

The  
**TENORSAX**  
of  
**BENJAMIN FRANCIS  
WEBSTER**  
**“BEN” “FROG” “BRUTE”**  
**PART 2**  
**(1943 – 1954)**

Born: Kansas City, Missouri, March 27, 1909  
Died: Amsterdam, Holland, Sept. 20, 1973

*Introduction:*

Ben Webster got his fame through his association with Duke Ellington in the early forties, but he certainly managed on his own for his remaining forty years as active and highly respect artist.

*Intermediate History:*

Led own band on 52<sup>nd</sup> Street, short stay in Sid Catlett's band (early 1944), with Raymond Scott on C.B.S. and two months with John Kirby (June – July 1944). Brief spell with Stuff Smith early in 1945, but from October 1944 mostly led own small groups for various residencies including: Spotlight and Three Deuces in New York and at Garrick Bar in Chicago (also guested with Henry Allen's Band at the Garrick). Rejoined Duke Ellington from November 1948 until September 1949, worked with Jay McShann in Kansas City, also toured with 'Jazz At The Philharmonic'. Returned to Kansas City, worked regularly with Bob Wilson's band and free-lanced. Moved back to New York in late 1952, led own small groups, did studio work and free-lance recordings, then lived for several years in California (ref. John Chilton).

## BEN WEBSTER SOLOGRAPHY

Continued from 1943 and Duke Ellington.

Ben Webster left Duke Ellington in Aug. 13, 1943.

### **WOODY HERMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Nov. 8, 1943**

Bobby Guyer, Ray Wetzel, Cappy Lewis, Benny Stabler, Nick Travis (tp), Al Mastren, Eddie Bert, Ed Kiefer (tb), Woody Herman (cl, vo-71499,501,503,ldr), Johnny Bothwell, Chuck DiMaggio (as), Pete Mondello, Ben Webster (ts), Skippy DeSair (bar), Dick Kane (p), Hy White (g), Chubby Jackson (b), Cliff Leeman (dm), Frances Wayne (vo-71498,500).

Six titles were recorded for World Program Service Transcriptions (also issued on Decca or Coral), no BW on 71501-A "By The River Of The Roses" but:

71498-A	The Music Stopped	Solo 8 bars. (SM)
71499-A	Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me	Duet with (tp) 4 bars. (S)
71500-A	I Couldn't Sleep A Wink Last Night	Solo with orch 20 bars. (SM)
71502-A	Basie's Basement	Solo 12 bars. (M)
71503-A	Who Dat Up Dere?	Solo 16 bars with ens vocal. (M)

### **NYC. Jan. 8, 1944**

Same personnel, except Ralph Burns (p) replaces Dick Kane, Woody Herman (cl, as, vo-71626,629).

Five titles (four issued on Br(E)), no BW on 71629 "I'll Get By" but:

71626	Noah	Solo 8 bars. (SM)
71627	I've Got You Under My Skin	Solo 16 bars. (M)
71628	I Get A Kick Out Of You	Solo 8 bars. (M)
	Cryin' Sands	Soli 8 and 8 bars. (S)

### **same date**

Same with Frances Wayne (vo).

Four titles, no BW on "Don't Believe Everything You Dream" but:

	Speak Low	Solo with orch 8 bars. (SM)
	Just Dreaming	Solo 4 bars. (SM)
	Starlight Souvenirs	Solo with orch 6 bars. (M)

BW certainly does not miss the Duke Ellington organization, at least if we judge from these sides. His soli are mainly short, but of excellent quality. Note the groovy "... Basement", the surprising "Who Dat ..." with ensemble vocal interplay, the incredibly beautiful "... Sands", or any at all! Postscript of Jan. 4, 2020: All now on Mosaic's Woody Herman box, also including three new BW soli, brief but nice!

### **BEN WEBSTER AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Feb. 8, 1944**

Hot Lips Page (tp), Ben Webster (ts), Clyde Hart (p), Charlie Drayton (b), Denzil Best (dm).

World Transcriptions. Complete session with alternates and breakdowns: Takes in () were released on 16" transcriptions for radio broadcast purposes.

1633-1	Woke Up Clipped	Intro with ens 4 bars to solo/ens 16+8 bars, solo 8 bars on bridge. Acc. (tp) 16+8 bars, (p) on bridge. Solo with ens 16 bars to close. (SM)
1633-2	Woke Up Clipped	As above. (SM)
1633(-3)	Woke Up Clipped	As above. (SM)
1634-1	Teezol	Solo with ens 32 bars. Solo 64 bars, last 8 ens. (F)
1634-2	Teezol (NC)	No solo.
1634-3	Teezol (NC)	Solo with ens 30 bars to breakdown. (F)
1634-4	Teezol	As take 1. (F)

1634(-5)	Teezol	As take 1. (F)
1635-1	'Nuf Said	Solo/ens 16+8 bars, (p)/(b) on bridge. Solo 16 bars to solo/ens 16 bars. (SM)
1635(-2)	'Nuf Said	As above. (SM)
1636-1	The Horn	Solo with ens 32 bars. Solo 64 bars, last 8 ens. (F)
1636(-2)	The Horn	As above. (F)
1637-1	Dirty Deal (NC)	No solo.
1637-2	Dirty Deal	Solo/ens 32 bars. Solo 8 bars to solo/ens 8 bars. (M)
1637(-3)	Dirty Deal	As take 2. (M)
1638-1	Don't Blame Me	Solo 16 bars. (SM)
1638-2	Don't Blame Me	Solo 16 bars. Solo 24 bars to duet with (tp) 8 bars. (SM)
1638(-3)	Don't Blame Me	As take 2. (SM)
1639(-1)	I Surrender Dear	Solo 32 bars. Solo with tp 16 bars. (SM)
1640-1	Tea For Two (NC)	Intro 4 bars to solo 4 bars - breakdown. (FM)
1640-2	Tea For Two (NC)	No solo.
1640-3	Tea For Two (NC)	As take 1. (FM)
1640-4	Tea For Two	Solo/ens 32 bars. Solo 32 bars. Solo/ens 24 bars to duet with (tp) 8 bars. (FM)
1640(-5)	Tea For Two	As take 4. (FM)

The beginning of Ben Webster as a solo performer! Gone is Duke and Woody, now the forties and later decades lie open for Frog's majestic tenorsax playing. This session is not only the first of this new era, it brings us a number of alternates, plus the companionship of the great HLP and the underrated, magnificent Clyde Hart. What to highlight is an impossible decision, really, but I take a chance with the three versions of the lovely "Don't Blame Me". Regarding "I Surrender Dear", the only fault is that Ben made it in one take, such a shame! Dig the lovely "Nuf Said", which is the "Kat's Fur" on a later Savoy recording. Not all his playing here is pure soloing, but mere presentations. They are, however, still lovely. One item I find somewhat boring: "Dirty Deal". The fast "Teezol" and "The Horn", organized in the same way, offer some fast, rough playing, but never too rough. Still I prefer the slightly slower "Tea For Two", here we have the driving but still restrained artist at his very best. In all, a remarkable session, with more tenorsax in one day for us to rejoice in than many other good artists left us from their whole career.

**JAMES P. JOHNSON'S BLUE NOTE JAZZMEN NYC. March 4, 1944**

Sidney de Paris (tp) Vic Dickenson (tb), Ben Webster (ts), James P. Johnson (p), Jimmy Shirley (g), John Simmons (b), Sid Catlett (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Blue Note:

BN 950-1	Blue Mizz	Solo 12 bars. (S)
BN 950-2	Blue Mizz	As above. (S)
BN 951-2	Victory Stride	Soli 4, 2, 32, 4 and 2 bars. (FM)
BN 951-3	Victory Stride	As above. (FM)
BN 952-2	Joy Mentin'	Solo 12 bars. (SM)
BN 953-2	After You've Gone	Solo 80 bars. (FM)

The heavy meal on Feb. 8 with Hot Lips and Clyde has not yet been digested and then this!! Backed by a magnificent Sid Catlett, one of the greatest drummers ever, Ben delivers two unforgettable choruses on "... Gone". Note the uncanny rapport between the two, particularly the breaks! This item counts heavily in the top-ever BW solography. Second in, we have the two uttermost delicate versions of "Blue Mizz", the blues. BW obviously thrives in this, seemingly a little bit oldfashioned, company. The two other tracks also contain very satisfactory tenorsax playing. Memorable session!!!

**COZY COLE ALL STARS****NYC. March 13, 1944**

Lammar Wright (tp, except 5413), Ray Coniff (tb), Ben Webster (ts), Johnny Guarnieri (p), Teddy Walters (g), Billy Taylor (b), Cozy Cole (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Savoy:

S5410	Jericho	Soli 8 and 16 bars. (M)
S5411	Talk To Me	Soli 8 and 6 bars. (FM)
S5412	Concerto For Cootie	In ensemble. (F)
S5413	Body And Soul	Intro 4 bars to solo 31 bars (S) to solo 64 bars. (FM)
S5413	Body And Soul	Intro 4 bars to solo 31 bars (S) to solo 96 bars. (FM)

It is necessary to start with bringing attention to the brief but good soli on "Jericho" and "Talk To Me", otherwise they might have been forgotten ("Concerto ..." should be forgotten!!) because of "Body And Soul"!!! After this day, the song should be equally associated with Frog and Hawk. The two takes here are just incredible, with the exact mixture of beauty and sensitivity on the one hand and force and outwardness on the other. The ideas flow like a liquid, the rhythm section functions perfectly, and the two takes are incredibly different! Note how Ben in the alternate adds half a chorus instead of a whole one to the end, making Guarnieri twist in the air of momentary confusion before following up. This is really a lovely day for BW fans!!!

**SIDNEY CATLETT QUARTET****NYC. March 18, 1944**

Ben Webster (ts), Marlowe Morris (p), John Simmons (b), Sid Catlett (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Commodore:

4738-1	Sleep	Straight 32 to solo 32 bars. Solo 64 bars. (F)
4738-2	Sleep	As above. (F)
4738-3	Sleep	As above. (F)
4738-4	Sleep	Straight 32 to solo 32 bars. Solo 32 bars. (F)
4739-1	Linger Awhile	Solo 64 bars. (M)
4739-2	Linger Awhile	As above. (M)
4739-3	Linger Awhile	As above. (M)
4740-1	Memories Of You	Soli 32 and 16 bars. (S)
4740-2	Memories Of You	As above. (S)
4741-1	Just A Riff	Straight 32 bars. Solo 64 bars. (M)

Another remarkable session following the lead of Feb. 8. Ben plays so authoritatively on all items that one just has to marvel. From the slow "Memories ..." to the fast "Sleep" everything works perfectly, and why they made several takes I do not understand, although I am very grateful. The drummer is the leader of the session, and in fact, the rhythm section has a large part of the honor for the successful results. Sid's duets with Simmons on "Linger ..." are incredible, he plays so elaborately, like he has a horn and not "only" his drums. And the variations from take to take make you holler for joy. His backing on all items is just worthy of the greatest drummer of them all. "Linger ..." and "... Riff" are perhaps in the most pleasant tempo for Ben's playing in general, but on this session there are only highlights!

**BEN WEBSTER QUARTET****NYC. March 25, 1944**

Personnel as March 18 (Sid Catlett).

Two titles were recorded for Session:

170	Perdido	Straight 32 bars to solo 32 bars. Solo 8 bars. (M)
171	I Surrender Dear	Solo 32 bars. (SM). Soli 32 and 32 bars. (FM)

This version of "Perdido" is in a pleasant slow medium tempo with BW at his grooviest. In spite of the excellent quality of this item, "... Dear" is the great performance of the two. First a beautiful chorus in the "ordinary" tempo, and then a drum ignition by Catlett sends BW and Morris into space with two and one chorus respectively. They swing like hell, and this is one of my favorite items of the period. The roughness here in the last chorus always has a purpose, and Sid's bombs are quite unique, note how he drops them particularly in the beginning of the last chorus! Unforgettable!!

**WALTER FOOTS THOMAS AND HIS JUMPCATS NYC. April 1, 1944**

Emmett Berry (tp), Walter Thomas (cl, as, ts, ldr), Budd Johnson (cl, ts, bar), Ben Webster (ts), Clyde Hart (p), Oscar Pettiford (b), Cozy Cole (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Joe Davis, three have BW:

8125A	Broke But Happy	Solo 8 bars. (M)
8125B-1	Blues On The Delta	Solo 12 bars. (S)
8125B-2	Blues On The Delta	As above. (S)
8125B-3	Blues On The Delta (NC)	No solo.
8125B-4	Blues On The Delta	As take 1. (S)
8126B-1	Blues On The Bayou	Solo 8 bars. (S)
8126B-2	Blues On The Bayou	As above. (S)
8126B-3	Blues On The Bayou	As above. (S)

While I am not completely satisfied with this session as a whole, it has improved at lot from the old, noisy Joe Davis 78s to the very good sound from the original 16" acetates, and with a lot of alternate takes added. BW is not heard very much, but his contributions are in very pleasant tempi. I dig his "... Happy", and three versions of the two slow tunes are very convincing.

**RAYMOND SCOTT AND HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. April 13, 1944**

Probable personnel: Les Elgart, Charlie Shavers, Red Solomon, Lyman Vunk (tp), S. J. Koty, Benny Morton, Billy Pritchard (tb), Artie Baker, Milt Yaner (as), Wolfe Tayne, Ben Webster (ts), Stan Webb (bar), Billy Rowland (p), Tony Mottola (g), Israel Crosby (b), Specs Powell (dm), female (vo-"... Love").

Broadcast transcriptions, recorded by Timme Rosenkrantz.

Four titles, no tenorsax on "Theme", another tenorsax playing nicely on "Stardust" solo 12 bars (S), but:

Tijuana	Solo 8 bars. (M)
It's Love, Love, Love	Solo 8 bars. (M)

Nice band, and BW has a very neat, brief solo on "... Love". "Tijuana" is less exciting. By the way, how would you feel taking a tenorsax solo on "Stardust" with Ben Webster sitting in the next chair?!

**SIDNEY CATLETT QUARTET NYC. April 17, 1944**

Personnel as March 18 and March 25 (Ben Webster).

One title was recorded for Session (note that the matrix number is adjacent to March 25 session, and there may be some misdating here. Note also the Savoy session on April 17 with a different rhythm section!):

172	1-2-3 Blues	Soli 24, 48 and 12 bars. (M)
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Of similar quality as the previous Session session; Big Sid propelling BW into seven blues choruses, the third and fourth one almost "duet with drums"!

**BEN WEBSTER QUARTET NYC. April 17, 1944**

Ben Webster (ts), Johnny Guarneri (p), Oscar Pettiford (b), David Booth (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Savoy:

S5436-1	Honeysuckle Rose	Straight 32 bars to solo 32 bars. Solo 32 bars. (M)
S5436-2	Honeysuckle Rose	As above. (M)
S5436-3	Honeysuckle Rose	As above. (M)
S5437-1	I Surrender Dear	Solo 32 bars. (S) Solo 64 bars. (FM)
S5437-2	I Surrender Dear	As above. (S)/(FM)
S5438-1	Blue Skies	Straight 32 bars to solo 32 bars. Solo 32 bars. (M)
S5438-2	Blue Skies	As above. (M)
S5439-1	Kat's Fur	Straight 32 bars to solo 32 bars. Solo 8 bars. (M)

The quality sessions never end! BW changes his rhythm section, but his own playing is the same; perfect, with all the facets of his art to the most luminous prominence.

There is no item here that cannot be characterized as magnificent. Therefore, we have to go from magnificent and upwards! Then Savoy 580 is slightly more magnificent than Savoy 553!! The "Kat's Fur" is just the most feline song you ever heard. In almost slow medium BW caresses the listener with his horn, it is quite indescribable, so just listen! On "... Dear" he chooses the same recipe as on Session with two tempi, but with a slightly slower beginning, and with no interfering piano chorus in the fast medium part. The two versions are in fact very different. This one is more refined, with a silky opening, and with an intricate last half where the rhythm is turned upside down so many times you can't name it!! Maybe this version is even better, only God and Ben know, and as far as I know they discuss it every day, certainly Ben has this opportunity ...

**MEZZ MEZZROW SEXTET** **NYC. May 2, 1944**  
Possibly Dicky Wells (tb), Mezz Mezzrow (cl), Ben Webster, unknown (ts), unknown (p), Sid Catlett (dm).  
Recorded at Carnegie Hall.

Lady Be Good Solo 64 bars. (FM)

A quite ordinary solo, easily forgotten.

In May 1944 BW joined John Kirby and his sextet for a period of approximately two months. This is a quite messy research area with undocumented personnel. I have presented the results so far, but I urgently need your comments!!

**JOHN KIRBY AND HIS SEXTET** **NYC. May 7, 1944**  
Personnel similar to those listed for May, but Clyde Hart is unlikely.  
Two titles:

Little Brown Jug Solo 16 bars. (FM)

B-Flat Jump Solo 32 bars. (SM)

**NYC. May 10?, 1944**  
Charlie Shavers (tp), probably Buster Bailey (cl), probably George Johnson (as), Ben Webster (ts), probably Clyde Hart (p), John Kirby (b), Bill Beason (dm).  
Broadcast. The date, also given as May 19?, is dubious, particularly considering the next session.

Rose Room Solo 32 bars. (M)

No Love No Nothing Solo with ens 34 bars. (SM)

Andyology Solo 32 bars. (M)

**NYC. May 17, 1944**

Personnel including Dizzy Gillespie (tp).  
One title, "Andyology", no BW.

**AULD-HAWKINS-WEBSTER SEXTET** **NYC. May 17, 1944**  
Charlie Shavers (tp), Ben Webster (cl, ts), Georgie Auld (as, ts), Coleman Hawkins (ts), Bill Rowland (p), Hy White (g), Isreal Crosby (b), Specs Powell (dm), unknown (vo-1019).

Four titles were recorded for Apollo:

R 1016 Pick-Up Boys Solo 36 bars (1st tenorsax solo). (FM)

R 1017 Porgy No solo.

R 1018 Uptown Lullaby Solo 8 bars. (S)

R 1019 Salt Peanuts Solo 32 bars  
(middle tenorsax solo). (F)

It is interesting to note that BW never is featured more than Hawk on any of the four items, maybe this tells something about the relative strength of these two tenorsax masters at this time? BW plays roughly but very satisfactorily on the two faster tracks, but you should note the way Hawk takes over from Ben on "... Peanuts", as if to prove who is the master... The "... Lullaby" is exactly what you can expect of BW in the solo tempo.

**JOHN KIRBY AND HIS SEXTET** **NYC. May 19, 1944**  
Dizzy Gillespie (tp), otherwise probably as above.

Close Shave No solo. (FM)

Yesterdays Solo 32 bars. (SM)

Takin' A Chance On Love No solo. (M)  
 Honeysuckle Rose (NC) No solo. (FM)

**RAYMOND SCOTT AND HIS ORCHESTRA** NYC. May 20, 1944  
 Personnel unknown but Ben Webster (ts).  
 CBS-AFRS broadcast.

Powerhouse Solo with orch 18 bars. (M)

This "concerto" is more of a curiosum than a real piece of jazz music, but BW's contribution is good enough.

**JOHN KIRBY AND HIS SEXTET** NYC. May 22, 1944  
 Probably as May 19.

I'm Coming Home No solo. (FM)  
 Yesterdays Solo 32 bars. (SM)  
 Oh, What A Beautiful Morning Soli 32 and 32 bars. (M)  
 Rose Room (NC) Solo 6 bars (NC). (M)

**NYC. May 24, 1944**

Probably as May 19.

Irresistible You In ensemble. (S)  
 Perdido Solo 32 bars. (SM)  
 Rose Room Solo 32 bars, first half  
 drowned by announcer. (M)

**NYC. May 31, 1944**

Personnel including Ram Ramirez (p), Cliff Leeman (dm).  
 Three titles:

Andyology Solo 32 bars. (FM)  
 Duke's Idea Solo 48 bars. (FM)  
 B-Flat Special Solo with ens 32 bars. (SM)

**NYC. May/June 1944**

Hot Lips Page (tp), otherwise probably as above.

Amour Solo 8 bars. (M)  
 Passepied In ensemble. Solo 8 bars. (FM)  
 B Flat Special Solo 32 bars. (SM)

**NYC. June 14, 1944**

Probably as May/June.

Passepied In ensemble. Solo 8 bars. (FM)  
 K. C. Caboose Solo 12 bars. (M)

**NYC. June 21, 1944**

Probably as May/June, but probably Billy Kyle (p).  
 AFRS ONS broadcast from the Aquarium restaurant.

Theme In ensemble. (S)  
 Desert Nights In ensemble. Solo 14 bars. (FM)  
 I'll Be Seeing You Solo 8 bars. (SM)  
 Andyology Solo 32 bars. (FM)  
 I Learned A Lesson Solo 6 bars. (SM)  
 K. C. Caboose Solo 12 bars. (FM)  
 Do You Savvy? In ensemble. (FM)  
 Honeysuckle Rose Solo 32 bars. (FM)



Cross Roads	In ensemble. (F)
Theme	In ensemble. (FM)

It is fair to admit right away that I have always found John Kirby's small band quite boring - why it became so famous is an enigma to me. However, the 1944 broadcasts have exciting soloists like Dizzy, Hot Lips, Clyde Hart and BW, certainly making the situation different. In this context, when BW opens his mouth, the Kirby band is interesting after all! There are many tenorsax soli of excellent quality, particularly "Andyology", "Yesterdays" and "B Flat Special".

**ART TATUM ALL STAR ORCHESTRA** **NYC. June 25, 1944**  
 Roy Eldridge, Charlie Shavers (tp), Benny Morton, Vic Dickenson (tb), Edmond Hall (cl), Ben Webster (ts), Art Tatum (p,ldr), Al Casey (g), Slam Stewart (b), Sid Catlett (vo), Billie Holiday (vo-"Fine And Mellow", "All Of Me").  
 "New World A Coming" broadcast No 17, issued on Gazell:

Fine And Mellow	Very weak obbligato with ens. (S)
Royal Garden Blues	Two brief breaks. Solo 12 bars. (F)
All Of Me	Very weak obbligato with ens. (M)
I Got Rhythm	In ens. Solo with ens 16+8 bars, (p) on bridge. In ensemble. (F)

Although a lot of jazz greats are present, the results are meager, and BW's presence is not history-making. He can be heard on all four items, but mostly weakly in ensemble obbligato or in up-tempo all-outs. The solo in "I Got ..." is rough and not well recorded, and so we end up with one item, "Royal ...", which as an acceptable solo but no more.

**JOHN KIRBY AND HIS SEXTET** **NYC. July 9, 1944**  
 Charlie Shavers (tp), otherwise probably as June 21.

Amor, Amor	Solo 8 bars. (M)
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**NYC. July 12, 1944**

Probably as June 21.

Note: These items should be checked with the June 21 items.

K. C. Caboose	Solo 12 bars. (FM)
Honeysuckle Rose	Solo 32 bars. (FM)

**NYC. July 16, 1944**

Personnel including Hot Lips Page (tp). Two titles:

Rose Room	Solo 32 bars. (M)
Andyology	Solo 32 bars. (M)

Some fine tenorsax here, although I do not think that the John Kirby band is particularly tailored to BW's music.

**BEN WEBSTER AND HIS GROUP** **NYC. early 1945**  
 Charlie Parker (as), Ben Webster (ts), Argonne "Sadik Hakim" Thornton (p), Rail Wilson (b), Hillard Brown (dm).  
 Unknown number of titles recorded at the Onyx Club, unissued.

**WOODIE HERMAN & HIS "V-DISC" ALL STARS** **NYC. Jan. 24, 1945**  
 Bill Harris (tb), Ben Webster (ts), Ralph Burns (p), Billy Bauer (g), Chubby Jackson (b), Dave Tough or Johnny Blowers (dm).  
 One title was recorded for VDisc at Vanderbilt Theatre:

John Hardy's Wife	Soli 40 and 64 bars. (M)
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**same**

Personnel as above plus Flip Phillips (ts), Marjorie Hyams (vib), Woody Herman (vo). Date falsely given as Feb. 19, 1945. Two titles:

Somebody Loves Me	Solo 16 bars. (S)
Just You, Just Me	Solo 32 bars (last (ts)-solo) to duet with (ts-FP) 32 bars to coda. (FM)

"John ..." seems not well rehearsed, BW presents the melody and returns with a solo which is quite good but collapses before the final 16 bars so the rest of the team has to land the item. "Somebody ..." is definitely the better item in a lovely slow tempo with good singing (why didn't WH stick to the vocals?). Flip has a beautiful solo preceding BW, who certainly competes! And "Just You ...", a fine tenorsax "battle", a must!

**BENNIE MORTON AND HIS ALL STARS** **NYC. Jan. 31, 1945**

Bennie Morton (tb), Barney Bigard (cl), Ben Webster (ts), Sam Benskin (p), Israel Crosby (b), Eddie Dougherty (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Blue Note:

BN 219-0	My Old Flame	Solo 16 bars. Acc. (tb) at the end. (S)
BN 220-0	Conversing In Blue	Solo 24 bars. Acc. (tb/cl) at the end. (S)
BN 221-0	The Sheik Of Araby	Solo 64 bars. Soli 4 and 4 bars. (FM)
BN 221-2	The Sheik Of Araby	As above. (FM)
BN 222-0	Limehouse Blues	Solo 64 bars. Coda-"tag". (F)

A very fine session showing the greatness of the much underrated Bennie Morton. The tenorsax contributions are all excellent. Note first the opening of the lovely "Conversing ...", typical Ben! This item is slightly more exciting than "... Flame", also a fine piece of music. The two takes of "... Araby" are very different, and I believe that the non-78 rpm. take has the most exciting solo, here one should note the first four bars. Finally, "Limehouse ..." just couldn't be done better in up-tempo! BW certainly proves on this session that he is one of the major artists on his instrument in 1945.

**SIR WALTER THOMAS AND HIS BAND** **NYC. March 8, 1945**

Charlie Shavers (tp), Milt Yaner (cl, as), Walter Thomas (as, ts), Ben Webster (ts), Ernie Caceres (cl, bar), Billy Taylor (p), Slam Stewart (b), Cozy Cole (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Joe Davis:

	Save It Pretty Mama	Solo 20 bars. (M)
	Peach Tree Street Blues	Solo 8 bars (1st (ts)-solo). (S)
	For Lovers Only	No solo.
	The Bottle's Empty	Solo 32 bars. (F)

Of the "Foots" sessions on Joe Davis, I prefer this one. It has in general a more direct swing and the arrangements are not too fancy (read artificial). And, most important, BW plays very well!! Unfortunately, there is no takes-abundance here, but the "originals" are quite satisfactory. Note the really groovy "Save It...!" Or the beautiful "Peach Tree ...!" Or the fast but far from brutal "... Empty"!!!

**TEDDY WILSON & HIS ALL STAR SEXTET** **NYC. Aug. 14, 1945**

Buck Clayton (tp), Ben Webster (ts), Teddy Wilson (p), Al Casey (g), Al Hall (b), J. C. Heard (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Musicraft:

5296-1	If Dreams Come True	Duet with (tp) 32 bars. Solo 32 bars. (M)
5296-5	If Dreams Come True	As above. (M)
5297-1	I Can't Get Started	Solo 16+8 bars, (tp) on bridge. Duet with (tp) 8 bars. (SM)
5297-2	I Can't Get Started	As above. (SM)
5298-2	Stompin' At The Savoy	Duet with (tp) 16+8 bars, (p) on bridge. Solo 32 bars. Duet with (tp) 16+8 bars, (b) on bridge. (F)
5298-3	Stompin' At The Savoy	As above. (F)
5299-3	Blues Too	Solo 12 bars to duet with (tp) 12 bars. (S)

A very enjoyable swing session with memorable contributions from Buck and Teddy. Personally I find BW a little uneven on this date. There can be no doubt that the two versions of "I Can't Get Started" are his best performances here. In spite of a memorable "sound" starting off the tenorsax solo on "Blues Too", I cannot quite share Frank Driggs' feeling of perfection, the solo is somewhat edgy. The fast tempo on "... Savoy" is mastered easily, while there is some serious reed trouble on "... True". Note the difference in tempi on the latter item, the (M) seems most suitable.

**BEN AND THE BOYS****NYC. Aug. 20, 1945**

Buster Bailey (cl-item 1), Herbie Fields (cl-item 1, ts), Ben Webster, Don Byas (ts), Dexter Gordon (ts-item 2), Stuff Smith (vln), Duke Ellington (p), Al Lucas (b), Eddie Nicholson (dm).

Recorded at the Onyx Club.

The Romp Solo 3 ½ choruses of 32 bars (2<sup>nd</sup> (ts)-solo). (FM)

Honeysuckle Rose Solo 64 bars (1<sup>st</sup> of four tenorsax soli). (F)

This is, sorry to say it, quite bad. All beauty has disappeared in the night, and only roughness remains. In "The Romp" Ben enters in the middle of a chorus by piano, and the reason may be inattentiveness, impoliteness or arrogance, who knows? The result, however, is just something to forget quite quickly. "... Rose" is possibly even worse. Compare it with the Savoy recording!! Of the four tenorsax players on this date, Ben comes in as the last man!!!

**HOT LIPS PAGE AND HIS ORCHESTRA****NYC. Sept. 7, 1945**

Personnel not known but includes aurally Hot Lips Page (ts, vo), Bennie Morton, J. C. Higginbotham (tb), Earl Bostic (as), Ben Webster, Don Byas (ts). Note that 3403 has a tenorsax solo by a third soloist, whose identity is unknown!

Seven titles were recorded for Continental:

W3397	The Lady In Debt	No solo.
W3398	Corsicana	Solo 24 bars. (F)
W3399	They Raided The Joint	No solo.
W3400	Sunset Blues	Solo 8 bars. (SM)
W3401	Willie Mae Willow Foot	No solo.
W3403	Florida Blues	No solo.
W3404	Race Horse Mama	No solo.

Two complete good blues choruses on "Corsicana", but surpassed by an expressive two-thirds of one on "Sunset ...", a real thriller. Unfortunately, there are no tenorsax duels on the date. The solo on "Florida ..." has been attributed to Frog, but there is just a slight similarity, no more.

**MARY LOU WILLIAMS****NYC. Dec. 31, 1945**

Probably Bill Coleman unlikely Irving Randolph (tp), possibly Henderson Chambers (tb), Edmond Hall (not Eddie Barefield) (cl), Ben Webster (ts), Mary Lou Williams (p), J. C. Heard (dm), strings, woodwinds.

Recorded at concert in Town Hall.

Two titles from the Zodiac Suite have BW:

Cancer Solo 10 bars. Solo 16 bars to very long coda. (S)

Gjon Mili Jam Session Solo 10 choruses of 12 bars. (FM)

A magnificent slow concerto performance on "Cancer", something quite special! The long sequence of blues choruses on "Gjon Mili ..." is more ordinary.

**AL HALL QUINTET****NYC. Jan. 24, 1946**

Dick Vance (tp), Ben Webster (ts), Jimmy Jones (p), Al Hall (b), Denzil Best (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Wax:

W100	Blues In My Heart	Soli 8 and 16 bars. (S)
W101	Emaline	Solo 32 bars. (M)
W102	Am I Blue?	Solo 16 bars. Solo 8 bars to duet with (tp) 16 bars. (SM)
W103	Rose Of The Rio Grande	Soli 16 and 64 bars. (FM)

An unusually reticent rhythm section creates a rather pale atmosphere, but the music is in fact quite interesting upon additional listening. And BW plays very nicely on all items, with exception of the rather rough "... Rio Grande".

**PETE JOHNSON'S HOUSEWARMING****NYC. Jan. 26 & 31, 1946**

Hot Lips Page (tp-113), J. C. Higginbotham (tb-113), Albert Nicholas (cl), Ben Webster (ts), Pete Johnson (p), Jimmy Shirley (g), Al Hall (b), J. C. Heard (dm).  
Four titles were recorded for National, two have BW:

NSC110-X	Ben Rides Out	Intro to solo 24 bars. Solo 60 bars. (M)
NSC110-Y	Ben Rides Out	Intro to solo 24 bars. Solo 24 bars. (SM)
NSC113	Pete's Housewarming	Solo 32 bars. (F)

The "housewarming" idea as such is very good, and the host, Mr. Johnson, is an excellent one and the session's most important soloist as such. However, I am not particularly impressed by Ben's contributions. "... Housewarming" is too fast and somewhat incoherent. The "Ben ..."s are better, but still not by far up to his most inspired moments. The item is a blues, with five choruses to end the issued take, and the lack of structure is surprising. The slower alternate may be preferred.

**TONY SCOTT SEPTET** **NYC. March 6, 1946**

Dizzy Gillespie (tp), Trummy Young (tb), Tony Scott (cl, as), Ben Webster (ts), Jimmy Jones (p), Gene Ramey (b), Eddie Nicholson (dm), Sarah Vaughan (vo-120).  
Three titles were recorded for Gotham:

120	All Too Soon	Solo 32 bars to coda. (SM)
121	You're Only Happy When I'm Blue	Part of intro. Solo 16 bars. (SM)
122	Ten Lessons With Timothy	Solo 32 bars. (F)

Only one item is really noteworthy, "All Too Soon", but it makes up for the rest. An old-time Duke-BW favorite, combined with the best of jazz vocal, smells of success! "... Blue" is far less interesting with its heavy arranging, even if the tempo is pleasant. "Ten Lessons ..." is fine for Dizzy's atmospheric, modern playing, but BW ends up with the kind of exaggerated roughness I believe was a blind alley for his great talent.

**BILL DE ARANGO AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. May 3, 1946**

Idrees Sulieman (tp), Tony Scott (cl), Ben Webster (ts), Argonne Thornton (p), Bill De Arango (g), John Simmons (b), Sid Catlett (dm).  
Four titles were recorded for Haven:

H1935	The Jeep Is Jumpin'	Solo 64 bars. (FM)
H1936	I Got It Bad And That Ain't Good	Soli 32 and 8 bars. (S)
H1937	Dark Comers	Part of long intro 4 bars. Solo 32 bars. (F)
H1938	Blues Mr. Brim	Intro 4 bars. Solo 24 bars. In ens 4 bars. (S)

As a group these guys do not function very well, and the recording balance is not good. Therefore, one is apt to miss some of the driving drums of Big Sid backing a Ben in good shape. The two faster sides do not go well together, and when BW is not playing, not much is happening. Between the semi-bopping there is however some good and typical tenorsax. The slow tunes are those to be remembered, and in particular the lovely "I Got It Bad", but also the two nice blues choruses on "... Mr. Brim".

**BEN WEBSTER QUINTET** **NYC. May 15, 1946**

Ben Webster (ts), Al Haig (p), Bill De Arango (g), John Simmons (b), Sid Catlett (dm).  
Four titles were recorded for Haven:

H1939	Frog And Mule	Solo 64 bars. Solo 16+8 bars, (dm) on bridge. (M)
H1940	Spang	Solo 48 bars. (S)
H1941	Doctor Keets	Soli 32 and 64 bars. (M)
H1942	Park And Tilford Blues	Soli 24 and 24 bars. (S)

This diminished group with only BW to blow and with the eminent Al Haig seems to work much better than the previous Haven group. The incredible drums of Sid C. is better recorded and he kicks off Ben to some very good soloing, not to mention his own unique contributions. "Frog ..." and "... Keets" are both medium standard swingers with the normal mixture of silk-soft openings and rather rough developments. "Spang" is a badly camouflaged 1 ½ chorus of "These Foolish Things"

(possibly the names have been switched on my LP?) Tenorsax playing of the best 1946 vintage.

**BENNY CARTER  
AND HIS CHOCOLATE DANDIES** **NYC. Aug. 23, 1946**

Buck Clayton (tp), Al Grey (tb), Benny Carter (cl-2694, as-2695/96/97), Ben Webster (ts), Sonny White (p), John Simmons (b), Sid Catlett (dm, vo-2695).

Four titles were recorded for Swing:

2694-1?	Sweet Georgia Brown	Solo 48 bars. (F)
2694-2	Sweet Georgia Brown	As above. (FM)
2695	Out Of My Way	Solo 16 bars. (M)
2696	What'll It Be?	No solo.
2697-1	Cadillac Slim	Soli 8 and 32 bars. 32 bars 4/4 with (as). (F)

A swing session, almost of the vintage type, with nice soloing by all participants. My favorite BW item is the groovy "Out ...", first rate. The two takes of "Sweet ..." differ in tempo. I prefer the slower of the two, but in both cases we get demonstrated the progress from a smooth, restrained opening to a rather rough ending one and one half chorus later. The "Cadillac ..." is also, in spite of the rough tempo, a real swinger with first rate tenorsax playing. Note the alto/tenorsax chase!

**BEN WEBSTER QUINTET** **NYC. Feb. 14, 1947**

Charlie Shavers (tp), Ben Webster (ts), Hank Jones (p), Sandy Block (b), Alvin Stoller (dm).

Broadcast, not available.

Juices At The Deuces  
Body And Soul  
Russian Bebop (Dark Eyes)

**BEN WEBSTER / REX STEWART** **March 7, 1947**

Rex Stewart (cnt-"Cotton Tail"), Ben Webster (ts), unknown (rhythm).

Private recordings.

Cotton Tail	Solo 96 bars. 32 bars 4/4 with (cnt) to solo 8 bars (NC). (F)
Danny Boy	Solo 64 bars. (S)

Interesting discovery, although I am surprised they chose "Cotton Tail", I would guess BW was quite fed up with it! He plays it very much in the usual manner, but a quite un-Dukish atmosphere makes it get a different flavour. "Danny Boy" is interesting inasmuch as it gives BW the opportunity to stretch out on a ballad in which we have not heard him before, but the playing is quite sluggish and not too exciting.

**DENZIL BEST AND HIS QUARTET/  
BEN WEBSTER'S WAX QUINTET** **NYC. April 17/19, 1947**

Bill Coleman (tp), Ben Webster (ts), Jimmy Jones (p), Al Hall (b), Denzil Best (dm). 113 as "Denzil Best", date given as April 17. 112 and 114 as "Ben Webster", date given as April 19. Three titles were recorded for Wax:

W112	As Long As I Live	Soli 8, 16 and 8 bars to 8 bars ens. (M)
W113	All Alone	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
W114	Blue Belles Of Harlem	Part of intro. Solo 12 bars. Part of coda. (S)

A rather uneven session. "Blue Belles ..." represents one of the few cases where Ben overplays in the slow mood, this is quasi-emotion, but with such a corny arrangement nothing better could be expected. "As Long ..." and "All Alone", while badly structured, quasi-modern pieces, still have some fine soloing by BW. Note for instance the different approaches to the two last soli of "As Long ..."!

BW rejoins Duke Ellington in early Nov. 1948 upon the band's return to New York after a tour.

**DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Nov. 6, 1948**

Harold "Shorty" Baker, Sheldon Hemphill, Al Killian, Francis Williams (tp), Ray Nance (tp, vln, vo), Lawrence Brown, Quentin Jackson (tb), Jimmy Hamilton (cl, ts), Russell Procope (cl, as), Johnny Hodges (as), Al Sears, Ben Webster (ts), Harry

Carney (cl, bcl, bar), Duke Ellington (p, ldr), Fred Guy (g), Wendell Marshall (b), Sonny Greer (dm), Kay Davis, Al Hibbler (vo).

NBC broadcast from concert at Union College, Schenectady.

Eight titles, six available, one has BW:

4801b You Oughta Solo 30 bars. (M)

BW is back with the Duke! His first solo shows that he is still intact and can play nicely, but the result here is not quite coherent and not near top quality.

**NYC. Nov. 13, 1948**

Personnel as Nov. 6.

Concert in Carnegie Hall. More than thirty titles, three have BW:

4802v How High The Moon Solo 32 bars (S) to soli 32, 32 and 32 bars (FM) to coda. (S)

4802w Cotton Tail Solo 64 bars. Solo 16 bars to long coda. (F)

4802ad Just A Settin' And A Rockin' Solo 32 bars. (SM)

Old vehicles like "Cottontail" and "... Rockin'" are of course exciting if you are present at the concert, but in a wider context they are only pale copies of old masterpieces. "... The Moon", however, is something quite different! First a slow chorus of exquisite beauty, and then three swinging choruses in "normal" tempo, each separated by orchestral breaks, are something worthy of notice!!

**DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS ORCHESTRA Philadelphia, Nov. 22, 1948**

Same. AFRS ONS No. 1830. CBS broadcast from the Click Restaurant.

Eight titles, one has BW:

4803d How High The Moon Ad lib intro to solo 32 bars (S) to soli 32, 32 and 32 bars (FM) to coda. (S)

**Philadelphia, Nov. 23, 1948**

Same. NBC broadcast from the Click Restaurant. Seven titles, two have BW:

4804c C Jam Blues Solo 28 bars. (M)

4804d Don't Blame Me Solo 16 bars. (S)

**Philadelphia, Nov. 24-27, 1948**

Same. NBC broadcasts from the Click Restaurant.

Eighteen titles, several unissued, one has BW (4807a "Singin' In The Rain" has no BW, contrary to notation):

4807c Lover Man Solo 8 bars. (S)

**NYC. Dec. 10, 1948**

Concert at Cornell University, Ithaca.

Large number of titles, two have BW:

4808u How High The Moon Long ad lib intro to solo 32 bars (S) to solo 32 bars (M) to soli 32 and 24 bars (F) to coda. (S)

4808ac Just-A-Settin' And A-Rockin' Solo 32 bars. (SM)

**Philadelphia, Dec. 1948**

Same. AFRS broadcast "Here's To Veterans". Five titles, one has BW:

4809b C Jam Blues Solo 28 bars. (M)

Two more and highly successful versions of "... The Moon" plus a few brief ballad performances prove that BW is thriving and on his way back to his old self.

**DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Dec. 29, 1948**

Personnel as Nov. 6.

Concert in Apollo Theatre. Two titles, one reported to have BW:

4810a Cotton Tail Solo 64 bars. Solo 16 bars to long coda. ( )

**AL HIBBLER AND HIS ORCHESTRA Chi. 1948/1949**

Ray Nance (tp), Tyree Glenn (tb, vib), Ben Webster (ts), Billy Strayhorn (p, ldr, arr), Alvin "Junior" Raglin (b), Fletcher Jackson (dm), Al Hibbler (vo).

Three titles were recorded for Sunrise (mx numbers 2140-2143 not with BW):

su 2133	Ghost Of Love	Intro 4 bars. Obligato parts. Solo 8 bars. Coda. (S)
su 2134	Hey Baby	Solo 8 bars. (S)
su 2135	It Don't Mean A Thing	Solo 16 bars. (FM)

BW thrives in these surroundings, and he is clearly on the move upwards a gain.

**DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA Hollywood, early Feb. 1949**

Personnel as Nov. 13 plus Tyree Glenn (tb, vib).

AFRS JJ-82 from Hollywood Empire Hotel. Date also given as June 1.

One title has BW:

4901c?	Main Stem	Solo 14 bars. (M)
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**Hollywood, Feb. 6, 1949**

AFRS JJ-81 from Hollywood Empire Hotel. Date also given as June 2.

Two titles have BW:

4902a	How High The Moon	Solo with orch 30 bars. (FM)
4902b	Lover Man	Solo 8 bars. (S)

**Hollywood, Feb. 1949**

AFRS Just Jazz JJ-46. Three titles have BW:

4903b	C Jam Blues	Solo 28 bars. (M)
4903e	Just-A-Settin' And A-Rockin'	Soli with orch 32 and 16 bars to coda. (SM)
4903f	One O'Clock Jump (NC)	Solo 16 bars (NC). (SM)

**Hollywood, Feb. 9, 1949**

AFRS JJ-88 from Hollywood Empire Hotel. Date also given as June.

One title has BW:

4904b	The Tattooed Bride	Solo 2 bars. (S)
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AFRS Jubilee No. 349 from Hollywood Empire Hotel. One title has BW:

4906e	St. Louis Blues	Solo 24 bars. (M)
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**Hollywood, Feb. 1949**

Same/similar. AFRS Jubilee No. 336, 352, 356, 361, no BW.

**Hollywood, Feb. 1949**

Four titles have BW:

4909d	Blue Lou	Solo 16 bars. (M)
4909e	Three Cent Stomp	Soli 16 and 4 bars. (M)
4909f	C Jam Blues	Solo 28 bars. (M)
4909h	Cotton Tail	Soli 64 and 16 bars to long coda. (F)

**Hollywood, April 29, 1949**

Telecast CBS "Adventures of Jazz". Two titles have BW:

4912b	Take The A Train	Solo with orch 8 bars. (M)
4912c	C Jam Blues	Solo 28 bars. (M)

Rarely has the Duke Ellington orchestra sounded so lacklustre as this, and the programs are quite boring. BW plays competently but with no particular inspiration, with "Lover ..." as a pleasant exception. Postscript of May 2017: More items have appeared but not very exciting really. Have you ever heard BW as boring as on "Three Cent ..."?

BW left Duke Ellington in May/June 1949.

**BENNY CARTER AND HIS ALL STARS**

**L.A. May/June 1949**

Chuck Peterson (tp), Vic Dickenson (tb), Benny Carter (tp, as, ldr), Ben Webster (ts), Dodo Marmarosa (p), John Simmons (b-1767, 68), Charlie Drayton (b-1813, 14), Jackie Mills (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Modern probably in a studio, audience dubbed in later

MM1767	Cotton Tail	Soli 8, 96 and 8 bars. (F)
MM1768	Time Out For The Blues	Solo 24 bars. (S)
MM1813	Surf Board	Soli 64 and 8 bars. (M)
MM1814	You're Too Beautiful	Solo 48 bars to coda. (S)

Where are all the others? This is supposed to be Benny Carter's band but the session is all playground for BW! And how he plays!! The most beautiful very slow ballad "... Beautiful" is one of his greatest performances from the late forties, and the groovy "Time Out ..." is an item you remember. He plays magnificently in "Surf Board", in the most fitting medium tempo. Only "Cotton Tail" is somewhat boring, we have heard this so many times before. In general, a very noteworthy BW session.

**BUS MOTEN & HIS MEN** **KC. Oct. 21, 1949**

Richard Smith (tp), Ben Webster (ts), Bus Moten (p, org, vo, ldr), Johnny Rogers (g), Lloyd Anderson (b), Jesse Price (dm).

Five titles were recorded for Capitol, BW not present on 5132 "That Did It" and 5130-3 "Sugar Daddy Blues" but:

5131-4	Turn It Over	Intro 4 bars. Solo 16 bars. (M)
5133-2	Best Friend Blues	Solo 12 bars. (S)
5134-2	Baby You Messed It Up	With ens 12 bars. Obligato parts Solo 24 bars. Obligato parts. With ens 24 bars. (FM)

At last did these rare Capitol recordings appear on CD, and you get your kicks from the very beginning, the tenorsax/drums intro on "Turn It ..." is just what you have been looking for!! "Baby ..." also has a good solo in more brisk tempo, and the slow blues chorus on "Best Friend ..." is magnificent, Ben is back in town!!!

**WALTER BROWN VOCAL  
WITH THE JAY McSHANN BAND**

**KC. Nov. 1, 1949**

Ben Webster (ts), Jay McShann (p), Herman Bell (g), Lloyd Anderson (b), Jesse Price (dm), Walter Brown (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Capitol:

5139-1	New Style Baby	Solo 24 bars. (SM)
5139-?	New Style Baby	Solo 24 bars. Obligato 12 and 8 bars. (SM)
5140-1	Let's Love Awhile	Solo 24 bars. Obligato 24 bars. (SM)
5141-1	Nasty Attitude	Intro to obligato 24 bars. Solo 12 bars. Obligato 8 bars. (S)
5142-1	Slow Down Baby	Solo 12 bars. Obligato 12 bars. (S)

'Back to the roots' I name this session. Kansas City was perhaps not the city where jazz was "invented", but it certainly was the home of "happy feet". This rhythm is groovy as hell, and Walter Brown is a much underrated blues shouter. BW thrives like a fish in water and makes this a memorable session. He plays surprisingly rough in the slow medium items, but still much to my pleasure. However, the slow tunes are magnificent, in solo and in obligato. Choose one item, choose "Nasty Attitude"!! Postscript: To my great pleasure my newly purchased "Kansas City Blues" CD had a different take of "New Style ..." compared to the Affinity LP!!

In 1950-51 BW was starring in Bob "Juice" Wilson's Band but no recording sessions.

**PEE WEE CRAYTON WITH  
HARRY EDISON'S ORCHESTRA**

**L.A. early 1950**

Personnel from "Blues Records": Ernie Royal, Harry Edison (tp), unknown (as), Ben Webster (ts) and other (reeds), Arnold Ross (p), Joe Comfort (b), Alvin Stoller (dm), Pee Wee Crayton (g, vo).

Three titles were recorded for Modern, "Please Come Back", "Louella Brown" and "Rockin' The Blues", but no BW soli, and his presence is unlikely, BW was in Kansas City from June 1949 to late 1951.

**JAY McSHANN AND HIS ORCHESTRA**

**KC. Oct. 27, 1951**



Orville Minor (tp), Clifford Jenkins (as, ts), Fats Dennis, Ben Webster (ts), Jay McShann (p,ldr), Gene Griddins (g), Lloyd Anderson (b), Cooky Jackson (dm), Pee Wee Mathews (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Mercury, no BW on 4618 "Got You Begging" but:

4617-1	You Didn't Tell Me	Soli 12 and 24 bars. (SM)
4619-2	The Duke And The Brute	Solo 48 bars. (M)
4620-1	Reach	Solo 24 bars. (SM)
4620-2	Reach	As above. (SM)

After a period of two years BW records again, and the waiting has done him good. He is in excellent shape, and with the dynamic KC-stride of McShann, the music is bound to swing. It is all blues, and the most important item is "... The Brute", a minor blues written by BW himself. The emotional ensemble is more exciting than many musicians' complete solo output, and his four choruses are just, wow! The other items are also highly notable for the groovy swinging of a new decade not at all purely "modern"!

#### JOHNNY OTIS AND HIS ORCHESTRA

**L.A. Dec. 19, 1951**

Personnel unknown, possibly similar to below, including Ben Webster (ts), Johnny Otis (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Mercury, 4714 "The Jones" and 4715 "Danny Boy" are unissued but:

4712	Unknown Title	Soli with orch 24 and 48 bars to coda. (M)
4713-1	Oopy Doo	Solo 24 bars. (M)

**L.A. Dec. 26, 1951**

Don Johnson, Gerald Wilson (tp), John Pettigrew, George Washington (tb), Floyd Turnham (as), Ben Webster, Lorenzo Holden (ts), Curtis Lowe (bar), Devonia Williams (p), Pete Lewis (g), Mario Delagarde (b), Leard Bell (dm), Gaucho (cga), Johnny Otis (vib, vo).

Four titles were recorded for Mercury:

4716-1	One O'Clock Jump	Solo 24 bars. In ens. Solo 36 bars. (M)
4716-2	One O'Clock Jump	Solo 24 bars. In ens. Solo 48 bars. (M)
4716-3	One O'Clock Jump	As take 1. (M)
4717-1	One Nighter Blues	Solo 24 bars. Coda. (S)
4718-1	Goomp Blues	Soli 2, 2 and 24 bars. (M)
4719-1	Stardust	Part of intro. Solo 32 bars. Solo 8 bars to coda. (S)
4719-2	Stardust	Solo 32 bars. Solo 8 bars to coda. (S)
4719-3	Stardust	As take 2. (S)

A grandiose tenorsax session! It is extremely interesting to note how different these almost rhythm & blues arrangements, built around Otis' big two-four beat, are from BW's famous Duke Ellington era. Here he seems to play like he never wanted to style himself differently, the blues! The "One O'Clock ..." is almost an unbearable experience, played in a style very far from the Count, and BW pushes so strongly that you cannot believe it! Three takes, sixteen choruses, wow!! Everything is golden here, from the emotional slow blues on "One Nighter ..." through the medium tempi, and then ending up in three quite different versions of "Stardust". To describe them, I will just quote Dan Morgenstern's liner notes: "Stardust, a showcase for Ben, is the masterpiece from this excellent session, and the three complete takes give us a fascinating view of the great tenorman's artistry and unflagging inspiration. Each take is a gem. The first begins with Ben a capela, way up high, answered by Otis' vibes. Then Ben moves gently into the chorus, backed by soft organ chords from the band. He doesn't state the theme, improvising from the start and making wonderful use of dynamics as he builds his solo. A brief Otis interlude sets up Ben's return, the band fuller behind him. He shares the complex cadenza with Otis and concludes with a cascading chromatic run. Take two is introduced by Otis alone. Ben sticks closer to the theme at this time, and has only rhythm behind him. This is the big man at his most romantic. Otis' interlude is longer now, and Ben opens up his sound, takes the cadenza by himself, and gives the band the final chord. Take 3 (the issued one) follows the routine of take 2, but Ben stays even closer to the melody, though he devises a new and lovely ending for the chorus. Otis, obviously inspired by Lionel Hampton's famous record of this tune, takes his few bars, and Ben re-enters softly,

then opens up into the most elaborate of the three cadenzas (with a slight reed squeak that doesn't matter at all). The tempo here is the slowest of the three takes, each of which, in varying degrees, demonstrates Ben's unique use of the air escaping from his mouthpiece as part of his total sound (You can also hear him breathe - the recording quality is excellent". Note also the "Unknown Title" which I found on a Mercury CD called "Back Beat" -The Rhythm of the Blues, listed as Johnny Otis, duration 3'38". Obviously belonging to the December sessions but previously unissued, it is a marvelous piece of music, exciting arrangement, Otis' vibes and BW playing like hell!!

**BEN WEBSTER SEXTET****LA. Dec. 27, 1951**

Maynard Ferguson (tp), Benny Carter (as-except 4723), Ben Webster (ts), Gerald Wiggins (p), John Kirby (b), George Jenkins (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Mercury:

4720-1	Randall's Island	Soli 36 and 36 bars. (FM)
4720-2	Randall's Island	As above. (FM)
4720-3	Randall's Island	As above. (FM)
4721-1	Old Folks	Solo 48 bars to long coda. (S)
4721-2	Old Folks	As above. (S)
4721-3	Old Folks	As above. (S)
4722-1	King's Riff	Soli 36 and 36 bars. (F)
4723-fs	You're My Thrill (NC)	Brief parts. (S)
4723-1	You're My Thrill	Solo 48 bars to long coda. (S)
4723-2	You're My Thrill	As above. (S)

A different kind of setup from the previous sessions, on paper that is, because BW plays his music again strongly. The two faster titles have a boppish flavour until the tenorsax soli take over, then it is BW all the way. The two ballads are something different again; beautiful, showing that Ben has entered another stage of development, a search for the innermost soul of the ballads, and he succeeds. This music anticipates what BW played later in his life, when his strength was diminishing, but when his emotions made the music all by themselves. I prefer "Old Folks" but also "... Thrill" is lovely, note however how take 1 is messed up after the first 32 bars.

**PETE "GUITAR" LEWIS & HIS BAND****LA. Jan. 4, 1952**

Personnel reported to be as the Otis session of Dec. 26, 1951, with Pete Lewis (g, hca, vo) and Leard Bell (dm) replacing Otis.

Four titles were recorded for Federal, however no BW (see also Lorenzo Holden). I doubt his presence.

**ESTHER PHILLIPS & HER ORCHESTRA****Same date**

Personnel as above plus "Little Esther" Phillips (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Federal, no BW on "Somebody New" and "Bring My Lovin' Back To Me" but:

F216	Hold Me	Obbligato 8 bars. Coda. (S)
F217	Better Beware	Solo 24 bars. (M)

An excellent solo on "... Beware" and some nice background in "Hold Me". Note that the tenorsax solo on "Somebody ..." is not by BW.

**LITTLE ESTHER & HER ORCHESTRA****LA. Jan. 16, 1952**

Personnel as Jan. 4, except Johnson, Pettigrew, Holden, Lowe out, Preston Love (as), Floyd Turnham (bar). Note: Discos list also Holden out, but there is a solo not by Ben Webster on "I Paid My Dues".

Four titles were recorded for Federal, no BW on "I Paid My Dues" and "The Storm", but:

F228	Aged And Melloew	Straight in ensemble. (S)
F230	Ramblin' Blues	Solo 24 bars. (M)

Quite ordinary solo this one.

**DOROTHY ELLIS & HER ORCHESTRA****LA. Jan. 16, 1952**

Lee Graves (tp), George Washington (tb), Rene Bloch (as), Ben Webster, Lorenzo Holden (ts), Walter Henry (bar), Devonia Williams (p), Pete Lewis (g), Mario Delagarde (b), Leard Bell (dm), Dorothy Ellis (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Federal, no BW on "He's Gone", "Slowly Going Out Of Your Mind" and "Must Go Out To Play (Religion Blues)" but:

F234 Drill Daddy Drill Break 2 bars to solo 12 bars. (M)

Wonderful lyrics very much concerned about drilling for oil to be topped by a lovely tenorsax break and following solo.

**DINAH WASHINGTON WITH  
JIMMY COBB'S ORCHESTRA**

**LA. Jan. 18, 1952**

Wardell Gray, Ben Webster (ts), Wynton Kelly (p), Jimmy Cobb (dm), Dinah Washington (vo), others unknown.

Four titles were recorded for Mercury, one has BW:

4733-2 Trouble In Mind Solo 8 bars. (S)

Brief solo but of the best quality!

**JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC**

**LA. early June, 1952**

Charlie Shavers (tp), Benny Carter, Johnny Hodges, Charlie Parker (as), Ben Webster, Flip Phillips (ts), Oscar Peterson (p), Barney Kessel (g), Ray Brown (b), J. C. Heard (dm). Date usually given as June 5, but this is not confirmed.

"Jam Session no. 1", studio recording for Verve:

C802-2 Jam Blues Solo 9 choruses of 12 bars. (FM)

C803-3 What Is This Thing Called Love? Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars.  
Chase 4 x 4 bars. (FM)

C804-2 Ballad Medley: The Nearness Of You Solo 36 bars. (S)

C805-2 Funky Blues Solo 24 bars. (S)

Good soli but not remarkable; "The Nearness ..." is almost a little bombastic, and the up-tempo items are too rough towards the end. Bird is a fresh breeze here!!

**JOHNNY HODGES & HIS ALL STARS**

**LA. July 22, 1952**

Emmett Berry (tp), Lawrence Brown (tb), Johnny Hodges (as), Ben Webster (ts), Teddy Brannon (p), Red Callender (b), J. C. Heard (dm), Al Hibbler (vo-"This Love Of Mine").

Four titles were recorded for Verve, no BW on "Rosanne" and "This Love Of Mine" but:

808-5 Hodge Podge Solo 8 bars. (M)

809-1 Jappa Solo 12 bars. (S)

Not much BW on this session (having "Rosanne" as the most beautiful item featuring Hodges at length), "Hodge ..." has a brief and rough solo, and it is "Jappa", a slow blues, which is the tenorsax highlight.

**JOHNNY HODGES & HIS ALL STARS**

**NYC. Dec. 11, 1952**

Emmett Berry (tp), Lawrence Brown (tb), Johnny Hodges (as), Ben Webster, Rudy Williams (ts), Teddy Brannon or Leroy Lovett (p), Barney Richmond (b), Al Walker (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Verve, no BW on "Come Sunday" but:

952-1 Through For The Night Solo 8 bars. (M)

954-1 The Sheik Of Araby Solo 8 bars. (M)

955-7 Latino Solo 24 bars (last (ts)-solo). (M)

Several good BW contributions here, most interesting is "Latino" with two blues choruses.

**THE RAVENS**

**Dec. 1952**

Vocal quartet: Joe Van Loan (lead tenor), Leonard Puzie (second tenor), Warren Suttles (baritone), Jimmy Ricks (bass), accompanied by Ben Webster (ts), Bill Sanford (p, arr), others unknown.

Four titles were recorded for Mercury, 9378 "Don't Be Mean, Be Mine" and 9379 "What Could Be More Beautiful" are unissued but:

9376-4 I'll Be Back Obbligato parts. Solo 16 bars. (FM)

9377-6 Don't Mention My Name Solo 16 bars with (vo) acc. Coda. (S)

Another exciting combination of popular music and the best of jazz! A rough solo on "... Back" is perhaps not out of the ordinary, but the lovely slow "... Name" with vocal chorus background is something special you should note!

**SLIM GAILLARD AND HIS BAKER'S DOZEN** **Dec. 1952**

Ben Webster (ts), Slim Gaillard (g, vo), possibly Cyril Haynes (p), Ray Brown (b), possibly Milt Jackson (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Mercury:

1126 Gomen Nashai Solo 16 bars. (M)

1127 Potatoe Chips Brief intro. Faint obbligato.  
Solo 32 bars. Coda 8 bars. (M)

Under such bizarre circumstances, one wonders how it is possible to play at all without bursting into laughter! But BW makes some interesting contributions, not as memorable as ten years before if you remember that incredible Gaillard session, but particularly "... Chips" has some good tenorsax playing.

**BENNY CARTER** **prob. California, 1952**

Keg Johnson (tb), Benny Carter (as), Ben Webster, Bumps Myers (ts), Gerry Wiggins (p), Ulysses Livingston (g), Charlie Drayton (b), George Jenkins (dm).

Film soundtrack "Clash By Night", nothing new, a record is played, probably from the Modern session.

**BEN WEBSTER WITH JOHNNY RICHARDS' ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Jan. 23, 1953**

Don Elliot (tp, mellophone), Eddie Bert (tb), Sam Rubinowitch (as, piccolo), Ben Webster (ts), Sidney Brown (bar), Billy Taylor (p), Milt Hinton (b), Jo Jones (dm), Johnny Richards (arr).

Three titles were recorded for Mercury:

9456-8 Hoot Soli with ens 8, 32 and 16 bars. (M)

9457-5 Pouting Solo with ens 48 bars. (SM)

9458-4 The Iron Hat Soli with ens 40 and 80 bars. (F). Coda. (S)

9458-6 The Iron Hat As above. (F/S)

Although Johnny Richards is a first rate arranger, I do not feel he gives BW the right background here, it seems artificial for this tenor giant. The tenorsax playing is however good enough in its own right, particularly "Pouting", a minor blues, can be recommended.

**DOSSIE TERRY VOCAL WITH** **NYC. Feb. 12, 1953**

Dick Vance (tp), Eddie Barefield (cl), Ben Webster (ts), Howard Biggs (p), Everett Barksdale (g), Abie Baker (b), James Crawford (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Victor, unissued.

**THE DU DROPPERS** **NYC. Feb. 17, 1953**

Vocal group: Julius Caleb Ginyard (lead), Willie Ray, Harvey Ray (tenor, baritone), Bob Komegay (bass), accompanied by Ben Webster (ts), Skeeter Best (g), Abie Baker (b), Herman Bradley (dm), Kelly Owens (ldr).

Four titles were recorded for Victor, 0508 "Baby Don't Leave Me In This Mood" is unissued but:

0506 I Wanna Know Ensemble intro 8 bars. Coda. (M)

0507 Laughing Blues Intro with laughter 4 bars.  
Similar coda 4 bars. (S)

0509-C Get Lost Intro 4 bars. Solo 16 bars. (M)

What a surprise! And for me, what a pleasure!! You would never expect to find BW in these surroundings, and there he is, with a forceful and typical solo on "Get Lost", good as ever. The most funny vocal item, "... Know" only lets him stick his neck out in the brief coda tag. However, "Laughing ..." in slow tempo has BW in a prominent role, somewhat anachronistic perhaps, but just therefore highly enjoyable.

**RENE HALL ORCHESTRA** **NYC. 1953**

Personnel given as Courtland Carter (vo, g), Van Walls (p), Rene Hall (g), Teddy Sinclair (b), Francisco Da Silva (dm). However Ben Webster (ts) is also present!

Six titles were recorded for Victor on one or two sessions, four issued, no tenorsax present on 0601 (Lord is wrong here) but:

0599	Don't Take Me For A Fool	Obbligato parts. Solo 8 bars. (S)
0600	Seen Better Days	Solo 24 bars. (M)
0821	Voodoo Moon	Solo 12 bars. (S)

This must be BW!!! I don't like to introduce unfounded myths based upon bad hearing capabilities, but this time I will make an exception; this is so typical BW that any other choice is impossible. His typical breathing is there, both on the two medium blues choruses, and on the echoed "... Moon". This was a nice surprise!!! Postscript of Feb. 2015: Fine and typical slow BW solo on "... Fool"!

**BEN WEBSTER QUINTET** **NYC. Feb. 21 & 28, 1953**

Ben Webster (ts), Milt Jackson (vib), John Lewis (p), Percy Heath (b), Kenny Clarke (dm).

Recorded at Birdland. Date also given as 1962, but then MJQ had changed its drummer to Connie Kay, and this one sounds like Kenny Clarke.

Confirmation	Solo 64 bars. (FM)
You Are Too Beautiful	Solo 48 bars to coda. (S)
Lady Be Good	Solo 64 bars. 4/4 chase with (vib) and (dm) for 64 bars. (F)
Nearness Of You	Soli 36 and 36 bars. (S)
Poutin'	Solo 36 bars. (M)
Danny Boy	Solo 64 bars. (S)
Billie's Bounce	Solo 36 bars. (FM)
Cotton Tail	Soli 8 and 96 bars. 64 bars 4/4 chase with (vib) and (dm). (F)

MJQ and Frog, a lovely combination!! Of the three ballads, my favourite is "... Beautiful", which is just what it is. "Nearness ..." is also a nice piece of music, while "Danny Boy" is too much of it, almost sirupy if I dare say. Fine blues playing on "Poutin'" and "... Bounce", and also "Confirmation" should be noted. "Lady ..." is rather rough, and "Cottontail" has nothing new to offer, except perhaps the length of the solo, three choruses are more than usual.

BW replaced Paul Quinichette in the Count Basie Orchestra April 1953.

**COUNT BASIE AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. April 6, 1953**

Paul Campbell, Wendell Cully, Reunald Jones, Joe Newman (tp), Henry Coker, Benny Powell, Jimmy Wilkins (tb), Marshall Royal (cl, as), Ernie Wilkins (as, ts), Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Ben Webster (ts), Charlie Fowlkes (bar), Count Basie (p), Freddie Green (g), Gene Ramey (b), Gus Johnson (dm).

WMGM broadcast from The Band Box.

Four titles (Sheridan also lists eight titles with Billy Eckstine (vo), presumably without tenorsax soli), one has BW:

Smooth Sailing	Solo 24 bars. (M)
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Exciting as it may have seemed in advance, BW with the Count, long time overdue, is rather disappointing. Sandwiched between tenorsax soli by Davis and Wilkins, he produces a quite ordinary solo.

**MARSHALL ROYAL QUINTET** **NYC. April 7, 1953**

Marshall Royal (as), Ben Webster (ts), Bobby Tucker (p), Milt Hinton (b), Jo Jones (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Mercury, one has BW:

9611-2 's Wonderful	Solo 32 bars. (M)
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The item as such is rather stiff and not among the most memorable, but BW has a fine chorus.

**COUNT BASIE AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. April 13, 1953**

Personnel as April 6. WMGM broadcast from The Band Box.

Five titles (Sheridan also lists ten titles with Billy Eckstine (vo), presumably without tenorsax soli), one has BW:

Perdido	Solo 8 bars. Solo 6 choruses of 32 bars. Solo 16 bars to coda. (FM)
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**NYC. April 19, 1953**

Personnel as April 6. Unidentified broadcast from Apollo Theatre.  
Four titles, two have BW:

New Basie Blues	Solo 12 bars. (SM)
Sure Thing	Solo 8 bars to 8 choruses of 12 bars. (M)

Upon encountering "Perdido", my negative comments to the first Basie broadcast fade away! This is BW in his most inspired shape, and six choruses are poured forth with great energy and success. Likewise, "Sure Thing" has BW playing the blues in the very best tradition, roughly but beautifully. The third item, "New ..." is however lame and quite ordinary. This is all, shortly after BW left Basie.

BW was replaced temporarily by Maurice Simon.

**THE DU DROPPERS****NYC. May 8, 1953**

Vocal group as Feb. 17, 1953 accompanied by Ben Webster (ts), Howard Biggs (p,ldr), James Cannady (g), Abie Baker (b), Panama Francis (dm).  
Unknown number of titles recorded for Victor, 1274 "Little Girl, Little Girl" has no tenorsax present, the following has BW:

1272-D	I Found Out	Intro 4 bars. (M)
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Oh, how a few notes can ignite a whole record!

**BEN WEBSTER QUINTET****NYC. May 21, 1953**

Ben Webster (ts), Oscar Peterson (p), Barney Kessel (g), Ray Brown (b), J. C. Heard (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Verve:

1226-2	Poutin'	Solo 8 choruses of 12 bars. (SM)
1227	Cottontail	Solo 6 choruses of 32 bars. (F)
1228	Danny Boy (Londonderry Air)	Solo 64 bars. (S)
1229-3	Bounce Blues	Solo 1 and 5 choruses of 12 bars. (SM)
1229-?	Bounce Blues	Solo 7 choruses of 12 bars. (SM)

A lovely session with perhaps the best "Cottontail" version of 'modern times', the most 'bouncing' "... Blues" and magnificent ballad playing on "Danny ..."!

**CLYDE McPHATTER & THE DRIFTERS****NYC. June 28, 1953**

Sam Taylor, Ben Webster (ts), possibly Jesse Stone (p), Mickey Baker (g), unknown (b), (dm), six male (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Atlantic, only "Lucille" issued, but no tenorsax.

**JAM SESSION - NORMAN GRANZ****NYC. Sept. 2, 1953**

Dizzy Gillespie, Roy Eldridge (tp), Johnny Hodges (as), Illinois Jacquet, Flip Phillips, Ben Webster (ts), Lionel Hampton (vib), Oscar Peterson (p), Ray Brown (b), Buddy Rich (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Clef/Verve (two additional titles 1284-3 "Jammin' At Clef" and 1285-2 "Rose Room" are without BW):

1280-3	Jam Blues	Solo 6 choruses of 12 bars. (M)
1281-3	Blue Lou	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (F)
1282-3	Just You, Just Me	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (M)
1283-3	Ballad Medley: Someone To Watch Over Me	Solo 32 bars. (S)

This session lacks some of the fire of the real JATP live recordings, but of course there is much good music to be heard. BW is not particularly inspired on the fast "Blue Lou" but settles more comfortably in the medium groove of "Just You ..." and "Jam ...". The highlight is the beautiful ballad performance "Someone ...", played quite simply but to great effect.

**GENE KRUPA SEXTET****NYC. Sept. 10, 1953**

Charlie Shavers (tp, arr), Bill Harris (tb), Ben Webster (ts), Teddy Wilson (p), Herb Ellis (g), Ray Brown (b), Gene Krupa (dm). Date falsely given as Sept. 27.

Eight titles were recorded for Verve, issued as "The Exciting Gene Krupa":

1308-1	Imagination	Soli 8 and 16 bars. (S)
1309-1	Don't Take Your Love From Me	Soli 16 and 6 bars. Solo 10 bars to coda. (S)
1310-5	Midgets	Solo 32 bars. (F)
1311-3	I'm Coming Virginia	Solo 24 bars. (S)
1312-3	Payin' Them Dues Blues	Solo 8 bars. (S)
1313-3	Jungle Drums	Solo 8 bars. (SM)
1314-2	Showcase	Solo 36 bars. (F)
1315-5	Swedish Schnapps (Flow Gently, Sweet Rhythm)	Solo 32 bars. (FM)

Gene Krupa may be an excellent drummer, but the session built around him is rather corny as a whole, and there are just too many sticks flying around, together with Shavers' nerve racking trumpet. However, there are nice solo sections, and particularly BW seems to have an inspired day; when he takes his turns, he seems to forget the rather corny setup and just blows! Thus every tune has its merits, note for instance "Jungle ...", "Don't Take Your Love ...", "Imagination" and in particular "... Virginia" in an unusual tempo. A very fine session, for BW that is!

**JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC Hartford, Conn., Sept. 11, 1953**

Roy Eldridge, Charlie Shavers (tp), Bill Harris (tb), Benny Carter, Willie Smith (as), Flip Phillips, Ben Webster (ts), Oscar Peterson (p), Herb Ellis (g), Ray Brown (b), Gene Krupa (dm).

Date has been given as May, but this seems to be false.

Recorded at Bushnell Memorial Auditorium.

Cotton Tail	Solo 4 bars. With (ts-FP) unison 32 bars to 2 choruses of 8/8 to 2 choruses 4/4 to 1 chorus of closing. (FM)
Concert Blues	Solo 7 choruses of 12 bars. (M)

A smart twist on an old favourite; Ben and Flip start by playing the Duke Ellington original version before going into a chase of 5 choruses in various combinations. Exciting, but I believe Flip is the most clever guy. "Concert ..." is one of the more exciting BW performances with JATP; early in the jam session he builds seven choruses to a climax without sorting to too much roughness.

**JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC NYC. Sept. 19, 1953**

Collective personnel: Charlie Shavers, Roy Eldridge (tp), Bill Harris (tb), Willie Smith, Benny Carter (as), Ben Webster, Lester Young, Flip Phillips (ts), Oscar Peterson (p), Herb Ellis (g), Ray Brown (b), J. C. Heard, Gene Krupa (dm). Personnel varies from title to title, for details consult a discography.

Recorded in Carnegie Hall. Date also given as Sept. 23.

Cool Blues	Solo 11 choruses of 12 bars. (FM)
The Challenges (Cotton Tail)	Solo 6 choruses of 32 bars. (F)
One O'Clock Jump	Solo 9 choruses of 12 bars. (FM)
Flying Home	Solo 4 choruses of 32 bars. (FM)
Ballad Medley: Someone To Watch Over Me	Solo 32 bars. (S)

Contrary to what one might believe, the heavy battleground of JATP is not quite the right place for BW. With his big sound and energy he should have been a perfect member, but the numerous uptempi with many horns involved stimulate his weaker points, and although there is a lot of fun, rarely his soli are out of what may be called ordinary. It is interesting though to hear an extended version of "Cotton Tail" in a non-Duke setting, and his ballad playing on "Someone ..." is exquisite. "Flying ..." starts without ensemble, with BW taking the first four choruses, Flip the remaining six to close, and this is a colourful, swinging item, the best of the up-tempo ones.

**MEL WALKER LA. Oct. 17&20, 1953**

Bigband personnel supposed to include Melba Liston (tb, ldr), Ben Webster (ts), Mel Walker (vo). This is in fact a Johnny Otis type group without Otis, led by Melba Liston group.

Seven titles were recorded for Mercury, "You Passed By" and "I'd Like To Make You Mine" have not been available, the five others are included in "The Mercury Blues 'N' Rhythm Story", but contrary to liner notes there is no BW to be heard,

probably he is not present (source: Ken Gross). The two remaining titles need to be checked (Oct. 23, 2017). Postscript: Dec. 2021: Checked, no BW.

**JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC**

**Tokyo, Nov. 3 - 8, 1953**

Roy Eldridge, Charlie Shavers (tp), Bill Harris (tb), Benny Carter, Willie Smith (as), Flip Phillips, Ben Webster (ts), Oscar Peterson (p), Herb Ellis (g), Ray Brown (b), J. C. Heard (dm), Ella Fitzgerald (vo-"Perdido").

Recorded at the Nichigeki Theatre:

Jam Session (Tokyo) Blues	Solo 16 choruses of 12 bars. (F)
Cotton Tail	Solo 6 choruses of 32 bars. (F)
Ballad Medley	
Someone to Watch Over Me	Solo 32 bars. (S)
Perdido	Solo 4 choruses of 32 bars. (FM)

"Come On Ben, Come On Ben Webster Blow, Come On And Blow Ben Web, Come On And Blow Perdido"! Ella chooses a nice way to introduce BW on "Perdido". However, his solo here and the one on "Jam ..." are rather rough and not particularly noteworthy. Nor the ballad "Someone ..." is very exciting, one chorus seems to be routine only, before it develops into something. Surprisingly the old "Cotton Tail" is the most interesting item, after the two standard choruses, BW really gets going, and also Flip gets his share. Summing up, this JATP date is not of the most exciting ones.

**Tokyo, Nov. 7, 1953**

Personnel as above but Raymond Tunia (p) replaces Peterson on first four items.

Jam Session (Tokyo) Blues	Solo 15 choruses of 12 bars. (F)
Cotton Tail	Solo 4 bars. Solo 7 choruses of 32 bars. (F)
Ballad Medley	
Someone To Watch Over Me	Solo 32 bars. (S)
Perdido	No solo. (FM)
Sweethearts On Parade	No solo. (M)
Dixie	Solo with ens/(tb) 32 bars. (SM)

**Tokyo, Nov. 8, 1953**

Same.

Cotton Tail	Solo 4 bars. Solo 6 choruses of 32 bars. (F)
Ballad Medley	
Someone To Watch Over Me	Solo 32 bars. (S)

More Tokyo JATP! Two concerts were held each day, and in addition to the titles issued commercially with unspecified dates, additional items from Nov. 7 & 8 have survived. There is not so much to add, it seems the programs were almost identical from concert to concert, but "alternate takes" are always welcomed. Note however "Perdido", Ella shouts and shouts in vain, but Ben is out somewhere on a mission, and Flip has to salvage the number and step in!

**BEN WEBSTER AND HIS ALL STARS**

**L.A. Dec. 8, 1953**

Harry Edison (tp), Benny Carter (as), Ben Webster (ts), Oscar Peterson (p), Herb Ellis (g), Ray Brown (b), Alvin Stoller (dm).

Five titles were recorded for Norgran/Verve, issued as "King Of The Tenor":

1362-?	That's All	Solo 48 bars to coda. (S)
1362-?	That's All	Solo 64 bars to coda. (S)
1363-2	Pennies From Heaven	Soli 32 and 32 bars. (M)
1364-3	Tenderly	Solo 48 bars to coda. (S)
1365-?	Jive At Six	Solo 8 choruses of 12 bars. (M)
1365-5	Jive At Six	Solo 6 choruses of 12 bars. (M)
1366-3	Don't Get Around Much Anymore	Solo 64 bars. (SM)

Here we have the loveliest of ballads, and on "... All", "... Much Anymore" and "Tenderly" BW takes it all except for brief piano intros. Note that the 78 rpm. containing the 'short' version of "... Six" has 1365-5 on the label. It has also four choruses of riffs at the end, against three on the common take.



**BEN WEBSTER QUARTET****NYC. March 30, 1954**

Ben Webster (ts), Teddy Wilson (p), Ray Brown (b), Jo Jones (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Verve as "Sophisticated Lady":

1527-1	Love's Away	Solo 48 bars to coda. (S)
1528-4	You're Mine You	Solo 48 bars to coda. (S)
1529-1	My Funny Valentine	Solo 56 bars to coda. (S)
1530-5	Sophisticated Lady	Solo 48 bars to coda. (S)

One of BW's most memorable ballad sessions, a magnificent exhibition of his unique talents! It strikes me how far we now are not only from the swing era but from the turbulent late 40s; instead of encouraging critique for the choice of a set of monotonous slow titles, the music is purposefully created as a ballad session with no extraneous impressions to destroy the mood. In fact the titles support each other when played in a sequence, and it is nerve-racking playing something else afterwards, thus it should be bedtime, with or without your lover! Apart from Wilson's brief piano intros on all titles except "... Lady", BW has the whole session to himself. My favourite is the exquisite "... Valentine", a masterpiece!!

**JOHNNY HODGES AND HIS ALL STARS****NYC. April 9, 1954**

Emmett Berry (tp), Lawrence Brown (tb), Johnny Hodges (as), Ben Webster (ts), Leroy Lovett (p), Lloyd Trotman (b), Osie Johnson (dm).

Three titles were recorded for Verve, no BW on "I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart" but:

1545-4	In A Mellow Tone	Solo 32 bars. (M)
1547-1	Don't Get Around Much Anymore	Solo 8 bars. (SM)

Competent playing without being particularly memorable.

**BEN WEBSTER & RALPH BURNS ORCHESTRA****May 28, 1954**

Tony Scott (cl), Ben Webster (ts), Billy Strayhorn (p, arr-1724), George Duvivier (b), Louie Bellson (dm), Ralph Burns (arr, dir), plus six (strings).

Four titles were recorded for Verve as "Ballads By Ben Webster":

1721-2	Our Love Is Here To Stay	As below. (S)
1721-4	Our Love Is Here To Stay	As below. (S)
1721-6	Our Love Is Here To Stay	Solo 48 bars to long coda. (S)
1722-2	It Happens To Be Me	Solo 48 bars to long coda. (S)
1723-1	All Too Soon	Solo 80 bars to coda. (S)
1724-2	Chelsea Bridge	Soli 32 and 16 bars to coda. (S)

**same date**

Personnel as above minus Scott and strings. One title:

1725-1	Almost Like Being In Love	Straight 8 bars to solo 36 bars. Solo 36 bars to coda. (SM)
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BW is appearing with strings for the first time, and the results are exquisite. There is no doubt that Strayhorn with his arranging and piano on "Chelsea ..." creates a totality the three Burns titles do not have. However, BW plays incredibly beautiful all over and particularly on "All Too Soon". Possibly he is somewhat indifferent to the strings surrounding him, he does not really need them, and there exist string-haters by principle, but personally I embrace the session!!

**RALPH BURNS****NYC. Sept. 9, 1954**

Al Epstein (cl, bcl, eh), Danny Bank (fl, cl), Ben Webster (ts), Hank Jones (p), Wendell Marshall (b), Osie Johnson (dm), many (strings), Ralph Burns (arr, dir).

Until Tonight	Soli with strings 32 and 16 bars to coda. (S)
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A beautiful, very slow performance, BW at his emotional best!

**JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC****Hartford, Conn., Sept. 17, 1954**

Dizzy Gillespie, Roy Eldridge (tp), Bill Harris (tb), Flip Phillips, Ben Webster (ts), Oscar Peterson (p), Herb Ellis (g), Ray Brown (b), Louis Bellson (dm).

Recorded live at Bushell Memorial Auditorium, issued on Verve.

Jazz Concert Blues	Solo 11 choruses of 12 bars. (FM)
The Challenges	Solo 6 choruses of 32 bars. (F)
Ballad Medley: Tenderly	Solo 32 bars. (S)

**probably as above**

Same personnel. Issued on JG-628 and JG-632 respectively. Most likely from another concert same day.

Jazz Concert Blues	Solo 9 choruses of 12 bars. (FM)
The Challenges	Solo 5 choruses of 32 bars. (F)

One third of a century after the famous JATP jam sessions, things come into perspective. In those old days, the concerts were unforgettable, if you had been present, still the music was somewhat frowned upon by the purists, many of whom did not go! Today it is still not difficult to understand those who did not care for the frenzy exhibitionism of which the fast "... Challenges" is an excellent example. However, even more important is that the "unforgettability" has not waned, the music is in fact better than we perceived then. Concerning this particular date(s), BW does not play remarkably in any way, his artistry is to be questioned on numerous occasions. Still he contributes to the overall atmosphere of the jam session, one of the most important inventions of the U. S. A., together with his fellow musicians to make the occasion as such great. In fact Flip plays the better tenorsax here, preceding Ben, but it is the combined result that counts, the sum is greater than its parts. Note also that the Jazz Great issues are different from Verve, almost like they are taken from each one of two concerts on the same night? Any specific information will be received with gratitude.

**BEN WEBSTER AND FRIENDS****NYC. Nov. 1954**

Roy Eldridge (tp), Kai Winding (tb), Ben Webster (ts), unknown (p), (b), (dm).  
TV-Show. Announced as "Roy Eldridge and his trio with Ben Webster and Kai Winding". Date also given as Feb. 23, 1955 and as 1960:

The Goof And I	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
Undecided	Solo 32 bars. (F)

Two fine items, brief but to the point, good soloing by everybody. BW is best on "The Goof ..." but tries more on "Undecided".

**ILLINOIS JACQUET & HIS ALL STARS****NYC. Dec. 13, 1954**

Russell Jacquet (tp), Matthew Gee (tb), Illinois Jacquet, Ben Webster (ts), Leo Parker (bar), John Acea (p), Al Lucas (b), Osie Johnson (dm), Chano Pozo (cga).  
Two titles were recorded for Verve as "The Kid And The Brute":

2121-1	The Kid And The Brute	Solo 9 choruses of 12 bars (2 <sup>nd</sup> (ts)) to duet with IJ 11 choruses, mostly 4/4, to conclude with ensemble. (F)
2122-2	I Wrote This For The Kid	Solo 6 choruses of 12 bars (1 <sup>st</sup> (ts)). Later 3 choruses of 4/4 with BW first to 12 bars in ensemble. (S)

Although the "big encounter" is slightly disappointing, ref. my comments in the IJ solography, these two titles have much to offer. Although somewhat sluggish, "... Kid" lets BW play the slow and expressive blues in his own rough way, and "... Brute" while rather ugly still is an interesting example of BW's development in the middle fifties.

**RALPH BURNS' ORCHESTRA****NYC. Dec. 15, 1954**

Jimmy Hamilton (cl), Ben Webster (ts), Danny Bank (bar), Teddy Wilson (p), Wendell Marshall (b), Louis Bellson (dm), Ralph Burns (arr, cnd) plus seven (strings).

Four titles were recorded for Verve:

2134-5	Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me	Soli 32 and 16 bars to coda. (S)
2135-3	Prelude To A Kiss	Soli 32 and 16 bars to coda. (S)
2136-5	Willow Weep For Me	Intro to solo 32 bars. Solo 20 bars to coda. (S)

2137-2      Come Rain Or Come Shine      Intro to solo 8 bars. (S). Solo 8 bars (M) to 12 bars and coda. (S)

Compared to the other Verve sessions around this time, this one is the weakest. The strings arrangements do not work properly here, they sound somewhat artificial, the whole setup seems disconnected. BW is obviously affected by this and does not play up to his best, he seems to have problems in finding good solutions, and I doubt he is enjoying himself very much. But of course, BW always creates music, and he enters the late fifties as one of the major jazz tenorsaxophonists, beside Coleman Hawkins the only real survivor from the great swing era of the thirties and early forties.

The Ben Webster solography will be continued from 1955 in Part 3 later.

...ooo...