

The

TRUMPET & CORNET

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).

DON JOSEPH SOLOGRAPHY

LUCKY MILLINDER & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. June 27, 1949**

Donald Joseph, Lammar Wright, Fats Ford, Frank Galbreath (tp), Porky Cohen, Alfred Cobbs, N. Cavas (tb), Tony Scott (cl), Rudy Powell, Teddy Small (as), Harold Clark (ts), Big John Greer (ts, vo), Tate Houston (bar), Leroy Lovett (p), Danny Perry (g), H. Homes (b), Joe Harris (dm), Annisteen Allen (vo).

Three titles were recorded for Victor, one may have DJ:

1752	Awful Natural	Solo 12 bars. (SM)
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This beautiful, laidback, “cool” solo is so similar to the later DJ style, that we are convinced it is played by him!

GENE ROLAND ORCHESTRA **NYC. April 3, 1950**

Marty Bell, Don Ferrara, Don Joseph, Red Rodney, Al Porcino (tp), Eddie Bert, Porky Cohen, Jimmy Knepper, Paul Selden (tb), Frank Orchard (vtb), Charlie Parker, Joe Maini (as), Al Cohn, Zoot Sims, Don Lanphere, Tommy McKagon (ts), Bob Newman, Gerry Mulligan (bar), Gene Di Novi (p), Sam Herman (g), Buddy Jones (b), Art Anton possibly Tiny Kahn (dm), Gene Roland (arr, con).

Seven titles were recorded, on this chaotic session, only one (tp)-solo on take 4 of “It’s A Wonderful World” (S), and it does not at all sound like DJ. Postscript of May 2019: What a mess and waste of talent!

BUDDY DE FRANCO & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. March 26, 1951**

Don Joseph, Bernie Glow, Dickie Mills, Dale Pierce (tp), Frank Lane, Al Robertson, Fred Zito (tb), Buddy De Franco (cl), Andy Cicalese, Gene Quill (as), Buddy Arnold, Eddie Wasserman (ts), Danny Bank (bar), Teddy Corabi (p), Bill Anthony (b), Frank DeVito (dm), Teddy Charles (vib-“Body ...”), Bonnie Richards (vo-“... Memory”).

Five titles were recorded for MGM, “I’m Stepping Out With A Memory” and “Polka Dots And Moonbeams” were rejected, no DJ on “Body And Soul”, “Rumpus Room” and “King Philip Stomp”.

ART MARDIGAN SEXTET **NYC. May 20, 1954**

Don Joseph (tp), Milt Gold (tb), Al Cohn (ts), John Williams (p), Teddy Kotick (b), Art Mardigan (dm). Date earlier given as Aug. 1954.

Four titles were recorded for EmArcy:

W245	Moroccan Blues	Solo 24 bars. (M)
W246	I Found A New Baby	Soli 8 and 32 bars. (F)
W247	Old Gold	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
W248	Golden Touch	Solo 16 bars. (M)

Don Joseph’s first real blowing session, and why hasn’t it been reissued on CD? His trumpet (or cornet?) playing immediately makes him a candidate for a solography, a quite original performer with delightful soli on all four items! They are mostly quite brief but so much to the point; particularly his almost teasing blues choruses on “Moroccan ...” are telling an exciting story, listen!!

TONY FRUSCELLA / DON JOSEPH **NYC. ca. 1955**

Don Joseph (cnt), Tony Fruscella (tp), unknown (g), (b), (dm).

Six titles were recorded privately at “Open Door” (note: Due to mediocre recording quality and similarity of styles, some simplifications have been made, and the details are sometimes of dubious quality, sorry for that):

Now’s The Time	Duet with (tp) 7 choruses of 12 bars. (FM)
Embraceable You	Duet with (tp) 32 bars. Solo 32 bars. 64 bars 8/8 and duet with (tp). (SM)
I Got Rhythm	Solo 64 bars. (F)
’S Wonderful	Duet with (tp) 32 bars. Solo 64 bars. Duet 32 bars. (M)
What Is This Thing Called Love	Duet with (tp) 32 bars. 3 choruses of 32 bars 4/4 with (tp). Duet 64 bars to coda. (FM)
Ash Wednesday Blues (NC)	Solo 5 choruses of 12 bars. (F)

Postscript of Dec. 2020: This is a great discovery, but could have been even greater if produced in a studio; the sound quality is simply not good enough to make complete appreciation possibly. It seems that DJ is leading the proceedings, but that both he and TF are in very good shape here. They cooperate closely, as evident

on “Embraceable ...” and other items, all worth noticing. Remember that we are dealing with two of the most important white trumpet/cornet players of the so-called ‘cool’ school. Take also a look at the TF-solography, also updated.

GERRY MULLIGAN CONCERT JAZZ BAND NYC. April 19/20, 1957

Don Joseph, Don Ferrara, Jerry Lloyd, Phil Sunkel (tp), Bob Brookmeyer, Jim Dahl, Frank Rehak (tb, vtb), Lee Konitz, Hal McKusick (as), Charlie Rouse, Zoot Sims (ts), Gerry Mulligan (bar, p, arr), Gene Allen (bsx), Joe Benjamin (b), Dave Bailey or Gus Johnson (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Columbia, no DJ on “Motel” but:

Thruway	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
Thruway (alt.)	As above. (FM)
All The Things You Are	Solo with orch 36 and 8 bars. (SM)
Mullenum	Solo 34 bars. (M)

This session contains one absolute solo-gem, the medium-tempoed “Mullenum”. Sandwiched between more self-starting and linear soloists such as Mulligan, Sims and Brookmeyer, DJ plays a beautifully conceived chorus, simple, controlled and lyrical, and at the same time full of unexpected twists and jumps, making his solo the high point of the item. “Thruway” starts off nicely, but in the middle of the 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 Iggoe (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 Iggoe (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 barthrills 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.

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