

# THE RECORDINGS OF HARRY SMITH

## An Annotated Tentative Personnel - Discography

SMITH, Harry

No biographical dates known

### STYLISTICS HARRY SMITH

#### STYLE

Johnny-Dunn-derived style of early New York, yet not as stiff as Miley's, but also using growl and dirty tones thus sounding very bluesy, often with a cup or plunger mute. He plays in a calm and unobtrusive manner – not exuberant – and tends to play legato phrases. Likes to end tunes on the tenth or other non-chordal notes.

#### TONE

Smooth tone – almost like Joe Smith

#### VIBRATO

#### TIME

Antiquated time, not very jazzy, but possibly resulting from St..Louis (?) background

#### PHRASING

Frequent use of antiquated 6/8<sup>th</sup> rhythm, jumping-trills and triplet phrasing after J. Dunn and Bubber Miley.

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

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.

H. Smith with Norman Thomas NYA 23.08.53p10 (NE-896) / (CD-84)

### SMITH HARRY

001 **ROSA HENDERSON** the Choo Choo Jazzers

New York,

Jun. 21-26, 1924

Rosa Henderson – voc;

*Harry Smith* – tpt; *Cliff Jackson* – pno

31607 I Can't Get The One I Want

Ajax 17049,

Document DOCD-5402

On 19 August 2016 Bob Hitchens, author of the great investigation on the Choo Choo Jazzers and their recordings, informed me on a chapter in "Luck's In My Corner" – The Life and Music of Hot Lips Page - by Todd Bryant Weeks, concerning influential trumpeters to Lips Page. On page 38 the author mentions two trumpet players of importance for Page in the "Territory" regions - Benno Kennedy and Harry Smith. About Smith he says: "In the summer and fall of 1924, Harry Smith recorded as a cornetist in a straightforward, heavily blues-inflected style

backing the singer Rosa Henderson with her New York-based group, the Choo Choo Jazzers (sic). Of interest in Smith's playing are several stylistic elements that support his influence on Hot Lips Page. In particular, there is Smith's use of plunger, growl and wah-wah effects on the tunes 'Strut Yo' Puddy' and 'Hard-Hearted Hannah' and his use of extended blue notes in 'I Can't Get The One I Want', all of which are reminiscent of Lip's later work. Smith's tone is dark, and he seems most comfortable in the horn's middle range. He also shows a marked King Oliver influence in his use of "crying" blue notes, typical for black jazz trumpeters of the day. And like that of Lips Page, Smith's playing also bears a striking similarity to that of the Ellingtonian master, James Wesley 'Bubber' Miley. This is evident especially in the manner in which he combines growls and smears while using the plunger on triplet figures of eighth-and sixteenth-note combinations.

Examples of this type of figure appear in several places in Harry Smith's 'Strut Yo' Puddy' performance, but are most prominent in measures fourteen through seventeen of Smith's cornet solo shown in Transcription 4.1." (Transcription on page 39 of the book.) This said by T.B.

Weeks may be right and to the point, but it has to be added that all these named features were of common use with many Harlem trumpet players of the first half of the 1920s, originated – or at least widespread - by Johnny Dunn. And this would not only include Bubber Miley, but also very much so the early Joe Smith! Unfortunately, I do not know where Mr. Weeks received his information on this part of his book from, but he may nevertheless be right at this point. I certainly am unable to refute him here, and I will honestly name Harry Smith as trumpeter for this session, but I feel free to still maintain Joe Smith as a possible trumpet player on this session. Checking the Rust and BGR editions it becomes apparent that they all list Harry Smith on trumpet, the origin of this assumption I do not know. But it may be asked then whether this has been Mr. Weeks' source, or that he did have another one, yet – unfortunately - not cited in his book. The solution of this problem might be a task of the future.

But we have to state that the sessions listed here all feature the same trumpet player – a distinct stylist of his own - different from all other prominent players of the period in Harlem Jazz. His tone is soft – but not as much as Joe Smith's, he possesses a strong attack, and plays in a Johnny Dunn derived style of early New York, yet not as stiff as Miley's, but also using growl and dirty tones thus sounding very bluesy, often with a cup or plunger mute. He plays in a calm and unobtrusive manner – not exuberant – and tends to play legato phrases. Likes to end tunes on the ninth or other non-chordal notes. He makes frequent use of antiquated 6/8<sup>th</sup> rhythm (behind verse and first vocal chorus and later!), not very jazzy, but possibly resulting from a St..Louis (?) background.

The piano player did not seem to be Cliff Jackson to me as none of his characteristics are obvious on this side. Yet, as Jackson seems to have been used by Ajax more often, it might nevertheless be him. And the lack of his licks might be due to his youth at the time of recording. A comparison to Mike Jackson's style results in favour of Cliff! No clarinet on this side.

#### Notes:

- Jazz Directory Vol.4: unlisted.

- RR 77-6, 86-6: unlisted

- W. Bryant, Ajax Records: no personnel per Hooper.

- BGR\*2: Bubber Miley or Harry Smith, tpt; Bob Fuller, clt; Cliff Jackson, pno.

- BGR\*3,\*4: Harry Smith, t; Cliff Jackson, p.

- Rust\*3: Harry Smith –t; Cliff Jackson –p.

- Rust\*4,\*6: Harry Smith, –c; or Bob Fuller , cl; Cliff Jackson, p

- Choo Choo Jazzers investigation: Collinson: Harry Smith, Cliff Jackson. Miley disco: Harry Smith or Bubber Miley, Cliff Jackson. Distinct trumpet style, no clarinet, probably Cliff Jackson (not quite sure). However, Harry Smith may have been touring with Gonzelle White. St 87/93 reports that Barclay Draper was playing with Cliff Jackson in spring 1924. KBR doubts Harry Smith & Cliff Jackson.

- VJM 177, Bob Hitchens, The Choo Choo Jazzers: "Distinct trumpet style, no clarinet, probably Cliff Jackson (not quite sure). Harry Smith was named by Hot Lips Page as an early influence. Mainly Texas based, he nonetheless was associated with Gonzelle White's group along with Jake Frazier and Gus Aiken. So it is quite possible that he was in New York at this time, but I know of no press reports to substantiate this. Lip's biography, "Luck's In My corner" by Todd Bryant Weeks gives good coverage to Harry Smith. Weeks does not mention his source other than Rust, and Rust of course did not record his source. So we must take this identification on trust, recognising that Rust will not have dreamed this up. The reference (in part 1 of this list in VJM 175) to Barclay Draper working with Cliff Jackson, while true, is irrelevant here."

- Storyville 146, J. Collinson: Harry Smith, t; Cliff Jackson, p.

002	<b>ROSA HENDERSON</b>	the Choo Choo Jazzers	New York,	Jul. 11-24, 1924
	Rosa Henderson – voc;			
	Harry Smith - cnt (1,3); Bob Fuller – clt (2);			
	Mike Jackson – pno			
31636	Strut Yo' Puddy		Ajax 17055,	Document DOCD-5402
31637	Somebody's Doin' What You Wouldn't Do		Ajax 17055,	Document DOCD-5402
31639	Hard-Hearted Hannah		Ajax 17060,	Document DOCD-5403

The same as said about session 001 applies to this session here. Bob Hitchens informed me on the book on Hot Lips Page and the citations on Harry Smith on pages 38/39. But I would like to inform the reader/listener about what I have said earlier in my comment on this session: This then very probably is the "Harry Smith" of the session above, playing a lot of jumping trills and finishing the tunes on the flatted seventh at both sessions! He may be the Harry Smith of Gonzelle White fame, having toured Cuba with her in 1923. But lacking any documentation of this player's style – there are no documented recordings known of him – I certainly hear the identity of this and the player of the above session. It would be very interesting to get to know who proposed the name of Harry Smith for this session and session above, and what the reasons were for his assumption!

Fuller is undisputed. As before: I do not hear Cliff Jackson's playing characteristics – and see the probability of Mike Jackson playing. Significant are the flowery treble figures played over a not very distinct stride left-hand rhythm. Thus, probably not Cliff Jackson nor Louis Hooper.

#### Notes:

- Jazz Directory Vol.4: unknown cor, tbn, p, bj, d.

- RR 77-6: not listed

- Rust\*3,\*4,\*6: Harry Smith, –c; or Bob Fuller , cl; Cliff Jackson, p

- W. Bryant, Ajax Records: personnel per Hooper (third title): Louis Metcalfe, c; Mike Jackson, p.

- BGR\*2: prob Louis Metcalf, t; Bob Fuller, cl; Cliff Jackson, p.

- BGR\*3,\*4: prob Rex Stewart, t; Bob Fuller, cl; Cliff Jackson, p.

- VJM 177, Bob Hitchens, The Choo Choo Jazzers: "Trumpet (on first title – KBR) is too active for the man from the last three sessions (two by Hazel Meyers and one by Helen Gross). I suggest Harry Tate. But trumpet (on third title – KBR) sounds like a different man to me. I would say Louis Metcalf as on the two neighbouring sessions (Helen Gross & Josie Miles)."

003 **JOSIE MILES** Choo Choo Jazzers New York, Sep. 18-22, 1924  
 Josie Miles – voc;  
 Harry Smith – cnt;  
 Charlie Pryme or (Louis Hooper) – pno; Elmer Snowden – bjo  
 31703 Won't Someone Help Me Find My Lovin' Man Ajax 17076, Document DOCD-5467  
 31705 South Bound Blues Ajax 17070, Document DOCD-5467  
 Sweet Man Joe Ajax 17076 not on LP/CD

Obviously, there is neither trombone nor clarinet on these sides! The trumpet player certainly sounds like Bubber Miley, but definitely seems to be somebody else. He might be Stewart when compared to the Vocalion recordings tackled in Part 1 of this article. He is not as stiff as Miley, but not as assured as well. But I have a feeling that this man is the same player as on Rosa Henderson's 'I Can't Get The One I Want' (Ajax 17049), and might thus be the little known Harry Smith of Gonzelle White fame.

The pianist shows details not accustomed by Hooper. He plays more melodically determined style with more variety than Hooper. Therefore I'd prefer Charlie Pryme, although I do not know anything of his style.

'Sweet Man Joe' seems not to be reissued and could therefore not be checked.

Notes:

- RR 77-6, 86-6: not listed

- W. Bryant, Ajax Records: no personnel per Hooper

- BGR\*4: prob Bubber Miley, c; Charlie Pryme or Louis Hooper, p; Elmer Snowden, bj; unknown, effects

- Rust\*6: Bubber Miley, c; Jake Frazier, tb; Bob Fuller, cl; Charlie Pryme or Louis Hooper, p; Elmer Snowden, bj.

- VJM 175: Bubber Miley (t); poss Charlie Pryme (p); Elmer Snowden (bj).

004 **SUSIE SMITH** New York, Sep. 18-22, 1924  
 Monette Moore – voc, kazoo;  
 Harry Smith – tpt; (Herb Gregory?) – tbn;  
 Louis Hooper – pno  
 31706 Bullet Wound Blues Ajax 17075, Document DOCD-5338

Here I now hear Harry Smith and the unknown trombonist of above on this side. This session obviously is the same with Josie Miles Ajax session of the preceding matrix numbers, the trumpet player seems to be the same. He sounds akin to Louis Metcalf here.

My comment on this side to Bob Hitchen's excellent Choo Choo Jazzers investigation was: "Is this really Bubber Miley? Drunk? Or another – less lively – player, trying to copy Miley? The trombonist is a legato player somewhat in Charlie Irviss' style, but unknown to me. Or is this Irviss, intoxicated, just like his colleague from the Snowden/Ellington band? As a matter of fact: this is not Frazier." In the light of my recent realizations I strongly believe the trombonist to be Herb Gregory.

Hooper claimed his own presence on piano.

Notes:

- RR 77-6: Fuller, Frazier, Hooper

- W. Bryant, Ajax Records: personnel per Hooper: Bubber Miley, c; Jake Frazier, tb; possibly Louis Hooper, p;

- Rust\*3,\*4: Bubber Miley -c; Jake Frazier -tb; Louis Hooper -p.

- BGR\*2,\*3,\*4: Bubber Miley, c; Jake Frazier, tb; Louis Hooper, p.

- Rust\*6: Bubber Miley, c; Jake Frazier, tb; Louis Hooper, p.

- Scherman, Eriksson, Anderby, Wallen, Bubber Miley Discography: Bubber Miley (tp), Jake Frazier, (tb); Louis Hooper, (p).

- VJM 175, B. Hitchens, Choo Choo Jazzers: Bubber Miley (t), Jake Frazier (tb), Louis Hooper (p). "KBR insists not JF. John Montague (p) was Monette's regular accompanist at this time."

005 **ROSA HENDERSON** New York, c. Sep. 29, 1924  
 Rosa Henderson – voc;  
 Harry Smith – tpt; Jake Frazier - tbn;  
 Arthur Ray or Louis Hooper – pno  
 5651-3 Deep River Blues Ban 1452, Document DOCD-5403  
 5652-3 The Basement Blues Ban 1437, Document DOCD-5403

Just like at the subsequent session below, Miley's presence is seen as doubtful in the discos, and I strongly suggest Harry Smith to be the trumpet player. The trombonist does not play enough legato notes to ascertain Gregory and so might be Frazier. The pianist plays a blues/boogie related style, but more differentiated than Hooper, and might thus possibly be Ray.

Notes:

- Jazz Directory Vol. 4: not listed

- RR 77-6: not listed

- Rust\*3: prob Bubber Miley, c; ? Jake Frazier, tb; Louis Hooper or Arthur Ray, p.

- BGR\*2: Tom Morris, c; poss Jake Frazier, tb; Louis Hooper, p.

- BGR\*3,\*4: unknown, c; poss Jake Frazier, tb; Louis Hooper, p.

- Rust\*4,\*6: ? Bubber Miley, c; ? Jake Frazier, tb; Louis Hooper or Arthur Ray, p.

- Scherman, Eriksson, Anderby, Wallen, Bubber Miley Discography: not listed.

006 **LOUELLA JONES AND JAZZ CASPER** New York, c. Oct. 29, 1924  
 Alberta Perkins, Billy Higgins – voc duet;  
 Harry Smith – cnt;  
 Louis Hooper – pno; Elmer Snowden – bjo;  
 Joe Davis – chimes (4,5)  
 5695-1 Who Calls You Sweet Mama Now? Ban 1467 not on LP/CD  
 5695-2 Who Calls You Sweet Mama Now? Ban 1467 not on LP/CD  
 5695-3 Who Calls You Sweet Mama Now? Ban 1467, Document DOCD-5528  
 5696-1 Sweet Mandy Ban 1467, Document DOCD-5654  
 5696-2 Sweet Mandy Ban 1467, Document DOCD-5528

This is not Miley, and I assume Harry Smith (tone, phrasing, the 6/8<sup>th</sup> rhythm!).

I think that the other musicians are obvious: Hooper and Snowden. Morris, as suggested by Louis Hooper RR 77, is far off the mark.

Notes:

- RR 77-9: Thomas Morris; Louis Hooper; Elmer Snowden, unknown chimes.

- BGR\*4: Bubber Miley, c; Louis Hooper, p; Elmer Snowden, bj.

- Rust\*6: Bubber Miley, c; Louis Hooper, p; Elmer Snowden, bj.

- Scherman, Eriksson, Anderby, Wallen, Bubber Miley Discography: Bubber Miley (tp); Louis Hooper (p); Elmer Snowden (bj); unknown (chimes). "Dixon-Godrich and Rust have the above personnel, except that both indicate the chimes player's presence after the wrong title, and Rust identifies him as ?Joe Davis."

Discernible differences of takes:

5695: As only take -3 of this title has been reissued, differences cannot be determined.

5696-1:

5696-2:

007	<b>CLEMENTINE SMITH</b>	Kansas City Five	New York,	c. Nov. 24, 1924
	Clementine Smith- voc, kazoo;			
	Harry Smith – cnt; unknown – tbn; unknown – clt;			
	unknown – pno; unknown – bjo			
5740-5	Everybody Loves My Baby		Re 9760,	Document DOCD-5518
5740-6	Everybody Loves My Baby		Ban 1464	not on LP/CD

I have a feeling that this session features the same – or some of – the musicians of the foregoing Edison session(s). The trumpet at times sounds like Miley but is not brilliant enough to be Miley or Dunn, and is too much in the Dunn mould to be Morris. After finding out about Harry Smith in the immediate past I am now convinced that this is our trumpet player here!

There certainly is a trombone very clearly heard, but because of too little exposition not to be identified. He plays some sort of tailgate style without the glissandos and delivers bass notes only after the introduction. The clarinet player shows similarities to the legato player of the Edisons before. He definitely is not Fuller. The pianist plays a two-fisted piano accompaniment unheard of from Hooper. The banjo player lacks Snowden's exuberance and plays functional only. Most interesting: this seems to be the first recording ever of kissing noises on '... Baby'!

The whole performance seems to be modelled after Clarence Williams' Blue Five recordings. So - as in the foregoing session(s) – I hear a band of more "Western" style.

Notes:

- BGR\*4: prob Louis Metcalf or poss Bubber Miley, c; Bob Fuller, cl; Louis Hooper, p; Elmer Snowden, bj; unknown kazoo

- Rust\*6: Louis Metcalf or Bubber Miley, c; Bob Fuller, cl; Louis Hooper, p; Elmer Snowden, bj.

Discernible differences of takes:

5740: As only take -5 of this title has been reissued, differences cannot be determined.

008	<b>JOSIE MILES AND JAZZ CASPER</b>		New York,	c. Nov. 24, 1924
	Josie Miles, Jazz Caspar (Billy Higgins) – voc duet;			
	Harry Smith – tpt;			
	unknown – pno; unknown – bjo			
5741-1	Let's Agree To Disagree		Ban 1499	on LP/CD ?
5741-2	Let's Agree To Disagree		Ban 1499	on LP/CD ?

This seems to be the same Miley disciple as before, but not Miley himself - nor Metcalf, but Harry Smith as before. And I do not think to hear Hooper and Snowden here. The Plaza people apparently have engaged people different from the Ajax stable, not to talk of the Edison men. Yet, the Miley influence is there – and probably wanted. And there is a slight similarity to Hooper, but not to Snowden.

Notes:

- BGR\*4: poss Bubber Miley or prob Louis Metcalf, c; Louis Hooper, p; Elmer Snowden, bj

- Rust\*6: Bubber Miley or Louis Metcalf, c; Louis Hooper, p; Elmer Snowden, bj.

- Scherman, Eriksson, Anderby, Wallen, Bubber Miley Discography: Bubber Miley (tp), Louis Hooper (p), Elmer Snowden (bj).

Discernible differences of takes:

5741: As only one take of this title has been reissued, differences cannot be determined. One of the takes listed has been issued on Document DOCD-5403.

009	<b>CLEMENTINE SMITH - BILLY HIGGINS</b>	the Kansas City Five	New York,	c. Nov. 24, 1924
	Clementine Smith- voc, kazoo; Billy Higgins – voc;			
	Harry Smith – tpt;			
	unknown – pno; unknown – bjo			
5742-1	I'm Done Done Done With You		Ban 1483,	Document DOCD T-009
5742-3	I'm Done Done Done With You		Ban 1483,	Document DOCD-5518

Once again, there is the trumpet player sounding a bit like Miley, but in my opinion a definitely different man following Miley's model, Harry Smith. No trombone and no clarinet on this recording. BGR and Rust are obviously wrong in listing a full band for this title!

Notes:

- BGR\*4: prob Louis Metcalf or poss Bubber Miley, c; Bob Fuller, cl; Louis Hooper, p; Elmer Snowden, bj; unknown kazoo

- Rust\*6: Louis Metcalf or Bubber Miley, c; Bob Fuller, cl; Louis Hooper, p; Elmer Snowden, bj.

- Scherman, Eriksson, Anderby, Wallen, Bubber Miley Discography: Bubber Miley (tp), Bob Fuller (cl), Louis Hooper (p), Elmer Snowden (bj). "For all three Clementine Smith, Josie Miles and Billie Higgins titles above, Dixon-Godrich have poss B. Miley or prob Louis Metcalf, Rust has Miley or Metcalf. We believe it is definitely Miley on aural evidence."

Notable differences of takes:

5742-1: Tune starts with 19 seconds of spoken dialogue, 2 bars cnt vamp, followed by vocal

5742-3: *Tune starts with 8 bars cnt intro, 2 bars cnt vamp, followed by vocal*

010 **JOSIE MILES AND BILLY HIGGINS** Choo Choo Jazzers New York, Nov. 23- Dec. 03, 1924  
 Josie Miles, Billy Higgins – voc duet;  
*Harry Smith* – tpt; Bob Fuller – clt (1);  
*Louis Hooper* – pno  
 31725 I'm Done, Done, Done With You Ajax 17080, Document DOCD-5467  
 31727 A To Z Blues Ajax 17080, Document DOCD-5467

Now – with Ajax – we seem to be with the Miley / Hooper coupling again! But this certainly is Harry Smith on trumpet again! Essential, but not exuberant piano playing by Hooper. And Bob Fuller with his distinct vibrato and phrasing on the first title.

Notes:

- BGR\*4: *Bubber Miley, c; Bob Fuller, cl; prob Louis Hooper, p*
- Rust\*6: *Bubber Miley, c; Bob Fuller, cl; prob Louis Hooper, p*

011 **JOSIE MILES AND BILLY HIGGINS** Choo Choo Jazzers New York, Nov. 23- Dec. 03, 1924  
 Josie Miles, Billy Higgins – voc duet;  
*Harry Smith* – tpt; Bob Fuller – clt (2);  
*Louis Hooper* – pno  
 31733 Satisfied Ajax 17083, Document DOCD-5467  
 31735 Picnic Time Ajax 17083, Document DOCD-5467

In the past I heard Bubber Miley here, and certainly Bob Fuller on the second title. But after discovering Harry Smith as possible participant in Ajax recordings in the second part of 1924 I believe to hear this distinct musician here.

I am not content with Hooper. This pianist may be one the other players around, Arthur Ray or Edgar Dowell, or even the man of the Edison/Plaza sessions of before.

Notes:

- *W. Bryant, Ajax Records: no personnel per Hooper.*
- BGR\*4: *Bubber Miley, c; Bob Fuller, cl; prob Louis Hooper, p*
- Rust\*6: *instrumentation uncertain.*
- *Scherman, Eriksson, Anderby, Wallen, Bubber Miley Discography: Bubber Miley (tp); Bob Fuller (cl), Louis Hooper (p), "Dixon-Godrich have the above personnel, and we agree, Rust has 'instrumentation uncertain'."*