McCarthy, *Jazz Directory, Vol. 2: June Clark (tpt) included*

- BGR\*2: June Clark, cnt; unknown, tbn; unknown, clt; unknown, vln; James P. Johnson, pno; unknown, bbs, poss others on some sides.

- BGR\*3,\*4: June Clark, cnt; unknown, tbn; unknown, clt; unknown, vln; James P. Johnson, pno; unknown, bbs; unknown, ts, definitely present.

- Rust\*3,\*4,\*6: June Clark -t; unknown -tb; unknown -cl; unknown -vn; James P. Johnson -p; unknown -bb; possibly others on some sides

- Brown/Hilbert, 'James P. Johnson A Case of Mistaken Identity': June Clark, cornet, unknown trombone, clarinet; tenor sax; violin;

Johnson, piano; unknown brass bass, possibly other instruments.

Tunes Structures:

Decatur Street Blues Key of C Arto, Bell, Globe, Hy-Tone  
(Intro 4 bars ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse A1 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus B1 20 bars voc + ens)(Verse A2 16 bars (stop-time) voc + ens)(Chorus B2 20 bars voc + ens)(Coda 2 bars cnt - ens)

Got To Have My Daddy Blues Key of Bb/Eb Arto, Bell, Globe, Hy-Tone  
(Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus A1 12 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A2 12 bars voc + ens)(Verse B1 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus C1 16 bars AABA voc + ens)(Chorus C2 16 bars AABA voc + ens)(Coda 2 bars clt - ens)

Heart Broken Blues Key of C Arto, Bell, Globe, Hy-Tone  
(Intro 4 bars ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse A1 12 bars voc + ens)(Chorus B1 20 bars AB voc + ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse A2 12 bars voc + ens)(Chorus B2 20 bars voc + ens)(Coda 4 bars ens)

I Want My Daddy Now Key of Ab Arto, Bell, Globe, Hy-Tone  
(Intro 4 bars ens)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Verse A1 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus B1 32 bars AA' voc + ens)(Chorus B2 32 bars AA' voc + ens)

007 **EDDIE GRAY** Jas. P. Johnson's Harmony Eight New York, c. Nov. 1921  
Eddie Gray - voc, uku;

(Gus Aiken? or June Clark?) - tpt; (Bud Aiken? or Jake Frazier?) - tbn;

unknown - alt; unknown (Walter Watkins?) - ten; unknown - flt;

James P. Johnson - pno; unknown - bjo

P-159 You've Got What I'm Looking For

BS 2020,

Document DOCD-1015

P-160 Ukulele Blues

BS 2020,

Document DOCD-1015

The instrumental accompaniment is entirely scored, with a flute playing the melody parts unison with the singer and the trumpet. No band member can be identified by style, tone or other individualities. Thus, all given musician's names above can only be speculation by Mr. Delaunay as noted below, but selected from Johnson's circle of musicians of this time. (Brown/Hilbert are obviously following Delaunay's statements.)

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography, 1948: personnel of early James P. Johnson recording groups included: Gus Aiken, Russell Smith (tp); Bud Aiken, Charlie Irvis, Jack Frazier (tb); Walter Watkins (ts); etc.*

- Carey, McCarthy, *Jazz Directory, Vol. 4: James P. Johnson (p) with unknown personnel*

- BGR\*2,\*3,\*4: not listed

- Rust\*2,\*3,\*4,\*6: not listed

- Brown/Hilbert, 'James P. Johnson A Case of Mistaken Identity': possibly Gus Aiken, trumpet; Bud Aiken, Jake Frazier or Charlie Irvis, trombone, unknown, alto; Walter Watkins, tenor sax; Johnson, piano; unknown bass and drums; unknown, ukelele, probably played by Gray.

008 **TRIXIE SMITH** James P. Johnson's Harmony Eight New York, c. Nov. 1921  
Trixie Smith - voc;

unknown - tpt; unknown - tbn;

unknown - clt; Walter Watkins - ten; unknown - vln;

James P. Johnson - pno; unknown - bjo

P-282-1	You Missed A Good Woman When You Picked All Over Me	BS, Pm	not on LP/CD
P-282-2	You Missed A Good Woman When You Picked All Over Me	BS 2044,	Document DOCD-5332
P-283-2	Long Lost, Weary Blues	BS 2044,	not on LP/CD ?
P-283-3	Long Lost, Weary Blues	BS 2044,	Document DOCD-5332

As before with James P. Johnson's band, the entire instrumental accompaniment is scored, and no improvised parts can be found. The violin plays first parts unison with the trumpet. In the second half of 'Long Lost, Weary Blues' a clarinet plays the only instrumental solo of the entire session, but still not improvised but plain melody. (Rust\*6 shows P-283-2 only!)

Notes:

- *Ch. Delaunay, New Hot Discography, 1948: personnel of early James P. Johnson recording groups included: Gus Aiken, Russell Smith (tp); Bud Aiken, Charlie Irvis, Jack Frazier (tb); Walter Watkins (ts); etc.*  
 - *BGR\*2,\*3,\*4: unknown cnt; unknown tbn; unknown clt; prob Walter Watkins, ten; unknown vln; James P. Johnson, pno; unknown, bjo*  
 - *Rust\*2: Louis Metcalfe (cnt); James P. Johnson (pno); Perry Bradford (vcl).*  
 - *Rust\*3,\*4,\*6: Louis Metcalf -c; James P. Johnson -p; Perry Bradford -v.*  
 - *Brown/Hilbert, 'James P. Johnson A Case of Mistaken Identity': unknown cornet, trombone, clarinet; probably Walter Watkins, tenor sax; unknown, violin; Johnson, piano; unknown banjo.*

**009 JAMES P. JOHNSON'S HARMONY EIGHT**

New York, Dec. 05, 1921

unknown, (June Clark) – tpt/cnt; unknown – tbn;  
 unknown – clt; unknown – alt; *Walter Watkins* – ten;  
 James P. Johnson – pno; unknown – bjo

70350-B	Dear Old Southland	OK 4504,	Chronological Classics 658
70351-C	Bandana Days (Intro. Love Will Find A Way)	OK 4504,	Chronological Classics 658

Both titles are largely arranged, but leaving improvisational room for the clarinet in 'Dear Old Southland' and for a strong cornet player, who may well be June Clark, adding a hot cornet part to the straight first trumpet part in 'Bandana Days'. There are beautiful sections for the trombone in 'Dear Old Southland', sounding to me like being coupled with a tuba, but there is no tuba apparent playing a two-beat rhythm in the melody sections, which makes me finally deny its presence. ... and there remain eight musicians, then.

Both tunes are arranged – and composed – in early 1920s two-beat ragtime style, with little jazz content and no off-beat phrasing, except the scarce ad-lib spots. And yet, it is a pleasant music of its time, determined for theatre and revue work.

Notes:

- *Ch. Delaunay, New Hot Discography, 1948: listed as piano solo*  
 - *Carey, McCarthy, Jazz Directory, Vol. 5: James P. Johnson (p) with unknown personnel*  
 - *Mahoney, Columbia 13/14000-D Series: Files: Louis Metcalf, tpt; James P. Johnson, pno; Perry Bradford, vcl.*  
 - *Rust\*2: Louis Metcalfe (cnt); James P. Johnson (pno); Perry Bradford (vcl).*  
 - *Rust\*3,\*4,\*6: Louis Metcalf -c; James P. Johnson -p; Perry Bradford -v.*  
 - *Brown/Hilbert, 'James P. Johnson A Case of Mistaken Identity': two unknown cornets; unknown trombone, clarinet, alto sax; possibly Walter Watkins, alto and tenor sax; Johnson, piano; unknown banjo, drums.*

Tune Structures:

*Dear Old Southland* Key of F / Fm / F OKeh  
 (Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus 1 16 bars AA' ens) (Chorus 2 16 bars AA' ens)(Verse 1 16 bars AA' ens)(Verse 2 16 bars AA' ens)  
 (Chorus 3 16 bars AA' ens + clt)(Verse 3 16 bars AA' ens)(Chorus 4 16 bars AA' ens + clt)(tag 2 bars ens)

*Bandana Days* Key of Bb / F / Bb OKeh  
 (Intro 4 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars AA' ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AA'AB ens)(Bridge 8 bars ens modulation)(Chorus 'Love Will Find a Way' 32 bars AA' ens + hot clt – cnt)(Chorus 2 32 bars AA'AB ens)(Coda 4 bars ens)

**010 JOHNSON'S JAZZERS**

New York, Sep. 02, 1927

**Louis Metcalf** – tpt;  
**James P. Johnson** – pno;  
**Perry Bradford** – voc

144621-2	Skiddle-De-Scow	Col 14247-D,	Chronological Classics 658
144622-2	Can I Get It Now?	Col 14247-D,	Chronological Classics 658

After a six-years' lapse of time with Johnson being occupied in solo recordings and some singers' accompaniments – besides his personal business of composing – he is back with the nucleus of a band to record jazz music with one of the trumpet heroes of the 1920s. All participants are at their characteristic best. Metcalf very off-beat here and swinging. Great James P. in duo. Even Bradford sings jazzy and in tune here.

Notes:

- *Ch. Delaunay, New Hot Discography, 1948: Louis Metcalf (tp); James P. Johnson (p)*  
 - *Carey, McCarthy, Jazz Directory, Vol. 5: Louis Metcalfe (tpt); James P. Johnson (p); Perry Bradford (vcl)*  
 - *Mahoney, Columbia 13/14000-D Series: Files: Louis Metcalf, tpt; James P. Johnson, pno; Perry Bradford, vcl.*  
 - *Rust\*2: Louis Metcalfe (cnt); James P. Johnson (pno); Perry Bradford (vcl).*  
 - *Rust\*3,\*4,\*6: Louis Metcalf -c; James P. Johnson -p; Perry Bradford -v.*  
 - *Brown/Hilbert, 'James P. Johnson A Case of Mistaken Identity': Louis Metcalf, cornet; Johnson, piano; Perry Bradford, vocal.*

**011 LOUISIANA SUGAR BABES**

New York, Mar. 27, 1928

Jabbo Smith – tpt; Garvin Bushell – clt, alt, bsn;  
 James P. Johnson – pno; Thomas Fats Waller – org

42566-1	Willow Tree	Vic 21348,	Chronological Classics 689
42566-3	Willow Tree	Vic unissued on 78,	JSP JSP927D
42567-1	'Sippi	Vic 21348,	Chronological Classics 689
42567-2	'Sippi	Vic BB B-10260,	JSP JSP927D
42568-1	Thou Swell	Vic BB B-10260,	JSP JSP927D
42568-2	Thou Swell	Vic 21346,	Chronological Classics 689

42569-1 Persian Rug Vic 21346, Chronological Classics 689  
 Composer credits: 42566 (Waller); 42567 (Johnson – Conrad - Creamer); 42568 (Rodgers); 42569 (Kahn – Moré)

This recording session may be considered as a James P. Johnson recording band, although it does not carry his name. L. Wright, 'Fats in Fact', p. 42/43: "... from Garvin Bushell's recollections it appears that both (studios 1 & 2 of the Church Building in Camden, New Jersey – KBR) were used simultaneously with (Fats) Waller on the organ manual in one studio along with the other musicians and the organ pipes (!) in the other – a very strange arrangement. The first two titles were from the show 'Keep Shufflin'', and this group was the pit band for the show, although Waller actually played piano in the theatre. Garvin Bushell also states that he doesn't recall playing the bassoon in the theatre but brought it to the studio on the insistence of James P. Johnson." As the pit bands for theatre shows usually had the size of a big band, we have to consider that the 'Louisiana Sugar Babes' were not "the pit band for the show", as noted above, but rather part of the pit band!

Nineteen-years old Jabbo Smith – boarding pupil and frequent fugitive from the 'Jenkins' Orphanage' of Charleston, South Carolina - was an up-rising star of the jazz trumpet scene who, in the consecutive years, lost his big reputation because of own personal weaknesses and unreliability and their consequences. But his rediscovery and revival in his later years is one of the few beautiful and heart-warming stories in the history of jazz. Garvin Bushell, in contrast, was a steady and responsible musical crafts-man, performing in jazz as well as in classical music with virtuosity and musicianship. James P. Johnson, composer of countless songs, jazz classics, and ragtime/jazz piano tunes, obviously had the idea to record these four titles in co-operation with his pupil and future piano/singer star Fats "Little Fatsy-Watsy" Waller. These four magnificent musicians happen to execute one of the most unusual but exciting recording sessions of the whole history of jazz.

Notes:

- Rust, Victor Master Book Vol. 2: Jabbo Smith -c; Garvin Bushell -cl/s/bsn; James P. Johnson -p; Fats Waller -pipe organ

- Rust\*2,\*3,\*4,\*6: Jabbo Smith (cnt); Garvin Bushell (clt, alt, bsn); James P. Johnson (pno); Fats Waller (pipe-organ)

- G. Bushell, *Jazz from the Beginning*, p. 74: "James P. Johnson wrote most of the music for 'Keep Shufflin'' and Fats Waller contributed some numbers, too. Some of the comedy bits in the show were like 'Ashuffle Along'. Two of the big songs were 'Willow Tree' and 'Sippi'. In the band we had tenor saxophonist Al Sears, who later went with Duke Ellington, also Jabbo Smith on trumpet. Allegretti was a dancer in the chorus, and Blanche Calloway was in the cast, too.

Jimmy conducted the pit orchestra, and Fats played piano. They had a two-piano thing where they played some of the same things they did down at Leroy's. The show could hardly go on after they got through.

Some Monday nights we'd have to send soeone out to find James P. and Fats, since they'd have been out at parties since Friday night, playing piano, spending money, buying liquor. They'd just close the places up. Monday night they'd be ossified and you couldn't get them on. That was fast living in the fast lane, then.

In March I went down with James P., Fats, and Jabbo to record in Camden, New Jersey. Victor had bought this church there which had a great sounding organ, and used it as a recording studio. The organ pipes were in one room and we were in another. Fats played organ on this date. The piano and the organ manual were together, but since the pipes were in the next room Fats had a real job, because the organ always sounded a fraction of a second late. It was quite a thing. And it was hard keeping time because we had no drums or bass. That morning, Fats didn't drink his fifth of gin until after we got through recording.

We did two songs from 'Keep Shufflin'' – 'Willow Tree' and 'Sippi' – also 'Persian Rug' and 'Thou Swell'. I played some of the first jazz bassoon on those recordings. My sound was terrible then. I was fascinated by Adrian Rollini's style on bass sax, and my bassoon playing just came out that way, even though I wasn't trying to imitate him. On the record they called us the Louisiana Sugar Babes – I have no idea why, maybe Fats created the title. He always looked at the humorous side of things."

Discernible differences of takes (from L. Wright, 'Fats in Fact' – thank you, Mr. Wright!):

42566-1: Last eight bars of trumpet solo: Jabbo Smith plays the melody  
 42566-3: Last eight bars of trumpet solo: Jabbo Smith improvises ascending arpeggios  
 42567-1: Bridge into bassoon solo: 4 firmly struck organ chords  
 42567-2: Bridge into bassoon solo: legato organ phrase  
 42568-1: Organ break before alto sax solo: one bar only  
 42568-2: Organ break before alto sax solo: two bars

**012 JIMMY JOHNSON AND HIS ORCHESTRA**

New York, Jun. 18, 1928

Cootie Williams, Ward Pinkett – tpt; unknown – tbn;  
 Garvin Bushell – alt, clt; unknown – ten, clt;  
 James P. Johnson, Fats Waller – pno; Joe Watts – sbs;  
 Perry Bradford – voc speech (1); unknown – train effects, bell, wbd  
 146539-3 Chicago Blues  
 146540-1 Mournful Tho'ts

Col 14334-D, Chronological Classics 658  
 Col 14334-D, Chronological Classics 658

This, now, is a real jazz group recording under James P. Johnson's name. After repeated and close listening, the following has to be stated: This recording session follows the same model as that of Johnny Dunn's Original Jazz Hounds of March 25, 1928: a couple of horn men accompanied by two pianists – the very cream of Harlem's pianists of the time – and a string-bass player. The arrangements are founded on the interplay of the two pianists who almost entirely make up the rhythm section. There is no banjo player and no drummer, but a lonely string-bass player restricted to play a two-beat rhythm. The five horn men play their sparse scores in adjustment with the reigning pianists, and I believe one of them, James P. Johnson, to be the arranger (compare the above-named Dunn session and Johnson's arrangement of 'You've Got To Be Modernistic' on Clarence Williams' session of December 03, 1929).

Laurie Wright in his extra-ordinary 'Fats In Fact' only lists one trumpet player, Cootie Williams. And, in fact, it has to be questioned whether we really hear two different trumpet players. Would Cootie, as a recent new-comer to Harlem, have been provided with all the solos on these sides? This against the well-known opinion and fact that he started to use a mute not earlier than joining the Ellington band in early 1929. And the usual dance-band personnel in Harlem – and elsewhere – was: one trumpet, one trombone, two reeds, alto and tenor, these enlarged only for larger premises like Ballrooms. Why two trumpets, then? Certainly, two trumpets in harmony are heard playing the verse in 'Chicago Blues' with Cootie Williams leading in his very slick section-playing manner as known from later Ellington sides. And easily a second trumpet can be recognized behind the muted soloist in 'Mournful Tho'ts'. I am whole-heartedly following Eric Townley (see below) here, attributing the muted solos to Ward Pinkett, and the open solo on the second side to Cootie Williams. It is my opinion that little-known Cootie subbed for Jabbo Smith at short notice for melody parts, and that Johnson hired Ward Pinkett – trumpet star in Harlem at this time – additionally for the solos.

It is my own (KBR) assumption that the unknown trombonist might be Charlie Irvis, late in his musical career and long after the zenith of his playing. Unfortunately, the arrangements do not leave any room for this player.

In opposition to A. Vollmer (see below) I do not hear a soprano solo in 'Chicago Blues', nor do I hear an alto solo in 'Mournful Tho'ts'. All alto playing sounds to be Garvin Bushell's slim and academic tone, performing scored parts. Bushell was with the show 'Keep Shufflin'' at

this time, together with James P. Johnson and Jabbo Smith. The tenor sax player is un-identifiable because of his retention certainly caused by the probably hastily pinned-down arrangements. But also, the arranger – James P.? – obviously did not see any inducement to furnish the reed players with soloistic possibilities. The same applies to the trombonist. Both men might probably have been in the pit-band for ‘Keep Shufflin’’, too.

The two pianists play reconciled piano passages, alternating first and second parts, and providing all the modulations and bridges. Joe Watts seems to have been one of the many legitimate band musicians occupied with show work in New York, having recorded with Lois Deppe in 1923, and with Ward Pinkett later in 1935

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography*, 1948: no personnel listed

- McCarthy, Carey, *Jazz Directory* Vol. 5: including Cootie Williams (tpt); Garvin Bushell (reeds); James P. Johnson (p); Bert Hall (bs)

- Rust\*2: Cootie Williams and another (tpt); unknown (tbn); unknown (clt, alt); unknown (clt, ten); James P. Johnson and another (pno); unknown (sbs)

- Rust\*3: Cootie Williams and another -t; unknown -tb; unknown -cl -as; unknown -cl -ts; James P. Johnson -Fats Waller -p; Joe Watts -sb; Perry Bradford -speech

- Rust\*4,\*6: Cootie Williams and another -t; unknown -tb; ?Charlie Holmes -cl -ss -as; unknown -cl -ts; James P. Johnson -Fats Waller -p; Joe Watts -sb; Perry Bradford -speech

- Brown/Hilbert, ‘James P. Johnson A Case of Mistaken Identity’: Cootie Williams, Ward Pinkett, trumpet; unknown, trombone, possibly Charlie Holmes, soprano and alto sax; unknown clarinet and tenor sax; Johnson, Fats Waller, pianos; Joe Watts, string bass; Perry Bradford, speech.

- L. Wright, ‘Fats’ In Fact, p.46: Cootie Williams, t; unknown, tb; Garvin Bushell, cl, as; unknown, cl, ts; James P. Johnson, Fats Waller, p; Joe Watts, sb; Perry Bradford, sp (1)

- Storyville 45-90, A. Vollmer, *Chicago Get-Together*: ‘The rhythm section for ‘Chicago Blues’/‘Mournful Tho’ts’ needs amending, since the bass is of the brass variety and banjo and drums are also present. The scat vocals on each side sound more like Cootie Williams than Perry Bradford to me. There is a soprano solo on ‘Chicago Blues’ and an alto solo on ‘Mournful Tho’ts’, both of which sound like Charlie Holmes to me. I shall try and play these sides to both Cootie and Charlie in the near future and will let you know their reactions.’

- Storyville 139-23, John G. Heinz: ‘Whilst redecorating my record room recently, I came across some notes I’d made on some James P. Johnson record sleeves when I played the sides to him at my home in Albany, New York just before he had his stroke, and I’ll pass these on as a matter of interest. On Co 14334-D he remembered Cootie Williams and Garvin Bushnell (I can’t now remember if that was how he gave it, or if it was an error on my part). For Co 2448-D, of course Razaf on vocal, but he was pretty sure Teddy Hill was on sax and also thought possibly Charlie Holmes.’

- Jazz Journal Feb. 1977, p. 19, Chris H. Hillman: ‘From Chilton it seems that Jabbo (Smith – KBR) should have been on this session, but that Williams stood in. Cootie came from Mobile and is said to have been influenced by the legendary New Orleans trumpeter Chris Kelly who is also supposed to have been an expert growler.’

- Ibid, Eric Townley: ‘The review of the James P. Johnson/Perry Bradford on Arcadia 2009 (Dec. 1976 issue) concentrates on the trumpet players and yet, on ‘Chicago Blues’ and ‘Mournful Tho’ts’ credits all the trumpet solos to Cootie Williams. This is really quite absurd as if one listens it is evident that the only solo played by Cootie is the open one on the second title and all other solos are played by a different person, the ‘unknown’ trumpeter. Some time ago I pencilled in my copy of Rust’s JR the name of Ward Pinkett for this session. ... Having now heard the record I am virtually certain that Ward Pinkett is the man who takes all the solos except the one mentioned. Listen to the Mortons and other recordings with Pinkett from around the same period.’

- S. E. Brown, James P. Johnson, *A Case of Mistaken Identity*, p. 369: Cootie Williams, Ward Pinkett, trumpets; unknown trombone; possibly Charlie Holmes, clarinet, soprano and alto sax; unknown clarinet and tenor sax; Johnson, Fats Waller, pianos; Joe Watts, string bass; Perry Bradford, speech

**013 JIMMY JOHNSON AND HIS BAND**

Louis Metcalf – tpt; (Joe Nanton) - tbn;  
Albert Happy Caldwell – ten, clt; unknown – clt (if at all);  
James P. Johnson – pno; (Perry Bradford) – cymbal  
Perry Bradford, Gus Horsley - voc  
148015-1 Put Your Mind Right On It  
148016-3 Sorry

New York, Mar. 05, 1929

Col 14417-D, Chronological Classics 671  
Col unissued not on LP/CD

The trumpet player does not show any definite and unequivocal Metcalf characteristics, but compared to Johnson’s ‘Fare The Honey Blues’ of 20 March 1929 (see below) there are miles between this trumpet player here and what we hear of – definitely – Louis Metcalf there! So, the reader/listener might allow me some severe doubts on Metcalf’s presence here. His playing on the latter record is very hot, urgent, full of power and strong rhythm, whereas here he – if it really is Metcalf – is tame and only plays what the head arrangement requests. This trumpet player might be any other player of sufficient technique and practice and experience.

The trombone might be Joe Nanton (the dirty tones!), Metcalf’s band-mate and buddy from his time with the Ellington band. But unfortunately, too little can be heard from the trombone to really judge.

Throughout this side the clarinet mainly plays head-arranged parts. Therefore, a personal individual style almost cannot be discerned. There only are very few instances where the clarinet can be heard away from the trumpet and on its own. But here, everything that can be distinguished, is outside of Elliott’s approach to clarinet playing. Attack, tone, vibrato and time are far better than what we know of Elliott, and in my opinion his presence has to be denied. As so often the assumption of Elliott as clarinetist seems to have come from the early days of discographic research as a mere esteem of someone who has not really listened and compared. What we really hear is the tenor saxophone starting together with tpt and tbn for a four-bar intro, then playing an eight-bar verse with the brass. This ad-lib tenor part at the beginning has typical Caldwell tone, rhythm and phrases. From then on it is always a clarinet – no tenor sax – with a distinct and clear Dooddsish flavour, and I strongly believe that we have Happy Caldwell here. In the coda it is Caldwell on tenor again. In the third and fourth chorus there might be a second clarinet answering the brass riffs along with the first clarinet (Caldwell) in harmony, but I must admit that this harmony part might also be played by the trumpet in a very soft manner. (Why should a recording company hire a second clarinet for only two chorus in a recorded item, I ask.) I have therefore listed a possible second clarinet above in italics.

The cymbal crash might have been the work of Perry Bradford as there are more similar isolated cymbal crashes with this very sound on Bradford’s recordings.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography* 1948: no personnel listed

- Carey, McCarthy, *Jazz Directory* Vol. 5: unknown 2 tpts; tbn; clt; ten; James P. Johnson (p); unknown d; male-female duet

- Rust\*2: Louis Metcalf (tpt); unknown tbn; clt; ten; James P. Johnson (pno); unknown dms; Perry Bradford (vcl), unknown vcl.

- D. Mahoney, *Columbia 13/14000-D Series*: unknown personnel

- Rust\*3,\*4: Louis Metcalf - c; unknown tb; Ernest Elliott - cl; unknown cl- ts; James P. Johnson -p; Perry Bradford and another v; someone hits a cymbal hard at the end of 148015-1 but there is no evidence elsewhere on this side of a drummer.  
 - Rust\*6: Louis Metcalf - c; unknown tb; Ernest Elliott - cl; unknown cl- ts; James P. Johnson -p; Perry Bradford and another v; there is a cymbal crash at the end of 148015-1 but there is no evidence of a drummer elsewhere on this side.  
 - Brown/Hilbert, James P. Johnson p 375: Louis Metcalf, cornet; unknown, trombone; Ernest Elliott, clarinet; unknown, clarinet and tenor sax; Johnson, piano; Perry Bradford, Gus Horsley, vocals. "Someone hits a cymbal at the end of 148015-1 but there is no evidence elsewhere of a drummer. It has been suggested that Bradford hit the cymbal."

014 JIMMY JOHNSON AND HIS BAND

New York, Mar. 20, 1929

Louis Metcalf – tpt; Julius Geechie Fields – tbn; unknown – clt;  
 James P. Johnson – pno;  
 Perry Bradford – voc  
 148108-3 Fare Thee Honey Blues

Col 14417-D, Chronological Classics 671

Now, this here really is Metcalf in full power – as compared with his assumed presence on the 05 March, 1929 session above. Very typical Louis Metcalf and probably Fields as known from Morton. And absolutely great James P.!  
 Again, I would deny Ernest Elliott's presence on clarinet here. Although I cannot say that this player is the same one as on the foregoing Johnson session (prob *Happy Caldwell*), his style is not what we know of Elliott now. The little flaws he plays – and also his phrases – seem to indicate, that he is a saxophone player in the first instance.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography 1948*: no personnel listed  
 - Carey, McCarthy, *Jazz Directory Vol. 5*: unknown tpt; tbn; clt; ten; James P. Johnson (p); unknown d; unknown male voc.  
 - Rust\*2: Louis Metcalf (tpt); unknown tbn; Ernest Elliott (clt); James P. Johnson (pno); Perry Bradford (vcl).  
 - D. Mahoney, *Columbia 13/14000-D Series*: unknown personnel  
 - Rust\*3,\*4,\*6: Louis Metcalf - c; prob Geechie Fields -tb; Ernest Elliott - cl; James P. Johnson -p; Perry Bradford -v  
 - Brown/Hilbert, James P. Johnson p 375: Louis Metcalf, cornet; probably Geechie Fields, trombone; Ernest Elliott, clarinet; Johnson, piano; Perry Bradford, vocal

015 JIMMIE JOHNSON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

New York, Nov. 18, 1929

Dave Nelson, Joe King Oliver – tpt; Jimmy Archey – tbn;  
 unknown, unknown – alt, clt; Charles Frazier – ten;  
 James P. Johnson, Thomas Fats Waller – pno; Bernard Addison – gtr, bjo; Harry Hull – sbs; Kaiser Marshall – dms;  
 The Keep Shufflin' Trio – voc; James P. Johnson - arr  
 57701-2 You Don't Understand  
 57702-2 You've Got To Be Modernistic  
 Composer credits: 57701 (Johnson); 57702 (Johnson)

Vic V-38099, Chronological Classics 671  
 Vic V-38099, Chronological Classics 671

Quite obviously, James P. Johnson lured some musicians – the brass players and the tenor sax – away from King Oliver's Orchestra, their boss included! James P. gave his soloistic power to Oliver's band in return on Oliver's Nov. 06, 1929 Victor date.  
 If we accept Charles Frazier to be the tenor saxophonist on this session, it could also mean that the altoists of the Oliver band, Glyn Paque and Hilton Jefferson would be on the date, only, that there are no solos indicating their personal presence. So, just like at the March 25, 1931 session, below, I assume these men to be musicians from one of Johnson's theatre bands of the time, rather than downright hot players. Fats Waller and James P. Johnson, are the pianists. It seems to have been a special amusement for Johnson to duet with his pupil Fats Waller, just like at the June 18, 1928 session (above) and the March 27, 1928 Louisiana Sugar Babes session.  
 When we leave out Teddy Bunn as guitarist and banjo player – he denied ever to have played banjo! – and accept Addison at this place, we have part of the rhythm section that accompanied Bessie Smith in her film 'St. Louis Blues' in June 1929 (see my article 'A Case of Serious Attempt' elsewhere at this website!). It also included string-bassist Harry Hull – obviously a favourite of James P. and named by Jimmy Archey for this session (see below) – and Kaiser Marshall, Fletcher Henderson's drummer for a long time and now on the loose, after leaving the Henderson band as a consequence of the 'Great Day' disaster. (He can visually be identified in the film with positive certainty.) And indeed, by close listening, for a very long time already I had the idea that he must be the drummer. Hear his marvellous – and very modern for it's time – hi-hat work all through the session, and particularly behind Archey and in the last chorus of '... Modernistic'. Thus, we find the complete rhythm section of 'St. Louis Blues' at this session.  
 The arrangements are decidedly Johnson's (compare with next session, below).

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography 1948*: featuring King Oliver, Dave Nelson (tp); James Archey (tb); Fats Waller, James P. Johnson (p); Bernard Addison (g); Harry Hall (b)  
 - Carey, McCarthy, *Jazz Directory, Vol. 5*: Joe Oliver, Dave Nelson (cnt); James Archey (tbn); Charles Frazier, two others (sax); James P. Johnson (p); Teddy Bunn or Bernard Addison (bj); Harry Hull (bs); unknown (d); 'Keep Shufflin' Trio (vcl)  
 - B. Rust, *The Victor Master Book, Vol. 2*: 2t; tb; 3s; 2p; bj; bb; d; vocalists: Keep Shufflin' Trio  
 - Rust\*2: King Oliver, Dave Nelson (tpt); James Archey (tbn); 2 unknown (clt, alt); Charles Frazier (ten); James P. Johnson, Fats Waller (pno); Teddy Bunn or Bernard Addison (bjo); Harry Hull (bbs); unknown (dms); The Keep Shufflin' Trio (vcl trio)  
 - Rust\*3,\*4,\*6: King Oliver -Dave Nelson -t; James Archey -tb; 2 unknown -cl -as; Charles Frazier -ts; James P. Johnson -Fats Waller -p; Teddy Bunn -bj -g; Harry Hull -sb; unknown -d; The Keep Shufflin' Trio -v (one of which sounds like Fats Waller)  
 - Brown/Hilbert, 'James P. Johnson A Case of Mistaken Identity': King Oliver, Dave Nelson, trumpet; Jimmy Archey, trombone; two unknown clarinet and alto sax; Charles Frazier, tenor sax; Johnson, Fats Waller, pianos; Teddy Bunn or Bernard Addison, banjo, guitar; Harry Hull, string bass; unknown, drums; "Keep Shufflin' Trio", vocal.  
 - L. Wright, "Fats" in *Fact*, p.58: Joe 'King' Oliver, Davidson C. 'Dave' Nelson, t; James Archey, tb; two unknown, cl/as; Charles H. Frazier, cl/ts; James P. Johnson, Fats Waller, p; unknown, bj/g; Harry Hull, bb; unknown -d; The Keep Shufflin' Trio -v (one of which sounds like Fats Waller). "The instrumentation is confirmed by the Victor files which also state that Jimmy Johnson directed and that Mr. Watson was present. James P. Johnson himself gave the above personnel, with the exception of Frazier, to Walter Allen and also named Teddy Bunn on banjo/guitar. Walter Allen also interviewed James Archey who recalled a four-title session for Victor (he may have been thinking of four takes) under James P. Johnson's leadership and recalled 'You've Got To Be Modernistic' as one of the tunes cut. He named both Waller and Johnson on pianos, Oliver, Nelson, himself, Teddy Bunn and recalled the bassist as Harry "Hall". Although one of the voices in the vocal trio sounds like Bunn, and despite these recollections, Bunn himself stated in 'Jazz Journal' November 1971, p.8, that he had never played banjo. Charles Delaunay once suggested Bernard Addison as the player here, but when I (L. Wright - KBR) interviewed

him he was evasive and the name is thus best left as "unknown". Charles Frazier had been recording with Oliver for Victor and, although he had no specific memory of this session, is probably the man present here."

Tune Structures:

You Don't Understand Key of Eb / F

Victor

(Intro 8 bars ens - ??clt - ?DN o-tpt)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA ?DN o-tpt over ens 16 - JA o-tbn+ ens 8 - ?DN o-tpt over ens)(Verse 16 bars ens - modulation)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA TKS voc - modulation)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA ens)

You've Got To Be Modernistic Key of Ab / Db

Victor

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Verse 1 16 bars clts - ens)(Verse 2 16 bars JPJ+TFW pnos - ens)(Verse 3 16 bars JPJ+TFW pnos - ens)(Bridge 4 bars ens - modulation)(Chorus 1 16 bars AA' TKS voc)(Chorus 2 16 bars AA' TKS scat-voc)(Chorus 3 16 bars AA' CF ten)(Chorus 4 16 bars AA' JA o-tbn)(Chorus 5 16 bars AA' BA bjo)(Chorus 6 16 bars AA' JKO o-tpt)(Chorus 7 16 bars AA' DN o-tpt - ens)(Tag 4 bars TKS voc)

016 JIMMY JOHNSON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

New York,

Mar. 25, 1931

unknown, Ward Pinkett - tpt; (Fernando Arbello) - tbn;

unknown, unknown - alt, clt; Teddy Hill - ten, clt;

James P. Johnson - pno; unknown - gtr; unknown - sbs; unknown - dms;

James P. Johnson - arr; Andy Razaf - voc; Ward Pinkett - voc (3)

151457-2 Go Harlem

Col 2448-D,

Chronological Classics 671

151459-2 A Porter's Love Song (To A Chambermaid)

Col 14668-D,

Chronological Classics 671

151460-3 Just A Crazy Song (Hi-Hi-Hi)

Col 2448-D,

Chronological Classics 671

Composer credits are: 151457 (Razaf - Johnson); 151459 (Razaf - Johnson); 151460 (Smith - Williams)

In 1930, Johnson had completed the scores for three theatre floor shows, and he chose at least the first two of these to cut them on disc with a band he compiled from other bands. It has to be noted that James P. Johnson only very seldom in his long musical career led a dance band of the jazz variety, but often he led theatre bands for shows he had composed and scored, mostly including string sections. It may thus be possible that the musicians he assembled for these sides were from stage bands he led, perfect "sight-readers", but poor hot players and improvisers. There are hot jazz solos found in 'Go Harlem' with a half-chorus tenor sax solo by the generally assumed Teddy Hill, another half-chorus by Ward Pinkett, whose rhythmically erratic flaming trumpet style is easily detectable, the trombonists' beautiful 8 bars, and one of the reed-men's nicely melodic - but not blue - clarinet at the titles' end. And not to forget: the bandleader's great piano behind Andrea Razafkeriefo's - that was his real name - scat singing which, by the way, does not swing at all. In 'Just A Crazy Song' again has a flamboyant trumpet solo by Ward Pinkett and a nice middle-eight trombone solo by one of the young trombonists under Jimmy Harrison's spell - Ferdinand Arbello from Puerto Rico would be an "educated" guess. If Charlie Holmes actually would be one of the alto players as assumed by James P. Johnson himself (see below), he certainly would have been allotted with a solo, but there is none on these sides. From these shows Johnson extracted 'Go Harlem' (from 'Shuffle Along') and 'A Porter's Love Song to a Chambermaid' (from 'Kitchen Mechanics Revue') for this session. 'Just A Crazy Song' as a Cab Calloway "loan" may well be of similar origin, as structure and "words" would suite to this origin, but not James P. Johnson's authorship.

The author of 'James P. Johnson, A Case of Mistaken Identity', attributes these sides to the Bingie Madison band, what cannot be maintained, yet, in my eyes and ears. Instead, we probably hear a band of theatre musicians spiced up with a little bunch of qualified jazz blowers. And hear the drummer losing the beat in chorus 3 behind the tenor sax solo, where he plays his choke-cymbal on one and three!

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography: featuring: Ward Pinkett (tp & vo); Bingie Madison, Freddie Skeritt, Lucas (s).*

- Carey, McCarthy, *Jazz Directory, Vol. 5: including Teddy Hill (ten); Charlie Holmes (alt); James P. Johnson (pno); Andy Razaf (vcl)*

- Rust\*2: 2 unknown (tpt); unknown (tbn); Charlie Holmes ? (clt, alt); Teddy Hill ? (clt, ten); James P. Johnson (pno); unknown (gtr); unknown (sbs); unknown (dms); Andy Razaf (vcl)

- Rust\*3: Ward Pinkett and another -t; ?Ferdinand Arbello -tb; Fred Skeritt -as; Henry L. Jones -Bingie Madison -ts; James P. Johnson -p; Goldie Lucas -g; Richard Fulbright -sb; Bill Beason -d; Andy Razaf -v.

- Rust\*4,\*6: Ward Pinkett -t -v; unknown -tb; 2 unknown -cl -as; unknown -cl -ts; James P. Johnson -p; unknown -g; unknown -sb; unknown -d; Andy Razaf -v.

- Brown/Hilbert, 'James P. Johnson A Case of Mistaken Identity': Ward Pinkett, trumpet, vocal; unknown, trumpet; poss Ferdinand Arbello, trombone; Fred Skeritt, Henry L. Jones, alto sax; Bingie Madison, clarinet and tenor sax; Johnson, piano; Goldie Lucas, guitar; Richard Fulbright, string bass; Bill Beason, drums; Andy Razaf, vocal.

- F. Trolle, James P. Johnson - Father of the Stride Piano: Ward Pinkett, tpt, vcl; unknown, tpt; poss Ferdinand Arbello, tbn; Fred Skeritt, as; Henry L. Jones, ts; Bingie Madison, cl, ts; James P. Johnson, p; Goldie Lucas, gtr; Richard Fulbright, sbs; Bill Beason, dms; Andy Razaf, vcl.

- Storyville 66-225: D. Griffith, A. Vollmer, Freddie Skeritt tells his Story: "Finally, it must be stated that, contrary to other reports, it would appear that the Bingie Madison Band was not used for either the Mamie Smith date of 19 February, 1931 or the Jimmy Johnson one of 25 March, 1931, since none of the musicians I have interviewed were on either date. (In support of this, I played two of the Mamie Smith titles to Jimmy Archey and his comment was: "Well, it sure sounds like me, but I don't remember it." - L. Wright)"

- Storyville 139-23: John G. Heinz: "Whilst redecorating my record room recently, I came across some notes I'd made on some James P. Johnson record sleeves when I played the sides to him at my home in Albany, New York, just before he had his stroke, and I'll pass these on as a matter of interest. On Co 14334-D he remembered Cootie Williams and Garvin Bushnell (I can't now remember if that was how he gave it, or if it was an error on my part). For Co 2448-D, of course Andy Razaf on vocal, but he was pretty sure Teddy Hill was on sax and also thought possibly Charlie Holmes."

Tune Structures:

Go Harlem Key of C / Bb / Eb

Columbia

(Intro 8 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars ABAC clts + ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars ABAC AR voc over ens)(Bridge 7 bars ens modulation)(Chorus 3 32 bars ABAC ?TH ten 14 - ens 2 - WP o-tpt 16)(Chorus 4 32 bars ABAC AR scat-voc+ JPJ pno)(Bridge 4 bars ens modulation)(Chorus 5 32 bars ABAC ens 8 - ?FA o-tbn 8 - ?? clt over ens 16)(Tag 2 bars ?? clt)

A Porter's Love Song To A Chambermaid Key of F / G / F

Columbia

(Intro 8 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA AR voc over ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA ens)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA AR scat-voc over ens 16 - AR voc 8 - ens 8)

Just A Crazy Song Key of C

Columbia

(Intro 8 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA WP o-tpt 16 - ?FA o-tbn 8 - WP o-tpt 8)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA AR voc+voc choir)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA AR scat-voc + voc-choir)(Chorus 4 32 bars AABA ?WP scat-voc+ voc-choir 16 - ?TH ten 8 - ens 8)

## 017 JIMMY JOHNSON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

New York,

Mar. 09, 1939

Henry Allen – tpt; J.C. Higginbotham – tbn; Gene Sedric – ten;

James P. Johnson – pno; Albert Casey - gtr; Johnny Williams – sbs; Sidney Catlett – dms;

Anna Robinson – voc (1,2,3); Ruby Smith – voc (4,5,6)

24205-1	Harlem Woogie	Voc 4768,	Moon MCD 082-2
24205-2	Harlem Woogie	Voc uniss 78,	Moon MCD 082-2
24206-1	Hungry Blues	Voc uniss 78,	Moon MCD 082-2
24207-1	Back Water Blues	Voc 4903,	Moon MCD 082-2
24207-2	Back Water Blues	Voc uniss 78,	Moon MCD 082-2
24208-1	He's Mine, All Mine	Voc 4903,	Moon MCD 082-2
24209-1	After Tonight	Voc 4768,	Moon MCD 082-2

Composer credits: 24205 (J. Johnson – Douglass); 24206 (J. Johnson – L. Hughes); 24207 (J. Johnson – B. Smith); 24208 (R. Smith); 24209 (J. Johnson)

These great band sides by a James P. Johnson led Swing band present a kind of down-to-earth style of jazz music between Swing and earlier jazz forms – these latter ones represented by Mr. Johnson himself in his traditional two-fisted stride style. Gene Sedric and Al Casey were borrowed from Fats Waller's Rhythm, Henry Allen, J.C. Higginbotham, and Sid Catlett from Armstrong's band of the time. Being a premier admirer of drummer Big Sid Catlett, I love these sides just to hear Big Sid in all his glory showing his skills in all their variety.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography*: Henry Allen (tp); J.C. Higginbotham (tb); Gene Sedric (ts); James P. Johnson (p); Albert Casey (g); Johnny Williams (b); Sid Catlett (dm); Anna Robinson, Ruby Smith (vo)

- Carey, *McCarthy, Jazz Directory, Vol. 5*: Henry Allen (tpt); J.C. Higginbotham (tbn); Gene Sedric (ten); James P. Johnson (p); Albert Casey (g); Johnny Williams (bs); Sid Catlett (d); Anna Robinson, Ruby Smith (voc)

- Rust\*2,\*3,\*4,\*6: Henry Allen (tpt); J.C. Higginbotham (tbn); Gene Sedric (ten); James P. Johnson (pno); Albert Casey (gtr); Johnny Williams (sbs); Sid Catlett (dms); Anna Robinson, Ruby Smith (voc)

## 018 JIMMY JOHNSON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

New York,

Jun. 15, 1939

Henry Allen – tpt; J.C. Higginbotham – tbn; Gene Sedric – ten;

James P. Johnson – pno; Eugene Fields - gtr; Pops Foster – sbs; Sidney Catlett – dms;

Anna Robinson – voc (12)

24776-1	Memories Of You	Col uniss 78,	Moon MCD 082-2
24776-2	Memories Of You	Col unissued,	Moon MCD 082-2
24777-1	Old Fashioned Love	Col DZ-545,	Moon MCD 082-2
24777-2	Old Fashioned Love	Col DZ-545,	Moon MCD 082-2
24778	Swingin' At The Lido - No.1	Col unissued	not on LP/CD
24778-	Swingin' At The Lido - No.2	Col uniss 78,	Moon MCD 082-2
24778-	Swingin' At The Lido - No.3	Col uniss 78,	Moon MCD 082-2
24778-1	Swingin' At The Lido - No.4	Col uniss 78,	Moon MCD 082-2
24778-2	Swingin' At The Lido - No.5	Col uniss 78,	Moon MCD 082-2
24779	Havin' A Ball – No. 2	Col unissued	not on LP/CD
24779-1	Havin' A Ball – No. 4	Col uniss 78,	Moon MCD 082-2
24779-2	Havin' A Ball – No. 3	Col uniss 78,	Moon MCD 082-2
24779-3	Havin' A Ball – No. 1	Col uniss 78,	Moon MCD 082-2
24780-1	Hungry Blues	Col uniss 78,	Moon MCD 082-2

Composer credits: 24776 (E. Blake – A. Razaf); 24777 (J. Johnson – C. Mack); 24778 (J. Johnson – W. Smith); 24779 (J. Johnson – A. Razaf); 24780 (J. Johnson – L. Hughes). Note: matrix numbers do not recall actual recording sequence!

In continuation of the fore-going session, the same great band with two replaced rhythm men. But Catlett is still there reigning supreme over proceedings. As a matter of fact, we may find us happy to have all titles of these last two sessions with all their surviving alternate takes on one single Spanish CD of the Moon label! Thanks a lot, Mr Moon!!

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography*: not listed

- Carey, *McCarthy, Jazz Directory, Vol. 5*: Henry Allen (tpt); J.C. Higginbotham (tbn); Gene Sedric (ten); James P. Johnson (p); Eugene Fields (g); Pops Foster (bs); Sid Catlett (d); Anna Robinson, Ruby Smith (voc)

- Rust\*2,\*3,\*4,\*6: Henry Allen (tpt); J.C. Higginbotham (tbn); Gene Sedric (ten); James P. Johnson (pno); Eugene Fields (gtr); Pops Foster (sbs); Sid Catlett (dms); Anna Robinson, Ruby Smith (voc)

## 019 JAMES P. JOHNSON'S BLUE NOTE JAZZMEN

New York,

Mar. 04, 1944

Sidney De Paris – tpt; Vic Dickenson – tbn; Ben Webster - ten;

James P. Johnson – pno; Jimmy Shirley – gtr; John Simmons – sbs; Sid Catlett – dms  
 BN950-1 Blue Mizz  
 BN950-2 Blue Mizz  
 BN951-2 Victory Stride  
 BN951-3 Victory Stride  
 BN952-2 Joy Mentin´  
 BN953-2 After You´ve Gone

BN 32, Chronological Classics 824  
 BN uniss. 78, Mosaic MR6-109 (LP)  
 BN uniss. 78, Mosaic MR6-109 (LP)  
 BN 32, Chronological Classics 824  
 BN 33, Chronological Classics 824  
 BN 33, Chronological Classics 824

**020 JAMES P. JOHNSON'S NEW YORK ORCHESTRA**

New York, Jun. 12, 1944

Frankie Newton – tpt;  
 James P. Johnson – pno; Albert Casey – gtr; Pops Foster – sbs; Eddie Dougherty – dms  
 MA1242 Hesitation Blues  
 MA1243 The Boogie Dream  
 MA1246 Four O´Clock Groove  
 MA1247 The Dream (Slow Drag)  
 MA1248 Hot Harlem  
 MA1249 Women Blues (pno solo)  
 MA1250 Euphonic Sounds (pno solo)

Asch 551-2, Chronological Classics 835  
 Asch 551-3, Chronological Classics 835  
 Asch 551-2, Chronological Classics 835  
 Asch 551-2, Chronological Classics 835  
 Asch 551-3, Chronological Classics 835  
 Asch unissued, Chronological Classics 1059  
 Asch 551-1, Chronological Classics 835

**021 JAMES P. JOHNSON'S BLUE NOTE JAZZMEN**

New York, Dec. 1944

Sidney De Paris – tpt; Vic Dickenson – tbn; Edmond Hall – clt;  
 James P. Johnson – pno; Arthur Shirley – gtr; Al Lucas – sbs; Arthur Trappier – dms  
 BN993-0 Tishomingo Blues  
 BN993-2 Tishomingo Blues  
 BN994-0 Walking The Dog  
 BN994-1 Walking The Dog  
 BN995-0 Easy River  
 BN996-0 At The Ball  
 BN996-3 At The Ball

BN uniss. 78, Mosaic MR6-109 (LP)  
 BN 7012, Chronological Classics 1027  
 BN uniss. 78, Mosaic MR6-109 (LP)  
 BN 7012, Chronological Classics 1027  
 BN 9287, Chronological Classics 1027  
 BN uniss. 78, Mosaic MR6-109 (LP)  
 BN 7012, Chronological Classics 1027

K. – B. Rau  
 24-01-2023  
 01-02-2023  
 16-07-2023  
 11-03-2024