

The
TENORSAX
of
RICHARD WILSON
“DICK”

Solographer: Jan Evensmo
Last update: Jan. 16, 2016

Born: Mount Vernon, Illinois, Nov. 11, 1911
Died: New York, Nov. 24, 1941

Introduction:

Dick Wilson was one of the best tenorsaxophone artists of the swing era but was confined to the Andy Kirk orchestra, and we just don't know his real capabilities. He also died so early, just after his 30th birthday, what a loss! His music was treated in Vol. 7 (1976) of my Jazz Solography Series, reprinted below. There has been no new discoveries since then.

History:

Both parents were musicians, his father played guitar and violin, his mother piano and guitar. The family moved to Seattle, Washington (ca. 1916). Dick started on piano and vocals, then after leaving high school in Los Angeles, returned to Seattle and began taking alto sax lessons from Joe Darensbourg. Switched to tenor and joined Don Anderson's Band in Portland, Oregon (c. 1929), returned home the following year and played briefly in Joe Darensbourg's Band. Then joined Gene Coy's Band on the West Coast, took sax lessons from Franz Roth in Denver, Colorado. Played in Zack Whyte's Band, then joined Andy Kirk in Kansas City (early 1936). Except for a spell in hospital (summer 1939) he remained with Kirk until shortly before his death. He died of tuberculosis. (ref. John Chilton).

DICK WILSON SOLOGRAPHY

ANDY KIRK**AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY****NYC. March 2, 1936**

Harry Lawson, Paul King (tp), Earl Thomson (tp, arr), Ted Donnelly, Henry Wells (tb), John Harrington (cl, as, bar), John Williams (as, bar), Dick Wilson (ts), Andy Kirk (bsx, dir), Claude Williams (vln), Mary Lou Williams (p, arr), Ted Robinson (g), Booker Collins (b), Ben Thigpen (dm, vo), Pha Terrell (vo).

Three titles were recorded for Decca, all have DW:

60852-A	Walkin' And Swingin'	Solo 8 bars. (M)
60852-C	Walkin' And Swingin'	As above. (M)
60853-A	Moten Swing	Solo 16 bars. (M)
60854-A	Lotta Sax Appeal	Soli 56 and 16 bars. Coda. (FM)

NYC. March 3, 1936

Same. Two titles were recorded, both have DW:

60861-A	Git	Solo 18 bars. (FM)
60861-C	Git	As above. (FM)
60862-A	All The Jive Is Gone	Solo 16 bars. (FM)

Jazz tenor saxophone has a distinct and personal voice in Dick Wilson. His style blossoms fully developed from this very first session. Basically it is a groovy rhythmical style reminiscent of Chu Berry. This can clearly be heard in his solo on "Moten Swing", a very fine piece whose melodic construction is remarkable and highly individual. His style is also highly characterized by the use of fast and flashing phrases of an ornamental nature, even in slower tempi. In fact his technique is surprising for the time. He has very few competitors concerning elegant switching between fast and more moderate phrases. I do not think it is an exaggeration to state that Wilson has had a significant influence on modern tenor saxophone, directly or through his later companion and pupil in the Kirk orchestra, Don Byas. His solo on "All The Jive ..." is a very good example of his command of the instrument, the hyper-elegant runs are something quite unique for the time. "Lotta ..." is a showcase for Wilson, and the soli are good, although they lack the intensity of the previously mentioned. The briefest solo, however, has an opening which is really remarkable. We are fortunate to hear two examples of alternate takes of the remaining tunes. Both demonstrate Wilson's capabilities as an improviser, the variations are abundant and the results excellent. Note the differences in the ending of "Walkin' ..." and also the inventive middle part of the C-take of "Git". This may be considered to be one of Wilson's best sessions, and one really wishes that the development of his style also had been recorded and preserved. It is a full-time professional saxophonist and one of the most important of the swing era which is presented to us.

ANDY KIRK**AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY****NYC. March 4, 1936**

Personnel as March 2, 1936.

Three titles were recorded for Decca, all have DW:

60865-A	Froggy Bottom	Solo 12 bars. (M)
60865-B	Froggy Bottom	As above. (M)
60866-A	Bearcat Shuffle	Solo 18+8 bars, (tb) on bridge. (M)
60867-A	Steppin' Pretty	Solo 16+8 bars, (tp) on bridge. (M)

NYC. March 7, 1936

Same. Two titles were recorded, both have DW:

60874-A	Christopher Columbus	Solo 32 bars. (M)
60876-A	Corky	Soli 2 and 16 bars. (M)

This is probably the very best of Wilson's recording sessions with Andy Kirk. On all five titles we hear firm and lively soli, full of inspired details. The fine blues chorus on "Froggy ..." is another reminder of Chu's style, though there is no

copying. Similarly "Bearcat ..." is groovy and swingin in the very best Kansas City style. "... Pretty" starts similarly but changes into a fine, more sensitive piece of music. But this is far from all, my favourite pieces are in fact the two remaining ones. "Christopher ..." is a fully coherent construction with a charming opening and with a logic sequence of fine phrases. The comparison with Chu's Henderson version of the same tune is outside the scope of this work but is well worth while! At last "Corky", where Wilson achieves something like a "duet-with-himself" effect, is invaluable and one of his most memorable soli. The only negative thing which may be said of these sessions concerns the choice of repertoire, it is uninventive since all five tunes follow an even medium tempo. A more complete picture might have been obtained with a ballad and an up-tempo tune included. Postscript: The reference to a fine blues chorus on "Froggy ..." concerns take B. Take A, which was uncovered later, is quite different and of similar fine quality.

ANDY KIRK

AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY

NYC. March 11, 1936

Personnel as March 2, 1936.

Two titles were recorded for Decca, one has DW:

60886-A I'se A Muggin' Solo 20 bars. (FM)

NYC. March 31, 1936

Same. One title was recorded:

60961-A Puddin' Head Serenade Soli 8 and 6 bars. (M)

NYC. April 2, 1936

Same. One title was recorded, no tenorsax solo.

NYC. April 3, 1936

Same. Two titles were recorded, one has DW:

60974-A Cloudy Solo 12 bars. (SM)

NYC. April 7, 1936

Same. One title was recorded:

61003-A Give Her A Pint Solo 4 bars. (FM)

NYC. April 10, 1936

Same. One title was recorded:

60961-C Puddin' Head Serenade Soli 8 and 6 bars. (FM)

The remaining sessions from this very fruitful period in Andy Kirk's recording history do not achieve the very high level of the first ones, but some very fine tenor saxophone can be heard. Particularly "Cloudy" is memorable, not only because it has the slowest tempo until now, but because it comprises the different aspects of Wilson's style in a beautiful way: technique, feeling and melodic inventiveness. "I'se ..." is even and good without being among the top rank soli. The brief part in "... Pint" is worth noticing, and the ensemble sound on the great hit "Until ..." would have been quite different without Wilson. Finally, the two takes of "Puddin' ..." demonstrate that he was an improviser of class.

ANDY KIRK

AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY

NYC. Dec. 9, 1936

Personnel as March 2, 1936 + Harry Mills (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, three have DW:

61463-A Fifty-Second Street Soli 4 and 8 bars. (M)

61464-A The Lady Who Swings The Band Solo 8 bars. (FM)

61465-A What Will I Tell My Heart Soli 4 and 2 bars. (SM)

Quite brief soli, none being particularly noteworthy except the last one on "... Street", which contains a couple of tricky details. "The Lady ..." is good, while "What Will ..." is of slight interest.

ANDY KIRK

AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY

Cleveland, Jan. 29, 1937

Personnel probably as March 2, 1936.

Broadcast from the Trinanon Ballroom.

1 Theme

No solo.

2	You Turned The Tables On Me	Soli 8 and 14 bars. (M)
3	Never Slept A Wink	No solo.
4	Goodnight My Love	Brief break. (SM)
5	You Do the Darndest Things	Solo 24 bars. (M)
6	Spring Holiday	No solo.
7	When I'm With You	No solo.
8	Make Believe Ballroom	No solo.
9	Sepia Jazz	Solo 18+8 bars, (cl) on bridge. (F)
10	Gypsy	Solo 24 bars (missing start). (M)
11	Clouds (NC)	No solo.

"Sepia Jazz" contains the fastest solo up till now, however the tempo does not seem to trouble Wilson at all. The result is quite satisfactory without being memorable. "Gypsy" and "You Do ..." are pleasant but not too dramatic "ballroomers". The best tenorsax at this date is probably "... Tables" with many impressive details.

ANDY KIRK

AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY

Cleveland, Jan. 30, 1937

Personnel probably as March 2, 1936.

Broadcast from the Trianon Ballroom.

1	Theme	No solo.
2	You're Slightly Terrific	Solo 6 bars. (M)
3	Yours Truly	Solo 16 bars. (M)
4	Trust In Me	No solo.
5	All The Jive Is Gone	Solo 14 bars. (M)
6	Dear Old Southland	Soli 16 and 12 bars. (M)
7	In the Chapel In The Moonlight	No solo.
8	Theme (NC)	No solo.

"... Southland" and "Yours Truly" contain soli of the very best quality, comparable to those on the March 1936 recording sessions. So does "All The Jive ...", which demonstrates great creativity. It is quite different from the Decca version. "... Terrific" sounds fine but is too brief to make any lasting impression.

ANDY KIRK

AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY

Cleveland, Feb. 5, 1937

Personnel probably as March 2, 1936.

Broadcast from the Trianon Ballroom.

1	Theme	No solo.
2	Honeysuckle Rose	Solo 32 bars. (M)
3	There's Frost On The Moon	Solo 6 bars. (FM)
4	Medley (Boo Hoo; One, Two, Button Your Shoe, Trouble Don't Like Music; Once In A Minute)	Solo with orch 16 bars. (FM)
5	Walkin' and Swingin'	Solo 8 bars. (FM)
6	Dedicated To You	No solo.
7	Oh Say Can You Swing	No solo.
8	King Porter Stomp	Part of intro 2 bars. Solo 16 bars. (FM)
9	Liza	Solo 8 bars. (F)
10	Theme	No solo.

Several fine tenor sax contributions here too. "Walkin' ..." offers a version different from both alternates on Decca and of equally high quality. "... Rose" and "King Porter ..." also have masterly soli which rank among his very best. In the "Medley"

Wilson plays his part, "Trouble ...", very good, while the two remaining items are not particularly noteworthy.

ANDY KIRK

AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY

Cleveland, Feb. 6, 1937

Personnel probably as March 2, 1936.
Broadcast from the Trianon Ballroom.

1	Theme	No solo.
2	Swingtime In The Rockies	Soli 8, 16 and 8 bars. (M)
3	Froggy Bottom	Solo 12 bars. (M)
4	What Will I Tell My Heart	Soli 4 and 2 bars. (SM)
5	Moten Swing	Solo 32 bars. (M)
6	I Love You From Coast To Coast	No solo.
7	Organ Grinder's Swing	Solo 16 bars. (M)
8	Theme	No solo.

These broadcasts may be considered to have the same importance for Dick Wilson as the Chatterbox broadcasts for Herschal Evans and Lester Young. From this late date several very important soli are preserved, particularly "Organ ...", one of my favorite DW soli. With sovereign technique he creates a memorable musical construction which at the same time swings magnificently. "Froggy ..." is again a piece quite different from the recorded version, and "Swingtime ..." has several great rolling soli. Finally, a very memorable "Moten Swing" a masterly piece! However, one point worries me; the first part is much too similar to the recorded version. We know it is not lack of capability to improvise, maybe it is just a coincidence?

ANDY KIRK

AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY

NYC. Feb. 15, 1937

Personnel as March 2, 1936, except Claude Williams (vln) omitted, Eddie Miller (as) added. Leslie Johnakins (arr).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, three have DW:

61598-A	Wednesday Night Hop	Solo 16+8 bars, (p) on bridge. (M)
61598-	Wednesday Night Hop	As above. (M)
61599-A	Skies Are Blue	Solo 4 bars. (M)
61951-A	In The Groove	Solo 32 bars. (M)

NYC. April 17, 1937

Same. Four titles were recorded, three have DW:

62133-A	Worried Over You	Solo 2 bars. (SM)
62134-A	Foolin' Myself	Soli 4, 4 and 4 bars. (SM)
62136-A	I'll Get Along Somehow	Solo 3 bars. (SM)

Obviously the most interesting item here is "Wednesday ...". Not only is it a very groovy, swinging piece, featuring the Kirk band at its very best. It also offers two alternates which present Dick Wilson in a very flattering way. He plays convincingly with all his musical tools included in a tasteful and professional way. Note for instance the second eights in take A. The takes are quite different in detail and rank high among DW's works. "In The Groove" is also a well contrived solo, personal and inspired. In contrast, the remaining items have only academic interest, featuring DW only briefly, although his style is always easily recognized.

ANDY KIRK

AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY

NYC. July 26, 1937

Personnel as Feb. 15, 1937.

Four titles were recorded for Decca, three have DW:

62446-A	A Mellow Bit Of Rhythm	Solo with orchestra 16+8 bars, (tp) on bridge. (M)
62447-A	In My Wildest Dreams	Solo 8 bars. Break. Brief coda. (SM)
62449-A	With Love In My Heart	Solo 8 bars. (SM)

NYC. July 27, 1937

Same. Four titles were recorded, two have DW:

62453-B	What's Mine Is Yours	Solo 4 bars. (SM)
62455-A	The Key To My Heart	Obbligato 4x1 bar. (SM)

The most prominent solo by far is to be found on "A Mellow Bit ..." although it is somewhat tied down by the arrangement and lacks freedom. However, it is a fine piece, standing forth particularly in the middle of all the commercial tunes presented. "With Love ..." has also, somewhat surprisingly, a charming and well contrived solo in a far from jazz-oriented setting. One might wish for a complete chorus or two, but such a wish is at least five years premature, and then DW was gone. The rest of the tenor sax contributions are brief and/or rather uninteresting.

ANDY KIRK

AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY

NYC. Dec. 13, 1937

Andy Kirk (dir), Clarence Trice, Earl Thomson, Harry Lawson (tp), Ted Donnelly (tb), Henry Wells (tb, vo), John Harrington (cl, as, bar), John Williams (as, bar), Earl Miller (as), Dick Wilson (ts), Mary Lou Williams (p, arr), Ted Robinson (g), Booker Collins (b), Ben Thigpen (dm), Pha Terrell (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, two maybe three, have DW:

62872-A	Lover, Come Back To Me	Solo 16 bars. (S)
62874-A	The Big Dipper	Solo 14 bars. (M)
62875-A	Bear Down	Possibly altosax solo 8 bars. (M)

NYC. Feb. 8, 1938

Same. Five titles were recorded, two have DW:

63257-A	It Must Be True	Solo 8 bars. (SM)
63259-A	Little Joe From Chicago	Solo 8 bars. (M)

The first session starts with a disappointment, "Lover ..." is presented straight and is in fact not very interesting. We might have had an opportunity to hear whether, and eventually how, DW mastered the slow tempo. However, there are several consolation pieces. Particularly "... Dipper" is excellent with DW exhibiting his complete command of the instrument. Also "Little Joe ..." is fine, and "It Must ..." is a real surprise, elaborate and beautiful, comparable to "With Love ..." a half year earlier. Finally, the alto sax playing in "Bear Down", while not outstanding, is rather similar to Wilson's tenor sax style and must probably be contributed to him.

RODNEY STURGIS,

BLUES SINGING WITH ORCHESTRA

NYC. Sept. 9, 1938

Personnel includes probably some of Andy Kirk's Twelve Clouds of Joy who recorded on the same date. One title. However, no saxophone is heard:

64612	The Gal That Wrecked My Life	No solo.
-------	------------------------------	----------

ANDY KIRK

AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY

NYC. Sept. 9, 1938

Personnel as Dec. 13, 1937.

Three titles were recorded for Decca, two have DW:

64613-A	Bless You, My Dear	Part of intro 2 bars. (SM)
64615-A	Mess - A Stomp	Solo 6 bars. (M)

NYC. Sept. 12, 1938

Same. Four titles were recorded, three have DW:

64642-A	Toadie Toddle	Solo 4 bars. Coda. (M)
64644-A	What Would People Say?	Part of intro 1 bar. Solo 6 bars. (SM)
64645-A	How Much Do You Mean To Me?	Solo 4 bars. Coda. (SM)

The great boredom is now descending upon the Andy Kirk sessions. The percentage of purely commercial items with vocal chorus is growing, and jazz is disappearing. It is sad to conclude that most of Dick Wilson's preserved music belongs to the time period before this date. No solo is longer than 6 bars on two complete sessions. If one of them is to be singled out, I would choose "Toadie Toddle".

ANDY KIRK**AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY****NYC. Oct. 24, 1938**

Personnel as Dec. 13, 1937.

Four titles were recorded for Decca, two have DW:

- | | | |
|---------|----------------|--|
| 64694-A | Jump Jack Jump | Solo 16+8 bars, (tp) on
bridge. Solo 8 bars. (FM) |
| 64696-A | Ghost Of Love | Intro 4 bars. (SM) |

NYC. Oct. 25, 1938

Same. Two titles were recorded, both have DW:

- | | | |
|---------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 64698-A | Sittin' Around And Dreamin' | Soli 4 and 8 bars. (M) |
| 64699-A | What's Your Story, Morning Glory? | Solo 6 bars. (SM) |

"Jump ..." shows that the band still knows how to play jazz if it gets the opportunity. Even if the recording does not belong to the very greatest, it is pleasant for a change. Wilson plays firmly and good, particularly the opening and the last solo of eight bars are noteworthy. There are also a couple of small surprises to be found on the remaining items. The longest solo in "Sittin' Around ..." and the brief six bars on "... Morning Glory" are definitely worth listening to, they are elaborate and sensitive.

ANDY KIRK**AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY****NYC. Dec. 5, 1938**

Personnel as Dec. 13, 1937.

Five titles were recorded for Decca, four have DW:

- | | | |
|---------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| 64778-A | September In The Rain | Solo 4 bars. (SM) |
| 64779-A | Clouds | Soli 4 (faint) and 8 bars. (SM) |
| 64780-A | Julius Caesar | Solo 8 bars. (M) |
| 64781-A | Dunkin' A Doughnut | Solo 16 bars. (M) |

NYC. Dec. 6, 1938

Same. Four titles were recorded, two have DW:

- | | | |
|---------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 64784-A | But It Didn't Mean A Thing | Solo 8 bars. (SM) |
| 64785-A | Say It Again | Solo 8 bars. Coda. (M) |

The soli here are not very interesting, with two exceptions. "Julius ..." is a very charming piece, probably no spontaneous improvisation but a very attractive construction based upon sovereign craftsmanship. The same goes for "... Doughnut", where he also demonstrates his arpeggio convincingly. Among the best of the 1938 vintage.

ANDY KIRK**AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY****NYC. March 16, 1939**

Personnel as Dec. 13, 1937 except Don Byas (ts), Floyd Smith (elg) replace J. Williams and T. Brinson. June Richmond (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, one has DW:

- | | | |
|---------|------------------|---|
| 65189-A | I'll Never Learn | Part of intro 2 bars. Solo 6 bars. (SM) |
|---------|------------------|---|

NYC. March 23, 1939

Same. Four titles were recorded, two have DW:

- | | | |
|---------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 65249-A | Then I'll Be Happy | Solo 12 bars. (M) |
| 65250-A | S'posin' | Solo 2 bars. (M) |

Only one solo is worth noticing, "... Happy", which is awake and driving.

ANDY KIRK**AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY****NYC. Nov. 15, 1939**

Personnel as March 16, 1939.

Four titles were recorded for Decca, one has DW:

- | | | |
|---------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| 66878-A | I Don't Stand A Ghost Of A Chance | Solo 4 bars. (SM) |
|---------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|

Four titles and all we get is 4 bars of fill-in. Although we are consoled by Don Byas, we are even more disappointed to note the lack of imagination from the producer's side. Two great tenor saxophonists in the same orchestra in pre-war jazz can be found almost only in the Count Basie and Andy Kirk orchestras, but this seems to have gone unnoticed when recording sessions were planned.

ANDY KIRK

AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY

NYC. Dec. 15 or 16, 1939

Personnel as usual.

WJZ broadcast, four titles:

Cherokee	Soli 8, 8 and 4 bars. (FM)
South Of The Border (NC)	No solo.
Dunkin' A Doughnut	Solo with orch 16 bars. (FM)
It's Funny To Everyone But Me (NC)	No solo.

Postscript of Jan. 16, 2016: Almost five years have passed since the presentation of the Dick Wilson solography, and I never expected any further discoveries, so this is great pleasure! One could of course wish for more, perhaps a full chorus on "Cherokee", but let us be happy for this, excellent tenorsax playing in his so familiar style.

ANDY KIRK AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY **NYC. Jan. 2, 1940**

Andy Kirk (dir), Harry Lawson, Clarence Trice, Earl Thomson (tp), Ted Donnelly, Fred Robinson (tb), John Harrington (cl, as, bar), Earl Miller (as), Don Byas, Dick Wilson (ts), Mary Lou Williams (p, arr), Floyd Smith (g, elg), Booker Collins (b), Ben Thigpen (dm), June Richmond, Pha Terrell (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, one has DW:

67013-A	It Always Will Be You	Solo 6 bars. (M)
---------	-----------------------	------------------

Nothing of interest on this session. Particularly regrettable is the fact that Don Byas' brief visit already is close to an end. Two great tenor saxophonists in the same orchestra in pre-war jazz can be found almost only in the Count Basie orchestra, but this seems to have gone unnoticed when the recording sessions were planned. Only on "It Always ..." they both solo, but briefly and with no connection. It's a pity, because Byas plays merrily on "Wham" which might have been a real battleground!

SIX MEN AND A GIRL

NYC. Jan. 26, 1940

Earl Thomson (tp), Earl "Buddy" Miller (cl, as), Dick Wilson (ts), Mary Lou Williams (p), Floyd Smith (elg), Booker Collins (b), Ben Thigpen (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Varsity:

US-1316-1	Mary Lou Williams Blues	No solo.
US-1317-1	Tea For Two	In ens 32 bars. Solo 32 bars. (M)
US-1318-1	Scratchin' The Gravel	Solo 8 bars. (S)
US-1319-1	Zonky	Solo 56 bars. (F)

This is in fact a quite sensational session. It does not advertise itself, and on first listening one may easily avoid noticing what is going on. However, so much interesting music is produced!! In this context, the tenor saxophone is in focus. Remember also that Dick Wilson only took part in two small-group recording sessions, this being the first. He plays unusually quietly, inwardly, in an almost cool manner, and the result is quite unexpected. This is real modern playing, in 1940! The basic rhythm is swing, and the similarity to Chu Berry's approach is a fact. However, his phrasing, his whole thinking points forward. "... Gravel" is perhaps not so interesting, it seems somewhat lost. "Zonky" and "Tea For Two", however, are both really epoch-making and must be noticed by those who search to understand how modern jazz developed.

ANDY KIRK

AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY

NYC. March 20, 1940

Personnel as Jan. 2, 1940, except Harold Baker (tp) replaces Thomson.

Broadcast from Cotton Club.

The Sheik Of Araby	No solo.
Cherokee	Soli 8, 8 and 4 bars. (F)

NYC. May 5, 1940

Same.

The Sheik Of Araby No solo.
 Marcheta Solo 16+8 bars, orch on bridge.
 Solo 8 bars. (FM)

NYC. May 6, 1940

Same. This item has also been dated as May 24.

The Riff Solo 16 bars. (FM)

Just before it is too late, we get a sensational item, "Marcheta", which is not a boring Latin song but a colorful up-tempo with extended contributions both by DW and Don Byas! DW plays magnificently, particularly the last 8 bars solo offers everything he has got!! Also "The Riff" has some good, typical and attractive DW.

ANDY KIRK AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY June 22, 1940

Personnel similar to June 25.

Broadcast. One title (additional titles may exist):

Boog It Solo 32 bars. (M)

An acetate discovery by the incredible Phil Schaap, having one of the best DW soli ever preserved. Perfect!!

ANDY KIRK AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY NYC. June 25, 1940

Personnel as March 20, 1940, except Rudy Powell (cl, as), Edward Inge (cl, ts) replace Miller and Byas.

Four titles were recorded for Decca, one has DW:

67894-A Scratching In The Gravel Solo 8 bars. (SM)

NYC. July 8, 1940

Same. Four titles were recorded, two have DW:

67918-A No Greater Love Solo 16 bars. (SM)

67920-A Little Miss Solo 16 bars. (M)

Three good soli on these sessions. "... Gravel" is fine and well contrived, and DW shows his musical talents quite convincingly. Even more thrilling is "No Greater Love", which offers a rare opportunity to study an extended solo in slow-medium tempo. The first part is rather straight with a heavy, sensuous sound, later he plays somewhat more freely with several of his trademarks included. One might wish for two or three complete choruses similar to Chu's "Ghost Of A Chance" with Cab Calloway. At last "Little Miss", one of the best Kirk records at this time, with a groovy, swinging solo of the kind the sessions four years earlier were full of, but which is so rare now.

ANDY KIRK AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY NYC. Nov. 7, 1940

Personnel as June 25, 1940, except Henry Wells (tv, vo) replaces Robinson.

Three titles were recorded for Decca, all have DW:

68317-A The Count Solo 24 bars. (FM)

68318-A Twelfth Street Rag Soli 16 and 16 bars. (FM)

68319-A When I Saw You Solo 3 bars. (SM)

NYC. Nov. 18, 1940

Same. Two titles were recorded, one has DW:

68364-A Or Have I? Solo with orch 16 bars. (SM)

"The Count" has a very good solo in the best tradition. The tempo invites technical exhibition, however he has a firm grasp of the musical qualities. Note particularly the neck-breaking conclusion of the solo, really impressive and an exclusive DW construction. "Twelfth ..." has many of the same qualities, but the attack is perhaps too forceful and not quite as exuberant. The two slow-medium items are of only slight interest.

**MARY LOU WILLIAMS
 AND HER KANSAS CITY SEVEN**

NYC. Nov. 18, 1940

Harold Baker (tp), Ted Donnelly (tb), Edward Inge (cl), Dick Wilson (ts), Mary Lou Williams (p), Booker Collins (b), Ben Thigpen (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Decca:

- 68365-A Baby Dear Soli 12 and 12 bars. (FM)
 68366-A Harmony Blues Soli 6 and 6 bars. (SM)

Personally I enjoy "Harmony Blues" the most, the deep, almost hypnotizing sound in the beginning of the first solo is unforgettable. In a way, his playing in this almost slow tempo reminds me of Henry Bridges with Harlan Leonard. "Baby Dear" is more ordinary, good playing but not comparable to many of the recordings with the full Andy Kirk Band.

ANDY KIRK AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY NYC. Jan. 3, 1941

Personnel as Nov. 7, 1940.

Four titles were recorded for Decca, two have DW:

- 68547-A A Dream Dropped In Solo 4 bars. (SM)
 68549-A Ring Dem Bells Solo 16 bars. (FM)

A good, but rather rough solo in "... Bells". It seems that DW's style is changing somewhat at this point, particularly where the sound is concerned, similar to what happened to Ben Webster a couple of years later. However, it is difficult to form an opinion, technical recording details may give a distorted picture.

JAM SESSION NYC. July 10, 1941

Kermit Scott, Dick Wilson (ts), probably Allan Tinney (p), probably Ebenezer Paul (b), unknown (dm), Gladys Bentley (vo-"When I Fall ...").

Recorded at Monroe's Uptown House.

Sweet Georgia Brown Fades in with solo appr. 21 bars.
 12"/33 rpm. acetate After piano: Solo 96 bars. Alternates with Scott in a 4/4 bars chase with (p) for 32 bars. In all three cases Wilson precedes Scott. In ensemble. (FM)

Hustlin' (Exactly Like You) Solo 32 bars. (M)
 10"/33 rpm. acetate

When I Fall For You (Exactly Like You) Sporadically
 10"/33 rpm. acetate obbligato 64 bars. (M)
 (same as Hustlin')

One is not surprised to find DW present on these acetates from the Jerry Newman collection. Obviously there was an experimental side to his musical personality, this is already mentioned in connection with the "Six Men And A Girl" session. There is reason to believe that he belonged to the inner core of the group of young, searching musicians having their nightly jam sessions at Minton's and Monroe's in the early forties, even if he himself was an established soloist at the age of thirty. This particular date is, however, not especially sensational. The soloing seems somewhat casual at times and a little heavy. The longest solo on "Sweet ..." constitutes the highlight. Note that "Hustlin'" and "When I Fall ..." are in fact two parts of the same tune, "Exactly Like You".

JAM SESSION NYC. July 14, 1941

Pete Stanley, Curtis Murphy (tp), Ducky Edwards, Dick Wilson (ts), Allan Tinney (p), Ebenezer Paul (b), Spencer Drayton (dm).

Recorded at Monroe's Uptown House.

Jumpy Record Solo 5 choruses of 32 bars
 12"/33 rpm. acetate (1st tenorsax solo). In ensemble. (F)

This is by far the most interesting of Wilson's soli at Monroe's. Here he is really exposing himself as a searching and experimenting artist. The atmosphere of the dance halls in Kansas City is far away, this is part of the process leading to a new concept of jazz music. It is not difficult to recognize DW, many of his particular trademarks are still present. However, here, in contrast to the Kirk recording sessions, he has no concessions to make but to himself, and he tries out large intervals and new runs with few restraints. To consider the solo good or not is, in fact, irrelevant, this is jazz history.

ANDY KIRK AND HIS TWELVE CLOUDS OF JOY NYC. July 17, 1941

Personnel as Nov. 7, 1940, except Earl Miller (as) replaces Powell.

Four titles were recorded for Decca, two have DW:

- 69519-A Big Time Crip Solo 6 bars. (M)

69520-A 47th Street Jive

Solo 12 bars. (M)

This is the end of Dick Wilson's long career in the "Twelve Clouds Of Joy". He does not get a really worthy sortie, considering that he during half a decade contributed with 49% of the really good soli (another 49% from Mary Lou Williams, the remaining 2% evenly distributed). Anyway, the two soli are both of the good old kind, at least partially. They swing forcefully and only lack some of the smooth elegance present earlier. As a summing up, even if DW had many opportunities in the band, most belong to the earlier years. Also he never got the chance to extend his soli, only two studio-recorded soli with Kirk reach the 32 bars limit, and we can only deduce his abilities in ballad playing from small glimpses. A small consolation that many other great musicians have had even less opportunity to put themselves on wax.

JAM SESSION**NYC. Sept. 22, 1941**

Harry Edison (tp), George Johnson (as), Dick Wilson (ts), Count Basie (p), William Lewis (g), Ebenezer Paul (b), Spence Drayton (dm).

Recorded at Monroe's Uptown House (12"/33 rpm. acetate):

Picturize This (Hold The Phone)

Solo 36 bars. In ens. (M)

Two months after this jam session, Dick Wilson was gone, death caused by tuberculosis. However, there is nothing which seems to imply illness in his playing this night. The music is an easily swinging medium blues with the unmistakable leadership of Count Basie. The tenorsax solo is groovy and attractive with several fine details at times. It cannot be considered experimental music, it is just a happy jam and as such marks a fine sortie for one of the great tenor saxophonists of the swing era.

... 000 ...