

# THE RECORDINGS OF BILL BENFORD

## An Annotated Tentative Personnel - Discography

BENFORD; Bill, tuba player

Born: Charleston, West Virginia, c. 1901; Died: ??

Entered (Jenkins) Orphanage as a child, was taught tuba by Alexander Stafford. Left c. 1920 to tour with travelling shows, then settled in New York. Led own band, and worked with many leaders, also recorded with Jelly Roll Morton.

(J. Chilton, A Jazz Nursery)

### STYLISTICS

#### STYLE

Bill Benford was a modest and sober – and traditional – tuba player, confined to his narrow business as a tuba player in classic jazz. He seems to have presented himself as a strictly functional part of a band with no ambitions as a soloist – if there were any possible at this time. His playing is exact, with little ad-lib outings on harmonic successions, but always supporting and stimulating the musical proceedings.

#### TONE

Benford owns a light, slim and airy tone on the tuba, not very voluminous and rather soft.

#### VIBRATO

With the tuba's business to play mostly beats one and three of each bar, and this in a sober manner, a vibrato is difficult to recognise, if at all.

#### TIME

He plays a very exact time, swinging and on the beat.

#### PHRASING

Depending on the functional duty of the tuba, there only are few phrases played by the tuba. These phrases are exhibiting harmonical features of a melody and are very seldom played in a distinct and varied melodic way.

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

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.

BILL BENFORD

001 **ETHEL WATERS** and her Ebony Four New York, Jul. 28, 1925  
 Ethel Waters – voc;  
**Horace Holmes** – tpt;  
**Pearl Wright** – pno; **Bill Benford** - bbs  
 140790-1 Go Back Where You Stayed Last Night Col 14093-D, Chronological Classics 775  
 140791-1 Sympathetic Dan Col 433-D, Chronological Classics 775  
 140792-2 Down Home Blues Col 14093-D, Chronological Classics 775

Personnel is documented by the Columbia Company, and needs not to be questioned.

Miss Waters sings in her own positive and optimistic style – very tasteful and smart. She is accompanied by one of the lesser-known trumpet players of Harlem, Horace Holmes, who plays very decent and retained, with good technique and nicely muted all through. Pianiste Pearl Wright plays in a strong, decided, strict and swinging manner. She was Ethel Waters' frequent accompanist for a about six years. (Where are her solo recordings?)

Bill Benford on his tuba seems a bit out of place on these soft sides, but he retains himself perfectly and heroically plays a somewhat un-needed bass-part for the musical proceedings.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography, 1948: not listed*
- Mahony, *Columbia 13/14000-D Series: Horace Holmes, cnt; Pearl Wright, p; William Benford, tu*
- BGR\*2,\*3,\*4: *Horace Holmes, cnt; Pearl Wright, pno; Bill Benford, bbs*
- Rust\*2: *not listed*
- Rust\*3,\*4,\*6: *Horace Holmes -c; Pearl Wright -p; Bill Benford -bb*

002 **ETHEL WATERS** her Plantation Orchestra New York, Oct. 20, 1925  
 Ethel Waters – voc;  
 Harry Tate, Horace Holmes – tpt; Joe King – tbn;  
 unknown, unknown – alt, clt; unknown – ten, clt; Ralph Shrimp Jones – vln;  
 Lester Armstead – pno; Maceo Jefferson – bjo; Bill Benford – bbs; Jesse Baltimore - dms  
 141163-2 Sweet Man Col 487-D, Chronological Classics 672  
 141164-2 Dinah Col 487-D, Chronological Classics 672

Ethel Waters presents two hits of 1925, 'Sweet Man' as a hot jazz performance with muted-trumpet ad-lib soloist Horace Holmes in 'Sweet Man', the open straight parts being played by Harry Tate. 'Dinah' is performed in a straight manner by singer and band. Both titles do not seem to belong to Miss Waters' favourite selection of tunes as they lack her so distinctly amiable and slightly ironical style. She uses incidental off-beat phrasing, here.

Ethel Waters sings with the 'Plantation Orchestra', the band famous in Harlem for accompaniment of the 'Plantation Revue' show, starring the beloved and immensely popular singer and dancer Florence Mills. The Plantation Orchestra's original star trumpeter Johnny Dunn is substituted by Harry Tate, here. It is Miss Waters' "her" Plantation Orchestra, and there might have been no room for another star?

The band swings nicely and easily, the rhythm section strongly based on Benford's steady and secure bass-part. The unknown reed-players might well be identical with those on the Plantation Orchestra sides of December 1926 (see below).

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography, 1948: not listed*
- BGR\*2,\*3,\*4: *Harry Tate, Horace Holmes, cnt; Joe King – tbn; three unknown reeds; Lester Armstead – pno; Maceo Jefferson – bjo; Bill Benford – bbs; Jesse Baltimore – dms; Ralph Shrimp Jones – vln*
- Rust\*2: *not listed*
- Rust\*3,\*4,\*6: *Harry Tate -Horace Holmes -c; Joe King -tb; 2 unknown -cl -ss -as; unknown -cl -ts; Lester Armstead -p; Maceo Jefferson -bj; Bill Benford -bb; Jesse Baltimore -d; Ralph "Shrimp" Jones -vl*

003 **THE GULF COAST SEVEN** New York, Nov. 05, 1925  
 June Clark – cnt; Jimmy Harrison – tbn;  
 Leonard Fields – alt; Harrison Jackson – clt, ten;  
 Charlie "Smitty" Smith – pno; Buddy Christian – bjo; Joe "Jazz" Carson – dms  
 141245-4 Santa Claus Blues Col 14107-D, Frog DGF 32  
 141246-3 Keep Your Temper Col 14107-D, Frog DGF 32

Bill Benford is not on this session, although he was an integral part of June Clark's Creole Stompers at this time. (He also is not on the well-known photo of the June Clark Band usurped by Perry Bradford. See Keepnews, Grauer, *A Pictorial History of Jazz*, p. 129.)

This group is the band otherwise known as the 'Blue Rhythm Orchestra' on Pathé Actuelle/Perfect, but in fact 'June Clark's Creole Stompers' residing at 'Smalls' Sugar Cane Club' on 2212 Fifth Avenue, forerunner of "Smalls' Paradise", for longer periods of 1924/1925. As I have constantly observed during my/our large research project on the recordings of Clarence Williams (N&N 58 – 61) it was common among composers/publishers to hire musicians from working bands for their own units playing and recording their recent compositions/publications. But very seldom did they hire more than two musicians of one distinct band. Often partnerships of trumpet / trombone players were engaged as cited above. Maybe it was not wanted to transpose the distinct sound of a working band on to the recording unit with another leader's name?! Not so Bradford. He engaged complete bands, even containing the band's leader as a playing member. So, Bradford hired one of the hottest bands in Harlem of the year 1925, residing at "Smalls' Sugar Cane Club" on 2212 Fifth Avenue, forerunner of "Smalls' Paradise". He had a photograph made of this band with himself leaning on the piano ('Pictorial History of Jazz' p. 129 and 'Born with the Blues' p. 147) which obviously was intended as a promotional photo for further use as a Bradford recording unit. So, it seems that Bradford had future plans with them. But only a handful of records resulted out of this combination, as I have shown in my comprehensive article on June Clark, which will be issued in the FROG Yearbook Vol. 4 later this year. Yet, a most interesting point should appropriately be added here: The band – June Clark's ! – recorded two titles of their very own repertoire in their own arrangement here. In all other instances of the Gulf Coast Seven output the tunes and titles are Perry Bradford's!

Although all other sources like Rust etc. list June Clark, cnt; Jimmy Harrison, tbn; Buster Bailey, clt, sop, alt; Prince Robinson, ten; Willie 'The Lion' Smith, pno; Buddy Christian, bjo; Bill Benford, bbs; 'Jazz' Carson, dms in this or other variants, the reader may be assured that my above listed personnel is the right one! The appropriate deduction will be found in the above-mentioned FROG Yearbook Vol. 4, to be issued later this year 2014.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography, 1948: personnel unknown*
- Carey, McCarthy, *Jazz Directory, Vol. 4*: "This group is generally considered to be connected with Perry Bradford and/or Johnny Dunn. Others have associated it with the Original Memphis Five. Definite information being lacking we merely give the basic details. It is possible that not all these records are by the same group of artists."
- W.C. Allen, *Hendersonia*: "On November 5, 1925, Buster Bailey recorded two titles for Columbia with the Gulf Coast Seven, a Clarence Williams recording group; and about this same time, he recorded three titles in two sessions for Pathe/Perfect with a similar band labelled as Blue Rhythm Orchestra."
- Rust\*2: June Clark (?) (cnt); Jimmy Harrison (tbn); Buster Bailey (clt, alt); Prince Robinson (ten); Willie "The Lion" Smith (pno); unknown (dms)
- Rust\*3,\*4,\*6: June Clark -c; Jimmy Harrison -tb; Buster Bailey -cl-ss -as; Prince Robinson -ts; Willie "The Lion" Smith -p; Buddy Christian -bj; ?Bill Benford -bb; "Jazz" Carson -d

004 THOMAS MORRIS AND HIS SEVEN HOT BABIES

New York,

Jul. 13, 1926

Thomas Morris, Ward Pinkett – tpt; Geechie Fields – tbn;

unknown – alt, clt, bar; Happy Caldwell – ten;

Marlow Morris or Mike Jackson – pno; Lee Blair – bjo; Bill Benford – bbs

35762-3 Lazy Drag

Vic 20483,

Frog DFG 1

35763-1 Jackass Blues

Vic 20179,

Frog DFG 1

35763-3 Jackass Blues

Vic 20179,

Frog DFG 1

35764-2 Charleston Stampede

Vic 20180,

Frog DFG 1

After Happy Caldwell's statements in Storyville 99 (see below) we might be certain of Thomas Morris, Ward Pinkett, Geechie Fields, Albert 'Happy' Caldwell, Lee Blair and perhaps Bill Benford on these sides.

Thomas Morris is the name-giving leader of the band. He plays first trumpet – i.e. the melody and the first part in the brass section – and he can be discovered playing solos in his own somewhat un-proficient way. For his solos see the structure of the recorded tunes below (Thomas Morris = TM). I assume that Morris' self-confidence as a musician was not very distinct, so that he engaged soloists of better quality than his own.

The much more elegant and securer soloist on trumpet is Ward Pinkett. His presence is documented in Laurie Wright's interview of Happy Caldwell, published in Storyville 99, but very sadly not continued as planned because of Caldwell's death not long after. For a time, Rex Stewart had been assumed to be on trumpet, but his style is much straighter and more in Armstrong's style than Pinkett's.

'Geechie' Fields is mainly known from J.R. Morton's Red Hot Peppers sides of June 1928 where he excels in off-beat growl solos. But what a wonderful legato trombonist he is here in the second chorus of his solo in 'Jackass Blues'. An unreckoned but very cultivated and elegant player who also knew how to play "freak". It really is a pity that he often has been misidentified in the past as the executioner for every "primitive" growl playing whose identity was not known.

Then there is an alto/baritone player doubling clarinet of whom I feel unable to propose a name. He is not Ernest Elliott as listed in any discography in the past. In my large investigation as to Ernest Elliott's assumed presence in so many recording sessions I have isolated his very special stylistic features, and these cannot be recognized here. So definitely, he is not present here! Even more so, Happy Caldwell in his interview does not talk of Elliott as participant at all. The two clarinet solos in 'Jackass Blues' display a very queer shaky vibrato – not Elliott's - strong uncertainties of tone and phrase and seem to be played by a man, whose main instrument is saxophone. But then: why did they make him play solo on clarinet? In Verse II of 'Lazy Drag' he plays his first saxophone part so retained – or reluctant – that the tenor sax of Caldwell is much to the fore, the alto only hardly audible and thus the melody (first part) nearly inaudible.

Only in 'Charleston Stampede' Albert 'Happy' Caldwell can be heard on tenor with his somewhat erratic style, beginning phrases and ending them in an absolutely not anticipated way.

The pianist is named as Marlowe Morris, not the noted swing pianist, Thomas Morris' nephew, of 'Swinging The Blues' fame, but – as Caldwell claims – Thomas Morris' uncle, obviously the swing pianist's father. (Rust\*6 lists both persons under one single notation in his index.) And it is interesting to note how this player keeps very much in the background and is mostly nearly inaudible, only coming to the fore in take -3 of 'Jackass Blues'. He does not seem to have been an experienced player and no other recordings of him are noted. But the treble figures under the trombone solo certainly point to Mike Jackson's style.

Lee Blair with his dry banjo sound seems to be as given. He can also be heard on the J.R. Morton RHP of June 1928, together with Bill Benford, whose presence here, shortly before his sojourn with the 'Blackbirds of 1926' band touring Great Britain, and after his time with the June Clark band at 'Smalls' Sugar Cane Club', seems to be confirmed. He played a straight upright tuba, not a sousaphone.

Pinkett, Fields, and Blair, together with drummer Tommy Benford, later were in Bill Benford's Rose Danceland band from where Morton picked them for recording purposes.

Notes:

- Rust, *Victor Master Book Vol. 2*: 2c / tb / 2s / p / bj / bb

- Rust\*2: Tom Morris, Ward Pinkett (cnt); Geechie Fields (tbn); Ernest Elliott (clt, alt); Happy Caldwell (ten); Mike Jackson (pno); unknown (bjo); Bill Benford ? (bbs)

- Rust\*3,\*4: Tom Morris, Rex Stewart -c; Geechie Fields -tb; Ernest Elliott -cl, ts, bar; unknown -as; Mike Jackson -p; ? Lee Blair -bj; ? Bill Benford -bb

- Rust\*6: Tom Morris, Ward Pinkett -t; Geechie Fields -tb; Ernest Elliott -cl-as-bar; Happy Caldwell -cl-ts; Marlowe Morris -p; ? Lee Blair -bj; Bill Benford -bb

- Storyville 99-88, Happy Caldwell: "The first electrical recordings I made were with Tommy Morris – I remember we had a microphone instead of those big horns. Ward Pinkett and Tommy were on trumpets, Geechie Fields on trombone and Marlowe Morris – he was Tommy's cousin, er no, his uncle, he was on piano. I remember we did Ham And Gravy (sic) and Jackass Blues. No, I never recorded with Rex Stewart at that time."

Tunes:

35762-3 Lazy Drag Key of F

Victor

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus 1 12 bars tpt TM)(Verse I 16 bars ens)( Verse II 16 bars sax breaks)(Verse II 16 bars bjo breaks)(Chorus 12 bars 2 tpt WP)( Chorus 3 12 bars bar)( Chorus 4 12 bars ens)(Coda 2 bars ens-ten HC)

35763-1 Jackass Blues Key of Bb

Victor

(Intro 4 bars tbn GF - tpt WP)( Chorus 1 12 bars tpt TM)( Chorus 2 12 bars ens theme)(Chorus 3 12 bars tbn (\*) GF)(Chorus 4 12 bars tbn GF)(Vamp 4 bars ens)(Chorus 5 12 bars clt)(Chorus 6 12 bars ens)  
 35763-3 Jackass Blues Key of Bb Victor  
 same as -1

35764-2 Charleston Stampede Key of Bb

(Chorus 1 12 bars ens)(Chorus 2 12 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars ens)(Chorus 3 12 bars tpt WP)(Chorus 4 12 bars ten HC)(Chorus 5 12 bars bbs BB)(Chorus 6 12 bars ens)(Chorus 7 12 bars ens)(Chorus 12 bars tpt TM)(Chorus 8 12 bars tbn GF)(Chorus 9 12 bars ens)(Coda 4 bars ens)

Notable differences of takes (\*):

35763-1 first trombone solo chorus – pno nearly silent

35763-3 first trombone solo chorus – pno playing prominent chimes-like treble notes behind tbn

005 **THOMAS MORRIS AND HIS SEVEN HOT BABIES**

New York,

Aug. 17, 1926

Thomas Morris, Jabbo Smith – tpt; Geechie Fields – tbn;

Ernest Elliott – alt, clt; Happy Caldwell – ten;

Mike Jackson – pno; unknown (*Buddy Christian*) – bjo; Bill Benford – bbs;

Mike Jackson – voc

36047-3 Georgia Grind

Vic 20180,

Frog DFG 1

36048-2 Ham Gravy

Vic 20179,

Frog DFG 1

36048-3 Ham Gravy

Vic 20179,

Frog DFG 1

With slightly altered personnel this session carries on as before. Morris, Fields, Caldwell and Benford are undisputed. The voice answering Mike Jackson in ‘Georgia Grind’ might then be Thomas Morris himself.

Being certain on Morris’ presence – how else – the big problem is: who plays second trumpet? Rust in all his early editions named Jabbo Smith, changing this name to Charlie Thomas in his 6<sup>th</sup> edition. This he obviously did following John R.T. Davies’ statement that it must be the mysterious person ‘Big’ Charlie Thomas, known as cornetist on some recordings of the Clarence Williams circle – a man who appeared out of the blue in New York in late 1925, recorded a couple of sides, and disappeared again without any further trace. His was a very beautiful cornet style with much Armstrong influence in it. John R.T. had isolated these recordings and discovered the identity of the cornetist, producing a very beautiful CD on the Dutch Timeless label in 1996. But he unfortunately also included three sides of Sara Martin with definitely June Clark on trumpet, and these sides by Thomas Morris of which we now know with the utmost probability that it is the very young Jabbo Smith on second trumpet, and not ‘Big’ Charlie Thomas. Marc van Nus of Almelo, The Netherlands, a friend of mine from the old days and a great trumpet player in the classic style himself, just recently told me of the days he had hosted Jabbo Smith in his home for several days in 1971. In the – among jazz musicians usual – “listening-sessions” Jabbo had denied his presence on the Buddy Christian Jazz Rippers, now believed to be the above noted “Big” Charlie Thomas. But when hearing the Morris’ Seven Hot Babies sides he had spontaneously remarked that it was he himself on trumpet. When comparing both players’ styles it becomes apparent that there are distinct differences of tone and style, Thomas with a crystal-clear cornet (?) tone and repeating phrases with large interval jumps, and Smith with a somewhat coated tone and rather flowing and partly chromatic linear phrases which find their correspondences in Jabbo Smith’s solos in the Charlie Johnson sessions of 1927 and 1928. On this basis I feel certain now of Jabbo Smith’s presence on second trumpet here, although I have to admit to being influenced for long by the very much-admired John R.T.’s claim that Charlie Thomas was the trumpet player here. I have changed my mind now.

On trombone we obviously hear the acclaimed Geechie Fields as before, vacillating between beauty and primitivity.

Comparing the clarinet solo in ‘Georgia Grind’ to Elliott’s solo in King Oliver’s ‘Tin Roof Blues’ (11 June 1928 Vocalion) I think that the alto-clarinet man on this session really is Ernest Elliott.

‘Ham Gravy’ - both takes – has Happy Caldwell playing the tenor sax solo in his own inimitable way. What a beautiful and individual – and unsung - tenor player Caldwell was!

The pianist is mostly inaudible, but plays a short solo in chorus A2 of the second title which distinctly is in Mike Jackson’s light style. In the A2 chorus piano solo of ‘Ham Gravy’ the right hand playing very much resembles the chimes-like phrases behind the trombone in take -3 of ‘Jackass Blues’ at the above session. Thus, we very probably hear the same pianist at both sessions. This certainly means that Happy Caldwell’s naming Marlow Morris on piano at least is very doubtful.

The banjo player has a stronger sound on his instrument and plays in a different style from Lee Blair’s, thus must be listed as unknown, although I have a feeling that it might be Buddy Christian judging from sound and execution.

And again we hear the busy and agile Bill Benford on tuba, completing the gang of Jenkins Orphanage boys assembled here (Smith, Fields and Benford).

The singer is documented as Mike Jackson in the Victor vaults. As he is known to have been a friend to Morris, he might just by chance have been in the studio and asked to do the vocal. Or may he possibly also be the pianist on both sessions?

Notes:

- Rust, *Victor Master Book Vol. 2: 2c / tb / 2s / p / bj / bb; vocalist Mike Jackson*

- Rust\*2: Tom Morris, Jabbo Smith (cnt); Geechie Fields (tbn); Ernest Elliott (clt, alt); Coleman Hawkins (ten); Mike Jackson (pno); unknown (bjo); Bill Benford ? (bbs)

- Rust\*3,\*4: Tom Morris, Jabbo Smith -c; Geechie Fields -tb; Ernest Elliott -as; Happy Caldwell -ts; Mike Jackson -p; unknown -bj; ? Bill Benford -bb

- Rust\*6: Tom Morris, Charlie Thomas -t; Geechie Fields -tb; Ernest Elliott -cl-as-bar; Happy Caldwell -cl-ts; Marlowe Morris -p; ? Lee Blair -bj; Bill Benford -bb; Mike Jackson -v (1)

- Storyville 99, Happy Caldwell: “ The first electrical recordings I made were with Tommy Morris – I remember we had a microphone instead of those big horns. Ward Pinkett and Tommy were on trumpets, Geechie Fields on trombone and Marlowe Morris – he was Tommy’s cousin, er no, his uncle, he was on piano. I remember we did Ham And Gravy (sic) and Jackass Blues ”.

Tunes:

36047-3 Georgia Grind Key of Eb

Victor

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus 1 12 bars ens)(Chorus 2 12 bars tbn GF)(Chorus 3 12 bars bjo)(Chorus 4 12 bars voc MJ)(Chorus 5 12 bars clt EE)(Chorus 6 12 bars tpt JS)(Chorus 7 12 bars tpt TM)(Chorus 8 12 bars voc – ens)

36048-2 Ham Gravy Key of Bb / Eb

Victor

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars ens)(Chorus A1 16 bars ens, middle-break tbn GF)(Chorus A2 16 bars pno MJ, middle-break clt EE)(Chorus A3 16 bars (\*) ens middle-break tpt JS)(Chorus B1 12 bars ten HC)(Chorus B2 12 bars tpt JS)(Chorus B3 12 bars tpt TM – ens)(Chorus B4 12 bars ens riff )(Chorus A 4 16 bars clt EE, middle-break brass)(Chorus A5 16 bars ens, middle-break bbs BB)

36048-3 Ham Gravy Key of Bb / Eb

Victor

same as -2

Notable differences of takes (\*):

36048-2 Chorus A3 first two bars 2nd tpt JS alone, 1st tpt TM enters at end of bar 2  
 36048-3 Chorus A3 full ens from beginning

**006 PLANTATION ORCHESTRA**

London, Dec. 01, 1926

Ralph "Shrimp" Jones – dir;  
 Pike Davis, Johnny Dunn – tpt; Calvin Jones – tbn;  
 Rudolph Dunbar, Nelson Kincaid – alt, sop; Alonzo Williams – ten, sop;  
 Ralph "Shrimp" Jones, George Smith – vln;  
 George Rickson – pno; Maceo Jefferson – bjo; Bill Benford – bbs; Jesse Baltimore – dms  
 A-4519-2 Silver Rose  
 A-4520-1 Arabella's Wedding Day  
 A-4521-1 Smiling Joe  
 A-4522-1 For Baby And Me

Col E 4185, Frog DGF 33  
 Col E 4238, Frog DGF 33  
 Col E 4185, Frog DGF 33  
 Col E 4238, Frog DGF 33

The 'Plantation Orchestra' are the original pit-band of Lew Leslie's show 'Plantation Revue' of 1926 which appeared in London in September 1926 with the title 'The Blackbirds Revue' starring the famous Florence Mills. Consequently, these sides were issued by British Columbia exclusively.

These sides present a lot of professional legitimate instrumental work, but rather little jazz improvisation. Yet, the work of the two trumpet players – Johnny Dunn on open horn, but a little retained, and Pike Davis on loud and aggressive muted horn – show a remarkable performance all through this session. The latter player has the first chair duties on all these sides.

Bill Benford – unfortunately (!?) – sticks to the scores and is very much in the background, but this seems to have been one of his personal characteristics.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography, 1948: Johnny Dunn, Pike Davis (tp); Calvin Jones (tb); Rudolph Dunbar, Ollie Williams (s); George Smith (v); Al Rickson (p); John Ricks (b); Jess Baltimore (dm)*

- Rust\*2,\*3: Johnny Dunn, Pike Davis (tpt); Calvin Jones (tbn); Rudolph Dunbar, Nelson Kincaid (clt, alt); Alonzo Williams (ten); Ralph "Shrimp" Jones, George Smith (vln); George Rickson (pno); Maceo Jefferson (bjo); Bill Benford (bbs); Jesse Baltimore (dms)

- Rust\*4,\*6: Ralph "Shrimp" Jones – vn -dir; Johnny Dunn -Pike Davis -t; Calvin Jones -tb; Rudolph Dunbar -Nelson Kincaid -cl -as (one doubling ss); Alonzo Williams -ts; George Smith -vn; George Rickson -p; Maceo Jefferson -bj; Bill Benford -bb; Jesse Baltimore -d

Tune structures:

A-4519-2 Silver Rose Key of D Columbia  
 (Intro 18 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA ens)(Bridge 2 bars ens)(Chorus 2 64 bars AABA (double-length) vln+ens)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA GR pno 16 – AW ten 8 – ens 8)

A-4520-1 Arabella's Wedding Day Key of C Columbia  
 (Intro 12 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AA' ens)(Verse 16 bars JD o-tpt)(Chorus 2 32 bars AA' PD m-tpt)(Chorus 3 32 bars AA' clts 14 – JD o-tpt 2 – PD m-tpt 16)

A-4521-1 Smiling Joe Key of C Columbia  
 (Intro 8 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AA' ens 30 – JD o-tpt 2)(Verse 12 bars CJ o-tbn)(Chorus 2 32 bars AA' PD m-tpt+RSJ vln 14 – MJ bjo 2 – PD m-tpt+RSJ vln 16)(Chorus 3 32 bars AA' JD o-tpt+vlns 14 – ens 2 – JD o-tpt+ens16)

A-4522-1 For Baby And Me Key of G/C/G Columbia  
 (Intro 8 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AA' vlns+ens)(Bridge 2 bars ens modulation)(Chorus 2 32 bars AA' sops+brass breaks)(Bridge 2 bars ens modulation)(Chorus 3 32 bars AA' ens)

**007 JELLY ROLL MORTON'S RED HOT PEPPERS**

New York, Jun. 11, 1928

Ward Pinkett – tpt; Geechie Fields – tbn; Omer Simeon – clt;  
 Jelly Roll Morton – pno; Lee Blair – bjo; Bill Benford – bbs; Tommy Benford – dms

45619-2	Georgia Swing	Vic V-38024,	JSP CD 324
45620-3	Kansas City Stomps	Vic V-38010,	JSP CD 324
45621-3	Shoe Shiner's Drag	Vic 21658,	JSP CD 324
45622-2	Boogaboo	Vic V-38010,	JSP CD 324
45623-1	Shreveport	Vic 21658,	JSP CD 324
45623-2	Shreveport	Vic 21658,	JSP CD 325
45624-1	Mournful Serenade	Vic unissued,	not on LP/CD
45624-2	Mournful Serenade	Vic V-38024,	JSP CD 324
45625	Honey Babe	Vic unissued,	not on LP/CD
45626	Sidewalk Blues	Vic unissued,	not on LP/CD

Nothing must be said about these generally known jazz classics. This group playing under Jelly Roll Morton's head-line in fact was Bill Benford's Band performing at the 'Rose Danceland' at 125th Street and Seventh Avenue in Harlem for a considerable length of time. 'Geechie' Fields does not play on "Shreveport" and the last two titles of this session are – and remain – unissued. What a great pity!

Notes:

- Rust\*2,\*3,\*4,\*6: Ward Pinkett (tpt); Geechie Fields (tbn); Omer Simeon (clt); Jelly Roll Morton (pno); Lee Blair (bjo); Bill Benford (bbs); Tommy Benford (dms). Simeon, Morton, Tommy Benford only on 45623; Fields, Simeon, Morton, T. Benford only on 45624; Pinkett, Morton, T. Benford only on 45625.

- L. Wright, Mr. Jelly Lord, p.54: "At this point it is appropriate to say something about the Rose Danceland, a 'taxi' dance hall/school situated on the second floor at 125th Street and Seventh Avenue and the band which played there, for it has considerable bearing on the recordings which follow. Tommy Benford recalls that his brother Bill was asked to form a band to go into a similar dance hall at 125th and Lexington and that, sometimes in 1927, they removed to the Rose Danceland. Tommy is no longer able to recall with certainty who was present in the band at what time (and it appears from various recollections that several musicians were in and out of the band more than once), but by putting together things that Tommy recalls with scraps of information from other sources, it seems likely that the band that transferred to the Rose Danceland was as follows: Ward Pinkett, Wardell 'Preacher' Jones, Edward 'Andy' Anderson, t; Julius 'Geechie' Fields, tb; Johnny Williams, as; Prince Robinson, ts; Lester Armstead, p; Lee Blair, g; Bill Benford, bb and leader; Tommy Benford, d. It seems likely that only one of the three trumpet players were present at any time and that Anderson may not have joined (probably replacing Jones) until after the band reached the Rose Danceland. Johnny Williams was from Cincinnati and stayed only a short time before

returning home, and was replaced by Rudy Powell who, in turn was replaced by Russell Procope. Prince Robinson too was later replaced by Joe Garland. Lester Armstead, who is recalled as a very fine pianist, had replaced the original (now un-recalled) pianist prior to the move. Armstead lived in Brooklyn and couldn't always get to the job and Nicholas 'Rod' Rodriguez was called in to substitute. Eventually Armstead's absences became so frequent that Rodriguez took his place. Morton had apparently first come to the Rose Danceland and auditioned as a singer/pianist, the management had liked him and taken him on, though in quite what capacity is not clear. Certainly, in due course, he spent some time conducting the band with Rodriguez playing the piano (Tommy Benford feels that Morton may well have had a hand in the hiring of Rodriguez). Tommy also makes it quite clear that there was no attempt by Morton to usurp the leadership of the band, and that it was almost entirely on his own material that he conducted them."

Notable differences of takes:

- 45623-1: T. Benford plays brushes on snare-drum, switches to cymbal for clarinet solo after pno-solo  
 45623-2: T. Benford plays brushes on snare-drum in first chorus, switches to cymbal in bar 3 of verse, switches back to snare-drum in bar 3 of second chorus (pno-solo)

**008 JELLY ROLL MORTON AND HIS RED HOT PEPPERS**

New York, Mar. 19, 1930

Ward Pinkett, Bubber Miley – tpt; Wilbur de Paris – tbn;

Lorenzo Tio, Jr. or (Jerry Blake) – clt;

Jelly Roll Morton – pno; Bernard Addison – gtr; Bill Benford - bbs; Tommy Benford – dms

59532-2 Little Lawrence

Vic V-38135,

JSP CD 323

59533-1 Harmony Blues

Vic V-38135,

JSP CD 323

Stylistically Lorenzo Tio might well be the clarinet player. But Happy Caldwell assumed Jerry Blake for this session after hearing these sides with Al Vollmer (see below). Contrary to all discographies before I am unable to hear an additional banjo player. Instead, I hear Morton's right hand on the afterbeats in some places. Can it be that the recording officials saw a banjo brought in by Addison which he then did not use?

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography 1948*: Ward Pinkett, Bubber Miley (tp); Wilbur de Paris (tb); Eddie Barefield (cl); Jelly Roll Morton (p); Bernard Addison (g); unknown (bjo); Bill Benford (b); Tommy Benford (dm).

- B. Rust, *The Victor Master Book Vol. 2*: 2t, tb, cl, p, bj, g, bb, d.

- Rust\*2: Ward Pinkett, Bubber Miley (tpts); Wilbur de Paris (tbn); unknown (clt); Jelly Roll Morton (pno); unknown (bjo); Bernard Addison (gtr); Bill Benford (bbs); Tommy Benford (dms).

- Rust\*3: Ward Pinkett -Bubber Miley -t; Wilbur de Paris -tb; ?Ernie Bullock -cl; Jelly Roll Morton -p; unknown -bj; Bill Benford -bb; Tommy Benford -d,

- Rust\*4,\*6: Jelly Roll Morton -p dir; Ward Pinkett, Bubber Miley -t; Wilbur de Paris -tb; Lorenzo Tio Jr. -cl; unknown -bj; Bernard Addison -g; Bill Benford -bb; Tommy Benford -d,

- L. Wright, *Mr. Jelly Lord*: Ward Pinkett, Bubber Miley, t; Wilbur de Paris, tb; unknown, cl; Jelly Roll Morton, p; unknown, bj; Bernard Addison, g; Bill Benford, bb; Tommy Benford, d, "When I played through these sides with Bernard Addison he readily identified his own playing but was adamant that when he recorded with Morton, he was the only plectrum player present!"

- Scherman, Eriksson, Anderby, Wallen, *Bubber Miley Discography*: Ward Pinkett, Bubber Miley (tp); Wilbur de Paris (tb); unknown (cl); Jelly Roll Morton (p); unknown (bj); Bernard Addison (g); Bill Benford (bb); Tommy Benford (dr). "The personnel above is the one listed in "Mr. Jelly Lord", by Laurie Wright, who points out that "Little Lawrence might be a tribute to Lorenzo Tio and it is possible that he is the clarinet player, for his daughter ... recalls her father coming home and saying I'm going to make a record with Jelly Roll Morton tomorrow." On Little Lawrence Miley plays the muted growl solo and Pinkett the following open solo. On Harmony Blues, the open solo is by Pinkett."

- Storyville 45, Al Vollmer, *Chicago Get-Together*: "Whilst on this session I should mention that when Happy Caldwell (sic – KBR) was here listening to records on 31 May 1972 he said that he had recorded with Jelly's Red Hot Peppers before his 1939 series. He remembered Ward Pinkett, Geechie Fields and the Thomas brothers. He recalled 'Primrose Stomp' and identified Geechie on this. He denied that he was the clarinet on 'Gambling Jack' and also said that he'd never played bass clarinet. He remembered Ernie Bullock well and said that the clarinet on 'Harmony Blues' could be Jerry Blake."

**009 JELLY ROLL MORTON AND HIS RED HOT PEPPERS**

New York, Mar. 20, 1930

Ward Pinkett, Bubber Miley – tpt; Wilbur de Paris – tbn;

Lorenzo Tio, Jr. – clt;

Jelly Roll Morton – pno; Bernard Addison – gtr; unknown – bjo; Bill Benford - bbs; Tommy Benford – dms

59643-1 Fussy Mabel

Vic V-38125,

JSP CD 323

59644-1 Ponchatrain

Vic V-38125,

JSP CD 323

My opinion: this is the same personnel as before, with possibly Tio on clarinet. And an additional strong banjo here which can be differentiated best in Ponchatrain Blues, where it plays simultaneously with the guitar under the opening guitar solo notes. The rhythm is much tenser here than on the foregoing session.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography 1948*: Ward Pinkett, Bubber Miley (tp); Wilbur de Paris (tb); Eddie Barefield (cl); Jelly Roll Morton (p); Bernard Addison (g); unknown (bjo); Bill Benford (b); Tommy Benford (dm).

- B. Rust, *The Victor Master Book Vol. 2*: 2t, tb, cl, p, bj, g, bb, d.

- Rust\*2: Ward Pinkett, Bubber Miley (tpts); Wilbur de Paris (tbn); unknown (clt); Jelly Roll Morton (pno); unknown (bjo); Bernard Addison (gtr); Bill Benford (bbs); Tommy Benford (dms).

- Rust\*4,\*6: Jelly Roll Morton -p dir; Ward Pinkett, Bubber Miley -t; Wilbur de Paris -tb; Ernie Bullock or Jerry Blake -cl; unknown -bj; Bernard Addison -g; Bill Benford -bb; Tommy Benford -d,

- L. Wright, *Mr. Jelly Lord*: Ward Pinkett, Bubber Miley, t; Wilbur de Paris, tb; unknown (possibly a different man from the previous day), cl; Jelly Roll Morton, p; unknown, bj; Bernard Addison, g; Bill Benford, bb; Tommy Benford, d,

- Scherman, Eriksson, Anderby, Wallen, *Bubber Miley Discography*: Same as last, except that the unknown clarinet player is replaced by a different unknown (cl, bcl). Thus: Ward Pinkett, Bubber Miley (tp); Wilbur de Paris (tb); unknown (cl); Jelly Roll Morton (p); unknown (bj); Bernard Addison (g); Bill Benford (bb); Tommy Benford (dr). "The trumpet solo on Fussy Mabel is by Miley, while Pinkett is more prominent in the ensembles. Pinkett plays the first solo on Ponchatrain, Miley the second with growl. If Lorenzo Tio Jr. recorded with Morton, it seems aurally more likely to be on this session than the previous one. The clarinet player on these titles sounds like a well schooled musician, on Fussy Mabel somewhat reminiscent of Tio's disciple Albert Nicholas."

## 010 BUBBER MILEY AND HIS MILEAGE MAKERS

New York,

May 16, 1930

Ward Pinkett, unknown, Bubber Miley – tpt; Wilbur de Paris – tbn;

Hilton Jefferson, unknown – clt, alt; Happy Caldwell – ten;

Earl Frazier – pno, cel; Bernard Addison – bjo, gtr; Bill Benford – bbs; Tommy Benford – dms;

Frank Marvin – voc

62232-3 I Lost My Gal From Memphis

Vic V-38138,

Frog DGF 11

62233-2 Without You, Emmaline

Vic V-38138,

Jazz Oracle BDW 8047

62233-3 Without You, Emmaline

Vic V-38138,

Frog DGF 11

Bubber Miley was Ellington's top ace trumpeter from 1923 on. He obviously was some sort of a lady's man, and it is purported that he was fired from the Ellington band because of his unreliability, as the only person fired by Ellington at all. His "retirement" occurred in January 1929. From then he spent the short remainder of his life working with a row of diverse bands and vaudeville acts without reaching top approval as with Ellington any more. John Chilton in 'Who's Who of Jazz' tells that Miley formed his own band, financed by Irving Mills, in 1931. These sides are from 1930, they are made by a stable personnel, and it is to be asked whether this is the band reported by Chilton. I have been unable to find an answer. The dates of recording would argue against it.

The band consists of top-notch Harlem band musicians known from other well-known bands. But, according to Chilton, none of them is known of having been a fixture with Bubber Miley.

Miley is the foremost soloist, leaving little room and opportunity to de Paris and Pinkett. Happy Caldwell gets even less, but can be heard ad-libbing in short between choruses or in bridges and modulations.

There are a couple of instances where Bernard Addison can be heard accompanying on guitar (see under 'Tunes' below). But, opposed to the statement in the Victor Master Book, which lists both instruments as being played by different persons, I feel unable to hear a banjo behind Addison's guitar. In 'I Lost My Gal From Memphis' I think that Addison played the first solo spot in chorus 2 on the banjo single-string, and that he later switches to guitar in chorus 3 behind the singer. I do not hear a banjo and a guitar simultaneously – or so I believe. Thus, I dare leave the listed unknown banjo player out. His presence would be too unintelligible. Nobody of the responsible persons would have paid for a guitarist who only played some few short guitar spots, and nothing more. The more so, as Addison was a banjo player from early on. I love to hear Tommy Benford's fancy and imaginative drumming. And his brother Bill's great tuba part, too!

Notes:

- *Delaunay, New Hot Discography: Bubber Miley (tp); Charlie Irvis (tb); Hilton Jefferson (as); Happy Caldwell (ts); Earl Frazier (p); Bernard Addison (g); 2 tp, s, tuba, dm unknown; Frank Marvin (vo)*

- *Victor Master Book, Vol. 2: 3t / tb / 3s / p / bj / g / bb / d, vocalist: Frank Marvin*

- *Rust\*2: Bubber Miley, Ward Pinkett (tpt); Wilbur de Paris (tbn); Hilton Jefferson, unknown (alt, clt); Happy Caldwell (ten); Earl Fraser (pno); Bernard Addison (bjo, gtr); unknown (bbs); unknown (dms); Frank Marvin (voc)*

- *Storyville 111, Tommy Benford, Have Drum Will Travel: "Mention of recordings made us play the three Miley Mileage Makers couplings to Tommy, as few days earlier we had played these to Happy Caldwell in an effort to fill some of the gaps in the personnel. Tommy listened carefully, and then commented: That's definitely me on drums and I'm sure I hear three trumpets on that first date – Bubber is the muted horn and that's Ward playing open. Could be my brother on the first date, but that's definitely not him on the others, Bill only ever played tuba, and it sounds more like Billy Taylor to me. I don't know who the banjo player is."*

- *Rust\*3,\*4,\*6: Bubber Miley, Ward Pinkett, unknown -t; Wilbur de Paris -tb; Hilton Jefferson, unknown -as -cl; Happy Caldwell -ts; Earl Frazier -p -cel; Bernard Addison, unknown -bj -g; Bill Benford -bb; Tommy Benford -d; Frank Marvin -v.*

- *Scherman, Eriksson, Anderby, Wallen, Bubber Miley Discography: Bubber Miley, Ward Pinkett, unknown (tp); Wilbur de Paris (tb); Hilton Jefferson, unknown (as,cl); Happy Caldwell (ts); Earl Frazier (p, cel); unknown (bj); Bernard Addison (g); Bill Benford (bb); Tommy Benford (dr). "On I Lost My Gal From Memphis, Miley plays the muted passages (16+8 bars solo and one chorus behind Marvin's vocal), while it is Pinkett in the introduction and the last bars. On Without You Emmaline, we have identified Pinkett in the 8 bars solo passage and the obligato behind Marvin's vocal chorus (almost trying to sound like Miley!), while it is probably Miley in the 16 bars after the vocal."*

Titles:

*I Lost My Gal From Memphis* Key of Em / Am / Em / Fm Victor  
(Intro 6 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars Em AABA growl tpt BM)(Bridge 4 bars AABA ens modulation to Am)(Chorus 2 32 bars Am AABA 8 tbn WdP – bjo BA 8 – bbs BB 8 – pno EF 8)(Bridge 2 bars ens modulation to Em)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA voc acc tpt BM/ gtr BA) (Vamp 4 bars ens modulation to Fm)(Chorus 4 32 bars Fm AABA 16 ens – tpt WP?6 – 10 ens)(Coda 3 bars ens)

*Without You, Emmaline* Key of G / A Victor  
(Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA tbn WdP 8 – gtr BA 8 – ens 8 – tpt BM 8)(Bridge 4 bars ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA voc FM acc tpt BM)(Bridge 2 bars modulation G – A)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA (\*)tpt BM 16 – tbn WdP 8 – ens 8)(Coda 4 bars ens)

Notable differences of takes(\*):

62233-2: Entry tpt solo Chorus 3 (ca. 1:54): BM tpt starts with 2 quarter notes C, 1 half note A in bar 1 of chorus 3

62233-3: Entry tpt solo Chorus 3 (ca. 1:54): BM tpt starts with upbeat 1 eighth note C, 1 quarter note C, 1 eighth note C in bar 2 of bridge bound to half note C in bar 1 of chorus 3.

A. McCarthy, Big Band Jazz, p. 55: "Bill Benford, brother of drummer Tommy, was considered one of the best tuba players of the 'twenties. He recorded with the Gulf Coast Seven (No! – KBR) and Ethel Waters in 1925, with Thomas Morris and the Plantation Orchestra in 1926, with Jelly Roll Morton in 1928 and 1930, and with Bubber Miley in 1930. During 1929 and 1930, he led his own band at the Rainbow Gardens in New York. The personnel, as given to Kurt Mohr by Earle Howard, consisted of unknown (trumpet), Jimmy Archey (trombone), Emmett Matthews (soprano), Morris O'Brien (alto), Noel Clookies (tenor), Earle Howard (piano), Bill Benford (tuba), Tommy Benford (drums). Archey and Tommy Benford were in the band for only a limited period; their replacements are not known. Trombonist Geechie Fields was with the band at one point, probably during the summer of 1930, but the suggested presence of trumpeter Ward Pinkett has not been definitely established."