

**The**  
**TRUMPET**  
**of**  
**DONALD FREDERICK**  
**JOSEPH**  
**“DON”**

Born: April 13, 1923  
Died: March 12, 1994

*Introduction:*

This legendary trumpeter should have been among the most appreciated in the world of jazz, but keeping himself out of the public ear for most of his life does not promote fame. However, play any of his few records, and you will understand why a soloography is coming!

*History:*

Raised on Staten Island, NYC., became known in the 1940s, playing in the brass sections of various big bands, including those of Buddy Rich, Alvino Rey and Lucky Millinder. In the early 1950s, he was part of a freewheeling group of musicians who played around New York City's Greenwich Village, notably at the late Robert Reisner's Open Door club.

This group included, besides Joseph, pianist Bill Triglia and bassist Red Mitchell. Others in this loosely knit group included the late legendary trumpeter Tony Fruscella and the late tenorist Brew Moore. A frequent visitor to these sessions was Charlie Parker, of whom Joseph was a particular favourite.

Many well-known musicians at the time were drawn to Joseph for his intelligence and his knowledge of all forms of music as well as his playing. Charlie Parker was one of these and various accounts exist of how good they sounded together.

Don was next seen and heard as a member of the Gerry Mulligan group, with whom he also recorded. There was also an album with guitarist Chuck Wayne in 1957. After this, it seemed as if a wall of silence and mystery descended around Don Joseph. Actually, an uncompromising attitude towards the business of music, coupled with health problems, caused a self-imposed retirement to Staten Island where he remains to this day (1984), teaching school and playing occasional local gigs.

(Source: Liner notes of Uptown LP UP27.23, session of June 2/3, 1984).



bridge, DJ loses the beat, and the remaining part of his solo falls apart in an attempt to retain the groove. “All ...” is not too interesting from a DJ-point-of-view, as he is for the most part restricted to play the melody straight with band figures moving around him. In the light of Don Joseph’s lack of recognition combined with the quality of his “Mullenum” solo, we see a definite proof of Oscar Wilde’s point when he once declared: “Only the great masters of style ever succeed in being obscure”. Postscript: There is an alternate take of “Thruway” on some Columbia LPs. DJ’s solo is completely different, maybe better!

**CHUCK WAYNE ORCHESTRA**

**NYC. July 22, 1957**

Don Joseph, Tom Allison, Al Stewart (tp), Sonny Truitt (tb), Sam Marowitz (as), Caesar DiMauro, Ed Wasserman (ts), Sol Schlinger (bar), Chuck Wayne (g), Clyde Lombardi (b), Sonny Igoe (dm).

Four titles were recorded for RCA Victor, no DJ on 5357 “Rock-A-Bye Baby”, 5358 “Carmel” and 5359 “Snuggle On Your Shoulder” but:

5356-2	Lullaby In Rhythm	Soli 8 and 4 bars. (FM)
5356-4	Lullaby In Rhythm	As above. (FM)

**NYC. July 23, 1957**

Don Joseph (tp), Sam Marowitz, Gene Quill (as), Caesar DiMauro (ts), Chuck Wayne (g), Clyde Lombardi (b), Sonny Igoe (dm).

Two titles:

5360-1	Love For Sale	As below. (F)
5360-11	Love For Sale	Straight 16 bars. Solo 32 bars. Straight 16 bars. (F)
5361-3	Lover Man	Soli 8 and 16 bars. (S)

**NYC. July 24, 1957**

Don Joseph (tp), Sam Marowitz (as), Caesar DiMauro (ts), Sol Schlinger (bar), Eddie Costa (p, vib), Chuck Wayne (g), Clyde Lombardi (b), Jimmy Campbell (dm).

Three titles (two more, 5365 “Body And Soul” and 5366 “Along With Me”, are without DJ):

5362-1	How About You?	As below. (M)
5362-2	How About You?	Solo 32 bars. (M)
5363-7	What A Difference A Day Made	Solo 32 bars. (F)
5364-1	Embraceable You	Solo 16 bars. (SM)

This may be the only existing studio session with Don Joseph cast in a more than supporting role, and what a pity this is, since the results here show a lyrical and highly personal trumpet soloist of the first rank. The two ballads are both small jewels, with DJ contributing contemplative and intelligent soli combining the worlds of Hackett, Sheldon and Fruscella into a highly personal whole. Compared to the latter (who quoted DJ as a main influence), DJ has a slightly more intellectual and systematic approach in his soloing, the mere construction of his soli being worthy of a study in itself, in contrast to TF’s more erratic and unpredictable playing. His trumpet tone is breathy and warm, which also gives the ensembles a very pleasant sound on the small band items. The trumpet phrasing behind Wayne on “Lover Man” is an example of this, at times so arresting as to take the interest away from the guitar soloist. The uptempi fare almost equally well. The trumpet on “Lullaby ...” does not quite sound like DJ, but the CD liner notes are quite clear about it, and whatever is the case, it does not rise up above the average level. On all the other tunes, the soli are nicely executed and constructed, with a rhythmic phrasing and choice of notes slightly more ‘old-fashioned’ than on the ballads. They may not one by one be particularly earth-shattering, but score highly on warmth and radiance. Beautiful trumpet sessions!!

**DAVE SCHILDKRAUT QUINTET**

**NY. ca. 1961**

Don Joseph (tp), Dave Schildkraut (as), Bill Triglia (p), Curley Russell (b), Al Walker (dm), Jackie Paris (vo-“Jackie’s Blues”).

Four titles were recorded live by Bill Triglia at the El Mambo Club, Long Island, no DJ on “Night In Tunisia” but:

Jackie’s Blues	Solo 36 bars. (M)
Whooz Blues	Solo 48 bars. (S). Solo 72 bars. With ens 24 bars. (SM)
Buzzy	Solo 14 choruses of 12 bars. 3 choruses 4/4 with (as). (FM)

These being the only known extended performances by Don Joseph, they are important inasmuch as they show him as a soloist also capable of sustaining interest in longer solo sequences. Although, as in most 'live' situations where later reproduction was not intended, the results are somewhat uneven, but DJ solos imaginatively for the most part. DJ could hardly be called a typical blues player, but his sense of form is clearly evident in his way of picking brief melodic ideas as the basic material for several of his blues choruses. The sudden fifth or octave upward jump to pick a grace note, which seems to be a particular favourite device of his, is heard to good advantage on "Buzzy", a solo that in general keeps up quite well, even if the rhythmic phrasing may be a little stiff here and there. "Jackie's ..." features a relatively brief solo which may not leave a lasting impression, while "Whooz ..." has two solo sequences that build up nicely after rather tentative and off-mike openings.

**TURK VAN LAKE & MIKE MORREALE QUARTET**      **unknown date**  
 Don Joseph (cnt), Mike Morreale (tp), Vinnie Ruggieri (p), Turk Van Lake (g), Earl Saul (b), John Trentacosta (dm).  
 Two film shorts. Date given as Feb. 24, 2007, but that must be the time for entrance on YouTube:

Blues	Solo 36 bars. 24 bars 4/4 with (tp). (M)
Embraceable You	Solo sequence: (tp) 16, (cnt) 8, (tp) 8, (cnt) 18, (tp) 8, (cnt) 8, (tp) 16, (cnt) 8, (tp) 8, (cnt) 8 bars, cut. (SM)

This was a great and pleasant surprise! DJ looked like he was in his sixties. He played nicely, many of his phrases were quite familiar!!

**DON JOSEPH**      **Englewood Cliffs, NJ. June 2/3, 1984**  
 Don Joseph (cnt), Al Cohn (ts), Bill Triglia (p), Red Mitchell (b), Joey Baron (dm).  
 Six titles were recorded for Uptown, issued as "One Of A Kind":

Ash Wednesday Blues	Solo 36 bars. 48 bars 4/4 with (ts) to 24 bars 4/4 with (ts/dm). (FM)
But Beautiful	Soli 16, 8 32 and 8 bars to coda. (S)
Indian Summer	Duet with (ts) 32 bars to solo 32 bars. Solo 16 bars. Duet 32 bars to coda. (M)
Stumbling	Straight 32 bars. Solo 32 bars. Straight 32 bars to coda. (FM)
It Might As Well Be Spring	Soli 8, 16, 16 and 8 bars. Duet with (ts) 12 bars to coda. (S)
When Lights Are Low	Straight 16+8 bars, (ts) on bridge. Solo 16+24+8 bars, (b) on bridges, to straight 16+8 bars, (ts) on bridge. (M)

This is a magnificent session, and the record one of a few to bring to a potentially desolate island!! The setup is perfect; DJ's close friends Bill Triglia and Red Mitchell, along with a sensitive drummer and finally Al Cohn (AC, who first played with Don in 1949, is a perfect front line foil for the cornetist. His rousing tenor is an ideal contrast to Joseph's economical improvisations (ref. liner notes)). Forty minutes of the most beautiful and delightful jazz music you can imagine!! Every title features DJ's cornet to the utmost advantage, and you will quickly understand how enormous loss jazz suffered by DJ's self-imposed exile. Every bar thrills you with simple yet unsuspected details. To name any highlight would be an insult to those titles not mentioned, but the producer goes for "Stumblin'" and me possibly for "'Indian ..." and "... Beautiful". So we don't mention any titles but suggest you assimilate the legendary Don Joseph into your jazz heart.

No further recording sessions.