

THE RECORDINGS OF MARY DIXON

An Annotated Tentative Personnel - Discography

Storyville 148-156: L. Wright: "Mary Dixon is one of those ladies renowned for her robust delivery on her Columbia sides, but this coupling, her first, is rather more sedate, but still a first class record with excellent accompaniment from J.C. Johnson and a cornet believed to be Louis Metcalf."

Alan Balfour, booklet to Document DOCD-5504: "There is no controversy concerning the identity of Mary Dixon, even there exists no supporting biographical information to confirm it, other than she was remembered to be Texan." is one of those ladies renowned for her robust delivery on her Columbia sides, but this coupling, her first, is rather more sedate, but still a first class record with excellent accompaniment from J.C. Johnson and a cornet believed to be Louis Metcalf."

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: **Mary Dixon**
- Probable, generally agreed, but not documented identifications are listed in italics, thus: *Mary Dixon*
- 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: (*Mary Dixon*)

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.

The following statements and the resulting list of recordings only reflect the opinion of this writer/listener and are open to discussion. More so, discussion is eagerly invited. Corrections, amendments and controversial opinions are much appreciated.

MARY DIXON

001 MARY DIXON	New York,	Jul. 30, 1928
Mary Dixon – voc;		
<i>Louis Metcalf</i> – tpt; J.C. Johnson – pno		
E-27912 Dusky Stevedore	Voc 1199,	Document DOCD-5504
E-27913 I Can't Give You Anything But Love	Voc 1199,	Document DOCD-5504

This trumpet player may well be Metcalf as assumed for so long now. He displays a fat tone, good technique and phrasing, but there is nothing to unequivocally identify Metcalf from. Yet, searching for an alternative name for this player is useless: there is no! But I am a bit astounded of this trumpeter's soft and tension-less performance. This might have been the consequence of Metcalf's time with Ellington and other high-graded bands and their professional and legitimate delivery. Compared to the trumpeter on Mary Dixon's session of 24 August 1929 below – who very distinctly is Metcalf – there remain doubts as to this musician's identity with Metcalf. This player almost sounds like a white player. It would be interesting to get to know the source for this personnel!

J.C. Johnson hailed from Chicago and – although living in New York for a long time of his life – stylistically did not belong to the group of Harlem Stride pianists. His approach to the keyboard was less rhythmic and swinging, but more bringing his compositional talents to the fore.

Notes:

- Carey, McCarthy, *Jazz Directory, Vol. 2: vcl with unknown acc.*

- Rust*3,*4,*6: *Louis Metcalf -c; J.C. Johnson -p.*
 - BGR*2,*3,*4: *Louis Metcalf, cnt; J.C. Johnson, -pno.*

002 MARY DIXON	New York,	Mar. 20, 1929
Mary Dixon – voc;		
Ed Allen - cnt; J.C. Johnson – pno		
148109-2 You Can't Sleep In My Bed	Col 14415-D,	Document DOCD-5504
148110-2 Daddy You Got Ev'rything	Col 14415-D,	Document DOCD-5504

Oh yes, this certainly is Ed Allen's delicate delivery. Played with beautiful taste and softness as known from his many recordings with Clarence Williams. Tasteful J.C. Johnson on piano, very much underrated and undeservedly mostly unknown today.

Notes:

- *Carey, McCarthy, Jazz Directory, Vol. 2: Vcl acc. cor; p.*
 - *Mahoney, Columbia 13/14000-D Series: Poss Joe Smith, cnt; J.C. Johnson, p.*
 - *Rust*3,*4,*6: Ed Allen, c; J.C. Johnson, p.*
 - *BGR*2,*3,*4: Ed Allen, cnt; J.C. Johnson, p.*

003 MARY DIXON	New York,	Jun. 20, 1929
Mary Dixon – voc;		
Ernest Elliott – clt; J. C. Johnson – pno		
148725-3 Old Forsaken Blues	Col 14442-D,	Doc DOCD-5504
148726-3 All Around Mama	Col 14442-D,	Doc DOCD-5504

Ernest Elliott in person. After ten years of experience and development he still is his dated self. And it is not surprising that at the start of the Swing era these two sides seem to be his last appearance in a recording studio. He had fallen out of his time.

Notes:

- *Carey, McCarthy, Jazz Directory, Vol. 2: acc. clt; p.*
 - *Rust*3,*4,*6: ? Ernest Elliott - cl; J.C. Johnson -p*
 - *BGR*2,*3,*4: prob Ernest Elliott, clt ; J.C. Johnson, pno*

004 MARY DIXON	New York,	Aug. 24, 1929
Mary Dixon – voc;		
Louis Metcalf – tpt;		
J.C. Johnson – pno; (<i>Bernard Addison</i>) - gtr		
148923-1 Black Dog Blues	Col 14459-D,	Document DOCD-5504
148924-2 Fire And Thunder Blues	Col 14459-D,	Document DOCD-5504

This certainly is Metcalf with his own double-time phrasing as heard so often in Ellington's recordings, and his beautiful and big tone. The trio is completed by J.C. Johnson's rhapsodic style, rhythmically more on the Chicago side. The full-bodied guitar is restricted to plain rhythm playing, with the only exception to play a single-string break in the introduction of *Black Dog Blues*. With regard of the Wabash Trio recordings of J.C. Johnson of this same month and year I opt for the possible – or probable – presence of Bernard Addison.

Notes:

- *Carey, McCarthy, Jazz Directory, Vol. 2: Acc. cor; p; g.*
 - *Mahony, Columbia 13/14000 Series: probably Louis Metcalf, cnt; J.C. Johnson, p; unknown, g*
 - *Rust*3,*4,*6: Louis Metcalf -c; J.C. Johnson -p; unknown g.*
 - *BGR*2,*3,*4: Louis Metcalf, cnt; J.C. Johnson, -pno; unknown gtr.*

005 MARY DIXON	New York,	Oct. 31, 1929
Mary Dixon – voc;		
Ed Allen - cnt; unknown – clt;		
J.C. Johnson – pno		
149455-3 Daddy, You're A Low Down Man	Col 14532-D,	Document DOCD-5504
149456-3 Unhappy Blues	Col 14532-D,	Document DOCD-5504

Very beautiful Ed Allen of Clarence Williams fame undeniably here with his cornet. There is great and very melodic double-handed piano playing, stylistically certainly by J.C. Johnson.

I very much doubt Socarras' presence. Socarras technically was a much better player, but he played less bluesy than this player here, and his rhythmic approach was less swinging, but stiffer in the kind of the Caribbean players. I would therefore list this player as unknown. I do not know any player possibly being responsible for these clarinet sounds.

Notes:

- *Carey, McCarthy, Jazz Directory, Vol. 2: Acc. unknown.*
 - *Mahony, Columbia 13/14000 Series: acc. cnt; clt; p; reputedly Ed Allen, Alberto Socarras, J.C. Johnson resp.*
 - *Rust*3,*4,*6: Ed Allen, c; ?Albert Socarras, cl; J.C. Johnson, p.*
 - *BGR*2,*3,*4: Ed Allen, cnt; poss Albert Socarras, clt; J.C. Johnson, pno.*