

The
TROMBONE
of
**HENRY STERLING
MORTON
“BENNY”**

Born: NYC. Jan. 31, 1907
Died: NYC. Dec. 28, 1985

Introduction:

Benny Morton was the most elegant of the black trombone players of the swing era, his music always had great qualities, and he had only a very few competitors on his instrument. He certainly deserves to be remembered!

Early history:

Step-father was a violinist. Studied at Textile High School in New York and began 'gigging' with school friends. Spent several years on and off with Billy Fowler's orchestra from 1924. With Fletcher Henderson (1926-28). With Chick Webb (1930-31), then rejoined Fletcher Henderson (March 1931). With Don Redman from 1932 until 1937, joined Count Basie in October 1937. Left Basie in January 1940 to join Joe Sullivan's band at Café Society. With Teddy Wilson sextet from July 1940 until 1943, then worked in Edmond Hall's sextet (ref. John Chilton: Who's Who of Jazz).

Message:

My co-solographer Ola Rønnow is a professional bass trombone player in the orchestra of the Norwegian National Opera, as well as playing trombone in Christiania 12, a local swing orchestra with a repertoire from the twenties and thirties. He has contributed many of the comments, particularly those which show a profound knowledge of the instrument, and an insight which I can only admire.

BENNY MORTON SOLOGRAPHY

FLETCHER HENDERSON & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. May 14, 1926

Russell Smith, Joe Smith, Rex Stewart (tp), Benny Morton (tb), Buster Bailey, Don Redman (cl, as), Coleman Hawkins (cl, ts), Fletcher Henderson (p), Charlie Dixon (bjo), Ralph Escudero (tu), Kaiser Marshall (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Columbia, one has HBM:

142206-2 Jackass Blues Solo 12 bars. In orch. (SM)

According to Walter C. Allen ("Hendersonia", 1973), Morton confirmed this as his first recorded solo with Henderson. The 19-year old trombonist already displays a good range and a nice sound, but there is little here to remind us of the Morton we know from later years.

THE DIXIE STOMPERS NYC. Oct. 20, 1926

Personnel as May 14 with Russell Smith and Ralph Escudero omitted. Benny Morton's presence is uncertain, the trombonist may be Charlie Green.

Three titles were recorded for Harmony, one has trombone solo:

142846-1 Brotherly Love Solo 8 bars. (FM)

Quoting "Hendersonia": "Although Morton says he remained with Henderson some time until he left to join Chick Webb in 1928, he may have been joined periodically by Charlie Green as section mate, or had to have a substitute on some particular record date such as this. The soloist here sounds somewhat like Green, without the growl". However, the phrasing reminds us somewhat of the solo on "Stockholm Stomp" a few months later, so we would not rule out HBM's presence here.

FLETCHER HENDERSON & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Nov. 3, 1926

Personnel including Benny Morton (tb).

Two titles were recorded for Columbia, no trombone soli, but trombone audible in orchestra.

NYC. Nov. 19, 1926

Similar. Two titles, no trombone soli. Note: On "Sweet Thing", HBM has been suggested for the 30 bars solo after the vocal. In our opinion, however, close listening reveals that this is not a trombone but a valve instrument, probably a mellophone; the trumpeters in the Henderson band are known to have doubled on this instrument as can be seen on some photos. Our guess would be Joe Smith.

FLETCHER HENDERSON & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Dec. 8, 1926

Personnel including Benny Morton (tb).

Two titles were recorded for Vocalion, one has HBM:

4184 Hot Mustard In orch. Solo with orch. 4 bars. (M)

NYC. Dec. 13, 1926

Same/similar. One title, "Sweet Thing", see comments Nov. 19 above.

NYC. Jan. 19, 1927

Russell Smith, Joe Smith, Tommy Ladnier (tp), Benny Morton, Jimmy Harrison (tb), Buster Bailey, Don Redman (cl, as), Coleman Hawkins (cl, ts), Fletcher Henderson (p), Charlie Dixon (bjo), June Cole (tu), Kaiser Marshall (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Vocalion, one has HBM:

4379/80 Some Of These Days Arranged (tb)-duet 16 bars and 2 bars coda. (M)

HBM has to step down for Jimmy Harrison who takes fine soli on both titles here. However a straight arranged duet on "... Days" is a nice curiosity.

Note: John R.T. Davis has suggested that Charlie Green replaces Morton on this session (Timeless Historical CBC 1-069).

THE DIXIE STOMPERS NYC. Jan. 20, 1927

Personnel possibly including Benny Morton (tb).

Three titles were recorded for Harmony, but no HBM.

FLETCHER HENDERSON & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Jan. 21/22, 1927

Personnel as Jan. 19.

Four titles were recorded for Columbia/Brunswick, two have HBM:

143344-3 Rocky Mountain Blues Soli 4 and 2 bars. (FM)

4404 Stockholm Stomp Solo 16 bars. (F)

“Stockholm ...” has a curious solo, quite virtuosic really, but also rather nervous and almost parodical. It seems that young HBM has more technique than he can handle! The contrast with Harrison’s relaxed little solo towards the end is striking.

NYC. March 11, 1927

Same. Two titles were recorded for Victor, one issued:

38160-1 Shuffling Sadie Solo 16 bars. (M)

A forceful but somewhat stiff solo on “... Sadie” seems to be by HBM.

NYC. March 19, 1927

Same. Two titles were recorded for Vocalion, but trombone soli by JH.

THE DIXIE STOMPERS

NYC. March 23, 1927

Personnel including Benny Morton, Jimmy Harrison (tb).
Three titles were recorded for Harmony, two have probably HBM:

143637-1 Wabash Blues Solo 16 bars (1st (tb)-solo). (M)

143639-2 St. Louis Shuffle Break 2 bars. Solo 4 bars. (FM)

On “Wabash Blues” the first trombone solo seems to be by Morton, still a bit stiff rhythmically compared to Harrison (who solos later on the side), but with some nice ideas.

FLETCHER HENDERSON & HIS ORCHESTRA

NYC. ca. April 1927

Personnel probably as Jan. 19.

Two titles were recorded for Paramount, one possibly has HBM:

2827-2 Swamp Blues Soli 8 and 8 bars. (M)

HBM is listed as uncertain in “Hendersonia”, we feel this might possibly be Charlie Green.

NYC. April 27, 1927

Personnel as Jan. 19.

Three titles were recorded for Victor, two issued, one has HBM:

38497-1 Variety Stomp Soli 4 and 4 bars (1st (tb)-soli). (FM)

38497-2 Variety Stomp As above. (FM)

38497-3 Variety Stomp As above. (FM)

A fine occasion for comparing Morton and Harrison. JH has his characteristic vibrato giving his playing a particular hue, while HBM has a more straightforward, less expressive sound, directly to the point. JH is also more rhythmically flexible.

NYC. April 28, 1927

Same. Two titles were recorded for Columbia but probably no HBM.

NYC. May 11, 1927

Similar. Two titles, but probably no HBM:

144132-2 Whiteman Stomp Solo with orch 2 bars. (FM)

THE LOUISIANA STOMPERS

NYC. ca. Oct. 1927

Joe Smith, possibly Russell Smith (tp), probably Benny Morton (tb), Buster Bailey (cl, as), Don Pasquall (as), Fletcher Henderson (p), Charlie Dixon (bjo), Coleman Hawkins (bsx).

Two titles were recorded for Paramount:

2859-1 Hop Off Solo 4 bars. In orch. (FM)

2860-2 Rough House Blues Break 2 bars. In orch. (SM)

FLETCHER HENDERSON & HIS ORCHESTRA

NYC. Nov. 4, 1927

Bigband personnel including Benny Morton (tb).

Two titles were recorded for Columbia but no HBM.

NYC. Nov. 26, 1927

Similar. Three titles were recorded for Regal but no HBM.

NYC. March 14, 1928

Similar. Two titles were recorded for Columbia but no HBM.

Chi. Sept. 14, 1928

Similar. Two titles were recorded for Brunswick, one issued, but no HBM.

CLARA SMITH VOCAL ACC. BY

NYC. Sept. 4, 1929

Ed Allen (cnt), Benny Morton (tb), possibly James P. Johnson (p).

Three titles were recorded for Columbia, two issued:

148970-2	Papa I Don't Need You Now	Obbligato parts. (S)
148971-2	Tired Of The Way You Do	Intro with (tp) 8 bars. Prominent obbligato parts. (SM)

Postscript of Dec. 2016: We omitted this session from the first version of this solography, but K.-B. Rau alerted us! Both Rust and Lord list the trombonist as 'unknown' on this session, but he is clearly HBM; listen to his introduction to "Tired Of The Way ..."! In addition, he contributes some beautiful obbligati, alternating with Ed Allen. These are the first recordings where we can hear HBM as a personal voice, with his characteristic sound and vibrato.

CHICK WEBB & HIS ORCHESTRA

ca. Dec. 1929

Personnel probably including Benny Morton (tb).

Film soundtrack "After Seben", three titles, one has trombone:

Sweet Sue	Solo 24 bars (FM)
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An interesting discovery! Morton worked with Chick Webb during this period, and for a brief moment it is possible to see a young trombonist resembling Morton in the margin of the picture (at least on some of the copies to be found on YouTube!). More important, the solo sounds like Morton, much more relaxed rhythmically than on the earlier records, and with a sound more like his later work. It could thus be said to constitute a kind of "missing link" between the earlier recordings and his work from 1931 onwards.

FLETCHER HENDERSON & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. March 19, 1931**

Russell Smith, Rex Stewart, Bobby Stark (tp), Claude Jones, Benny Morton (tb), Russell Procope, Harvey Boone (cl, as), Coleman Hawkins (cl, ts, bar), Fletcher Henderson (p-151441,42), Horace Henderson (p-151443,44), Clarence Holiday (g), John Kirby (b), Walter Johnson (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Columbia, three have HBM:

151441-2	Clarinet Marmalade	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
151442-1	Sugar Foot Stomp	Solo 36 bars. (Mute) (F)
151442-2	Sugar Foot Stomp	As above. (F)
151444-1	Comin' And Going	Soli 12, 12 and 6 bars. (SM)

Benny Morton is back in the Henderson band, and now as a great soloist! He is at this point 24 years old, and this session is his real breakthrough on record. He plays with great authority and a relaxed sense of swing, and his style is by now fully developed. His "trademark", the beautiful vibrato/trill at the end of longer notes is now in place. This expressive device of course stems from Armstrong and had already been used by trombonists like Jack Teagarden and Dicky Wells, but Morton has his own very personal way of using it, making him instantly recognizable.

Note first the three super-hot choruses on an up-tempo version of "Sugar Foot Stomp", which the Henderson band recorded with Armstrong in 1925. The solo is a variation on the classic King Oliver choruses on the 1923 "Dippermouth Blues", which Armstrong recreated in the 1925 recording. Interestingly, Henderson first lets Rex Stewart play the three traditional choruses, and then Morton gives his version. He plays it in the same octave as the trumpet, which gives the solo a very intense quality, making it the high spot of the record for me (OR). Few jazz trombonists in 1931 had such a control of the high register. He ends the solo with a sustained trill (in place of Armstrong's long note) and a perfectly timed slurred passage on the overtone series, with clear reference to Claude Jones' excellent solo on the same side. One can imagine these two great players playing the tune night after night and competing with each other for spectacular effects. The second take, at a slightly faster tempo, is quite similar to the first, but with a fluff on the very last note. "... Marmalade" also has a fine hot and swinging solo. Finally, the superb "Comin' and Going", with three majestic, bluesy contributions from Morton. Surely an essential session for the Benny Morton collector!

Note: The music-reading listener can find a transcription of the last section of Morton's solo on "Sugar Foot Stomp" in Gunther Schuller's "Early Jazz" (1968), pp. 275-276.

NYC. ca. March/April 1931

Same/similar. Four titles were recorded for Crown, one has HBM:

1233-3 Somebody Stole My Gal Solo 18 bars. (FM)

This session is a rather tame affair compared to the other Henderson sessions from the same period, and HBM's solo is not one of his best efforts, despite a nice break at the end.

NYC. April 10, 1931

Same. Four titles were recorded for Melotone, two have HBM:

36455-A Sugar Foot Stomp Solo 36 bars. (FM)

36456-A Just Blues Soli 2 and 12 (mute) bars. (SM)

Another very fine version of "Sugar Foot Stomp", quite different from the Columbia one; further removed from the Oliver/Armstrong originals and without the stop-time elements, but swinging mightily, listen to the ending of the second chorus! "Just Blues" is a lovely record; not much of an arrangement, just a string of blues choruses really (as indicated by the title!). How well Henderson employed his two trombone stars with their contrasting styles: First Claude Jones with his impeccably clean technique in a beautiful duet with Bobby Stark, and then the hotter Morton, creating a wonderful rhythmic tension. Notice how much this solo depends on its rhythmic effects; up to the fifth bar 17 of the 22 notes played are the same high A flat, played with a hint of double-time, then increasing the intensity by introducing shorter note values into a real double-time feeling, but perfectly matching the slow and steady accompaniment. A great solo!

NYC. April 29, 1931

Same/similar. Four titles were recorded for Victor, three have HBM:

53066-1 Sugar Foot Stomp Solo 36 bars. (F)

53066-2 Sugar Foot Stomp As above. (F)

53067-1 Roll On, Mississippi, Roll On Solo 8 bars. (F)

53067-2 Roll On, Mississippi, Roll On As above. (F)

53068-1 Moan You Moaners In intro. (M)

53068-2 Moan You Moaners As above. (M)

Yet another version of "Sugar Foot..", at an even more hectic tempo, Morton's soli are almost identical to the Columbia versions. Don't overlook the two other titles; although the tunes are very corny, they contain some fine jazz – "Roll On..." has 8 bars of first-rate Morton.

WOODING'S GRAND CENTRAL RED CAPS

NYC. May 20, 1931

Personnel probably includes Benny Morton (tb).

One title was recorded for Victor:

69610-1 I Can't Get Enough Of You Probably solo 16 bars. (M)

This good trombone solo has all the trademarks of HBM's style, particularly his very personal vibrato, so we go for him!

FLETCHER HENDERSON & HIS ORCHESTRA

NYC. July 17, 1931

Personnel as March 19 except Edgar Sampson (cl, as, vln) replaces Boone.

Four titles were recorded for Brunswick/Melotone, three have HBM:

36925-A Low Down On The Bayou Solo 4 bars. (FM)

36926-A The House Of David Blues Solo 13 bars. (SM)

36927-A Radio Rhythm Solo 8 bars (1st (tb)-solo). (FM)

Expressive, powerful solo on ...David..., with just a small intonation problem in bar 10.

DON REDMAN & HIS ORCHESTRA

NYC. Sept. 24, 1931

Bill Coleman, Leonard Davis, Henry "Red" Allen (tp), Claude Jones, Fred Robinson, Benny Morton (tb), Edward Inge, Rupert Cole (cl, as) Don Redman

(as, vo, ldr, arr), Robert Carroll (ts), Horace Henderson (p, arr), Talcott Reeves (bjo, g), Bob Ysaguirre (b, tu), Manzie Johnson (dm, vib), Lois Deppe (vo).
Four titles were recorded for Brunswick, two have trombone, HBM:

37222 I Heard Solo 8 bars. (F)
37224 Shakin' The African Soli 2 and 8 bars. (F)

NYC. Oct. 15, 1931

Same except Langston Curl (tp) replaces Coleman.
Two titles were recorded for Brunswick, both have trombone, HBM:

37291 Shakin' The African Solo 2 and 8 bars. (F)
37292-A I Heard Break. Solo 8 bars. (F)

HBM has now moved on to the Don Redman, who had one of the very best orchestras in this period. He was undoubtedly one of the finest soloists in the band, but was not featured as much on record as one could wish. However, when this is said, there are several nice, but brief soli to be noted. On these first sessions, no problems with uptempo, and note how different the takes of "... The African" and "I Heard" are.

DON REDMAN & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Feb. 26, 1932**
Personnel as above except Shirley Clay, Sidney DeParis (tp) replace Allen and Davis.
Two titles recorded for Brunswick, no trombone soli.

NYC. April 13, 1932

Same with Bing Crosby (vo). One title, no trombone soli.

NYC. June 17, 1932

Same, issued as **HARLAN LATTIMORE**. Four titles were recorded for Columbia, one has HBM:

152220-2 Reefer Man Solo 4 bars. (F)

NYC. June 28, 1932

Same. Four titles were recorded for Brunswick/Melotone, all have trombone:

11979-3 Got The South In My Soul Unlikely solo 8 bars. (M)
11994-A If It's True Obligato 8 bars. (M)
11995-A It's A Great World After All Intro 8 bars. Solo 8 bars. (FM)
11996-A You Gave Me Everything But Love Unlikely straight 16+8 bars,
orch on bridge.
Obligato 32 bars. (SM)

NYC. June 30, 1932

Same. Three titles, two have trombone, HBM:

12005-A Tea For Two Solo 8 bars. (FM)
12007-A I Got Rhythm Solo with orch 34 bars. Solo 8 bars.
Probably leading trombone trio 16+10 bars. (F)

A very elegant bridge on "Tea for Two", staying close to the melody, but how unmistakably personal he still sounds, with his characteristic vibrato and sound! Excellent solo work on "...Rhythm" as well, but here the highlight is the exciting trombone trio. Redman's was the first of the swing bands to feature three trombones. According to some sources Claude Jones led the trombone section in the Redman band, but to these ears it sounds as if HBM plays the lead part here, which climbs up to a high D.

NYC. Sept. 16, 1932

Same. Two titles were recorded for Brunswick:

12306-A Pagan Paradise Two soli of 8 bars, one by HBM. (M)
12307-A Two-Time Man Probably soli 4, 4 and 16 bars. (M)
12307-B Two-Time Man As above. (M)

NYC. Oct. 6, 1932

Same. Four titles were recorded for Brunswick, three have trombone (see Claude Jones):

- 12444-A Underneath The Harlem Moon Unlikely solo 4 bars. (M)
 12446-A Doin' What I Please Unlikely intro 4 bars, obligato 16
 and 8 bars, solo 4 bars. (M)

NYC. Dec. 29, 1932

Same plus (tap-dancing), (vo). One title was recorded for Brunswick, no trombone soli.

NYC. ca. Jan. 1933

Same with Mae "Betty Boop" Questal (vo).
 Soundtrack from "Betty Boop" soundtrack, three titles, one has HBM:

I Heard Break. Solo 8 bars. (F)

NYC. Feb. 2, 1933

Same except Don Kirkpatrick (p, arr) replaces Horace Henderson.
 Five titles were recorded for Brunswick, two have trombone soli, one by HBM:

13006-A How Ya Feelin'? Solo 16 bars. (M)

HBM is not quite on top form on "How Ya...", for once sounding a little strained in the high register. If you listen very carefully, you may just hear the fine trombone trio behind the last 32 bars of the vocal, adding a beautiful colour.

NYC. April 26, 1933

Same. Four titles were recorded for Brunswick, three have trombone, one by HBM:

12287-A It's All Your Fault Solo 8 bars. (FM)

Another fine bridge in typical HBM-style.

NYC. Aug. 2, 1933

Similar. Two titles were recorded for Brunswick, one has trombone:

13694-A Lazy Bones Unlikely straight 4, 4 and 4 bars.
 Obbligato 16 and 8 bars. (SM)

NYC. Oct. 19/20, 1933

Similar. Five titles were recorded for Brunswick, four have trombone soli:

14179-A I Found A New Way To Go To Town Solo 12 bars (mute). (SM)

14180-A You Told Me But Half The Story Possibly straight 8 bars.
 Solo 4 bars. (M)

14182-A She's Not Bad Solo 6 bars. (M)

14192-A NLML That Dallas Man Solo 8 bars (mute). (M)

The gem here is a very fine, bluesy solo on the minor-key "I Found a New ...", and there might be a hint of Teagarden influence here, suggested by OR.

**HENRY ALLEN / COLEMAN
 HAWKINS & THEIR ORCHESTRA**

NYC. Nov. 9, 1933

Henry Allen (tp, vo), Benny Morton (tb), Edward Inge (cl, as), Coleman Hawkins (ts), Horace Henderson (p), Bernard Addison (g), Bob Ysaguirre (b), Manzie Johnson (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Melotone:

14282-1 Hush My Mouth Solo 8 bars. (M)

14283-1 You're Gonna Lose Your Gal Straight 20 bars. In ens. (FM)

14283-2 You're Gonna Lose Your Gal As above. (FM)

14284-1 Dark Clouds Weak obligato parts.
 Straight 4 bars. (SM)

14285-1 My Galveston Gal In ens. Solo 16+8 bars,
 (cl) on bridge. (M)

14285-2 My Galveston Gal As above. (M)

"This is a superb small-band session matching average-at-best popular songs with first-class musicians from the Henderson and Redman bands" to quote Loren Scoenberg. A brief but elegant solo on "Hush ..." shows that HBM now has

developed into an important and very personal artist on his instrument. The highlight is however “My ...”. The original take has an excellent, well conceived solo (although with a slight error in bar 12), and a take 2 is therefore a very exciting discovery, although the sound quality is quite bad. It is a pleasure to hear that the two trombone soli have lots of differences (a slight problem with the opening in take 2), particularly the last eight, showing that HBM was a true improviser.

DON REDMAN & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Nov. 14, 1933**

Shirley Clay, Henry Allen, Didney de Paris (tp), Claude Jones, Fred Robinson, Benny Morton (tb), Edward Inge, Rupert Cole (cl, as) Don Redman (as, vo, ldr, arr), Robert Carroll (ts), Don Kirkpatrick (p, arr), Talcott Reeves (bjo, g), Bob Ysaguirre (b, tu), Manzie Johnson (dm, vib), Chick Bullock (vo).

Six titles were recorded for Melotone, no trombone on 14315-1 “Puddin’ Head Jones” but:

14298-1	Our Big Love Scene	Possibly straight 8 bars. Solo 4 bars. (FM)
14299-1	After Sundown	Probably solo with orch 8 bars (mute). (SM)
14316-1	My Old Man	Obbligato 32 bars (mute). (FM)
14317-1	Tired Of It All	Weak obbligato parts. (SM)
14318-2	Keep On Doin’ What You’re Doin’	Solo 6 bars. (M)

No trombone soli of importance on this rather saccharine session. Morton definitely plays the 4 bars on “Our Big...”, the solo on “Keep On...”, the 8 bars on “After Sundown” and probably the faintly audible obbligato on “My Old Man”.

DON REDMAN & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Dec. 22, 1933**

Personnel as usual.

CBS broadcast from Casino de Paris, two titles have BM:

You Told Me	Solo 4 bars (mute). (M)
Redman Rhythm	Soli 4 and 4 bars. (M)

BEN POLLACK & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Dec. 28, 1933**

Yank Lawson, Charlie Spivak, Shirley Clay (tp), Joe Harris, Benny Morton (tb), Matty Matlock (cl), Gil Rodin, Dean Kincaide (as), Eddie Miller (ts), Al Beller, Ray Cohen (vln), Gil Bowers (p), Nappy Lamare (g, vo), Harry Goodman (b), Ray Bauduc (dm), Ben Pollack (vo, ldr).

Four titles were recorded for Columbia, three have HBM:

152662-2	Got The Jitters	Solo 8 bars. (M)
152664-1	Swing Out	Solo 8 bars. With orch. (FM)
152665-1	I’m Full Of The Devil	Solo 8 bars. (FM)

An interesting session. Shirley Clay and Benny Morton from the Redman band guesting with the excellent Pollack band shortly before that band broke up, with most of its members forming the Bob Crosby Orchestra. Morton delivers a fine and typical solo on “...Jitters”, although he gets a little lost in the last two bars! Good solos also on “Swing Out” and “...Devil”.

Note: The trombone contributions on 152633 “Deep Jungle” do not sound like Morton, and are probably by Joe Harris (another fine trombone player, hear him on “Blues of Israel” with Gene Krupa in 1935).

DON REDMAN & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Jan. 5&9, 1934**

Personnel including Benny Morton (tb).

Two titles were recorded for Brunswick, but no trombone:

14536-A	I Wanna Be Loved	Possibly obbligato parts. (SM)
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DON REDMAN & HIS ORCHESTRA **1934**

Personnel probably similar to above.

Vitaphone film short, four titles (to be found on YouTube), one has HBM:

Yeah Man	Solo 24 bars (F)
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This is great! A sparkling uptempo-solo, with full control of the fast tempo, stop chorus in the last 8 bars, and better still; we can watch our hero play! As Redman says/sings: “he really played that thing, I guess we’ll have to make him the king!” Well, at least he has a place among the very best jazz trombone players at this point! Of course, during this period the music was pre-recorded and the musicians “mimed” the playing afterwards, but the synchronization works quite well here

and one really gets a feeling of how it must have been to experience the Redman band live.

BENNY MORTON & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Feb. 23, 1934**

Henry Allen (tp, vo-152720), Benny Morton (tb), Edward Inge (cl, as), Jerry Blake (cl, as, vo-152717,18), Ted McRae (ts), Don Kirkpatrick (p), Bobby Johnson (g), Billy Taylor (b), Manzie Johnson (dm).
Four titles were recorded for Columbia (blue wax!):

152717-2	Get Goin'	Solo 14 bars. (M)
152717-3	Get Goin'	As above. (M)
152718-1	Fare Thee Well To Harlem	Solo 12 bars. (M)
152719-1	Tailor Made	Solo 8 bars. (M)
152720-2	The Gold Digger's Song	Solo/straight 16+8 bars, (as) on bridge. Solo 16+8 bars, (p) on bridge. (FM)

This is HBM's first session as a leader, and there would not be many of those, and ten years till next time. The session is great as such, oh, yes, but HBM might have done more with it from his own trombone point of view. His playing is rather modest compared to what we know from Redman. Most interesting is he on the "... Song".

BENNY CARTER & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Dec. 13, 1934**

Russell Smith, Otis Johnson, Irving "Mouse" Randolph (tp), Benny Morton, Keg Johnson (tb), Benny Carter (cl, as, ldr), Ben Smith, Russell Procope (as), Ben Webster (ts), Teddy Wilson (p), Clarence Holiday (g), Elmer James (b), Walter Johnson (dm), Charles Holland (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Vocalion, two have trombone soli, both by HBM:

16414-1	Everybody Shuffle	Solo 16 bars. (F)
16415-1	Synthetic Love	Solo 16 bars. (M)
16415-2	Synthetic Love	As above. (M)

Now the swing era is developing, and on "Everybody ..." HBM blows a strong, swinging and very confident solo in high tempo, not many could challenge him by now. Relaxed and pleasant solo on "... Love". Postscript of Oct. 20, 2017: An alternate of "... Love" has appeared!

CHUCK RICHARDS **NYC. Dec. 19, 1934**

Henry Allen (tp), Benny Morton (tb), Buster Bailey (cl), Charlie Beal (p), Lawrence Lucie (g), Billy Taylor (b), Chuck Richards (vo).

Three titles were recorded for Vocalion, one has HBM:

16523-1	Blue Interlude	Straight 16 bars. (SM)
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TEDDY WILSON & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Oct. 25, 1935**

Roy Eldridge (tp), Benny Morton (tb), Chu Berry (ts), Teddy Wilson (p), Dave Barbour (g), John Kirby (b), Cozy Cole (dm), Billie Holiday (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Brunswick,

18196-1	Twenty-Four Hours A Day	Solo 16 + 8 bars, (ts) on bridge. (FM)
18197-1	Yankee Doodle Never Went To Town	Solo 8 bars. (M)
18198-1	Eeny Meeny Miney Mo	With ens 32 bars to obligato 16 bars. Solo 32 bars. (F)
18209-1	If You Were Mine	Straight intro 4 bars. Solo/straight 8 bars. Obligato 16 bars. (SM)

HBM meets Teddy Wilson! Although they recorded together the year before, this session represents the entrance card to the swing era, and later, as we shall see, HBM became one of this famous pianist's best musical companions. His trombone playing is now among the most important and easily recognizable with its strong vibrato. He is a creative musician, and his soli here are highly noteworthy, our highlight is the fine solo on "Eeny Meeny ...", with "... Day" not far behind, and a brief solo on "... should also be noted. Finally, although "... Mine" is not a vehicle for improvisation, HBM defines the mood with his introductory trombone, and there is some lovely background for Billie here.

THOMAS "FATS" WALLER & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Dec. 4, 1935

Herman Autrey, unknown (tp), Benny Morton (tb), Emmett Matthews (sop), Rudy Powell (cl, as), Gene Sedic, Bob Carroll (ts), Fats Waller (p, vib, vo), Hank Duncan (p), James Smith (g), Charles Turner (b), Yank Porter (dm).
Three titles were recorded for Victor, one has HBM:

98198-1 I Got Rhythm Solo 16+10 bars, (as) on bridge. (F)

This must be one of the fastest jazz records from the thirties (after Bennie Moten's "Toby"!), and Morton copes well with the extreme tempo, encouraged by Fats' shouting. He wisely adopts a quasi half-tempo approach, floating effortlessly above the busy (and very swinging!) rhythm section. Postscript of March 2020: The trombone solo on "... Rhythm" has previously been attributed to BM, both by Rust and RCA Victor's LPM 525. However, Laurie Wright ("Fats in Fact") and Lord has Fred Robinson (or George Wilson) as possible trombonist, and this seems more likely.

TEDDY WILSON & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. March 17, 1936

Frankie Newton (tp), Benny Morton (tb), Jerry Blake (cl, as), Ted McRae (ts), Teddy Wilson (p), John Trueheart (g), Lennie Stanfield (b), Cozy Cole (dm), Ella Fitzgerald (vo-18830,32).

Four titles were recorded for Brunswick, three issued:

18829-1 Christopher Columbus Solo 32 bars. (M)

18830-1 My Melancholy Baby Solo/straight 24 bars. (M)

18832-1 All My Life Straight intro 2 bars. (SM)

After a piano intro, HBM presents the theme of "... Baby" in his own very personal way, in fact he plays more interesting straight than many trombonists when they improvise. Long solo on "Christopher ..." but it seems somewhat heavy, and he has problems at the end of the bridge.

BOB HOWARD NYC. April 3, 1936

Unknown (tp), Benny Morton (tb), unknown (cl), Dick Stabile (as), Robert Carroll (ts), (p), (b), (dm), Bob Howard (vo).

Three titles were recorded for Decca, two issued:

60980-A Public Weakness No. 1 Solo 8 bars. In ens. (M)

60981-A Let's Not Fall In Love Solo 16+8 bars, (ts) on bridge. (FM)

Good solo on "Public ..." except for one wrong note in bar 1. The most exciting item is however "... Love" with a swinging solo, note particularly the last eight, and with a great tenorsax bridge.

DON REDMAN SMALL BAND NYC. Jan. 9, 1934

Personnel including Benny Morton (tb), Ed Inge (cl), Robert Carroll (ts).

One title was recorded for Champion, originally issued as **CAHN-CHAPLIN ORCHESTRA**:

60982-A Christopher Columbus Solo 8 bars. With ens. (FM)

Fine and very typical solo on this item!

DON REDMAN & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. May 7, 1936

Reunald Jones (tp, arr), Shirley Clay, Sidney DeParis (tp), Gene Simon, Benny Morton (tb), Edward Inge, Rupert Cole (cl, as), Don Redman (cl, as, vo), Harvey Boone (as, bar), Robert Carroll (ts), Don Kirkpatrick (p, arr), Talcott Reeves (g), Bob Ysaqure (b), Manzie Johnson (dm, vib), Harlan Lattimore (vo).

Four titles were recorded for ARC, one has trombone:

19202-1 A Little Bit Later On Solo 8 bars. (FM)

Beautiful solo, ending with a very nice break.

NYC. Sept. 30, 1936

Reunald Jones (tp, arr), Otis Johnson, Harold Baker (tp), Gene Simon, Benny Morton, Quentin Jackson (tb), Edward Inge, Rupert Cole (cl, as), Don Redman (cl, as, vo), Harvey Boone (as, bar), Robert Carroll (ts), Don Kirkpatrick (p, arr), Clarence Holiday (g), Bob Ysaqure (b), Sid Catlett (dm), Harlan Lattimore (vo).
Four titles, two have trombone:

19979-1 Who Wants To Sing My Love Song? Probably solo 8 bars. (SM)

19982-1 Bugle Call Rag Solo 16 bars. Break. (F)

Among all the commercial tunes on the Redman sessions, it is nice to find a really hot jazz record with “Bugle...”, and HBM contributes a fine solo, supported by the superb rhythm section.

DON REDMAN & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. May 28, 1937**

Reunald Jones (tp, arr), Otis Johnson, Harold Baker (tp), Gene Simon, Benny Morton, Quentin Jackson (tb), Edward Inge, Rupert Cole (cl, as), Don Redman (cl, as, vo), Harvey Boone (cl, as, bar), Robert Carroll (ts), Don Kirkpatrick (p, arr), Bob Lessey (g), Bob Ysaqure (b), Sid Catlett (dm).

Seven titles were recorded for Variety, four have trombone, HBM:

505-2	Stormy Weather	Straight with (vo-ens) 48 and 12 bars. (M)
506-1	Exactly Like You	Solo 4 bars to obligato to ens vocal 36 bars. (M)
508-1	On The Sunny Side Of The Street	Obbligato 6 bars. (M)
509-2	Swingin' With The Fat Man	Solo 8 bars. (FM)

The Redman orchestra gets progressively more commercial these days, but there are much nice music anyway. The highlight here is his elegant background to “Exactly ...”, but note also the brief tag on “... Street”.

HBM joined Count Basie in September 1937.

COUNT BASIE & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Oct. 13, 1937**

Personnel from this period: Buck Clayton, Ed Lewis, Bobby Moore (tp), Henry “Benny” Morton, Dan Minor (tb), Eddie Durham (tb, g), Earl Warren (as), Herschel Evans, Lester Young (cl, ts), Jack Washington (bar), Count Basie (p), Freddie Green (g), Walter Page (b), Jo Jones (dm), Jimmy Rushing (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, three have HBM:

62682-A	I Keep Remembering	Solo/straight 16+8 bars, (p) on bridge. Duet with (p) 8 bars (mute). (M)
62683-A	Out The Window	Solo 16+8 bars, (ts-LY) on bridge. Coda. (F)
62685-A	Let Me Dream	Solo 16+8 bars, (p) on bridge. Coda. (SM)

On his first recording session with the Count, HBM gets three very good opportunities. His light and elegant style suits the Basie rhythm section well. The really important solo is on “... Window”, where he constructs a very fine and inventive piece beginning with a humorous quote of “Hush Little Baby”, and joined by Prez on the bridge. The fast tempo does not seem to worry him at all, and in fact, this is one of his best soli with Basie. However, this shall not overshadow the other two items! We have a particular weakness for HBM’s straight and sweet trombone presentations, and both “I Keep ...” and “... Dream” are excellent examples. The first is the hottest item with other good jazz soli, but note also the charming interplay with the Count himself on “... Dream”!

COUNT BASIE & HIS ORCHESTRA **Cedar Grove, NJ. Nov. 3, 1937**

Same plus Billie Holiday (vo).

Broadcast, eight titles, one has HBM:

One O’Clock Jump	Solo 24 bars. (FM)
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Sandwiched between Herschel and Lester, HBM takes two nice blues choruses.

COUNT BASIE & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Jan. 3, 1938**

Same except Karl George (tp) replaces Moore and without Holiday.

Two titles were recorded for Decca, but no HBM.

TEDDY WILSON & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Jan. 6, 1938**

Personnel as Jan. 12 below except Buster Bailey out.

Four titles were recorded for Brunswick:

22192-3	My First Impression Of You	Intro 8 bars. (SM)
22192-4	My First Impression Of You	As above. (SM)
22194-3	When You’re Smiling	Solo/straight 32 bars. (FM)
22194-4	When You’re Smiling	As above. (FM)
22195-3	I Can’t Believe That You’re ILWM	Solo/straight 8 bars. (SM)
22195-4	I Can’t Believe That You’re ILWM	As above. (SM)

- 22255-1 If Dreams Come True Solo 32 bars. (M)
 22255-2 If Dreams Come True As above. (M)

... and in addition HBM can be heard in the final ensembles. In almost every solography the Wilson/Holiday sessions are praised because they make the participants create performances that will last for a long time, if not forever. Benny Morton is no exception! His simultaneously sweet, hot and swinging trombone plays an important role here, like for instance in "... Smiling", where he plays quite straight but nevertheless so personal in sound, that the result (the takes are almost identical in this respect) is almost like a solo. The variations in "... With Me" are also slight but with the same, fine sound. However, "My First ..." offer two intro with fine improvising, take 3 is slightly the best one though not quite perfect. And then "If Dreams ...", the Morton masterpiece with Wilson! Two very different takes of sweet swinging trombone, which I (jan) love! Take 1 seems to be the best one.

BILLIE HOLIDAY & HER ORCHESTRA NYC. Jan. 12, 1938

Buck Clayton (tp), Benny Morton (tb), Buster Bailey (cl), Lester Young (ts), Teddy Wilson (p), Freddy Green (g), Walter Page (b), Jo Jones (dm), Billie Holiday (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Vocalion, no HBM on 22283-1&2 "Back In Your Own Backyard" but:

- 22281-2 Now They Call It Swing Solo 8 bars. (M)
 22281-3 Now They Call It Swing As above. (M)
 22282-1 On The Sentimental Side Straight 16 bars with (p).
 Obbligato 8 bars. (S)
 22282-2 On The Sentimental Side As above. (S)
 22284-2 When A Woman Loves A Man Obbligato 32 bars. (S)

A lovely but weakly recorded muted trombone on "... Man" shall be noted, but maybe the the two driving soli on "... Swing" should take the prizes on this date?

COUNT BASIE & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Feb. 16, 1938

Same except Harry Edison (tp) replaces George.

Four titles were recorded for Decca, one has HBM:

- 63289-A Swingin' The Blues Solo 4 bars. (FM)

Randall's Island, May 29, 1938

Same. Broadcast, Bill Savory collection, one title:

- One O'Clock Jump Solo 24 bars. (FM)

NYC. June 6, 1938

Same. Three titles, but no HBM.

NYC. July 9, 1938

Same except Dicky Wells (tb) replaces Durham and Helen Humes (vo) added.

Broadcast "America Dances", nine titles, one has HBM:

- One O'Clock Jump Solo 24 bars (1st (tb)-solo). (FM)

NYC. July/Aug. 1938

Same. Broadcasts from the Famous Door, the following have HBM:

- July 23 Jumpin' At The Woodside Solo 8 bars. (FM)
 July 23 Everybody Loves My Baby Solo 8 bars. (F)
 Aug. 9 King Porter Stomp Solo 16 bars. (FM)

Good soloing but nothing really remarkable, consider possibly "King ..." as a highlight. Note also that HBM now has got challenging company with Dicky Wells, listen to them both on "... Jump"!

COUNT BASIE & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Aug. 22, 1938

Personnel as July 9.

Four titles were recorded for Decca, one has HBM:

- 64472-A London Bridge Is Falling Down Soli 8 and 8 bars. (FM)

One wonders who had the idea that the Basie band should record this corny (from a jazz viewpoint) children's tune. They manage to make some fine jazz of it, but

HBM is given the ungrateful task of presenting parts of the melody, which he does elegantly as always, but it hardly makes for memorable jazz.

COUNT BASIE & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Aug. /Sept. 1938**
Same. Broadcasts from the Famous Door, the following have HBM:

Aug. 23	Melody In F	Solo 2 bars. (F)
Aug. 24	Nagasaki	Soli 8 and 48 bars to coda. (F)
Sept. 6	Out The Window	Solo 16+8 bars (ts-LY) on bridge. Brief coda. (F)
Sept. 13	Ta-Ta	Solo 32 bars. (F)

Here we have some of the most interesting items with Basie! Already on the first 8 bars of "Nagasaki" he shows that he is in an inspired mood and comes back with a concluding solo. The solo on "... Window" has the same overall shape as the studio recording, but with many differing details, and on "Ta-Ta" he takes a swinging solo between the two tenorsax players.

COUNT BASIE & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Oct. 12, 1938**
Same. Broadcast, Bill Savory collection, one title:

Harlem Shout Solo 8 bars. (F)

TEDDY WILSON & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Oct. 31, 1938**

Harry James (tp), possibly Benny Morton (tb), Edgar Sampson, Benny Carter (as), Herschal Evans, Lester Young (ts), Teddy Wilson (p), Al Casey (g), Walter Page (b), Jo Jones (dm), Billie Holiday (vo).

Two titles were recorded for Brunswick, one has HBM:

23643-1 Here It Is Tomorrow Again Straight 8 bars. (M)

NYC. Nov. 9, 1938

Same/similar, Benny Morton (tb). Four titles, one has HBM:

23687-1 Say It With A Kiss Solo/straight 16 bars. (M)

"Here ..." does not sound much like HBM at all, but "Say It ..." has a nice introduction by our friend!

COUNT BASIE & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Nov. 11, 1938**

Personnel as July 9.

Broadcast, Bill Savory collection, one title:

Harlem Shout Solo 8 bars. (F)

COUNT BASIE & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Nov. 16, 1938**

Same. Five titles were recorded for Decca, one has HBM:

64747-A Shorty George Solo 8 bars. (FM)

Rather ordinary item, "... George" seems dry and constrained.

COUNT BASIE & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Dec. 23, 1938**

Same except Shad Collins (tp) added.

Concert at Carnegie Hall. Three titles but no HBM.

COUNT BASIE & HIS ORCHESTRA **1939**

Same. Broadcast. One title:

One O'Clock Jump Solo 12 bars. (M)

unknown dates

Same. Broadcasts, Bill Savory collection, two titles:

One O'Clock Jump Solo 12 bars. (M)

One O'Clock Jump Solo 12 bars. (FM)

COUNT BASIE & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Jan. 5, 1939**

Same. Two titles were recorded for Decca, but no HBM.

NYC. Feb. 3/4 1939

Same except Chu Berry (ts) replaces Evans.

Six titles, one has BM:

64979-A Cherokee Pt 1 Solo with orch 16 bars. (F)

HBM's contribution to the bridge in the first chorus is more a part of the arrangement than a real solo, but don't miss the very elegant last few bars, leading beautifully back to the A section!

NYC. March 19/20, 1939

Same except Buddy Tate (ts) replaces Berry.
Seven titles were recorded for Vocalion, one has HBM:

24244-1 Jump For Me Solo 8 bars. (M)

NYC. April 2, 1939

Same. Bill Savory collection, one title:

Swinging The Blues Solo 4 bars. (F)

NYC. April 4, 1939

Same. Four titles, one has HBM:

24338-A If I Didn't Care Solo 8 bars. (M)

NYC. May 19, 1939

Same. Four titles but no HBM.

Chi. June 1939

Same. Broadcasts. One title:

June 5: One O'Clock Jump Solo 12 bars. (M)

Chi. June 24, 1939

Same. Four titles but no HBM.

NYC. July 15, 1939

Same. Broadcasts from the Famous Door. Two titles:

Swingin' The Blues Solo 4 bars. (FM)

One O'Clock Jump

NYC. Aug. 4, 1939

Same. Four titles, one has HBM:

24978-A Moonlight Serenade Solo 12 bars. (M)

Glendale, Ca. Nov. 3, 1939

Same. Broadcast from Glendale Civic Auditorium, one title:

One O'Clock Jump Solo 12 bars. (M)

LA. Nov. 6&7, 1939

Eight titles but no HBM.

Benny Morton was not much featured during his last year with the Count (we can very well understand why he quit!), and therefore it is a pleasure to state his final contributions are among the most important ones. The brief soli on "Jump ..." and "... Care" are elaborate, improvised and swinging contributions. Even into the hopeless "Moonlight ..." he manages to inject some interesting details.

HBM leaves Count Basie Feb. 1940 to join Joe Sullivan.

**JOE SULLIVAN
& HIS CAFÉ SOCIETY ORCHESTRA**

NYC. Feb. 9, 1940

Ed Anderson (tp), Benny Morton (tb), Edmond Hall (cl), Danny Polo (cl, ts), Joe Sullivan (p), Freddie Green (g), Henry Turner (b), Johnny Wells (dm), Joe Turner (vo-26502,03).

Four titles were recorded for Vocalion/Okeh:

26500-A Solitude In ens. Solo 16+8 bars,
(cl) on bridge. (SM)

26501-A Oh, Lady Be Good Solo 8 bars to ens. (F)

26502-A Low Down Dirty Shame Obbligato 12 bars. (SM)

26503-A I Can't Give You Anything BL In ens 8 bars to coda. (SM)

26503-? I Can't Give You Anything BL As above. (SM)

NYC. April 29, 1940

Similar, but Helen Ward (vo-26777,78).
Four titles, no trombone on 26776 "Pom Pom" but:

26777-A	I Cover The Waterfront	Soli/straight 16 and 8 bars to coda. (SM)
26778-A	I've Got A Crush On You	Solo/straight 8 bars. (S)
26779-A	Coquette	Solo 8 bars. (FM)

Beautiful sessions, particularly with regard to Anderson, but HBM does not have a very prominent role. Nevertheless it is a great pleasure to hear him introduce "... The Waterfront", his sweet following up of the magnificent trumpet on "Solitude", as well as nice background on "... Shame", while "Lady..." and especially "Coquette" shows Morton's hotter side to good advantage. (Beautifully as HBM plays his sweet straight soli, solographer OR thinks it a little sad that this increasingly becomes his role on records, some more hot jazz soli wouldn't hurt!).

**RED ALLEN & HIS ORCHESTRA /
ZUTTY SINGLETON & HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. May 28, 1940**

Henry Allen (tp), Benny Morton (tb), Edmond Hall (cl), Lil Armstrong (p), Bernard Addison (g), Pops Foster (b), Zutty Singleton (dm).
Four titles were recorded for Decca:

67839-A	Down In Jungle Town	Solo 32 bars. With ens. (F)
67840-A	Canal Street Blues	Solo 12 bars. With ens. (SM)
67841-A	King Porter Stomp	Solo 16 bars. With ens. (F)
67842-A	Shim-Me-Sha-Wabble	Solo 16 bars. With ens. (M)

As aameleon changes its colours, HBM has easily moved from the swinging bigbands of Fletcher Henderson, Don Redman and Count Basie to the traditional world of Pops and Zutty. Note however that he plays some unusually clean and to-the-point soli on all items here. The highlight is however without doubt "... Jungle Town", great!

EDDY HOWARD VOCAL ACC. BY **NYC. Oct. 4, 1940**

Bill Coleman (tp), Benny Morton (tb), Edmond Hall (cl), Bud Freeman (ts), Teddy Wilson (p), Charlie Christian (g), Billy Taylor (b), Yank Porter (dm).
Four titles were recorded for Columbia, no trombone on 28796 "Exactly Like You" but (complete session from safety acetates):

28794x	Old Fashioned Love (brkd)	No solo.
28794y	Old Fashioned Love	As below. (SM)
28794-1	Old Fashioned Love	Obbligato 32 and 12 bars (mute). (SM)
28795-1	Star Dust	Intro 4 bars to obbligato 32 bars (mute). Obbligato 8 bars to coda. (S)
28797w	Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams (NC)	Solo 16 bars (open). (S)
28797x	Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams (NC)	No solo.
28797y	Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams (NC)	No solo.
28797z	Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams (NC)	As above (w). (S)
28797-1	Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams	Solo 16 bars. Obbligato 4 bars. (S)

HBM has recorded with Teddy Wilson before, but with this session he begins a new and closer cooperation with him as part of a small group. His contributions here are as far as you can get them from the previous Allen session, but he seems to enjoy the soft and cool backing of the various vocalists he meets, and at least this solographer (JE) finds much pleasure here. The soli on "Wrap..." are in fact very close to straight playing.

**BILLIE HOLIDAY VOCAL /
JOE TURNER VOCAL ACC. BY
BENNY CARTER & HIS ALL-STAR ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Oct. 15, 1940**

Bill Coleman (tp), Benny Morton (tb), Benny Carter (cl, as), Georgie Auld (ts), Sonny White (p), Ulysses Livingston (g), Wilson Myers (b), Yank Porter (dm), Billie Holiday (vo-28874,75), Joe Turner (vo-28876,77).
Four titles were recorded for Okeh, no trombone on 28875-1&2 "Loveless Love" but:

28874-1	St. Louis Blues	Obbligato 12 bars (mute). (SM)
28874-2	St. Louis Blues	As above. (SM)
28876-1	Joe Turner Blues	Obbligato 12 bars (mute). (SM)
28876-2	Joe Turner Blues	As above. (SM)
28877-1	Beale Street Blues	Obbligato 12 bars (mute). (SM)
28877-2	Beale Street Blues	As above. (SM)

Although Wilson is not present here, HBM continues with his very successful backing of vocalists, employing the mute for both the Holiday and Turner items. The results are striking and elegant, this is vintage trombone playing at its very best!

BENNY CARTER & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Nov. 19, 1940**

Benny Carter (tp, cl, as, ldr), Russell Smith, Sidney de Paris, Bobby Williams (tp), Benny Morton, Milton Robinson, Madison Vaughan (tb), Chauncey Haughton (as), George James (as, bar), George Irish, Stafford Simon (ts), Sonny White (p), Everett Barksdale (g), Hayes Alvis (b), William Purnell (dm), Roy Felton (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Bluebird, one has trombone solo, certainly by HBM:

57656-1	All Of Me	Solo/straight 16 bars. (SM)
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As mentioned before, HBM is more pleasant and interesting playing straight than most others improvising, and "All ..." supports that view.

CHICK BULLOCK VOCAL ACC. BY **NYC. Dec. 6, 1940**

Bill Coleman (tp), Benny Morton (tb), Edmond Hall (cl), Bud Freeman (ts), Teddy Wilson (p), Eddie Gibbs (g), Billy Taylor (b), Yank Porter (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Okeh, no trombone soli on 29223-1,-2,-3 "My Melancholy Baby" but:

29221-1	Smiles	Obbligato 32 bars. (M)
29222-1	It Had To Be You	Solo 16 bars. (SM)
29222-2	It Had To Be You	As above. (SM)
29224-1	Back Home In Indiana	Solo 16 bars. (M)
29224-2	Back Home In Indiana	As above. (M)

As said before, it seems that HBM enjoys very much the relaxed small band concept presented by Teddy Wilson these days, listen to how he thrives behind Chick on "Smiles"! Even more important is the fact that he really improvises here! Don't be fooled, but do like me (I guess nobody did this before (JE)) and compare his playing on the two takes of "... You", although sweet and on the surface rather straight, they are in fact quite different and both excellent! Same goes for "... Indiana", but here he is not so successful, and the opening of his solo on take 1 has a grandiose fluff!

TEDDY WILSON & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Dec. 9, 1940**

Bill Coleman (tp), Benny Morton (tb), Jimmy Hamilton (cl), George James (bar), Teddy Wilson (p), Eddie Gibbs (g), Al Hall (b), Yank Porter (dm), Helen Ward (vo-29234,35).

Four titles were recorded for Columbia:

29233-1	I Never Knew	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
29233-2	I Never Knew	As above. (FM)
29234-1	Embraceable You	Straight 8 bars. (SM)
29235-1	But Not For Me	Soli/straight 8 and 8 bars. (SM)
29236-1	Oh, Lady Be Good	Solo 24 bars. (M)
29236-2	Oh, Lady Be Good	As above. (M)

On this session Wilson is allowed to record with his octet under his own name, and HBM gets his chance on all items, particularly interesting although not sensational are his contributions at the end of "... Knew" and "... Good".
Postscript of April 2018: Note new alternates on Mosaic!!

CHICK BULLOCK VOCAL ACC. BY NYC. Feb. 12, 1941

Bill Coleman (tp), Benny Morton (tb), Jimmy Hamilton (cl), George James (bsx),
Teddy Wilson (p), Eddie Gibbs (g), Al Hall (b), J. C. Heard (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Okeh, no trombone soli on 29704-1 "Amapola" but:

29703-1	Dolores	Obbligato with (cl) 32 and 16 bars. (SM)
29705-1	Oh! How I Hate To Get Up ITM	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
29705-2	Oh! How I Hate To Get Up ITM	As above. (FM)
29706-1	There'll Be Some Changes Made	Solo 8 bars. (S)

Fine follow up session to the one two months earlier, but less important for HBM. Rather straight but beautiful slow solo on "... Made". Not too great differences between the two takes of "... Hate ...".

TEDDY WILSON & HIS ORCHESTRA Chi. Feb. 25, 1941

Personnel probably as Dec. 9, 1940.

Broadcast from Ambassador Hotel, three titles, no HBM "Society Hop (Theme)" but:

Ida, Sweet As Apple Cider	Solo. (M)
There'll Be Some Changes Made	Solo. (FM)

Chi. April 17, 1941

Same, three titles, no HBM on "Society Hop (Theme)" but:

Caroline	Soli 8 and 6 bars. (FM)
Boogie Woogie	Solo 24 bars. (FM)

This small group had immense qualities, all participants were able to produce excellent soli, with the great Wilson in control. These airshots just confirm this opinion. HBM plays very nicely all over. The sound on these is not at all bad.

TEDDY WILSON & HIS ORCHESTRA Chi. early 1941

Personnel audibly as above.

Roy Eldridge collection. Broadcasts from The Pump Room. No dates given. The following four items have soli by Benny Morton (the numbering confirms with the disc numbers given when digitalizing) (there are some very damaged items not worth mentioning and additional short segments with ensemble and piano without trombone soli):

108	Just Give Me Music In The Evening	Solo 16 bars. (M)
184	Ida	Solo 24 bars (NC). (FM)
188	Boogie Woogie	Solo 24 bars. (M)
203	Theme	Solo 16 bars. (FM)

Nice soloing but bad sound, highlight is "... Woogie".

JAM SESSION NYC. April 22-July 9, 1941

Collective personnel: Bobby Hackett (cnt), Joe Thomas (tp), Miff Mole, Lou McGarity, Benny Morton (tb), Edmond Hall, Joe Marsala (cl), Abe Walker (ts), Dave Bowman, Joe Sullivan (p), Eddie Condon (g), Johnny Williams (b), Zutty Singleton (dm).

BBC jam session broadcast, six titles, two have BM:

Them There Eyes	In ens. Solo 32 bars. (FM)
Blues	In ens. Soli 4 and 24 bars. (M)

A very nice trombone chorus on "Them ...".

FLETCHER HENDERSON & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. April 24, 1941

Bigband personnel including Benny Morton, Sandy Williams (tb).

Four titles were recorded for Columbia but no HBM.

TEDDY WILSON & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Sept. 16, 1941

Emmett Berry (tp), Benny Morton (tb), Jimmy Hamilton (cl), Teddy Wilson (p), Johnny Williams (b), J. C. Heard (dm), Lena Home (vo-31320,21).

Four titles were recorded for Columbia:

31319-1	A Touch Of Boogie	Solo 12 bars. (M)
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31319-2	A Touch Of Boogie	As above. (M)
31320-1	Out Of Nowhere	Straight 16 bars. (SM)
31321-1	Prisoner Of Love	Straight 8 bars. (S)
31322-1	The Sheik Of Araby	Soli 16 and 4 bars. (FM)
31322-2	The Sheik Of Araby	As above. (FM)

Reduced now to a sextet, Wilson and his men always have much to offer, and there are good trombone soli on "... Boogie" and "... Araby".

BENNY CARTER & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Oct. 16, 1941**
 Benny Carter (tp, as, ldr), Nathaniel Williams, Emmett Berry, Rostelle Reese (tp), Jimmy Archey, Benny Morton, John McConnell (tb), Ernie Purce, George James (as), Ernie Powell, Alfred Gibson (ts), Sonny White (p), William Lewis (el-g), Charles Drayton (b), Berisford Shepherd (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Bluebird, two have trombone soli, both by HBM:

66792-1	Sunday	Solo with orch 14 bars. (FM)
66795-1	Tree Of Hope	Solo 16 bars. (M)

Note that "Sunday" first has a straight trombone choir, later a fine trombone solo unmistakably by HBM. The highlight is however a nice "... Hope".

TEDDY WILSON & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. July 31, 1942**
 Personnel as above except Edmond Hall (cl) replaces Hamilton; Helen Ward (vo). Four titles were recorded for Columbia, two have HBM:

33084-1	Stomp Pt 1	Duet with (dm) 56 bars. (F)
33086-1	B Flat Swing	Solo 6 bars. (FM)
33086-2	B Flat Swing	As above. (FM)

Modest close of the vintage era for HBM, and although he continued to play fine trombone, some of the magic seems to have gone with the era; he became one of many 'old-fashioned' trombonists who became stronger associated with trad jazz when the modernists took over. Postscript of April 2018: Note the appearance of "Stomp" although not very exciting.

This Benny Morton solography stops here for the time being, but will be continued with your help!

Postscript of Nov. 28, 2016: Starting on a prolonged solography, here is an interesting session:

SIR CHARLES THOMPSON **NYC. Dec. 29, 1947**
 Joe Newman, Taft Jordan (tp), H. B. Mitchell alias Benny Morton (tb), Rudy Williams (not Pete Brown (as), Bob Dorsey (ts), Tate Houston (bar), Sir Charles Thompson (p), Hank Morton (g), John Simmons (b), Shadow Wilson (dm).
 Four titles were recorded for Apollo, one has trombone solo:

1305-1	Benson Alley	Solo 6 bars. (M)
1305-3	Benson Alley	As above. (M)

Eddie Bert has confirmed that the previously commonly adapted personnel is in error. The altosax player earlier presented as Pete Brown has been suspected to be wrong, and Rudy Williams is the correct man. That nobody has identified Benny Morton is perhaps strange, because the trombone soli sound just like his style. Note also that there is only one session for 'H. B. Mitchell' in Tom Lord's discography, but why HBM needed a pseudonym is not known.

Late history:

Worked in Edmond Hall's sextet until forming own band in September 1944 (had previously led own recording-studio band) in 1933). Disbanded in January 1946 and worked for several years playing in Broadway theatre orchestras. Did studio work in late 1950s and 1960s, also free-lanced with many bandleaders including Henry Allen at The Metropole (1960), in Las Vegas with Ted Lewis (summer 1964), later that year toured Africa with Paul Taubman's Concert Orchestra. In 1967 'subbed' for Vic Dickenson in the 'Saints and Sinners', also toured Europe

with the 'Top Brass' package. In 1968 worked regularly in Wild Bill Davison's 'Jazz Giants', again with 'Saints and Sinners'. With Bobby Hackett quintet (spring 1970).

Total: 206 sessions, last in 1978.

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