

# THE RECORDINGS OF EUBIE BLAKE AND HIS ORCHESTRA

## An Annotated Tentative Personnel - Discography

BLAKE, 'Eubie' James Hubert Born: Baltimore, Maryland, 7th February 1883; died: Brooklyn, New York, 12th February 1983  
 Began playing organ during early childhood, during his teens played in local 'sporting-house' and at 'rent-parties', began composing before the turn of the century. In 1901 toured for a while with a medicine show, then worked as accompanist for Madison Reed. Worked mainly at the Goldfield Hotel, Baltimore, from 1907 until 1915, then whilst playing at River View Park, began long association with Noble Sissle. They moved together to New York and worked together as partners for many years: composing, in vocal-piano duo, and as joined orchestra leaders. Together they wrote and produced 'Shuffle Along' (1921), they appeared in Europe; returned to New York (April 1926). Blake remained in U.S.A. when Sissle returned to Europe. During the late 1920s and early 1930s wrote for many shows, revues, etc., ranging from the 'Blackbirds' to Olsen and Johnson's 'Atrocities of 1932'. Resumed partnership with Noble Sissle; in World War II they toured with own show for the U.S.O. Though professionally inactive from 1946, he appeared occasionally on television shows with Noble Sissle and made several concert appearances. Was featured with great success at the New Orleans Jazz Fest in June 1969, and at festivals in Southern California (1971) and Newport (July 1971). Compositions include: 'Memories of You', 'I'm Just Wild about Harry', 'You're Lucky to Me', etc.. Was featured at many jazz festivals during the 1970s, both in the U.S.A. and Europe. Honorary Doctorate of Music 1974. Played at Jimmy Carter's White House Jazz Party (June 1978). 'Eubie', a show based on Blake's music opened in New York in 1978. Blake received the Presidential Medal of Honour in 1981. (J. Chilton, Who's Who of Jazz)

Eubie Blake mainly worked as composer and solo-pianist in a duet with singer Noble Sissle for many years, mostly under Sissle's heading. Yet, in 1921 he recorded two sessions and in 1931 four sessions with a big band under his own name. All sessions were played by bands compiled for playing show music for show performances of mainly his own authorship and direction.

### EUBIE BLAKE AND HIS ORCHESTRA

001	<b>EUBIE BLAKE AND HIS SHUFFLE ALONG ORCHESTRA</b>	New York,	Jul. 15, 1921
	Eubie Blake – pno, ldr;		
	Russell Smith, William Hicks – tpt; Calvin Jones – tbn;		
	Bill Johnson – clt; Vess Williams – alt; Sam Yearwood – flt; <i>William Grant Still</i> – oboe;		
	Willie Carroll – vln;		
	Leroy Vanderveer – bjo; John Ricks – bbs; George Reeves – dms		
25465-2	Baltimore Buzz (Intro: In Honeysuckle Time)	Vic 18791, Eubie Blake Music EBM-4 (LP)	
25466-4	Bandana Days (Intro: I'm Just Wild About Harry)	Vic 18791, Eubie Blake Music EBM-7 (LP)	

Thanks to R. Kimball's and W. Bolcom's 'Reminiscing with Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake' we have a contemporaneous and very clear photograph of the 'Shuffle Along Orchestra' which would certify the given personnel.  
 In Storyville 1996/97, p.207, trumpeter Billy Hicks "confirmed all the dates shown in Rust except that with Eubie Blake on 15 July, 1921 and said he had played on the Lloyd Scott session of 10 Jan 1927." Thus, the William/Billy Hicks of Eubie Blake's Shuffle Along Orchestra is not the musician of Chick Webb – under Armstrong's name - and Midge Williams fame, but rather the trumpet player with the Wilbur Sweatman band of the late 1910s, Rust having poured together both musicians under one single notation in his index.  
 The music certainly is not jazz, lacking any improvisation, but ragtime-influenced show music expertly played.

#### Notes:

- Delaunay, *New Hot Discography 1948*: not listed  
 - Rust\*2: William Hicks, Russell Smith (tpt); Carroll Jones (tbn); ---- Johnson (clt); Vess Williams (alt); ---- Yearwood (flt); Noble Sissle (vln); Eubie Blake (pno); ---- Vanderveer (bjo); John Ricks (bbs); George Reeves (dms)  
 - Rust\*3,\*4: Billy Hicks -Russell Smith -t; Calvin Jones -tb; Bill Johnson -cl; Vess Williams -as; Sam Yearwood -f; Noble Sissle -vn; Eubie Blake -p -ldr; Leroy Vanderveer -bj; John Ricks -bb; George Reeves -d  
 - Rust\*6: Billy Hicks, Russell Smith, t; Calvin Jones, tb; Bill Johnson, cl; Vess Williams, as; Sam Yearwood, f; unknown, o; Willie Carroll, vn; Eubie Blake, p, dir; Leroy Vanderveer, bj; John Ricks, bb; George Reeves, d  
 - R. Kimball, W. Bolcom, *Reminiscing with Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake*, p. 114: *Shuffle Along Orchestra photo: (back row l. to r.):*

Williams (alt); Ricks (sbs); Jones (tbn); Smith (tpt); Hicks (tpt); (front row l. to r.): Reeves (dms); Yarborough (sic)(flt); L. Johnson (clt); Jetter (vco); Still (oboe); H. Johnson (vln); Blake (pno); Carroll (vln).

- *Ibid*: Letter of thanks to Mr J. Hubert Blake, underlined by: W. Ricks, S.W. Yearwood, W. Hicks, Felix F. Stein (or Hein?), R.T. Smith, Lorenzo Calduel (sic – recte Caldwell?), Cal B. Jones, Clarence Harris, Geo. Reeves, H. Lemartin (?), Edgar O. Campbell, Hall Johnson, Wm. G. Still.

Tunes Structures:

25465-2 *Baltimore Buzz (Intro: In Honeysuckle Time) Eb / Bb / Eb* Victor  
(Intro 4 bars ens)(Verse 12 bars ens)(BB Chorus 1 20 bars ABAC ens)(BB Chorus 2 20 bars ABAC ens)(Bridge 8 bars ens modulation)(IHT Chorus 1 20 bars AA' ens)(IHT Chorus 2 20 bars AA' ens)(BB Chorus 3 20 bars ens)

25466-4 *Bandana Days (Intro: I'm Just Wild About Harry) B / D / B* Victor  
(Intro 4 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars ens)(BB Chorus 1 32 bars ABAC ens)(BB Chorus 2 32 bars ABAC ens)(Bridge 6 bars ens modulation)(IHT Chorus 1 36 bars AA' ens)(IHT Chorus 2 36 bars AA' VW alt+WC vln+EB pno modulation)(BB Chorus 3 32 bars ABAC ens)

002 **EUBIE BLAKE AND HIS ORCHESTRA**

New York,

c. Feb. 11, 1922

Eubie Blake – pno, ldr;

probably:

Russell Smith, William Hicks – tpt; Calvin Jones – tbn;

Vess Williams – alt; unknown - ten;

Willie Carroll – vln;

Leroy Vanderveer – bjo; John Ricks – bbs; George Reeves – dms

42185-2 *Cutie* Em 10519 not on LP/CD ?, but held

42186-1 *Jimmy (I Love But You)* Em 10519 not on LP/CD ?

Although all Rusts declare this personnel as similar to the preceding personnel of session 001, I have to state that we may have the same brass section as before and possibly the same rhythm team, but we hear a saxophone section of one alto and one tenor – unisono in the last chorus, by the way – and the whole band lead by the violin, playing the melody throughout.

Notes:

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

- *Rust\*2: similar to: William Hicks, Russell Smith (tpt); Carroll Jones (tbn); ---- Johnson (clt); Vess Williams (alt); ---- Yearwood (flt);*

*Noble Sissle (vln); Eubie Blake (pno); ---- Vanderveer (bjo); John Ricks (bbs); George Reeves (dms)*

- *Rust\*3,\*4: similar to: Billy Hicks -Russell Smith -t; Calvin Jones -tb; Bill Johnson -cl; Vess Williams -as; Sam Yearwood -f; Noble Sissle – vn; Eubie Blake -p -ldr; Leroy Vanderveer -bj; John Ricks -bb; George Reeves -d*

- *Rust\*6: probably similar to: Billy Hicks, Russell Smith, t; Calvin Jones, tb; Bill Johnson, cl; Vess Williams, as; Sam Yearwood, f; unknown, o; Willie Carroll, vn; Eubie Blake, p, dir; Leroy Vanderveer, bj; John Ricks, bb; George Reeves, d*

Tunes Structures:

42185-2 *Cutie Key of Eb / C* Emerson  
(Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus 1 40 bars ABACA ens)(Verse 24 bars ens)(Chorus 2 40 bars ABACA ens – saxes – ens modulation)  
(Chorus 3 40 bars ABACA ens – tpts – ens)

**Eubie Blake and his Orchestra**, as listed below, was a standard-size big band Blake established for theatre and show work in 1931.

The band was compiled of musicians experienced in this kind of work, some of them veterans of Blake's show bands of the early 1920s.

They used very complex arrangements with frequent modulations and different keys along the following manner: most choruses cease with their tonic on the first beat of their penultimate bar, from then on undergoing a modulation to the dominant chord to the key of the subsequent chorus. This cadence of chords needing four bars to be accomplished: the last two bars of the prevailing chorus and a tag of two bars ending with the dominant leading to the key of the subsequent chorus. These crammed arrangements leave very little room only for ad-lib/improvising in relation to the arrangements of jazz/dance bands which usually leave much more space for instrumental solos.

All six sessions suffer from being over-arranged – for a jazz orchestra at least – and thus impede the ardent listener to identify any instrumental soloist, let alone participating section musicians. We must consider that Blake's bands were compiled for show-work - not dance band work – where free improvisation was not desired so much. Yet, the band play with fervency and swing, very much due to the high quality of these sight-reading and legitimate musicians who were specialized to show-music. On this side we note the secure and stringent first-part trumpet work of Alfred Brown, whose single and only listing this is in Rust\*6. Second-part trumpet player is Frank Belt. He might be responsible for the muted-trumpet work in 'One More time' and 'St. Louis Blues'. His name is listed in Rust for one other participation only in a jazz recording: with the early Leroy Smith Orchestra of 1921. But he also has to be seen as the trumpet soloist at the September 1931 Eubie Blake recording session 006, of which the – here only - participating George Winfield recalled that he did not take any solos (see above).

For the jazz parts and most trumpet solos we have to point to Walter 'Jock' Bennett, an accomplished trumpet player of the second grade of the Harlem jazz scene. When I compiled an individual list of his recordings about 5 or more years ago (see elsewhere at this website!) I was not aware of his participation in the Eubie Blake band inspected here. I, yet, have to admit that I was not able to realise any similarity of the trumpet work heard here and the trumpet work I knew from Bennett's recordings inspected in my before-mentioned list in [www.Harlem-Fuss.com](http://www.Harlem-Fuss.com), regarding tone and phrasing.

The trombone work is done by Calvin Jones, a seasoned and skilled trombone player of the show business, one of Blake's co-workers of early 'Shuffle Along' days (see above). He owns a strong tone and plays very secure, but is not employed for jazz parts.

First alto is played by Harold Scott, who is listed in Rust\*6 only once, with Alex Jackson's Plantation Orchestra. He certainly was a legitimate reading musician for first-part duties. He is replaced on the September 1931 session by Ben Whitted, backbone of the Charlie Johnson Paradise Band in Harlem on lead-alto for about twenty years. Because of Whitted's duty for clarinet solos in the Johnson band, he might as well be responsible for them on this session 006.

On third alto (or second sax – just as you might prefer) we find Ralph Brown here, probably also playing all the clarinet solos on sessions 003 to 005. Brown was a veteran of Chicagoans 'Clarence Jones and his Sock Four' of 1928 and spent two years with Fess Williams and his Royal Flush Orchestra in New York's Savoy Ballroom. He "regarded himself primarily as a theatre musician, and felt that he found his niche when he left Fess to team up with Sissle and Blake." (A. Vollmer, 'Some Notes on Clarence M. Jones ... and others', Storyville 51, p. 87).

The tenor saxophonist (or second sax – if you prefer) is Bob Robinson – or James? (see Storyville 82, p. 126) – and he is responsible for all tenor sax soloistic, which is not very jazzy, I must note.

There are two pianists on these sides. George Rickson of Plantation Orchestra fame and veteran of several Johnny Dunn and Edith and Lena Wilson sides, providing a jazzy and swinging piano foundation. For the ragtime eccentrics, tinkled un-swingingly on the treble keys of his Piano, the bandleader, ragtime pianist and composer Eubie Blake, is responsible.

In Leroy Vanderveer – banjo veteran of very early Blake and Henderson personnels - and Frank Smith – also with Joe Steele and his Orchestra and with Henry Saparo and his Bamboo Inn Orchestra – on the bass horn, the Blake Orchestra had two reliable and experienced rhythm men, strengthened by Alan Porter (not Helen!) on drums, using the brushes almost throughout. On the September 1931 band session (006) we find drummer Jesse Baltimore – he with the ‘Plantation Orchestra’ in 1926 and with Noble Sissle’s Orchestra in England in Sept./Oct. 1929.

With these men, the Blake band was profoundly equipped for theatre and show music from the hot side, and able to furnish dance music and even hot jazz of high quality. Only Eubie Blake’s piano contributions are a bit off.

#### 003 EUBIE BLAKE AND HIS ORCHESTRA

New York, Mar. 1931

Eubie Blake – pno, ldr;

Alfred Brown, Frank Belt, Walter ‘Jock’ Bennett – tpt; Calvin Jones – tbn;

Harold Scott, Ralph Brown – alt, clt; Robert Robinson – ten, clt;

George Rickson – pno; Leroy Vanderveer – bjo; Frank Smith – bbs; Alan Porter – dms;

Dick Robertson – voc

1234-4	Please Don’t Talk About Me When I’m Gone	Cr 3090,	Harrison Records LP-R (LP)
1239-1	I’m No Account Anymore	Cr 3090,	Harrison Records LP-R (LP)
1240-	When You’re Lover Has Gone	Cr 3086	not on LP/CD
1241-	It Looks Like Love	Cr 3105,	Harrison Records LP-R (LP)

This first recording session of Eubie Blake and his Orchestra of March 1931 may positively be seen as cut by the personnel given by George Winfield’s recollections (see above), with the exception that it is not Winfield on third trumpet here, but probably Walter ‘Jock’ Bennett, and not Ben Whitted on first alto sax, but the band’s regular first alto man Harold Scott. The singer aurally is Dick Robertson as on all sessions recorded.

From Michael Rader’s research we know that Blake’s band accompanied the show ‘Singing the Blues’ from April 1931 on, possibly earlier. As it was frequent use, the band was recorded before, for publicity reasons and to cash in on public success.

My personnel listed seems to be generally known since 1969 (Rust\*3), yet is adapted along ‘George Winfield’s Story’, being published in 1978. We thus find Walter ‘Jock’ Bennett – not ‘Cuban’ Bennett, and not George Winfield! – as third trumpet player/soloist. First alto sax should be Harold Scott, as Winfield recalled: “*On the records we made for Eubie, incidentally, Ben Whitted subbed for Harold Scott.*” As Winfield only participated in the September session, Ben Whitted should only be seen as participant at this session 006 (“*records we made for Eubie ...*”). Of the three reed players I assume Ralph Brown to be the main clarinet soloist on the below sides (see Al Vollmer, Storyville 51-84: “*and Jones preferred Brown to play mostly alto, as he felt the clarinet otherwise conflicted with the violin*”), whereas Robert Robinson can clearly be distinguished as clarinet soloist in the Vitaphone short-film ‘Pie Pie Blackbird’ (see session 007 below).

In some choruses we hear both pianists solo together, George Rickson spreading a fine jazzy and swinging foundation for Eubie Blake’s rather irritating ragtime styled renditions in the treble register. OK, it was a show band!

There almost is no solo work on ‘Please, Don’t Talk About ...’ except for the pianists and the singer. On the second title we find a nice chorus for the clarinet trio cum trombone. The final clarinet solo on this title may be played by Robinson, as compared with his work in the ‘Pie Pie Blackbird’ film. The fourth title of the session is of similar substance, and equally uneventful jazz-wise.

#### Notes:

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

- Rust\*2: three unknown (tpt); unknown (tbn); Robert Robinson, unknown (clt, alt); unknown (ten); Eubie Blake (pno, ldr); unknown (bjo); unknown (bbs); unknown (dms); Dick Robertson (vcl)

- Rust\*3,\*4,\*6: Alfred Brown -Frank Belt -George Winfield -t; Calvin Jones -tb; Ben Whitted -Ralph Brown -cl -as; Robert Robinson -cl -ts; Eubie Blake -p -ldr; George Rickson -p; Leroy Vanderveer -bj; Frank Smith -bb; Helen Porter -d; Dick Robertson -v

#### Tunes Structures:

1234-4 Please Don’t Talk About Me When I’m Gone Key of Eb / Db / Ab / F Crown  
 (Intro 8 bars bbs-clt – ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA DR voc – ens)(tag 2 bars ens modulation)(Verse 16 bars AA’ ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA ens)(tag 2 bars ens modulation)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA EB treble pno + GR background pno 16 - ?RB clt + ens 8 – EB treble pno + GR background pno 6 – ens 2)(tag 2 bars ens modulation)(Chorus 4 32 bars AABA ens 16 – CJ o-tbn 8 – ens 8)(tag 2 bars ens)

1239-1 I’m No Account Anymore Key of Eb / F / Eb Crown  
 (Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA DR voc + ens)(bridge 4 bars ens)(tag 4 bars ens modulation)(interlude 8 bars ens)  
 (Chorus 2 32 bars AABA CJ o-tbn - ens 16 – clts 8 – CJ o-tbn - ens 8)(tag 2 bars ens modulation)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA ens 16 – EB treble pno + GR background pno 8 – ens 8)(tag 2 bars ens)(1/2 Chorus 4 16 bars BA RR clt 8 – ens 8)(tag 2 bars ens)

1241- It Looks Like Love Key of Eb / Db / Eb Crown  
 (Intro 8 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA ens)(tag 2 bars ens modulation)(Verse 16 bars AA’ ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA DR voc – ens)(tag 2 bars ens modulation)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA EB treble pno + GR background pno 4 – ens 4 - EB treble pno + GR background pno 4 – ens 4 – EB treble pno + GR background pno 8 – ens)(tag 2 bars ens)

#### 004 EUBIE BLAKE AND HIS ORCHESTRA

New York, Apr. 1931

Eubie Blake – pno, ldr;

Alfred Brown, Frank Belt, Walter ‘Jock’ Bennett – tpt; Calvin Jones – tbn;

Harold Scott, Ralph Brown – alt, clt; Robert Robinson – ten, clt;

George Rickson – pno; Leroy Vanderveer – bjo; Frank Smith – bbs; Alan Porter – dms;

Dick Robertson – voc

1295-1	Two Little Blue Little Eyes	Cr 3111,	Harrison Records LP-G (LP)
1296-1	Nobody’s Sweetheart	Cr 3130,	Harrison Records LP-G (LP)
1297-1	One More Time	Cr 3111,	Harrison Records LP-G (LP)
1298-3	St. Louis Blues	Cr 3130,	Harrison Records LP-G (LP)
1298-4	St. Louis Blues	Cr 3130	not on LP/CD

We cannot determine possible changes of personnel at subsequent sessions as the recorded music is almost entirely arranged. As musicians can be identified by their solo-work only, there is very little possibility to compare. Thus, I can only but maintain the former personnel – with no alterations. And this still is not the session with Ben Whitted participating, re George Winfield.

There is very nice trumpet in the first chorus of the first title, but for me it does not sound like Bennett as I know him. ‘Nobody’s Sweetheart’ has Blake “tickling” the keys, again; the clarinet soloist shows blues and funk – for me Ralph Brown, and the hot trumpet – ‘Jock’ Bennett? – delivers the hot ride-out. There is very competent growl playing by the second trumpet probably in ‘One More Time’, thus probably Frank Belt. And ‘St. Louis Blues’ also has nice muted trumpet – Belt again, possibly – and bluesy clarinet of the Western manner, thus probably Ralph Brown. The last trumpet choruses I would assume to be ‘Jock’ Bennett. This version of ‘St. Louis Blues’ is performed in an arrangement very different from all other titles, because the band use a less complicated jazz arrangement here. Therefore we find much more solo performance.

Notes:

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

- Rust\*2: three unknown (tpt); unknown (tbn); Robert Robinson, unknown (clt, alt); unknown (ten); Eubie Blake (pno, ldr); unknown (bjo); unknown (bbs); unknown (dms); Dick Robertson (vcl)

- Rust\*3,\*4,\*6: Alfred Brown -Frank Belt -George Winfield -t; Calvin Jones -tb; Ben Whitted -Ralph Brown -cl -as; Robert Robinson -cl -ts; Eubie Blake -p -ldr; George Rickson -p; Leroy Vanderveer -bj; Frank Smith -bb; Helen Porter -d; Dick Robertson -v

Tunes Structures:

1295-1 Two Little Blue Little Eyes Key of C / Eb / C Crown

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AA' ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AA' DR voc)(tag 4 bars ens modulation)(Chorus 3 32 bars AA' EB treble pno + GR background pno)(tag 2 bars ens modulation)(Chorus 4 32 bars AA' ens 16 – RR ten 8 – ens 8)(Coda 4 bars ens)

1296-1 Nobody's Sweetheart Key of Ab / C / Ab Crown

(Intro 8 bars ens)(Chorus 1 40 bars ABACA' ens)(Chorus 2 40 bars ABACA' DR voc modulation)(Chorus 3 40 bars ABABA' ?RB clt 16 – CJ o-tbn 16 – ?RB clt 6 – ens 2 modulation)(Chorus 4 40 bars ABACA' ens 16 – WJB o-tpt 24)(tag 2 bars ens)

1297-1 One More Time Key of Em / Fm Crown

(Intro 8 bars ens+?FB m-tpt)(Chorus 1 38 bars AA'BA' ens+?FB m-tpt 18 – saxes 8 – ens+?m-tpt 12)(Chorus 2 38 bars AA'BA' DR voc)(Bridge 6 bars ens modulation)(Chorus 3 AA'BA' ens+RR ten 20 – saxes 8 – ens+RR ten 4 – ens 8)(tag 2 bars ens)

1298-3 St. Louis Blues Key of G / Gm / G Crown

(Intro 8 bars ens)(Chorus 1 12 bars DR voc + ?FB m-tpt)(Chorus 2 12 bars DR voc + ?FB m-tpt)(Verse 16 bars CJ o-tbn – ens)(Chorus 3 12 bars DR voc)(Chorus 4 12 bars ?RB clt)(Chorus 5 12 bars ?RB clt)(Chorus 6 12 bars WJB o-tpt)(Chorus 7 12 bars ?RB clt)(Chorus 8 12 bars WJB o-tpt – ens)(tag 2 bars WJB o-tpt)

Discernible differences of takes:

1298: as take -4 of matrix 1298 is un-reissued, differences cannot be stated.

**005 EUBIE BLAKE AND HIS ORCHESTRA**

New York,

Jun. 03, 1931

Eubie Blake – pno, ldr;

Alfred Brown, Frank Belt, Walter ‘Jock’ Bennett – tpt; Calvin Jones – tbn;

Harold Scott, Ralph Brown – alt, clt; Robert Robinson – ten, clt;

George Rickson – pno; Leroy Vanderveer – bjo; Frank Smith – bbs; Alan Porter – dms;

Dick Robertson – voc

69683-1 Thumpin´ n´ Bumpin´

Vic 22737,

Frog DGF 11

69683-2 Thumpin´ n´ Bumpin´

Vic unissued,

Frog DGF 71

69684-1 Little Girl

Vic 22735,

Frog DGF 11

69684-2 Little Girl

Vic unissued,

Frog DGF 71

69685-1 My Blue Days Blew Over (When You Came Back To Me)

Vic unissued,

Frog DGF 71

69685-2 My Blue Days Blew Over (When You Came Back To Me)

Vic 22735,

Frog DGF 11

The band really seems to be in fine fettle: “thumpin´ and bumpin´”, as the first title suggests. The tuba has a nice and interesting part in this title, playing harmonic bass-lines and swinging along with Rickson on piano. (Which makes me wonder: was Rickson the author of all these most interesting arrangements?) And the drummer still uses brushes all along, to change over to sticks in the last chorus, only to cause big confusion when missing the band’s rhythm for one measure on his cymbal in take -2 (see below).

‘Little Girl’ has nice romantic trumpet over the ensemble and the vocal by probably Belt in the first choruses, and hot muted trumpet in the last chorus by probably Bennett. He also solos extendedly in the penultimate chorus, the middle-eight taken over by Vanderveer’s banjo solo. The two pianists then perform their double-level piano model in the middle-eight of the last chorus.

And not Ben Whitted, here.

Notes:

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

- Rust\*2: three unknown (tpt); unknown (tbn); Robert Robinson, unknown (clt, alt); unknown (ten); Eubie Blake (pno, ldr); unknown (bjo); unknown (bbs); unknown (dms); Dick Robertson (vcl)

- Rust\*3,\*4,\*6: Alfred Brown -Frank Belt -George Winfield -t; Calvin Jones -tb; Ben Whitted -Ralph Brown -cl -as; Robert Robinson -cl -ts; Eubie Blake -p -ldr; George Rickson -p; Leroy Vanderveer -bj; Frank Smith -bb; Helen Porter -d; Dick Robertson -v

- B. Rust, *The Victor Master Book, Vol. 2*: 3 t; tb; 3 s; p; bj; bb; d; vocalist: Dick Robertson

Tunes Structures:

69683-1 Thumpin´ n´ Bumpin´ Key of F / Dm / G / Bb Victor

(Intro 8 bars ens – RR ten)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA' ens)(Chorus 2 30(!) bars AABA' DR voc)(Chorus 3 32 bars AA'BA' ens 8 – CJ o-tbn 8 – ?WJB 8 – CJ o-tbn 8)(tag 2 bars ens modulation)(Chorus 4 32 bars AABA' ens 16 – RR ten 8 – ens 8)(tag 4 bars ens modulation)(Chorus 5 32 bars AABA' ens / clts 16 – ens 16)(Coda 4 bars ens)

69684-1 Little Girl Key of Bb / Ab / C Victor

(Chorus 1 32 bars AA' ens 8 – EB treble pno + GR background pno 8 – ens 16)(Chorus 2 32 bars AA' DR voc – ? m-tpt)(tag 4 bars ens modulation)(Chorus 3 32 bars AA' CJ o-tbn 8 – ens 8 – CJ o-tbn 8 – ens 8)(tag 2 bars ens modul.)(Chorus 4 32 bars AA' ?WJB m-tpt 16 – saxes 8 – ens 8)

69685-1 My Blue Days Blew Over (When You Came Back To Me) Key of C / Eb / D Victor

(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA' clts 16 – m-brass 8 – clts 6 – ens 2)(tag 2 bars ens modulation)(Verse 16 bars ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA' DR voc 30 – WJB o-tpt 2)(Chorus 3 32 bars AABA' WJB o-tpt 16 – LV bjo 8 – WJB o-tpt 6 – ens 2)(tag 2 bars ens modulation)(Chorus 4 32 bars AABA' ens 16 – EB treble pno + GR background pno 8 – ens 8)(tag 2 bars ens)

Discernible differences of takes:

69683-1: Middle-eight of last chorus: drummer’s cymbal inaudible

- 69683-2: *Middle-eight of last chorus: drummer struggles to play same rhythm with band, but plays two quarter strokes each one measure behind the band for four bars, then changing over to play one stroke each only on the band's two beats*  
 69684-1: *First chorus: E. Blake starts his treble piano over Rickson's background reluctantly in bar 10*  
 69684-2: *First chorus: E. Blake starts his treble piano over Rickson's background in bar 8 already*  
 69685-1: *Trumpet solo in chorus 3 ends with downward phrase ending with middle Eb*  
 69685-2: *Trumpet solo in chorus 3 ends with upward phrase ending with high Eb*

## 006 EUBIE BLAKE AND HIS ORCHESTRA

New York,

Sept. 1931

Eubie Blake – pno, ldr;

Alfred Brown, Frank Belt, George Winfield – tpt; Calvin Jones – tbn;

Ben Whitted, Ralph Brown – alt, clt; Robert Robinson – ten, clt;

George Rickson – pno; Leroy Vanderveer – bjo; Frank Smith – bbs; Jesse Baltimore – dms;

Dick Robertson – voc

1476-3	Blues In My Heart	Cr 3197,	Harrison Records LP-G (LP)
1477-2	Life Is Just A Bowl Of Cherries	Cr 3193	not on LP/CD
1477-3	Life Is Just A Bowl Of Cherries	Cr 3193	not on LP/CD
1478-2	Sweet Georgia Brown	Cr 3197,	Harrison Records LP-G (LP)
1479-1	River, Stay ^Way From My Door	Cr 3193	not on LP/CD
1479-3	River, Stay ^Way From My Door	Cr 3193	not on LP/CD

Here now, we seem to be on firm ground, re the personnel. This must be the recording session George Winfield refers to in his recollections, he himself on trumpet, and Charlie Johnson's Ben Whitted on alto/clarinet.

'Blues In My Heart' is the famous Benny Carter composition of this same year, yet played in an arrangement different from Carter's own as used by the Chick Webb Band – and with Carter himself on alto sax. The Blake band version uses a more romantic trumpet part.

The trumpet soloist in 'Sweet Georgia Brown' using wa-wa technique must then be Frank Belt, as George Winfield – although playing third trumpet – recalled that "I didn't take any solos" (see below). (It is a sad fact that the only ad-lib trumpet solo declared by Winfield as his own is on Jesse Stone's Variety recording of 'Windstorm', one of two only titles by the Jesse Stone's Orchestra of 1937 never reissued in all the years of great LPs and CDs of the past.)

Notes:

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

- *Peter Carr, You Don't Know Me, But ... George Winfield's Story, p. 20: "After my first week (with Elmer Snowden at 'Smalls' – KBR), Eubie Blake sent for me for the show 'Singing The Blues'. I was on two weeks' notice at Small's (sic – KBR) when I made the audition with Blake. There were only the two of us at his apartment. He asked me if I knew 'Memories Of You' – he had written it for one of his shows.*

*He told me to play a straight chorus, then to swing the second. At the end of the second chorus he said he was changing keys, so I played it in the new key with ease. He told me I was satisfactory and would let me know when rehearsals would start for the full band. He told me to call him when I finished at Small's. I did this and went into rehearsal for the show as 3rd trumpet. The show had already had a try-out and had closed until the theatre season started.*

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*After the show closed, we made a few auditions. One was for NBC but nothing came of it. We played a week at the Lafayette Theatre on 7th Avenue. I continued my gig work while Blake was idle. We finally got two weeks with the Buck and Bubbles unit, using the same band except for the brass. We had lost Frank Belt and Alfred Brown, who went with a show called 'Sugar Hill'. The International Musician of January 1932 lists the band in Washington with the two changes in the trumpet section. I was now playing second, Gilbert Paris was 1st, Ward Pinkett was 3rd. For the first show there was no one there but me; Ward had fallen asleep in the movie and Paris was held up with a problem at the Union. So Ward showed and I played 1st and Ward 2nd.*

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*The 'International Musician' of January 1932 lists the personnel of the band as mentioned above."*

- *Rust\*2: three unknown (tpt); unknown (tbn); Robert Robinson, unknown (clt, alt); unknown (ten); Eubie Blake (pno, ldr); unknown (bjo); unknown (bbs); unknown (dms); Dick Robertson (vcl)*

- *Rust\*3,\*4,\*6: Alfred Brown -Frank Belt -George Winfield -t; Calvin Jones -tb; Ben Whitted -Ralph Brown -cl -as; Robert Robinson -cl -ts; Eubie Blake -p -ldr; George Rickson -p; Leroy Vanderveer -bj; Frank Smith -bb; Helen Porter -d; Dick Robertson -v*

Tunes Structures:

1476-3 *Blues In My Heart* Key of Bb / F Crown  
 (Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AABA DR voc modulation)(1/2 Chorus 3 16 bars AABA ens 16)  
 (Coda 4 bars RR ten – ens)

1478-2 *Sweet Georgia Brown* Key of G / Dm / Ab / G Crown  
 (Intro 8 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AA' ens)(Chorus 2 32 bars AA' DR voc – EB pno background)(tag 6 bars ens modulation)  
 (Verse 20 bars AA' RR ten – ens modulation)(Chorus 3 32 bars AA' FB m-tpt)(Bridge 4 bars clt – ens modulation)(1/2 Chorus 4 16 bars A' ens – ten – ens)(Coda 8 bars ens)

Discernible differences of takes:

1477: *as both takes of this title are un-reissued, differences cannot be stated.*

1479: *as both takes of this title are un-reissued, differences cannot be stated.*

## 007 EUBIE BLAKE AND HIS ORCHESTRA

New York,

late 1932/early 1933

Eubie Blake – pno, ldr;

Alfred Brown, Frank Belt, George Winfield – tpt; Calvin Jones – tbn;

Harold Scott, Ralph Brown – alt, clt; Robert Robinson – ten, clt;

soundtrack of Vitaphone film

'Pie Pie Blackbird'

George Rickson – pno; Leroy Vanderveer – bjo; Fred Peters – sbs; Jesse Baltimore – dms; Nina Mae McKinney – voc (2,4); Eubie Blake + band – voc (5); The Nicholas Brothers – tap dance (6)	
Intro (Tiger Rag sequence)	Harlequin HQ 2038 (LP)
Blackbird Pie	Harlequin HQ 2038 (LP)
Memories Of You	Harlequin HQ 2038 (LP)
Everything I've Got Belongs To You	Harlequin HQ 2038 (LP)
I'll Be Glad When You're Dead, You Rascal, You	Harlequin HQ 2038 (LP)
China Boy (tap-dance sequence)	Harlequin HQ 2038 (LP)

Dates given above are from Dr. Klaus Stratemann, 'Negro Bands on Film' Vol. 1. This film is mentioned in short only in George Winfield's Story 'You Don't Know Me, But ...'.

Stratemann notes that all trumpet solos are by George Winfield, as does Storyville 83. This note I cannot entirely disprove, but it is my opinion that two of the three trumpet players may solo, the first one being Winfield (clearly recognised by his physiognomy) in 'Memories Of You', his trumpet style over-hasty, not swinging, and rhythmically un-secure. This solo is discernibly over-dubbed, Winfield's erratic finger movements clearly not corresponding with the melody notes heard – probably of quality reasons. (Was this Blake's reason not to let Winfield solo on session 006?) The trumpet solos in 'You Rascal, You' – in minor key - as well as the later muted one in 'China Boy' and the accompaniment of singer McKinney in 'Everything ...' – in duet with the clarinet - I would attribute to Frank Belt, as they are much more swinging than Winfield's solo in 'Memories of You'. This again would correspond with my assumption that Belt is the trumpet soloist in session 006, where Winfield did not solo in his own report.

Alto player Ralph Brown is recognised wearing glasses by Al Vollmer. The clarinet soloist on 'Everything I've Got ...' and on 'You Rascal, You' – the minor part - must then be Robert Robinson, comparing with the final clarinet solo in 'I'm No Account Any More' of the first session (see above). The player's style is horizontal, tenor-sax-like, and not bluesy.

Calvin Jones also solos strongly on his trombone, but – as in the recordings above – never ad-libbing, but always playing straight melody. The 'Tiger Rag' sequence - used as introduction to the film - clearly has two trombones playing the middle-break glissandos in harmony. But the film does not show a second trombonist.

And then there is beautiful Nina Mae McKinney singing – but with little funk, unfortunately. And two promising new-stars, Fayard and Harold Nicholas, fourteen and eight years of age at this time, tap-dancing and singing.

And we hear Eubie Blake in full power, not really very jazzy but more classically inclined, yet not in the trashy style heard on sessions 003 to 006. His piano introduction to 'Memories of You' cites Franz Liszt's 'Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 in C-sharp-minor'. Probably only to demonstrate that Blake also knew the Classics.

#### SOURCES:

- Peter Carr, 'You Don't Know Me, But ...' George Winfield's Story, p. 20: "After my first week (with Elmer Snowden at 'Smalls' – KBR), Eubie Blake sent for me for the show 'Singing The Blues'. I was on two weeks' notice at Small's (sic – KBR) when I made the audition with Blake. There were only the two of us at his apartment. He asked me if I knew 'Memories Of You' – he had written it for one of his shows. He told me to play a straight chorus, then to swing the second. At the end of the second chorus he said he was changing keys, so I played it in the new key with ease. He told me I was satisfactory and would let me know when rehearsals would start for the full band. He told me to call him when I finished at Small's. I did this and went into rehearsal for the show as 3rd trumpet. The show had already had a try-out and had closed until the theatre season started.

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- Storyville 82, p.126, George Winfield: "You asked about the personnel in the 'Pie Pie Blackbird' short. That was the original Eubie Blake Band I was with, but with one change. Fred Peters was on bass fiddle in place of Bruno Henson, who was not available at the time. If my memory about this date is correct, Peters had a bass that he could only get in his car one way, which was very difficult. Instead of taking the bass in the house for the night, he left it in the car overnight ... and you can guess right, someone stole it out of the car! I think this was the night after the 'Pie Pie Blackbirds' engagement. The personnel is: 1st trumpet Alfred Brown, 2nd trumpet Frank Belt, 3rd trumpet George Winfield, trombone Calvin Jones, 1st alto sax Harold Scott, 2nd tenor sax/clarinet James (Bob) Robinson, 3rd alto sax Ralph Brown, piano and leader Eubie Blake, 2nd piano George Rickson, banjo Leroy Vanderveer, bass Fred Peters, drums Jesse Baltimore. George Winfield, New York." (It should be noted that George Winfield takes all the trumpet solos, and Al Vollmer identifies Ralph Brown as the alto player wearing glasses – LW)

- Michael Rader of Karlsruhe, Germany, has unearthed the following dates of Eubie Blake and his Orchestra in 1931: The show 'Singing The Blues' already existed in April 1931. The music for the revue was composed by Dorothy Fields and Jimmy McHugh, and among the performers were the Washington-sisters Fredi and Isabelle (Fredi being known for her star-appearance in Duke Ellington's early movie

'Black And Tan Fantasy' of 1929). The Eubie Blake Orchestra performed at the Pythian Temple in Pittsburgh on 8 June, 1931, at the Fernbrook Theatre, Wilkes-Barre, on 4 July, and in Atlantic City with a revue called 'Hot From Harlem' in August of that year. From September on the band accompanied 'Singing The Blues' again, at the Liberty Theatre in New York City this time. An advertisement (courtesy Franz Hoffmann) shows Blake's Band with the 'Shaky Feet Revue' on 16 May 1931, and with 'Garvey's Facts and Fancies' at the Lafayette Theatre in NYC.

Alfred Brown and Frank Belt seem to have been an accomplished trumpet team for this kind of music - Frank Belt also with the early Leroy Smith Orchestra from Detroit - leaving Blake together in late 1931 for the show 'Sugar Hill'.

Trombonist Calvin Jones was a veteran with Sissle and Blake's 'Shuffle Along' of 1921 (see above) and the later 'Plantation Orchestra', and thus a very reliable and able performer.

The reed player Harold Scott, probably hailing from Cincinnati and late with Alex Jackson and his Plantation Orchestra, altoist/clarinetist Ralph Brown from Chicago, where he worked and recorded with Clarence Jones and his Sock Four, and later for two years with Fess Williams and his Royal Flush Orchestra at New York's Savoy Ballroom, and tenor man Robert Robinson - no other employment known - make up the reed section. Of these three musicians I assume Ralph Brown to be the clarinet soloist on the below sides, whereas Robert Robinson can clearly be distinguished as clarinet soloist in the Vitaphone short-film 'Pie Pie Blackbird'.

In some choruses we hear both pianists solo together, George Rickson spreading a jazzy and swinging foundation for Eubie Blake's rather irritating ragtime styled renditions in the treble register.

Banjo player Leroy Vanderveer is a remnant of Blake's 'Shuffle Along' Orchestra, Fletcher Henderson's earliest recording session, and the later Arthur Gibbs Orchestra. He delivers a strong and swinging banjo rhythm.

Frank Smith on the tuba is under-recorded, unfortunately, and can thus not be estimated.

Our drummer is male, Alan Porter, and not female as listed in the early discos, namely Helen Porter. He prefers to use the brushes when performing, and supports the band with a driving beat. He is replaced later by Jesse Baltimore, veteran of the Plantation Orchestra and Noble Sissle's band of 1929.

I have to thank whole-heartedly Michael Rader and Georg Haselbek for their great help to find out some of the above noted details!

K. - B. Rau  
02.05.2023