THE RECORDINGS OF

WOODING'S GRAND CENTRAL RED CAPS

An Annotated Tentative Personnelo - Discography

WOODING, Russell pianist, bandleader

personal data unknown, but probably from Washington D.C.

A. McCarthy, Big Band Jazz: "Russell Wooding's Grand Central Red Caps had four titles issued on RCA Victor in 1931. The two which I have heard are decidedly undistinguished, not least for the vocals by one Willie Jackson. Little is known about Wooding's activities during the early and mid 'twenties, but trumpeter Demas Dean was working with him around 1923. Musicians have reported that the best band that Wooding led was one in 1932, a year in which he employed Leonard Davis (trumpet), Dicky Wells (trombone) and Bernard Addison (guitar) and was resident for a while at Connie's Inn. Shortly afterwards, Wooding concentrated on theatre work, his only other appearance on record was as conductor of a band that accompanied Ethel Waters on some titles made for the Liberty Music Shop."

Website 'harryoakley': "Russell Wooding, horn player, bandleader and actor. Wooding began band leading in Washington D.C., and was an early employer of Duke Ellington. At some point he moved to New York and began a stint playing for Broadway shows and appearing in Vitaphone short subjects. In 1933 he appeared in the Vitaphone short "Rufus Jones for President" with Ethel Waters and composed/played the score for her Broadway show "At Home Abroad". He also recorded two tunes with Waters on the Liberty Music Shop label."

This personnelo-discography is based on RUST, $\,$ JAZZ AND RAGTIME RECORDS $\,$ 1897 - 1942.

Personnels 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: Russell Wooding
- Probable, generally agreed, but not documented identifications are listed in italics, thus: Russell Wooding
- 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: (Russell Wooding)

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.

WOODING'S GRAND CENTRAL RED CAPS

001 WOODING'S GRAND CENTRAL RED CAPS New York, May 13, 1931 unknown, unknown – tpt; Benny Morton – tbn; Q. Wooding or (Albert Socarras?) – alt, clt, flt; unknown – alt, clt; Gene Kennedy – ten, clt; unknown - pno; unknown - bjo; unknown - bbs; Percy Robinson - dms; Willie Jackson – voc (1,2); Frank Luther – voc (3) 69607-2 Vic 23382, Frog DGF 11 Nina Frog DGF 11 Niagara Falls 69608-1 Vic 23382. 69609 That's My Desire Vic unissued not on LP/CD I Can't Get Enough Of You 69610-1 Frog DGF 11 Composer credits: 69607 (Andy Razaf - Russell Wooding); 69608 (Walter Brown); 69610 (Joe Goodwin _ Larry Shay)

This is expertly played hot dance music from New York in the early 1930s, not very jazzy - and not funky at all, but well suited for dancing.

The band recorded four titles for Victor on May 13, 1931, of which 'That's My Desire' was unissued, but re-recorded at the later session

Rather curiously we find trombonist Bennie Morton among the band's musicians.

In 'I Can't Get Enough Of You' a flute is present among the three-part reed section, but heard only in the vocal chorus together with an oboe. As Wooding's flutist is named as his brother Quentin in Storyville 72-215 (see below), Socarras might possibly only be an assumption of record collectors conveyed to Brian Rust and listed in Rust*4,*6, based on his uniqueness as flutist among coloured musicians in the late 1920s in New York.

The flute part heard in this title is quite short in size and requirement, and may well be played by any flutist. But regarding Quentin Wooding's documented activity as reed/flute-player in his brother's band in c. 1929 (see below) this might well be a clue to this player's identity. The scored flute parts, yet, do not allow any determination as to the musician's identity.

Another name cited in Storyville 72 is a Mr. Kennedy playing oboe. He might possibly be the ill-famed Gene Kennedy, notorious for always carrying a gun and threatening others, but known for playing with Luis Russell, June Clark, Leon Abbey and other leaders. (He is the soprano sax player on the famous Perry Bradford band photo in 'Keepnews / Grauer, A Pictorial History of Jazz', p.129! It must yet be added that the band shown actually is 'June Clark and his Creole Stompers', house band at 'Smalls' Sugar Cane Club' in 1924/25!) If in fact this is 'this' Gene Kennedy, he must be the tenor sax soloist in the band, playing an un-swinging tenor sax style of by-gone times, yet the only examples possibly of this enigmatic man's musical activities on record. Notes:

- Storyville 72-215: Russell Wooding Orchestra (no date, no location, but before August 1929?): Demas Dean, trumpet; Juan Tizol, Trombone; --- Blanchette, violin; Russell Wooding, piano; R. Tizol, bass; --- Kennedy, oboe; Q. Wooding, flute; unknown, banjo; unknown, drums; Busch (sic) Hunter, cello, vocal; Wesley Howard, violin.
- L. Wright, "Fats" in Fact, p.61: "The 'International Musician' of February 1930 has a report of what appears to be the Russell Wooding Orchestra from Local 9 of Boston which lists Russell Wooding, Bernard Parker, vn; Willie Hicks, t; Joe Marshall, d; Thomas Waller, p; Charles Green, tb; and Dallas Chambers, t."
- Rust*2: two unknown (tpt); unknown (tbn); three unknown (reeds); unknown (pno); unknown (bjo); unknown (bbs); Percy Robinson (dms); Willie Jackson, Frank Luther (vcl)
- Rust*3: two unknown -t; unknown -tb; three unknown -cl -ss -as -ts; unknown -p; unknown -bj; unknown -bb; Percy Robinson -d; Willie Jackson, Frank Luther -v
- Rust*4: 2 unknown -t; Benny Morton (?) -tb; Albert Socarras -as -f; 2 unknown -cl -ss -as -ts -one doubling -o; unknown -p; unknown -bj; unknown -bb; Percy Robinson -d; Willie Jackson, Frank Luther -v
- Rust*6: unknown, unknown, t; Benny Morton, tb; unknown, unknown, cl, ss, as; unknown, cl, ss, ts; Albert Socarras, as, f; unknown p; unknown bj; unknown bb; Percy Robinson, d; Willie Jackson, Frank Luther -v

002 WOODING'S GRAND CENTRAL RED CAPS

New York,

May 20, 1931

 $unknown, unknown-tpt; \ Benny\ Morton-tbn;$

Q. Wooding or (Albert Socarras?) - alt, clt, flt; unknown - alt, clt; Gene Kennedy - ten, clt;

unknown – pno; unknown - bjo; unknown – bbs; Percy Robinson – dms;

Dick Robertson - voc

69609-4 That's My Desire Vic 22718.

Frog DGF 12

This is the re-recording of the unissued title of the fore-going session. No additional titles seem to have been recorded on this date. Here the flutist leads the three-piece reed section, again including an oboe, in the first chorus. He may well be the same musician as before in the vocal chorus of 'I Can't Get Enough Of You'. Yet, on this 'That's My Desire' he is featured much more on flute, playing scored fast arpeggiated phrases behind the vocalist.

In case this in fact would be Socarras as listed in Rust*4,*6, he is not added to a three-piece reed section, but is part of it, and would thus perhaps be an integral part of the Wooding band. But unfortunately, Socarras does not mention any connection or business with the Russell Wooding band - recording for Victor - in his reminiscence in Storyville 90! Instead, he remembered working as a studio musician for Columbia Records for some time.

Conclusively, I do not think that Albert Socarras is the flutist/saxophonist on these two Russell Wooding sessions, the flute parts being played nicely and musically, but not necessarily by Mr. Socarras.

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- Rust*3: two unknown -t; unknown -tb; Albert Socarras -as -f; three unknown -cl -ss -as -ts; unknown -p; unknown -bj; unknown -bb; Percy Robinson -d; Dick Robertson -v
- Rust*4: 2 unknown -t; Benny Morton (?) -tb; Albert Socarras -as -f; 2 unknown -cl -ss -as -ts -one doubling -o; unknown -p; unknown -bj; unknown -bb; Percy Robinson -d; Dick Robertson -v
- Rust*6: unknown, unknown, t; Benny Morton, tb; unknown, unknown, cl, ss, as; unknown, cl, ss, ts; Albert Socarras, as, f; unknown p; unknown bj; unknown bb; Percy Robinson, d; Dick Robertson, v

003 RUSSELL WOODING AND HIS ORCHESTRA

New York, Vitaphone film 'Rufus Jones for President'

1933

regular big band personnel of

3 unknown - tpt; unknown - tbn;

3 unknown reeds;

unknown - pno; unknown - gtr/bjo; unknown - bbs; unknown - dms;

Mabel Scott - voc

Puttin' It On

on you tube 'harryoakley'

Website "harryoakley" presents an excerpt from the Vitaphone short "Rufus Jones for President" of 1933, showing a very slim female dancer/ singer - assumed to be Mabel Scott - performing one chorus of 'Puttin' It On', accompanied by a very strong big band of regular instrumentation and assumed to be Russell Wooding's, and a chorus line of female dancers, also accompanied by this same big band, performing 4 choruses with a simple score of riff-like A-parts of AABA chorus, the B-parts being ad-libbed by a hot trumpeter or a hot trombonist. The Vitaphone film stars singer Ethel Waters and the very young singer/dancer Sammy Davis, Jr.

004 **ETHEL WATERS** Russell Wooding and his Orchestra New York, Oct. 16, 1935

Ethel Waters - voc;

unknown - tpt;

unknown – clt; unknown – vln;

 $unknown-pno;\ unknown-gtr;\ unknown-sbs;\ unknown-dms$

95605-1 Hottentot Potentate LMS L-188, Chronogical Classics 755 95606-1 Thief In The Night LMS L-188, Chronogical Classics 755

Composer credits are: 95605 (Dietz - Schwartz); 95606 (Dietz - Schwartz)

Russell Wooding led big bands in Harlem with differing personnels through the early 1930s. With five sides recorded for Victor in New York in 1931, these two titles with Ethel Waters are his only known output.

The band is a competent and strong unit, but plays scores, throughout. No individual traits can be detected. Thus, nothing can be said about the personnel. Great Ethel Waters.

Notes:

- Rust*2,*3,*4,*6: Instrumentation and personnel unknown

K. - B. Rau

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