

The
GUITAR
of
ANTHONY ETRI
“BUS”

Last update: Nov. 5, 2018

Note: This is supposed to be a complete solography with comments to every session. However there are (still) several missing sessions and programs as you will see below. Please therefore assist to make the solography really complete!

Born: Manhattan, NYC. June 22, 1917
 Died: Culver City, Ca., Aug. 21, 1941

Introduction:

I learned the name of Bus Etri many years ago on the cover of a Savoy LP by Fats Navarro, where Ozzie Cadena wrote: "I consider myself extremely fortunate in that I was allowed to live through the time of two of the greatest eras in jazz; first the swing era, at which time I was able to listen to the finest talents of Bunny Berigan, Charlie Christian, BUS ETRI, Fats Waller and John Kirby, and second, the Bop era, at which time I was able to hear Sonny Berman, Clyde Hart, Buddy Stewart, Stan Hasselgard and many others".

This of course stimulated me to find out who was Bus Etri, and when I discovered his guitar playing, I was utterly amazed and thrilled. Why was he so unknown? Then I learned that he had a very short lived career, with no small band recording sessions, thus forgotten by most jazz connoisseurs. I therefore decided to make his solography. It has been lying dormant for many years, but here it is!

History:

I really do not know anything about this guy, except from the discographies, so please help! Postscript of June 15, 2015: Thanks to Francesco Martinelli for supplying death date information. Can anybody supply birth date information? Postscript of Oct. 22, 2017: Lawrence "Larry" Etri (1947), son of Bus' elder brother Benjamin (1914 – 2008) has supplied biographical information and photos!! Bus married Alice (1917 -1990/91) in 1934. Two children, Anthony jr. (1936 – 1973) unmarried, and James (1938 – 2014), the latter with daughter Susan (1966 – 2014). No direct living descendants from Bus Etri.

Message:

A lot of progress has been made since the first Bus Etri solography, but there are still problems to be solved:

No more missing 78 items, thanks to Thomas Mall, but:

The **Thesaurus Transcriptions** are still a mess, and the various LPs have made things more complicated. Can anybody give more precise information?

There are several **Charlie Barnet** broadcasts listed in Tom Lord's discography, issued on cassettes, not available. Here is the list, can anybody help?:

Cassettes: Ajax C-671, C-679, Redmond Nostalgia CO-4390, 4391,
 Joyce JRCC1521, 1523

Additional photos:

Postscript of Feb. 26, 2018: I am most grateful to Stephanie De Lange who has supplied several publicity photos (1937-38) from her memorabilia collection of her dad's Hudson-De Lange Orchestra, of which two are presented here



ANTHONY “BUS” ETRI SOLOGRAPHY

HUDSON – DE LANGE ORCHESTRA **NYC. March 10/11, 1937**
 Charles Mitchell, Howard Schaumberger, Jimmy Blake (tp), Edward Kolyer (tb), George Bohn, Gus Bivona (cl, as), Ted Duane (cl, ts), Pete Brendel (as, bar), Mark Hyams (p), Bus Etri (g), Doc Goldberg (b), Nat Pollard (dm), Ruth Gaylor (vo), Will Hudson (arr, dir), Eddie de Lange (vo, arr, dir).
 Nine titles were recorded for Master/Brunswick, four have guitar soli:

210-1	Star Dust	Solo 16 bars. (M)
211-1	College Widow	Solo 8 bars. (FM)
213-1	Bugle Call Rag	Solo 16 bars. (F)
220-1	Wake Up And Live	Intro 4 bars. (M)

Great surprise listening to this orchestra for the first time, never expected any guitar discoveries. However it turned out that Bus Etri already must have been identified as a promising jazz artist, because he gets several solo opportunities here, mostly with chord playing. Particularly “Star Dust”, in a tempo a bit higher than usual, has a very interesting solo, and in general the guitar style is the same as the one we know from the Charlie Barnet sessions a few years later.

HUDSON – DE LANGE ORCHESTRA **May 27, 1937 – April 8, 1938**
 Collective personnel: As above plus Joe Bauer, Rudy Novak (tp), Jack Andrews (tb), Charles Brosen (cl, ts), Billy Exner (dm), Nan Wynn, Betty Allen, Elyse Cooper, Mary McHugh, Jane Dover (vo).
 Twenty-six titles were recorded for Brunswick, twenty-four issued, four have guitar soli:

NYC. May 27, 1937

502-1	I Know That You Know	Chord solo with orch 32 bars. (F)
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NYC. July 1, 1937

542-1	Popcorn Man	Intro 2 bars. (FM)
543-1	Yours And Mine	Intro 4 bars. (SM)

probably NYC. ca. fall 1937

Paramount Pictures “From The Minuet To The Big Apple” (ref. Mark Cantor Nov. 2018), BE is on the following:

Medley – Organ Grinder Swing	Chord intro. ()
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NYC. April 8, 1938

808-1	On The Alamo	Solo 16 bars. (M)
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The intro on “Yours ...” is interesting, but the main discovery is a fine solo on “... Alamo”, a lovely mixture of chords and single string, dig this! Postscript of May 2018: Fine guitar contribution on “... Know”!

WILL HUDSON & HIS SEVEN SWINGSTERS **NYC. June 10, 1938**
 Joe Bauer (tp), Gus Bivona (cl, as), Charles Brosen (cl, ts), Mark Hyams (p), Bus Etri (g), Doc Goldberg (b), Billy Exner (ldr, arr).
 Four titles were recorded for Brunswick, three issued:

836-2	Lady Of The Night	Acc. (cl) 4 bars. (S)
838-1	Hangover In Hongkong	Solo 32 bars. (F)
839-1	The Corrigan Hop	Solo 16 bars. (M)

A few lovely bars on “... Night” must be noted, but the main contents are the chord soli. “Hangover ...” is a typical novelty number, too fast, but still with an interesting guitar solo. “... Hop” in a better tempo is the highlight.

WILL HUDSON & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. June 11 & July 15, 1938**
 Charles Mitchell, Rudy Novak, Joe Bauer (tp), Jack Andrews, Edward Kolyer (tb), George Bohn, Gus Bivona (cl, as), Charles Brosen (cl, ts), Pete Brendel (as, bar), Mark Hyams (p), Bus Etri (g), Doc Goldberg (b), Billy Exner (dm), Will Hudson (ldr, arr), Jane Dover (vo).
 Eight titles were recorded for Brunswick, only one has guitar soli:

840-2	The Flat Foot Floogie	Soli 4, 4 and 2 bars. (M)
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Only short soli but well worth noticing.



CHARLIE BARNET & HIS ORCHESTRA **1938**
 May 16, 1938: Bus Etri has been assumed to be present on the twenty titles recorded for Thesaurus Transcriptions. However, he was then still a member of the Will Hudson orchestra. Also, there are no traces of any guitar soli.
 Nov. 5, 1938: Bus Etri has also been assumed to be present on the eight titles recorded for Thesaurus Transcriptions. He may then be a member of the Charlie Barnet orchestra. However, there are no guitar soli.

CHARLIE BARNET & HIS ORCHESTRA **1939 – 1941**
 From Jan. 20, 1939 to Aug. 14, 1941, Brian Rust lists 27 recording sessions for Bluebird with a total of 146 issued items. In addition there are several transcription sessions. Bus Etri was a key personality in this orchestra, giving the rhythm section a very strong base and propelling the orchestra forward with great inspiration.

CHARLIE BARNET & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. 1939**
 Personnels similar to below.
 Eight recording sessions for Bluebird but no Bus Etri soli.

NYC. Jan./March 1939
 Same. Broadcasts from the Famous Door, but no guitar soli.

NYC. ca. Feb. 1939
 Same. Twelve titles were recorded for Thesaurus Transcriptions, eleven not available, no guitar on "Undecided".

NYC. ca. July 16, 1939
 Same. Thirteen titles, nine not available, no guitar on "In A Mizz", "I'll Remember", "Make Believe Ballroom" and "I've Got To Be A Rug Cutter".

Hollywood, Aug./Sept./Oct. 1939
 Same. Broadcasts from Palomar Ballroom, one has BE (note: a "... Home" has also been given as Aug. 2, 1940, see below, and it is not clear whether there really are two versions):

Oct. 3, 1939

Flying Home

Solo 8 bars. (FM)

CHARLIE BARNET & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Jan. 3, 1940**
 Robert Burnet, Billy May, John Owens, Lyman Vunk (tp), Spud Murphy, Don Ruppersberg, Bill Robertson (tb), Noni Bernardi, James Lamare, Gene Kinsey (as), Charlie Barnet (as, ts, ldr), Kurt Bloom (ts), Bill Miller (p), Bus Etri (g), Phil Stevens (b), Cliff Leeman (dm), Mary Ann McCall (vo).
 Six titles were recorded for Bluebird, one has Bus Etri solo:

046057-1 Tappin' At The Tappa Solo 24 bars. (SM)

The first recorded Bus Etri guitar solo with Charlie Barnet seems to be one of the most memorable ones! His two blues choruses on "... Tappa" immediately give some explanation for the legendary status of BE. He is a very original musician, uses the guitar unconventionally. This solo is mostly chorded but interspersed with single string ornamentation. I find it unique with no known source of inspiration. He has been called a "white Charlie Christian", but this is not quite relevant with regard to this solo. However, listen to the intriguing details like the deep single string conclusion of the first chorus, the moody chorded opening of the second chorus, and the generally innovative progress of the solo with rich harmonics. A real guitar masterpiece!

CHARLIE BARNET & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. 1940**
 Same/similar. Various broadcasts, not available.

NYC. possibly Feb. 1940
 Same/similar.
 Ten titles were recorded for Thesaurus Transcriptions, six not available, no BE on "Castle Of Dreams", "Busy As A Bee", "So Far So Good" and "The Duke's Idea".

NYC. Feb. 7&27, 1940
 Personnel as Jan. 3, except Skippy Martin (as, arr) replaces Bernardi.
 Eight titles were recorded for Bluebird but no Bus Etri soli.

CHARLIE BARNET & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. March 21, 1940**
 Same. Six titles were recorded for Bluebird, two have BE:

047985-1 A Lover's Lullaby Solo with orch 16 bars. (SM)

047989-1 Wanderin' Blues Solo 12 bars. (S)

Another masterpiece, "Wanderin' Blues"! Mostly played single string in the bottom register, it is a 100% original conception of the blues. Ranging from down-to-earth blue phrases to an almost Ravellian atmosphere in bars 9-10, purposefully played out of beat, the solo gives altogether the impression of a true innovator on the instrument. On "... Lullaby" he performs upon a prominent orchestral background, playing flashing single string in a truly original style. On this title it is obvious that Barnet was quite aware of BE's qualities, and the guitar is played with a confidence far from unfounded. You are recommended to study these soli, as well as "... Tappa" (Jan. 3) carefully, in these titles lie the original reason for a Bus Etri Solography.

CHARLIE BARNET & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. April 16, 1940**
Personnel as March 21.

Six titles were recorded for Bluebird, one has BE:

048911-1 Shake, Rattle And Roll / Intro 4 bars. (M)
Afternoon Of A Moax

NYC. May 8, 1940

Same. Six titles, one has BE:

050620-1 Flying Home Solo 8 bars. (FM)

NYC. May 16, 1940

Same. Four titles but no BE.

NYC. June 19, 1940

Personnel as Jan. 3 except Leo White (as) for Bernardi.

Six titles, two have BE:

051530-1/2 The Reverie Of A Moax Soli 4 and 8 bars. (SM)

051531-1 Tangleweed 'Round My Heart Intro 4 bars. (SM)

Note of June 15, 2015: Tom Lord states that there are two takes of "The Reverie Of A Moax", take 1 on all LPs, take 2 on Bluebird 78 B10785 only. Checking this carefully, I cannot find but one version of this delightful item. Any arguments to the contrary?

The guitar soli on these sessions are rather brief. Immediately one turns to "... Home", expecting to have a complete chorus as suiting to the "white Christian". However, his eight bars in a bit too fast tempo, are somewhat forced. Mostly chorded, the solo has no time to build, leaving therefore a competent but not deep impression. Most interesting of these items are "... Moax", note for instance the clever harmonic twists in the beginning of the longest solo. His intri on "Afternoon ..." and "Tangleweed ..." are quite typical of his style.

CHARLIE BARNET & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. July 19, 1940**

Personnel as June 19 except Bernie Previn, Sam Skolnick (tp) replace Burnet and Owens, Harriet Clark (vo) replaces McCall.

Six titles were recorded for Bluebird, one has BE:

054605-1 Ring Dem Bells Break 2 bars. (FM)

NYC. July 26, 1940

Same. Broadcast from Hotel Lincoln, not available.

Sandusky, Ohio, Aug. 2, 1940

Same. Broadcast, two titles:

Flying Home Solo 8 bars. (FM)

Ring Dem Bells Break 2 bars. (FM)

Detroit, Aug. 17, 1940

Same. Broadcast from "Eastwood Ballroom Gardens", but no BE.

NYC. Sept. 13, 1940

Same. Broadcast from Fiesta Danceteria, one title has BE:

Afternoon Of A Moax Intro 6 bars. (M)

NYC. Sept. 17, 1940

Same. Six titles, five issued, one has BE:

056127-1 Wings Over Manhattan Pt 2 Intro 4 bars. (S)

NYC. Oct. 14, 1940

Same except Ford Leary (tp, vo) added, Cown Humphreys (as) replaces Kinsey, Bob Carroll (vo) added.

Six titles, one has BE:

056483-1 I Hear A Rhapsody Solo 8 bars. (SM)

NYC. Dec. 3, 1940

Personnel as Oct. 14 except Bob Burnet, George Esposito (tp) replace Skolnick and May, Harry Gordon (dm) replaces Leeman.

Six titles, two have BE:

058211-1 Nowhere Intro 4 bars. (SM)

058212-1 I Can't Remember To Forget Solo 8 bars. (SM)

All of these soli are quite typical of BE's style, but they are unfortunately very brief. "... Rhapsody" is the most interesting item.

CHARLIE BARNET & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Jan. 7, 1941

Personnel as Dec. 3, 1940 except Cliff Leeman (dm) replaces Gordon, Lena Horne (vo) added.

Six titles were recorded for Bluebird, one has BE:

058767-1 Blue Juice Solo 24 bars. (M)

NYC. prob. between Dec. 20, 1940 & Jan. 20, 1941

Same/similar. Nine titles were recorded for Lang-Worth Transcriptions at Liederkranz Hall, four have BE:

357b Wings Over Manhattan Pt 2 Intro 4 bars. (S)

358b Blue Juice Solo 24 bars. (M)

358d I Can't Remember To Forget Solo 8 bars. (SM)

358e Uptown Blues Solo 24 bars. (M)

With these sessions we have the pleasure of finding two versions of the same tune, "Blue Juice", almost like alternate takes. It seems that BE had a particular knack for the blues, and he plays very well here, mixing a driving single string with strange chords, creating rather unique results, not to be mistaken for any other contemporary guitar player, nor later ones. Note how he uses several of Charlie Christian's tricks, adapted to his own needs. "... Forget ..." is also almost like a second take, but his role here is more modest and arranged.

CHARLIE BARNET & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. ca. Jan. 15, 1941

Same/similar.

Ten titles were recorded for Thesaurus Transcriptions, "The Moon Is Crying" has not been available, nine have been available on Hep CD53 and Viper's Nest 1002, no BE except one item:

Somewhere Chord intro 2 bars. (SM)

NYC. Jan. 23, 1941

Same. Six titles were recorded for Bluebird, one has BE:

060361-1 Little John Ordinary Solo 8 bars. (M)

NYC. Jan. 27, 1941

Same. Ten titles were recorded for Lang-Worth Transcriptions, no BE on "Haunted Town", "Little John Ordinary", "You Walk By", "Phylisse", "Lumby", "I Hear A Rhapsody", "Redskin Rhumba" and "Sweet Low Sweet Chariot" and "Afraid To Say Hello" but:

Para Vigo Me Voy Solo 4 bars. (FM)

NYC. ca. early April 1941

Same/similar.

Ten titles were recorded for RCA Thesaurus Transcriptions, no BE on "Why", "Buffy Boy", "Fantasia", "Phyllysse", "Wings Over Manhattan Pt 1", "Little John Ordinary" and "Wild Mab Of The Fish Pond" but:

Blue Juice Solo 24 bars. (M)

Little Dip Solo 8 bars. (FM)

Wings Over Manhattan Pt 2 Intro 4 bars. (S)

Just got a very pleasant surprise at IJS, Rutgers: A third version of “Blue Juice” appeared on Hep CD-53, one of BE’s most important vehicles, quite different from the other transcription version on Circle CD-65!

CHARLIE BARNET & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. April 29, 1941**
 Personnel as Jan. 7 except Charlie Zimmermann, Bob Price (tp) replace Burnet and Esposito, Tommy Reo (tb) replaces Ruppberg.
 Four titles were recorded for Bluebird, two have BE:

063832-2	You Talk Too Much	Solo 8 bars. (M)
063834-1	Little Dip	Solo 8 bars. (F)

NYC. June 9, 1941
 Same/similar. Four titles, broadcast from Madison Square Garden, “Nowhere” and “The Great Lie” have not been available, no BE on “Merry-Go-Round” and “Spanish Kick”.

NYC. June 11, 1941
 Same. Six titles were recorded for Bluebird but no BE.

NYC. ca. mid-July 1941
 Same. Ten titles were recorded for RCA Thesaurus Transcriptions, no BE on “The Heart You Stole From Me”, “Consider Yourself Kissed”, “Plowin’”, “Spanish Kick”, “The Bar Is Open”, “Barcarole” and “Ponce De Leon” but:

Dutch Kitchen Stomp	Intro 2 bars. (M)
Song Of The Volga Boatmen	Solo 8 bars. (FM)
Reflections	Solo 16 bars. (SM)

Hollywood, Aug. 4, 1941
 Same/similar. Four titles were recorded for Bluebird, three have BE:

061531-1	Harlem Speaks	Solo 8 bars. (F)
061532-1	Swingin’ On Nothin’	Solo 8 bars. (SM)
061534-1	Murder At Peyton Hall	Solo 8 bars. (FM)

Already the end of the Bus Etri Solography, much too early. Several brief pieces to be found on these sessions but never any really stretching out. However, there are notable details like in “Harlem ...”, the most Christianesque BE solo, reminding of his Minton jams! Or note the last phrase of “... Peyton Hall”! Or the fine “... Volga ...”, and it time to note that BE sometimes seem to be inspired by the Hawaiian guitar style, as far from jazz as one can get. The latest discovery, “Reflections” has one of his major soli. In my opinion, BE might have developed into one of the major guitar players, and jazz performers, of the fifties and later decades, but alas, that was not to be.

Bus Etri died in a car crash Aug. 21, 1941.

Acknowledgement:

The coloured painting was made from some photo back in ca. 1941 by Bus’ wife Alice. On the back of the painting is the name of the artist: A. Fleissner, Forest Hills, NY.

The black & white photo from Charlie Barnet’s band is part of a postcard from unknown source.

... ooo ...

