

**The**

**ALTOSAX**

**of**

**CHARLES WILLIAM  
HOLMES  
“CHARLIE”**

Born: Boston, Massachusetts, Jan. 27, 1910  
Died: Stoughton, Ma., Sept. 19, 1985

*Introduction:*

After listening to Charles Holmes' alto sax playing with Henry Allen in 1929, we realized we had heard one of the finest alto sax performers of the swing era. It also seemed that he was the first one to really have the instrument really swing. Or what?

*Early history:*

Boyhood friend of Harry Carney and Johnny Hodges. Studied music with Joseph Wagner in Boston, played oboe with the Boston Civic Symphony Orchestra in 1926. Moved to New York (with Harry Carney) in 1927, briefly with Chick Webb. With drummer George Howe's band at The Nest, remained when Luis Russell was appointed leader. Left Russell (ca. mid-1928), joined Henri Saparo's band at Bamboo Inn, New York, then worked with pianist Joe Steele at the same venue. Rejoined Luis Russell in 1929, with Mills Blue Rhythm Band (1932), then again worked with Luis Russell and later with Louis Armstrong until September 1940. With Bobby Burnet in New York (Feb. – March 1941), left music briefly in summer 1941 to return to Boston. With Cootie Williams' bigband from early 1942 until summer 1944, then toured the Orient with Jesse Stone's U.S.O. Show. Briefly with John Kirby early in 1947, later that year worked in Billy Kyle's sextet. Left full-time music in 1951 to work in the offices of a Wall Street insurance broker. Played 'gigs' in the 1960s. Returned to work in Clyde Bernhardt's Harlem Blues & Jazz Band (1972 – 75). (Ref. John Chilton / Wikipedia).

## CHARLIE HOLMES SOLOGRAPHY

**FOWLER'S FAVORITES****NYC. July 5, 1927**

Personnel given in earlier solography, taken from Rust: Unknown (tp), (tb), possibly Ernest Elliott (cl, sop), possibly Charlie Holmes (as), unknown (ts), Lemuel Fowler (p, vo), unknown (bjo), (tu), (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Columbia, both have altosax:

144627-1 Percolatin' Blues In ens. (FM)  
 144628-3 Hot Strut In ens. Solo 8 bars. Break. (FM)

My previous comments: A nice solo on "Hot Strut", one of the earliest examples of altosax swing. Postscript of Feb. 2020: However, distinguished jazz scholar K.-B. Rau argues for a different personnel (different from what I by mistake published earlier): Leonard Davis (cnt), George Washington (tb), Eugene Mikell (cl, as), Happy Caldwell (sop, ts), Lemuel Fowler (p, vo), Paul Burnett (bjo), Billy Taylor (tu), Sammy Hodges (dm). If this is correct, the altosax solo "Hot Strut" is not a Charlie Holmes item but played by Gene Mikell.

**JIMMY JOHNSON & HIS ORCHESTRA****NYC. June 18, 1928**

Cootie Williams, unknown (tp), unknown (tb), possibly Charlie Holmes (cl, sop, as), unknown (cl, ts), James P. Johnson, Fats Waller (p), Joe Watts (b), Perry Bradford (speech).

Two titles were recorded for Columbia:

146539-3 Chicago Blues In ens. (FM)  
 146540-1 Mournful Tho'ts In ens. (M)

**GULF COAST SEVEN****NYC. Oct. 19, 1928**

Personnel given in earlier solography: Louis Metcalf (cnt), unknown (tb), possibly Charlie Holmes (not Johnny Hodges!!) (sop), unknown (cl, ts), James P. Johnson (p), unknown (dm), Perry Bradford (vo).

Two titles were recorded for Columbia:

147151-1 Daylight Savin' Blues Unlikely (sop)-Solo 14 bars. (M)  
 147152-1 Georgia's Always On My Mind Unlikely (sop)-Solo 32 bars. (FM)

However, K.-B. Rau argues for a different personnel: Louis Metcalf (tp), Joe Nanton (tb), unknown (as), Emmett Matthews (sop, ts), James P. Johnson (p), unknown (dm), Perry Bradford (dm). Thus the sopranosax soli above should be considered as played by Emmett Matthews and not Charlie Holmes.

**KING OLIVER****NYC. Nov. 14, 1928**

King Oliver (cnt), Louis Metcalf (tp), J. C. Higginbotham (tb), Charlie Holmes (as), probably Teddy Hill (cl, ts), Luis Russell (p), Will Johnson (bjo, g), Bass Moore (tu), Paul Barbarin (dm).

One title was recorded for Brunswick:

28757 Slow And Steady Unlikely (cl)-Straight 16 bars. (M)

The altosax can be heard in ensemble immediately before and after the clarinet solo, no time to change instruments.

**LUIS RUSSELL & HIS BURNING EIGHT****NYC. Jan. 15, 1929**

Louis Metcalf (tp), J. C. Higginbotham (tb), Charlie Holmes (cl, as), Teddy Hill (ts), Luis Russell (p, dir), Will Johnson (bjo, g), William "Bass" Moore (tu), Paul Barbarin (dm), Walter Pichon (vo-401534).

Three titles were recorded for Okeh:

401532-A Savoy Shout Soli 14 and 4 bars. (FM)  
 401533-A The Call Of The Freaks Solo 16 bars. In ens. (SM)  
 401534-A It's Tight Like That Solo 12 bars. Obligato parts. In ens. (M)

Luis Russell's orchestra was one of the most swinging jazz organizations by the end of the 1920s, and it had excellent soloists to make its studio recordings highly notable even today. Charlie Holmes was one of those, his singing, almost jubilant altosax playing belongs to the very best of early examples of this instrument. All three items here are very nice, note particularly his playing on "... Tight ..." and how he wails behind Pichon! Postscript: If the corrections to the earlier sessions are correct, this is Charlie Holmes' first altosax soli on record.

**KING OLIVER & HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Jan. 16, 1929**

Louis Metcalf (cnt), J. C. Higginbotham (tb), Charlie Holmes (as), Teddy Hill (ts), Luis Russell (p), Will Johnson (bj), Bass Moore (tu), Paul Barbarin (dm), Walter "Fats" Pichon (vo-49651), King Oliver (dir).

Three titles were recorded for Victor, two issued:

49650-1	West End Blues	As below. (SM)
49650-2	West End Blues	Solo 12 bars. (SM)
49651-1	I've Got That Thing	Obbligato 32 bars. (SM)
49651-2	I've Got That Thing	Obbligato with (tp) 32 bars. (SM)

CH's altosax playing is so clean and positive, he sings through his horn in a unique way, conveying joy and happiness like nobody did before him on his instrument. His contributions on this session is highly notable.

**MUSICAL STEVEDORES** **NYC. Jan. 30, 1929**

Ward Pinkett (not Freddie Jenkins nor Louis Metcalf, ref. K.-B. Rau) (tp), Henry Hicks (tb), Charlie Holmes (cl, sop, as), Cliff Jackson (p, cymbal), Elmer Snowden (bjo), Bud Hicks (tu, scat-vo).

Two titles were recorded for Columbia:

147899-3	Happy Rhythm	(cl)-Soli 16 and 6 bars. (M)
147900-3	Honeycomb Harmony	Solo 8 bars. (SM)

A beautiful singing and swinging solo on "... Harmony".

**KING OLIVER & HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Feb. 1, 1929**

Louis Metcalf (tp), J. C. Higginbotham (tb), Charlie Holmes (cl, sop, as), Teddy Hill (cl, ts), Luis Russell (p), Will Johnson (bjo, g), Bass Moore (tu), Paul Barbarin (dm), King Oliver (dir).

Four titles were recorded for Victor, three issued:

48335-1	Freakish Light Blues	As below. (SM)
48335-2	Freakish Light Blues	Solo/straight 12 bars. (SM)
48333-1	Call Of The Freaks	As below. (SM)
48333-2	Call Of The Freaks	(sop)-Solo 12 bars. (SM)
48334-1	The Trumpet's Prayer	(sop)-Solo 12 bars. (SM)
48334-2	The Trumpet's Prayer	As above. (SM)

Strong sopranosax soloing to be enjoyed on this Oliver session.

**LOUIS ARMSTRONG  
WITH LUIS RUSSELL's ORCHESTRA** **NYC. March 5, 1929**

Louis Armstrong (tp, vo), J. C. Higginbotham (tb), Albert Nicholas, Charlie Holmes (cl, as), Teddy Hill (ts), Luis Russell (p), Eddie Condon (bj), Lonnie Johnson (g), George "Pops" Foster (b), Paul Barbarin (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Okeh:

401690-alt.	I Can't Give You Anything BL	As below. (SM)
401690-C	I Can't Give You Anything BL	Break 2 bars. (SM)
401691-B	Mahogany Hall Stomp	Solo 12 bars. (M)

Great altosax solo on "Mahogany ...", one of the most noteworthy till now!

**JUNGLE TOWN STOMPERS** **NYC. April 15, 1929**

Ward Pinkett (not Louis Metcalf, ref. K.-B. Rau) (tp), Henry Hicks (tb), Charlie Holmes (cl, as), Luis Russell (p, cel), Elmer Snowden (bjo), Henry Edwards (tu), unknown (perc).

Two titles were recorded for Okeh:

401797-C	African Jungle	Solo 14 bars. (M)
401798-B	Slow As Molasses	(cl)-Solo 10 bars. (SM)

A delightful, perfect solo on "... Jungle", CH is now certainly belonging to the very few altosax performers of the late twenties who really could play this instrument with results of lasting value.

**GEORGIA GIGOLOS /  
JASPER DAVIS & HIS ORCHESTRA****NYC. April 23, 1929**

Probably Ward Pinkett (not Louis Metcalf, ref. K.-B. Rau) (tp), Henry Hicks (tb), Charlie Holmes (cl, as), unknown (p), Elmer Snowden (bjo), Ernest Moore (tu), Lizzie Miles (vo).

Two titles were recorded for Harmony:

148465-3	Georgia Gigolo	Break. In ens. (M)
148468-2	It Feels So Good	(cl)-Solo 12 bars. (M)

**JOE STEELE & HIS ORCHESTRA****NYC. June 4, 1929**

Info Dec. 24, 2013 from Bo Scherman: Contrary to earlier versions of this solography, Charlie Holmes is not present on this session. Storyville No. 80 has the correct personnel: Ward Pinkett, Jack Wilson or Wendell Cully (tp), Jimmy Archey (tb), Bobby Holmes (cl, sop, as), Trenton Harris (ts), Eugene Mikell (bar), Joe Steele (p, ldr), Percy Richardson (bjo), Frank Smith (tu), Gerald Hobson (dm), Benny Carter (arr). Thus the fine altosax soli on 53808-1&2 "Coal-Yard Shuffle" are played by Bobby Holmes.

**HENRY ALLEN JR.  
& HIS NEW YORK ORCHESTRA****NYC. July 16/17, 1929**

Henry Allen (tp), J. C. Higginbotham (tb), Albert Nicholas (cl, as), Charlie Holmes (cl, sop, as), Teddy Hill (cl, ts), Luis Russell (p, cel), Will Johnson ( bjo, g), Pops Foster (b), Paul Barbarin (dm, vib).

Four titles were recorded for Victor, no altosax soli on 55134-1&2 "Biff"ly Blues" but:

55133-1	It Should Be You	Solo 32 bars. (F)
55133-2	It Should Be You	As above. (F)
55133-3	It Should Be You	As above. (F)
53929-1	Feeling Drowsy	Soli 4, 2, 12 and 4 bars. (SM)
53929-2	Feeling Drowsy	As above. (SM)
53929-3	Feeling Drowsy	As above. (SM)
53930-1	Swing Out	In ens. Solo 8 bars. (FM)
53930-2	Swing Out	As above. (FM)
53930-3	Swing Out	As above. (FM)

In the Henry "Red" Allen solography I wrote that "this is one of the most outstanding trumpet sessions ever made!". But it also contains magnificent trombone by JCH and much more, and some altosax playing by CH which can blow you over backwards! It is really against the principles of solography to put artists up against each other, but in my opinion, CH had only one challenger on his instrument at this point of time, Johnny Hodges. The highlights here are the three takes of "It Should ...", so easy swinging and perfect, and with the necessary differences to prove CH's improvisational capabilities, lovely! Also "... Drowsy" and "... Out" have some wonderful altosax playing! So there are many reasons for digging this session!!

**LUIS RUSSELL & HIS ORCHESTRA****NYC. Sept. 6, 1929**

Henry "Red" Allen, Bill Coleman (tp), J. C. Higginbotham (tb, vo), Albert Nicholas (cl, as), Charlie Holmes (sop, as), Teddy Hill (ts), Luis Russell (p), Will Johnson (bjo), Pops Foster (b), Paul Barbarin (dm, vib).

Three titles were recorded for Okeh, no altosax soli on 402939-C "Feelin' The Spirit" but:

402938-C	The New Call Of The Freaks	Solo 12 bars. (M)
402940-B	Jersey Lightning	Solo 8 bars. (F)

**NYC. Sept. 13, 1929**

Similar, two titles were recorded for Banner, issued as **LOU & HIS GINGER SNAPS:**

9006-1	Broadway Rhythm	Solo 16+8 bars, (tp-BC) on bridge. (FM)
9007-1	The Way He Loves Is Just Too Bad	Solo 30 bars. (FM)
9007-2	The Way He Loves Is Just Too Bad	Solo 32 bars. (FM)

The Luis Russell orchestra is getting better and better, and very good reasons are the swinging slap bass of "Pops" Foster, as well as the brilliant trumpet of "Red"

Allen and finally the colourful arrangements including sections for saxes, thrilling young musicians even today. (I have to mention that Russell was the main early inspiration for our local "Christiania 12" a fine swingband still around today, and the guys still play those great songs!). CH plays with great inspiration, note in particular his brief but effective solo on "Jersey ..."! In "... Too Bad" we get two takes, again showing that CH certainly is improvising his stuff, the takes are quite different!

**HENRY ALLEN JR.  
& HIS NEW YORK ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Sept. 24, 1929**  
Personnel as July 16 plus Victoria Spivey and The Four Wanderers (vo).  
Four titles were recorded for Victor:

55852-1	Make A Country Bird Fly Wild	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
55852-2	Make A Country Bird Fly Wild	As above. (FM)
55853-1	Funny Feathers Blues	Obbligato 32 bars. (M)
55853-2	Funny Feathers Blues	As above. (M)
55854-1	How Do They Do It That Way?	Solo 30 bars. (M)
55854-2	How Do They Do It That Way?	As above. (M)
55855-1	Pleasin' Paul	Solo 14 bars. (M)
55855-2	Pleasin' Paul	As above. (M)

The second Allen/Victor session is almost as good as the July session, although the vocal limits solo space. CH however is prominently featured here, all items with alternates have magnificent alto sax playing, none mentioned, none forgotten. This is not only an important recorded part of the creation of jazz alto saxophone but highly enjoyable music to this very day!

**VICTORIA SPIVEY** **NYC. Oct. 1, 1929**  
Henry Allen (tp), J. C. Higginbotham (tb), Charlie Holmes (sop), Teddy Hill (ts-except 56735), Luis Russell (p), Will Johnson (g), Pops Foster (b, tu).  
Four titles were recorded for Victor:

56732-1	Bloodhound Blues	Collective obbligato. (SM)
56733-2	Dirty T. B. Blues	Collective obbligato. (SM)
56734-1	Moanin' The Blues	Collective obbligato. (SM)
56735-1	Telephoning The Blues	Collective obbligato. (SM)

In fact, you can hear CH's beautiful and singing sopranosax clearly all the way through the session, Victor had marvellous recording equipment in 1929!

**WILTON CRAWLEY & HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Oct. 3, 1929**  
Henry Allen (tp), unknown (tb), Wilton Crawley (cl, vo), Charlie Holmes (as), unknown (ts), Luis Russell (p), Will Johnson (g), Pops Foster (b), Paul Barbarin (dm).  
Two titles were recorded for Victor:

56747-2	Snake Hip Dance	Obbligato 32 bars. (FM)
56748-2	She's Driving Me Wild	Obbligato 32 bars. (FM)

The recording quality is not quite as good as on the Victoria Spivey session, but CH's altosax comes nicely through!

**SWEET PEA SPIVEY** **NYC. Nov. 25, 1929**  
Henry Allen (tp), Charlie Holmes (as), Luis Russell (p), Will Johnson (g), Addie "Sweet Pea" Spivey (vo).  
Four titles were recorded for Victor:

57554-1	Day Breakin' Blues	Collective obbligato. (SM)
57555-1	Heart-Breakin' Blues	Collective obbligato. (S)
57555-2	Heart Breakin' Blues	As above. (S)
57556-1	Leavin' You Baby	Collective obbligato. (S)
57556-2	Leavin' You Baby	As above. (S)
57557-1	Longing For Home	Collective obbligato. (S)

Again good recording quality, and it is quite easy to hear CH's abundant and beautiful altosax clearly, often as breaks, and even when he plays together with trumpet.

**WILTON CRAWLEY & HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Dec. 2, 1929**

Two unknown (tp), unknown (tb), Wilton Crawley (cl), Charlie Holmes (as), Jelly-Roll Morton, Luis Russell (p), unknown (bjo, g), Pops Foster (b), possibly Sonny Greer (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Victor, no CH on 57565-2 "You Oughta See My Gal" and 57566-1 "Futuristic Blues" but:

57567-2 Keep Your Business To Yourself Solo 14 bars. (FM)

57568-1 She's Got What I Need Soli 24 and 4 bars. (FM)

Two very fine altosax contributions here!

**LOUIS ARMSTRONG & HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Dec. 10, 1929**

Personnel as Sept. 6, 1929 except Otis Johnson (tp) replaces Coleman and Louis Armstrong (tp, vo) added.

Two titles were recorded for Okeh:

403493-A I Ain't Got Nobody (vo) With orch only. (M)

40349 I Ain't Got Nobody (non-vo) Solo 8 bars. (M)

403494 Dallas Blues (vo) As below. (M)

403494-C Dallas Blues Break. (M)

**NYC. Dec. 13, 1929**

Same. Two titles, no altosax (of importance) on 403496-C "Rockin' Chair" but:

403495 St. Louis Blues (vo) In ens. (M)

403495 St. Louis Blues (non-vo) As above. (M)

403495 St. Louis Blues (non-vo) As above. (M)

**NYC. Dec. 17, 1929**

Same with Armstrong omitted, issued properly as **LUIS RUSSELL & HIS ORCHESTRA**.

One title was recorded for Okeh:

403524-C Doctor Blues Breaks. Solo 32 bars. (FM)

From these sessions CH shall primarily be remembered for his statement that Allen and Armstrong share 16 bars on "I Ain't Got Nobody", but let that matter rest here, for god's sake. Musically, note his excellent solo on "Doctor ..."!

**FATS WALLER & HIS BUDDIES** **NYC. Dec. 18, 1929**

Henry Allen, Leonard Davis (tp), J. C. Higginbotham (tb), Jack Teagarden (tb, vib), Albert Nicholas, Charlie Holmes (cl, as), Larry Binyon (ts), Fats Waller (p), Will Johnson (bjo), Pops Foster (b), Kaiser Marshall (dm), Orlando Robertson (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Victor:

57926-1 Lookin' For Another Sweetie Straight 32 bars? (M)

57927-3 Ridin' But Walkin' Solo 12 bars. (SM)

57928-1 Won't You Get Off It? Solo 6 bars. (FM)

57929-2 When I'm Alone Solo 8 bars. (M)

CH is not very prominent on this session, understandably, there are many other important musicians present! The straight altosax playing on "... Sweetie" does not sound like him, and "... Alone" and "Ridin' ..." have a harder sound than usual. However, a very fine brief solo on "... Off It?" should definitely be noted!

**LUIS RUSSELL / LOUIS ARMSTRONG & HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Jan. 24, 1930**

Personnel as Dec. 17, 1929 except Louis Armstrong (tp, vo) and three unknown (vln) added on 403681.

Three titles were recorded for Okeh, no altosax on 403681 "Song Of The Islands" but:

403680-A Saratoga Shout Solo with orch 24 bars. Breaks. (FM)

403682-C Song Of The Swanee Solo with orch 12 bars.

Solo 12 bars. (SM)

A magnificent stop-time solo on “Saratoga ...”, as well as fine contributions on “... Swanee”.

**NYC. Feb. 1, 1930**

Same/similar. Two titles, 403714-B “Bessie Couldn’t Help It” and 403715-B “Blue Turning Grey Over You”, but no altosax.

**J. C. HIGGINBOTHAM & HIS SIX HICKS NYC. Feb. 5, 1930**

Henry “Red” Allen (tp), J. C. Higginbotham (tb), Charlie Holmes (as), Luis Russell (p), Will Johnson (g), Pops Foster (b), Paul Barbarin (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Okeh:

403736-B Give Me Your Telephone Number In ens. Solo 16+8 bars, ens on bridge. Soli 4 and 8 bars. (FM)

403737-C Higginbotham Blues Duet with (tb) 12 bars to solo 12 bars. In ens. (SM)

This lovely session was my first encounter with CH, on British Parlophone 78! Why they only made two items is rather odd, because this is one of JCH’s greatest moments, as well as brilliant trumpet, and Pops’ slapping bass is unforgettable on “Give Me ...”! The altosax contributions fit nicely into this great occasion, note how CH plays behind Higgy on “... Blues” to go into a lovely solo!!

**HENRY “RED” ALLEN & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Feb. 18, 1930**

Personnel as July 16, 1929 except Otis Johnson (tp) added, William T. Blue replaces Nicholas, Greely Walton (ts) replaces Hill.

Four titles were recorded for Victor, no CH on 58582-2 “You Might Get Better But You’ll Never Get Well” and 58583-2 “Everybody Shout” but:

58581-2 Sugar Hill Function Soli with ens 24 and 12 bars. (FM)

58584-2 Dancing Dave (sop)-Solo 18 bars. (SM)

There is not so much CH here as we might have wished for, but the session is magnificent as such, and CH contributes efficiently to making “Sugar Hill ...” one of the most exciting jazz items in the year of 1930!

**LUIS RUSSELL & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. May 29, 1930**

Henry Allen (tp), J. C. Higginbotham (tb), Albert Nicholas (cl, sop, as), Charlie Holmes (sop, as), Teddy Hill (ts), Luis Russell (p), Will Johnson (bjo, g), Pops Foster (b), Paul Barbarin (dm, vib), unknown (vo).

Three titles were recorded for Okeh, no CH on 404049-A&B/C “On Revival Day” but:

404047-A Louisiana Swing Soli 8, 8 and 8 bars. (FM)

404047-B? Louisiana Swing As above. (FM)

404048-C Poor Li’l Me (sop)-Solo 30 bars. (M)

CH’s altosax has a prominent role in the arrangement on “Louisiana ...”, but the takes are not that different. On “Poor ...” he demonstrates his proficiency on his second instrument, the sopranosax.

**WILTON CRAWLEY NYC. June 3, 1930**

Henry Allen (tp), Wilton Crawley (cl, vo), Charlie Holmes (as), Jelly Roll Morton (p), Teddy Bunn (g), Pops Foster (tu), Bruce Johnson (wbd).

Four titles were recorded for Victor:

62188-2 Big Time Woman Solo 8 bars. (SM)

62189-1 I’m Her Papa, She’s My Mama As below. (SM)

62189-2 I’m Her Papa, She’s My Mama Solo 16 bars. (SM)

62190-1 New Crawley Blues Duet with (tp) 12 bars. In ens 12 bars. (SM)

62191-1 She Saves Her Sweetest Smile For Me Solo 16 bars. (M)

This session presents CH at his very best! Lovely altosax playing, could not be done better, real vintage!! Not only brilliant “Big ...” and “... Smiles ...”, but there are two takes of “... Mama”, and they are so different, showing that CH was a great improviser!



**HENRY "RED" ALLEN & HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. July 15, 1930**

Henry Allen, Otis Johnson (tp), Jimmy Archey (tb), Albert Nicholas (cl, as), Charlie Holmes (cl, sop, as), Greely Walton (ts), Luis Russell (p, cel), Will Johnson (bjo, g), Ernest Hill (tu), Paul Barbarin (dm, vib).

Four titles were recorded for Victor, no CH on 62343-2 "Roamin'" but:

62344-1	Singing Pretty Songs	Break 2 bars. Solo 6 bars. (FM)
62344-2	Singing Pretty Songs	As above. (FM)
62345-2	Patrol Wagon Blues	Break 2 bars. (SM)
62346-1	I Fell In Love With You	Break 4 bars. (FM)
62346-2	I Fell In Love With You	As above. (FM)

The last of the famous Victor sessions with Henry "Red" Allen is disappointing with regard to CH, he only gets a few breaks, note however some brief inspired playing on "... Songs".

**LUIS RUSSELL & HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Sept. 5, 1930**

Personnel as May 29, 1930 except Greely Walton (ts) replaces Hill.

Three titles were recorded for Okeh:

404428	Muggin' Lightly	Solo 16 bars. (M)
404429-A	Panama	Solo 16 bars. (F)
404430-B	High Tension	Soli 16 and 8 bars. (FM)

Believe it or not, but this session is in fact the last of CH's great altosax sessions, so important in the great 1929-30 era. The three items here show an artist on the top of his creative powers, nevertheless he starts sliding down, to become a sideman and then nothing after a decade or so. The reason for this cannot be devoped from his recordings above, because he, with his flexible rhythmic approach, seems most suitable to join the swing era. Therefore, enjoy these three items as most you can!

**LUIS RUSSELL & HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Oct. 24, 1930**

Henry "Red" Allen, Otis Johnson (tp), J. C. Higginbotham (tb), Albert Nicholas (cl, sop, as), Charlie Holmes (sop, as), Greely Walton (ts), Luis Russell (p, dir), Will Johnson (bj, g), Pops Foster (b), Paul Barbarin (dm, vib), Dick Robertson (vo). Three titles were recorded for Melotone, one issued, 35025 "I Got Rhythm", but no altosax soli.

**NYC. Dec. 17, 1930**

Same except unknown (tp), Vic Dickenson (tb, vo) added..

Three titles were recorded for Vocalion, no altosax soli on 35759-C "Ease On Down" but:

35758-C	Saratoga Drag	Solo with orch 4 bars. (FM)
35760	Honey, That Reminds Me	Straight. (SM)

Luis Russell still has a fantastic band, swinging more than almost any of its competitors, but little blowing space has been give to CH, however a few bars on "... Drag" show he still is in good shape.

**MILLS BLUE RHYTHM BAND** **NYC. Feb. 25, 1932**

Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson (tp), Harry White, Henry Hicks (tb), Charlie Holmes, Crawford Wethington (cl, as), Joe Garland (cl, ts, bsx), Edgar Hayes (p), Benny James (bj, g), Hayes Alvis (b), O'Neil Spencer (dm, vo), Baron Lee (dir).

Note: Brian Rust has included Charlie Holmes in the MBRB sessions from March 23, 1931 (some issued as **KING CARTER & HIS ROYAL ORCHESTRA**), replacing Crawford Wethington. However, according to CW himself, this is not correct, the latter being permanently with MBRB until late 1936. There are no altosax soli resembling the style of CH.

Four titles were recorded for Perfect, three issued, two have CH:

11360-1	The Scat Song	Solo 16+8 bars, (tp) on bridge. (F)
11364-1	Doin' The Shake	Intro 4 bars. Solo 16+8 bars, orch on bridge. (F)

**NYC. April 5, 1932**

Same. One title:

11651-A	The Scat Song	Obbligato 16 and 8 bars. (FM)
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**NYC. April 28, 1932**

Same. Two titles but no altosax soli.

**NYC. May 2&7, 1932**

Same. Three titles, two have CH:

11767-1	The Growl	Soli 12 and 8 bars. (M)
11788-1	Mighty Sweet	Intro 8 bars. Solo 4 bars. Coda. (FM)

**NYC. May 12, 1932**

Same. Four titles, three have CH:

11823-1	Rhythm Spasm	Solo 16+8 bars, orch on bridge. (F)
11825-1	White Lightning	Soli with orch 4 and 4 bars. (F)
11826-1	Wild Waves	Soli with orch 2 and 4 bars. (SM)
11826-2	Wild Waves	As above. (SM)

To leave the swinging Luis Russell orchestra must have been traumatic, but the replacement was the best CH could ever choose, the Mills Blue Rhythm Band, swinging like few other bands around this time, a magnificent organization, often unjustly forgotten. He still is on the top of his creative powers, as evident from the not too many examples, but listening to the "... Scat Song's", "... Shake", "... Growl" and "... Spasm", one realizes how fine a musician CH still continued to be. I have also thought that he should later have joined Count Basie to make altosax really important in that band...

Gene Mikell (cl, as) is replacing CH from the session of Aug. 17, 1932.

**LUIS RUSSELL & HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Aug. 8, 1934**

Rex Stewart (cnt), Leonard Davis, Gus Aiken (tp), Nat Story, Jimmy Archey (tb), Henry Jones (as), Charlie Holmes (cl, as), Bingie Madison, Greely Walton (cl, ts), Luis Russell (p, dir), Lee Blair (g), Pops Foster (b), Paul Barbarin (dm, vib), Sonny Woods, The Palmer Brothers (vo).

Six titles were recorded for Banner, five have altosax, three by CH:

15573-1	Ghost Of The Freaks	Solo 12 bars. (SM)
15575-1	Primitive	Coda. (F)
15576-1	Ol' Man River	Solo 28 bars. (F)

A brief return to the Luis Russell orchestra, and his solid soli on "Ghost ..." and "... River" tell that CH is still in command of his musical powers, and apart from Johnny Hodges and Benny Carter, he can certainly still eat cherries with anybody.

**LOUIS ARMSTRONG & HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Oct. 3, 1935 – Jan. 18, 1936**

Louis Armstrong (tp, vo), Louis Bacon, Leonard Davis, Gus Aiken (tp), Harry White, Jimmy Archey (tb), Henry Jones, Charlie Holmes (as), Bingie Madison (cl, ts), Greely Walton (ts), Luis Russell (p), Lee Blair (g), Pops Foster (b), Paul Barbarin (dm).

Five sessions, sixteen titles were recorded for Decca, three have altosax soli, 60024-B "Got A Bran' New Suit" has solo 14 bars. (M) by Henry Jones, but:

60022-A	You Are My Lucky Star	Solo 32 bars. (M)
60155-D	I've Got My Fingers Crossed	Break 2 bars. (M)

**NYC. April 18&29, May 18, 1936**

Similar. Three sessions, nine titles, one has altosax:

61111-A	Mahogany Hall Stomp	Solo 12 bars. (FM)
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Violent changes have come upon the Luis Russell organization; from being one of the greatest and highly original orchestra from the late 20s and through the first half of the 30s, it has now become a backup band for Louis Armstrong. The space for other soloists is highly limited, also with regard to CH. The solo on "... Suit" is square and does not seem to be his, particularly in contrast to "... Lucky Star" which is very nice, showing that CH still is an active and highly competent altosax performer, also evident on "... Hall Stomp", compare it for fun with the 1929 version!.

**VICTORIA SPIVEY** **NYC. March 12, 1937**

Personnel confirmed by CH himself: Henry "Red" Allen (tp), Albert Nicholas (cl), Charlie Holmes (as), unknown (ts), Luis Russell (p), Pops Foster (b), Victoria Spivey (vo). However, I am not fully convinced about the personnel in toto.

Four titles were recorded for Vocalion:

20793-1	One Hour Mama	In ens-obbligato. (SM)
20794-1	Harlem Susie-Q	Solo 8 bars. (M)
20795-1	Give It To Him	Solo 4 bars. (FM)
20795-2	Give It To Him	As above. (FM)
20796-1	Got The Blues So Bad	In ens-obbligato. (S)

Particularly the brief soli are quite similar to CH's style.

**LOUIS ARMSTRONG  
& HIS ORCHESTRA**

**NYC./Chi. April/May 1937**

Personnels same/similar to July Decca recording sessions below.

The Fleischmann's Yeast Shows, weekly commercial broadcasts from April 9 to May 28. Some of this material has been issued on a Special Jazz Heritage Edition, and the following items have altosax soli by Charlie Holmes:

**NYC. April 16, 1937**

Note: This item is on Ambassador CD 1903 only, in lower sound quality:

Dinah Solo 16+8 bars, orch on bridge. (F)

**NYC. April 30, 1937**

I've Got A Heart Full Of Rhythm Solo 8 bars. (F)

After You've Gone Solo 32 bars. (F)

**Chi. May 14, 1937**

Ida Solo with orch 14 bars. (FM)

Washington And Lee Stomp Solo 4 bars. (F)

**Chi. May 21, 1937**

I Got Rhythm Solo 8 bars. (F)

I Know That You Know Soli 8 and 8 bars. (F)

**NYC. May 28, 1937**

Bugle Blues Solo 12 bars. (F)

These very interesting programs were forgotten in the first solography version, sorry about that, as they give some important new material with CH! The great highlight is the fast "After ...", showing that he still belongs to the most competent altosax artists of the thirties, and it is a shame he did not have better recording opportunities. Of the remainder, particularly "... Rhythm" and "Bugle ..." should be noted.

**LOUIS ARMSTRONG  
& HIS ORCHESTRA**

**NYC. July 2&7, 1937**

Louis Armstrong (tp, vo), Shelton Hemphill, Louis Bacon, Henry "Red" Allen (tp), "Big" George Matthews, George Washington, J. C. Higginbotham (tb), Pete Clark, Charlie Holmes (as), Albert Nicholas (cl, ts), Bingie Madison (ts), Luis Russell (p), Lee Blair (g), George "Pops" Foster (b), Paul Barbarin (dm).

Eight titles were recorded for Decca, one has altosax:

62338-A I've Got A Heart Full Of Rhythm Solo 8 bars. (M)

Brief but nice solo, seems to be played by CH.

**LOUIS ARMSTRONG**

**LA. Nov. 15, 1937**

Louis Armstrong (tp, vo), J. C. Higginbotham (tb), Charlie Holmes (as), Bingie Madison (ts), Luis Russell (p), Lee Blair (g), Red Callender (b), Paul Barbarin (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Decca, one has altosax:

1085 On The Sunny Side Of The Street Solo 8 bars. (M)

A smallband session which should have given better opportunities for CH, but he takes only a brief, semi-straight solo on "... The Street".

**LOUIS ARMSTRONG  
& HIS ORCHESTRA****L.A. Jan. 12/13, 1938**

Louis Armstrong (tp, vo), Shelton Hemphill, Louis Bacon, Henry "Red" Allen (tp), Wilbur DeParis, George Washington, J. C. Higginbotham (tb), Pete Clark, Charlie Holmes (as), Albert Nicholas, Bingie Madison (cl, ts), Luis Russell (p), Lee Blair (g), Red Callender (b), Paul Barbarin (dm), Chappie Willett (arr).

Eight titles, three have altosax:

1132-A	Satchel Mouth Swing	Solo 8 bars. (M)
1134-A	Struttin' With Some Barbecue	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
1137-A	True Confession	Solo 16 bars. (SM)

Fine, swinging soli here, all seem to be played by CH, note in particular the sweet but nice "... Confession".

**LOUIS ARMSTRONG****Chi. Feb. 1938**

Personnel probably as above.

Postscript of July 7, 2023: Recorded by Luis Russell from various broadcasts from Grand Terrace Café, issued on CD, five items have altosax soli (note that items 2 and 4 below earlier have been presented in this solography as prob. Winter 1938):

After You've Gone (NC)	Solo 32 bars (NC). (FM)
Blue Rhythm Fantasy	Solo with orch 32 bars. (FM)
I've Got A Heart Full Of Rhythm	Solo 8 bars. (FM)
Mr. Ghost Goes To Town	Solo 16 bars. (M)
Old Man River	Solo 32 bars. (F)

CH comes nicely through on these broadcasts, excellent soloing on all items, with "... Rhythm" and "... River" as highlights!

**LOUIS ARMSTRONG****NYC. May 13&18, 1938**

Louis Armstrong (tp, vo), Shelton Hemphill (tp), J. C. Higginbotham (tb), Charlie Holmes (as), Rupert Cole (cl, as), Bingie Madison (cl, ts), Luis Russell (p, arr), Lee Blair (g), Pops Foster (b), Paul Barbarin (dm).

Eight titles were recorded for Decca, one has altosax:

63778-A	When The Saints Go Marchin' In	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
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"Blow it, Brother Holmes" Louis says, and a good altosax solo follows!

**LOUIS ARMSTRONG****NYC. Sept. 15, 1938**

Same/similar (possibly without Armstrong).

Postscript of July 7, 2023: One more title here:

At The Swing Cats Ball	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
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**possibly NYC. 1938**

Same/similar. Two more titles:

Algiers Bounce	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
Hot Bricks	Solo 24 bars. (F)

Again excellent altosax soloing on new discoveries!

**LOUIS ARMSTRONG & HIS ORCHESTRA****NYC. Jan. 18, 1939**

Personnel including Rupert Cole (cl, as), Charlie Holmes (as).

Two titles were recorded for Decca, but no altosax soli.

**NYC. April 5, 1939**

Louis Armstrong (tp, vo), Shelton Hemphill, Otis Johnson, Henry "Red" Allen (tp), Wilbur DeParis, George Washington, J. C. Higginbotham (tb), Charlie Holmes (as), Rupert Cole (cl, as), Joe Garland, Bingie Madison (ts), Luis Russell (p), Lee Blair (g), Pops Foster (b), Sidney Catlett (dm).

Four titles, two have altosax:

65345-A	Save It Pretty Mama	Solo with orch 8 bars. (SM)
65347-A	Savoy Blues	Solo with orch 12 bars. (SM)

**NYC. April 25, 1939**

Same except Bernard Flood (tp) replaces Johnson.

Four titles, two have altosax:

65460-A Confessin' Intro 6 bars. (SM)  
 65461-A Our Monday Date Solo with orch 16 bars. (FM)

**NYC. June 15, 1939**

Same. Three titles, two have altosax:

65824-A Baby, Won't You Please Come H? Solo with orch 18 bars. (SM)  
 65826-A Shanty Boat On The Mississippi Intro 8 bars. (SM)

**NYC. Dec. 18, 1939**

Same. Four titles but no altosax.

**NYC. March 14, 1940**

Same. Five titles, one has altosax:

67324-A Wolverine Blues Solo 16 bars. (F)

**NYC. May 1, 1940**

Same. Four titles, one has altosax:

67649-A You Run Your Mouth, IRMB Solo 16 bars. (M)

From these Louis Armstrong recordings, it is evident that CH still is in very good shape and able to deliver good soloing. The Luis Russell era is long gone, the backup orchestra does not give the best opportunities, and listening tends to concentrate on the maestro. Just therefore, if one concentrates upon the other soloists, and CH in particular, one will be very pleasantly surprised. The eight solo items from the 1939-40 period indicate that his artistic career is not by far concluded, nevertheless he seems to disappear into oblivion. Luckily not permanently.

**COOTIE WILLIAMS & HIS ORCHESTRA 1942-Summer 1944**  
 Bigband personnel including Charlie Holmes (as), Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson (as, vo). Postscript of Aug. 2023: "CH didn't want to do any solo work when he joined Cootie's band. So EV had to do the lead and solo alto roles, in addition to singing" (ref. Steven Bowie).

**JOHN KIRBY SEXTET 1947**  
 Charlie Shavers (tp), Buster Bailey (cl), Charlie Holmes (as), Billy Kyle (p), John Kirby (b), Sid Catlett (dm).  
 Movie "Sepia Cinderella", two titles:

Broadjump Solo 8 bars. (F)  
 Musicomania Solo 8 bars. (F)

Postscript of May 2023: Just got this info from Tom Buhmann, two brief altosax soli in quite fast tempo, bridges in the piano soli, ok without being remarkable..

**AL SEARS & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Sept. 21, 1951**  
 Emmett Berry (tp), Lawrence Brown (tb), Charlie Holmes (as), Al Sears (ts), Leroy Lovett (p), Lloyd Trotman (b), Joe Marshall (dm).  
 Eight titles were recorded for King, three have altosax soli:

K8064-1 Marshall Plan Solo 24 bars. (FM)  
 K8065-1 Berry Well Brief break. (M)  
 K8066-1 Steady Eddie Solo 16+8 bars, (tp) on bridge. (M)

This is a very controversial session! Several highly knowledgeable jazz experts have pointed out that Johnny Hodges with his altosax is present, taking part in some of the ensembles and also playing the solo on "Steady Eddie". Then it is important to note that Hodges himself said to Harry Carney and Johnny Simmen that "Norman Granz should have been so mad that I found it best to refrain from playing; Charlie was hired in my place" (the quote is not the exact wording). We do not know how Holmes played in the early fifties, more than a decade since his last appearance on record, but that he is the one on the "... Well"-break as well as taking the good but not remarkable solo on "... Plan" is evident. That "Steady ..." has caused problems is no surprise, and I shall not have the last saying here, but my intuition, listening to solo many times, tells me that it is not quite Hodges in style or quality, although I admit the aural evidence is thin. Note also that neither Carney could not say, but that "Holmes had always tried to sound like Hodges". Maybe he finally made it!



vocals here, contrasting the previous session. And of course it is nice to hear Miss Rhapsody again with her "Sweet Man", more than 25 years after her famous versions with Frankie Newton, this time in a slower tempo, and with an almost timid but beautiful altosax solo.

**KUSTBANDET****Stockholm, Aug. 27-28 / NYC. Oct. 4, 1975**

Christer Ekhe, Ola Pålsson (cnt), Bent Persson (tp), Jens Lindgren (tb), Kenneth Amström, Erik Persson, Mats Söderqvist (saxes), Åke Edenstrand (p), Stephan Lindstein (tb-item 1,2, p-item 2), Hans Gustafsson (bjo, g), Bo Juhlin (b-tb, tu), Göran Lind (b), Krister Olsson (dm).

Charlie Holmes was dubbed in from NYC. some weeks after the bigband recording session in Stockholm.

Five titles were recorded for Kenneth Records, issued as "Kustbandet Featuring The Great Charlie Holmes" (other titles without CH):

75324-3	Stardust	Solo 32 bars. (S)
75325-4	Rockin' In Rhythm	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. In ens. (FM)
75326-5	Saratoga Shout	Solo 24 bars. In ens. (FM)
75327-4	East St. Louis Toodle-Oo	Solo 36 bars. In ens. (M)
75328-4	Washboard Wiggles	Solo 64 bars. (F)

This session seems to me to be a peculiar idea, the remoteness of CH is all too evident on most items! Also because Erik Persson and particularly Kenneth Amström are highly competent altosax players not really needing a famous but slightly outdated CH interfering (on "... Wiggles" all three are soloing). The latter is now not quite what he used to be as late as two years earlier. He is not playing badly, not at all, but the details can be revealing. Take "Stardust", nicely played, but he needs several bars to warm up. It also seems that he is struggling with "... Rhythm" (who wouldn't ...). But by all means, an interesting session with lots of good vintage music.

**CLYDE BERNHARDT****NYC. Oct. 9, 1975**

Collective personnel: Doc Cheatham (tp), Franc Williams (tp, flh), Clyde Bernhardt (tb), George James (sop, as), Charlie Holmes (as), Dill Jones, Jimmy Evans (p), Barbara Dreiwitz (tu), Tommy Benford (dm), Princess White Durrah, Miss Rhapsody (vo).

Fifteen titles were recorded for Barron, twelve issued, most of the altosax soli are by GJ, but the following four have CH:

Somebody Stole My Gal	Solo 40 bars. (FM)
Red Wing	Solo 32 bars (2 <sup>nd</sup> (as)-solo). (M)
Careless Love	Solo 24 bars (2 <sup>nd</sup> (as)-solo). (M)
Gotta See Mama Every Night	Solo 32 bars (1 <sup>st</sup> (as)-solo). (M)

Recorded just a few days after the collaboration with Kustbandet above, the impression is the same; CH is no longer what he used to be, and George James is a hard match. However, he makes some serious efforts with acceptable results, and we can only be grateful for all the good music Charlie Holmes has given us through the years.

No further recording sessions.

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