

The
VOCAL
of
DONALD MATTHEW
REDMAN
“DON”

Born: Piedmont, West Virginia, July 29, 1900
Died: New York City, Nov. 30, 1964

Introduction:

Those who have heard Don Redman's peculiar speech-singing became very fond of it, at least I did! There is nothing like it in the whole world!!

Early history:

Began playing trumpet at the age of three, and before he was 12 could play proficiently on all wind instruments including oboe. After intensive musical studies at Storer's College, Harper's Ferry and the Chicago and Boston conservatories, he joined Billy Paige's Broadway Syncopators and went to New York with them in March 1923. Later that year began recording with Fletcher Henderson and subsequently joined the band in 1924. With Henderson on sax and as a staff arranger until June 1927. Moved to Detroit to take appointment as musical director for McKinney's Cotton Pickers, a position he held until summer 1931. During this period arranged and recorded with Louis Armstrong studio groups in Chicago. In October 1931 his first band was formed by combining a nucleus of ex-McKinney members with several musicians from Horace Henderson's band. The band began their first long residency at Connie's Inn in 1932 and subsequently worked regularly throughout the 1930s until disbanding in January 1940. The band consolidated its considerable success by appearing on many important radio shows; they also appeared in one short film made by National in 1935 (ref. John Chilton (excerpts).

Message:

Don Redman was also an excellent multi instrumentalist, but the treatment of this side of his artistry may take place in another context later.

DON REDMAN VOCAL SOLOGRAPHY

FLETCHER HENDERSON & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. April 16, 1924

Elmer Chambers, Howard Scott (cnt), Teddy Nixon (tb), Don Redman (cl, as, vo), Coleman Hawkins (ts, bsx), possibly Lonnie Brown (sax), Fletcher Henderson (p), Charlie Dixon (bjo), Ralph Escudero (tu), Kaiser Marshall (dm).
Recording session for Columbia, one title has DR's vocal:

81691-2 My Papa Doesn't Two-Time No Time Vocal 16 bars. (M)

Straightforward singing, nothing remarkable.

FLETCHER HENDERSON & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Nov. 16, 1925

Elmer Chambers, Russell Smith, Joe Smith (tp), Charlie Green (tb), Buster Bailey (cl, as), Don Redman (cl, as, vo), Coleman Hawkins (cl, cmel, ts), possibly Lonnie Brown (sax), Fletcher Henderson (p), Charlie Dixon (bjo), Ralph Escudero (tu), Kaiser Marshall (dm).

Recording session for Regal, one title has DR's vocal:

6297-1 Then I'll Be Happy As below. (FM)

6297-2 Then I'll Be Happy Vocal 32 bars. (FM)

Now DR's personality comes clearly through, and it is not at all difficult to recognize his voice in comparison to later sessions. Postscript of Nov. 26, 2017: There are no notable differences between the two takes with regard to the vocal part.

THE DIXIE STOMPERS NYC. Dec. 22, 1925

Joe Smith, Russell Smith (tp), Charlie Green (tb), Buster Bailey (cl, as), Don Redman (cl, as, vo), Coleman Hawkins (cl, ts, bsx), Fletcher Henderson (p), Charlie Dixon (bjo), Kaiser Marshall (dm).

Recording session for Harmony, one title has DR's vocal:

141422-2 Get It Fixed Vocal 16 bars. (M)

NYC. Jan. 20, 1926

Same. Recording session for Harmony, one title has DR's vocal:

141526-3 I Found A New Baby Vocal 32 bars. (FM)

Note "... New Baby", a full chorus on a standard for the first time!

CLARENCE WILLIAMS' STOMPERS NYC. April 7, 1926

Bubber Miley, Thomas Morris (cnt), possibly Charlie Green (tb), Don Redman (cl, as, vo), Clarence Williams (p), Leroy Harris or Buddy Christian (bjo), possibly Bass Edwards (tu).

Recording session for Okeh, one title has DR's vocal:

74091-B What's The Matter Now? Vocal 4 and 2 bars. (FM)

Brief but no doubt, DR's characteristic voice asks "What's The Matter Now?" three times!

FLETCHER HENDERSON & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. April 14, 1926

Personnel as Dec. 22, 1925.

Recording session for Harmony, one title has DR's vocal:

141958-1 Dynamite Brief vocal intro and coda. (FM)

NYC. Jan. 21, 1927

Joe Smith, Russell Smith, Tommy Ladnier (tp), Benny Morton, Jimmy Harrison (tb), Buster Bailey (cl, as), Don Redman (cl, as, vo), Coleman Hawkins (cl, ts), Fletcher Henderson (p), Charlie Dixon (bjo), June Cole (tu), Kaiser Marshall (dm).
Recording session for Columbia, one title has DR's vocal:

143345-4 Tozo! Vocal 32 bars. (F)

NYC. March 23, 1927

Same except except Russell Smith omitted.

Recording session for Harmony, one title has DR's vocal:

143638-3 The Wang Wang Blues Vocal 16 bars. (FM)

Here "Wang ..." is the most interesting item, "Tozo!" is too fast for DR's style.

McKINNEY's COTTON PICKERS **Chi. July 11/12, 1928**

Langston Curl, John Nesbitt (tp), Claude Jones (tb), Don Redman, Milton Senior (cl, as), George Thomas, Prince Robinson (cl, ts), Todd Rhodes (p), Dave Wilborn (bjo), Ralph Escudero (tu), Cuba Austin (dm), Jean Napier (vo), vocal trio: Don Redman, George Thomas, Dave Wilborn.

Recording sessions for Victor, one title has DR's vocal:

46093-1 Four Or Five Times As below? ()
 46093-2 Four Or Five Times Vocal trio 82 bars. (FM)

Nice and charming item with scatting and jesting but not the clear DR vocal we are looking for.

THE CHOCOLATE DANDIES **NYC. Oct. 13, 1928**

Personnel as for MKCP above.

Recording session for Okeh, one title has DR's vocal:

401221-A Four Or Five Times Vocal trio 16 bars. (SM)

This item has no particular interest in this context.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG & HIS SAVOY BALLROOM FIVE **Chi. Dec. 12, 1928**

Louis Armstrong (tp, vo, speech), Fred Robinson (tb), Don Redman (cl, as, speech), Jimmy Strong (cl, ts), Earl Hines (p, speech), Mancy Cara (bjo), Zutty Singleton (dm).

Three titles were recorded for Okeh, one has DR's vocal:

402226-C Tight Like This Brief speech. (SM)

McKINNEY's COTTON PICKERS **NYC. April 8/9, 1929**

Personnel as for MKCP above but Jimmy Dudley or Joe Moxley (cl, as) replaces Senior.

Recording sessions for Victor, one title has DR's vocal:

51085-2 Save It Pretty Mama Vocal 16 bars. (SM)

McKinney's Cotton Pickers offers DR his best opportunities to promote his vocal abilities, and "... Pretty Mama" is his first one and quite nice.

THE LITTLE CHOCOLATE DANDIES **NYC. Sept. 18, 1929**

Rex Stewart (cnt), Leonard Davis (tp), J. C. Higginbotham (tb), Don Redman (cl, as, vo), Coleman Hawkins (ts), Fats Waller (p), unknown (bjo), Cyrus St. Clair (tu), George Stafford (dm).

Recording session for Okeh, one title has DR's vocal:

402966-D Six Or Seven Times Vocal trio 16 bars.
 Vocal with (as-BC) 16 bars. (SM)

The wordless scat with Benny Carter's beautiful alto sax behind is a great event in jazz of the late twenties!

McKINNEY's COTTON PICKERS **NYC. Nov. 5-7, 1929**

Don Redman (cl, as, bar, ldr, vo), Joe Smith, Sidney De Paris, Leonard Davis (tp), Claude Jones (tb), Benny Carter (cl, as), Coleman Hawkins, Theodore McCord (cl, ts), Fats Waller (p, cel), Dave Wilborn (bjo), Billy Taylor (b), Kaiser Marshall (dm).

Recording sessions for Victor, four titles have DR's vocal:

57065-1 Gee, Ain't I Good To You? Vocal 16 bars. (SM)
 57067-1 The Way I Feel Today Vocal 32 bars. (FM)
 57068-2 Miss Hannah Vocal 32 bars. (FM)
 57140-2 Wherever There's A Will, Baby Vocal 32 bars. (FM)
 57140-3 Wherever There's A Will, Baby As above. (FM)

This might be Don Redman's greatest vocal sessions, for certain the greatest asides from those with his own orchestra later! The way he sings or talks "Gee ..." is just unique and with a charm light years away from what could be accepted as entertainment in our time! Only Hot Lips Page has made similar unforgettable success with this title. The three other titles are all in upper tempo, with a swinging band with very few competitors in the transition from the twenties to the thirties. Note that "Wherever ..." has two takes, and there are several places with slight but notable differences in the intonation. When DR takes to the microphone,

everything calms down and Fats gives the best possible background to what is important jazz history!!

McKINNEY's COTTON PICKERS **NYC. Jan. 31 & Feb. 3, 1930**
 Don Redman (cl, as, bar, ldr, vo), Joe Smith (cnt), John Nesbitt, Langston Curl (tp), Ed Cuffee (tb), Benny Carter (cl, as), George Thomas (cl, as, ts, vo), Prince Robinson (cl, ts), Todd Rhodes (p, cel), Dave Wilborn (bjo, g, vo), Billy Taylor (tu), Cuba Austin (dm), Frank Marvin (vo).
 Recording sessions for Victor but no DR vocal.

Camden, NJ. July 28-31, 1930

Personnel as above except James P. Johnson (p) replaces Rhodes.
 Recording sessions for Victor, one title has DR's vocal:

64005-2 Blues Sure Have Got Me Vocal 16 bars. (SM)

This is DR at his most exciting as a vocalist, if you don't dig this, forget it/him!

McKINNEY's COTTON PICKERS **NYC. Nov. 3-5, 1930**
 Don Redman (cl, as, bar, ldr, vo), Joe Smith, Rex Stewart (cnt), Langston Curl (tp), Ed Cuffee (tb), Benny Carter, Edward Inge (cl, as), Prince Robinson (cl, ts), Todd Rhodes (p, cel), Dave Wilborn (bjo, g, vo), Billy Taylor (tu), Cuba Austin (dm), Frank Marvin (vo).
 Recording sessions for Victor, two titles have DR's vocal:

64605-1 Talk To Me Vocal 32 bars. (FM)

64605-2 Talk To Me As above. (FM)

64606-1 Rocky Road Intro. Vocal 32 bars. Coda. (M)

64606-2 Rocky Road As above. (M)

Here are two other magnificent DR vocal titles! Both are treasures, the two takes of "Talk ..." are not much differently sung though, but "Rocky ..." is a particular favourite of mine, just great, not much difference in vocal there either.

McKINNEY's COTTON PICKERS **NJ. Dec. 17, 1930 – Feb. 12, 1931**
 Personnel as above except Buddy Lee (tp) replaces Joe Smith, Quentin Jackson (tb, vo) added, Lois Deppe, Donald King (vo).
 Recording sessions for Victor but no DR vocal, although:

64056-2 You're Driving Me Crazy Brief speech. (F)

DON REDMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Sept. 24, 1931**
 Don Redman, (as, vo, arr, ldr), Leonard Davis, Bill Coleman, Henry Allen (tp), Claude Jones, Fred Robinson, Benny Morton (tb), Edward Inge, Rupert Cole (cl, as), Robert Carroll (ts), Horace Henderson (p, arr), Talcott Reeves (bjo, g), Bob Ysaguime (b, tu), Manzie Johnson (dm, vib), Lois Deppe (vo).
 Four titles were recorded for Brunswick, two have DR's vocal:

E-37222-A I Heard Vocal 32 and 32 bars. (F)

E-37224-A Shakin' The African Vocal intro, 32 and 8 bars. (F)

NYC. Oct. 15, 1931

Personnel as Sept. 24, 1931, except Langston Curl (tp) replaces Bill Coleman.
 Two titles were recorded:

E-37291-A Shakin' The African As above. (F)

E-37292-A I Heard As above. (F)

Don Redman is now his own band leader, one of the best band in the early thirties, and not surprisingly he uses it now and then as vehicle for his own utterly original speechsong. Particularly his appearance on the very fast "... African" is highly enjoyable, and the two versions have slight difference in the lyrics.

DON REDMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Feb. 26, 1932**
 Personnel as Oct. 15, 1931, except Shirley Clay, Sidney de Paris (tp), replace Leonard Davis and Henry Allen. Talcott Reeves also (speech).
 Three titles were recorded for Brunswick, two issued:

11366-A How'm I Doin'?' Vocal 64 bars and coda. (M)

11367-A Try Gettin' A Good Night's Sleep Vocal intro and 76 bars. (M)

On this session we get two nice items with a more civilized tempo. The lyrics are not that easy to understand for a foreigner born far away from Harlem, but that does not matter, listen to DR as he was an instrumentalist!

**HARLAN LATTIMORE AND HIS
CONNIE'S INN ORCHESTRA**

NYC. June 17, 1932

Personnel as Don Redman and his orchestra Feb. 26, 1932, except Quentin Jackson (tb) replaces Fred Robinson. Harlan Lattimore (vo-152218,19).

Four titles were recorded for Columbia, two have DR's vocal:

152218-1	I Heard	Vocal 32 bars. (FM)
152220-2	Reefer Man	Vocal intro. (FM)

A third version of "I Heard", but this time DR assisted by Claude Jones ("Rachel") impersonates a gossipy woman during the last vocal section, while HL takes the first. DR speaks only briefly at the outset of "Reefer Man", setting up the extended, spoken performance of Claude Jones (Feb. 19, 2019: improvement of earlier comments, suggested by Phil Melick).

DON REDMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA

NYC. June 28, 1932

Personnel as Harlan Lattimore and his Connie's Inn Orchestra, June 17, 1932.

Four titles were recorded for Brunswick, one has DR's vocal:

11995-A	It's A Great World After All	Vocal with (vo-ens) 16, 8, 16 and 16 bars. (FM)
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NYC. June 30, 1932

Personnel as June 17, 1932.

Three titles were recorded for Brunswick, one has DR's vocal:

12006-A	Hot And Anxious	Vocal 12 bars. (M)
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NYC. Sept. 16, 1932

Personnel as June 17, 1932.

Two titles were recorded for Brunswick, one has DR's vocal:

12307-A	Two-Time Man	Vocal 16 and 16 bars. (M)
12307-B	Two-Time Man	As above. (M)

NYC. Oct. 6, 1932

Personnel as June 17, 1932.

Four titles were recorded, two have DR's vocal:

12446-A	Doin' What I Please	Vocal 32 and 32 bars. (M)
12447-A	Nagasaki	Vocal with (vo-ens) 32 bars. Coda. (FM)

NYC. Dec. 29, 1932

Personnel as June 17, 1932 + Bill Robinson (vo, tapdancing-12810), Cab Calloway + The Mills Brothers (vo-12811), two titles but no vocal.

Several fascinating items here, like his scatting on "... Anxious", or the laidback "... Please" with fine trombone and trumpet backing. "Nagasaki" would have been better without the vocal ensemble. However, my highlight is "Two-Time ...", great! Note how he accents "time" differently in bar 3 of the two takes. Check yourself for other differences!

DON REDMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA

NYC. ca. Jan. 1933

Personnel as above.

"Betty Boop" – Original motion picture soundtrack.

Five titles, three have DR's vocal:

I Know A Gal Named Betty Boop	Vocal 18 bars. (M)
How Am I Doing, Heh, Heh!	Vocal 32 bars. (M)
I Heard	Vocal 16 bars. (F)

A marvellous movie, one of the most funny I have seen from that era! DR sings abundantly, so take a look and listen, it is on YouTube! Postscript of Dec. 3, 2018: Note that Doctor Jazz CD DJ 010 contains two items supposed to be the source material for the movie: "How Am ...", length 3:18, vocal 18 (in fact the "... Betty

Boop” item) and 32 bars, “I Heard”, length 3:22, vocal 32 and 32 bars. The latter thus has vocal not in the film itself.

DON REDMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Feb. 2, 1933**
 Personnel as June 17, 1932, except Don Kirkpatrick (p) replaces Horace Henderson.
 Four titles were recorded for Brunswick, two have DR’s vocal:

13006-A How Ya Feelin'? Vocal 44 bars. (M)
 13008-A Mommy, I Don’t Want To Go To Bed Vocal 26 bars. (M)

NYC. April 26, 1933

Personnel as Feb. 2, 1933.
 Four titles were recorded for Brunswick, one has DR’s vocal:

13285-A I Won’t Tell Vocal 32 bars. (SM)

NYC. Aug. 2, 1933

Personnel as Feb. 2, 1933.
 Two titles were recorded for Brunswick, one has DR’s vocal:

13695-A Watching The Knife and Fork Spoon Vocal 44 bars. (M)

NYC. Oct. 19/20, 1933

Personnel as Feb. 2, 1933, except Gene Simon (tb) replaces Claude Jones.
 Five titles were recorded for Brunswick, two have DR’s vocal:

14182-A She’s Not Bad Vocal 32 bars. (M)
 14192-A No-One Loves Me Like That Dallas Man Vocal 32 bars. (M)

Some of the greatest DR vocals can be found here. There is a peculiar feeling of an unreachable past, a concept of what is popular entertainment extremely far from today’s, and nevertheless music and performing so fresh and eternal. Whether we take “How Ya ...”, “... Bed”, “... Tell” or the others three, DR gives us an insight into a world at least I should have given years to witness just for a fortnight...

DON REDMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Nov. 14, 1933**
 Personnel as Oct. 19, 1933. Chick Bullock (vo).
 Six titles were recorded for Melotone, but no DR vocal.

DON REDMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Dec. 22, 1933**
 Personnel probably as Oct. 19, 1933.
 CBS broadcast from Casino de Paris, six titles, two have DR’s vocal:

Watching The Knife And Fork Spoon Vocal 44 bars. (M)
 Odds And Ends Vocal 32 bars. (SM)

Postscript of Nov. 16, 2017: Two fine additions to DR’s vocal solography! One new title and a “... Spoon” to be compared to the studio recording earlier.

DON REDMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Jan. 5, 1934**
 Personnel as Oct. 19, 1933, except Henry Allen (tp) replaces Langston Curl and Jerry Blake (cl, as) added.
 One title was recorded for Brunswick, no DR vocal.

NYC. Jan. 9, 1934

Personnel as above. One title was recorded:

14559-A Got The Jitters Vocal with (vo)-ens 36 bars. (FM)

Time flies, and the Don Redman changes with it, but still this is swing music at the very highest level. There are more exciting vocal contributions though.

DON REDMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Aug. 1934**
 Don Redman (cl, as, ldr, arr, vo), Shirley Clay, Langston Curl, Sidney De Paris (tp), Gene Simon, Benny Morton, Quentin Jackson (tb), Edward Inge (cl, as), Rupert Cole (as), Robert Carroll (ts), Don Kirkpatrick (p), Talcott Reeves (g), Bob Ysaquiere (b), Manzie Johnson (dm), Red & Struggie (vo).
 Vitaphone short “Don Redman & His Orchestra”, DR (mc) only on “Ill Wind” and “Nagasaki” but:

Yeah Man! Vocal 32 bars. (F)
 Tall Man Vocal 8+64 bars. (F)

DON REDMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. May 7, 1936**

Don Redman (cl, as, ldr, arr, vo), Reunald Jones, Shirley Clay, Sidney De Paris (tp), Gene Simon, Benny Morton (tb), Edward Inge, Rupert Cole (cl, as), Harvey Boone (cl, as, bar), Robert Carroll (ts), Don Kirkpatrick (p), Talcott Reeves (g), Bob Ysaquiere (b), Manzie Johnson (dm), Harlan Lattimore (vo).

Recording session for ARC, two have DR's vocal:

19202-1 A Little Bit Later On Vocal 32 and 16 bars. (FM)
19205-1 I Gotcha Vocal 64 bars. (FM)

NYC. Sept. 30, 1936

Don Redman (cl, as, ldr, vo), Reunald Jones, Otis Johnson, Harold Baker (tp), Gene Simon, Benny Morton, Quentin Jackson (tb), Edward Inge, Rupert Cole (cl, as), Harvey Boone (cl, as, bar), Robert Carroll (ts), Don Kirkpatrick (p), Clarence Holiday (g), Bob Ysaquiere (b), Sid Catlett (dm), Harlan Lattimore (vo).

Recording session for ARC, two titles have DR's vocal:

19980-2 Too Bad Vocal 32 and 8 bars. (M)
19981-1 We Don't Know From Nothin' Vocal 32 and 8 bars. (FM)

NYC. May 28, 1937

Personnel as above except Bob Lessey (g) replaces Holiday.

Recording session for Variety, one title has DR's vocal:

507-1 The Man On The Flying Trapeze Vocal 32 and 32 bars. (F)

Several remarkable items here! Can you avoid being amused, thrilled and attracted by the swinging "I Gotcha"? Or the others for that matter, even the comy "... Trapeze" has its merits.

DON REDMAN & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Oct. 16, 1938**

Personnel details unknown.

Broadcast from Savoy Ballroom (Johns Bergh collection), one title has DR's vocal:

I Gotcha Vocal 64 bars. (FM)

NYC. Nov. 28, 1938

Same. One title has DR's vocal:

Nagasaki Vocal 32 bars. (F)

Postscript of March 2022: Two exciting broadcast items, particularly "Nagasaki"; DR had still an excellent band with his vocal as central elements.

DON REDMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Dec. 6, 1938**

Don Redman (cl, sop, as, ldr, vo), Carl Warwick, Mario Bauza, Reunald Jones (tp), Gene Simon, Quentin Jackson (tb), Eddie Barefield, Edward Inge, Pete Clarke (cl, as, bar), Joe Garland (ts), Nicholas Rodriguez (p), Bob Lessey (g), Bob Ysaquiere (b), Bill Beason (dm), Laurel Watson (vo).

Recording session for Bluebird, two titles have DR's vocal:

30354-1 I Got Ya Vocal 64 bars. (FM)
30360-1 Margie Vocal 32 bars. (FM)

NYC. March 23, 1939

Don Redman (cl, sop, as, ldr, vo), Tom Stevenson, Robert Williams, Disney De Paris (tp), Quentin Jackson, Gene Simon (tb), Carl Frye, Edward Inge (cl, as, bar), Eddie Williams, Gene Sedic (ts), Nicholas Rodriguez (p), Bob Lessey (g), Bob Ysaquiere (b), Bill Beason (dm), Laurel Watson (vo).

Recording session for Victor/Bluebird, two titles have DR's vocal:

35080-1 The Flowers That Bloom In The Spring Vocal 40 bars. (FM)
35081-1 Jump Session Vocal with (vo)-ens 40 and 8 bars. (FM)

NYC. May 18, 1939

Personnel as above except Buster Smith, Tapley Lewis (as), Slick Jones (dm) replace Frye, Inge and Beason.

Recording session for Victor, one title has DR's vocal:

36965-2 Ain't I Good To You? Vocal 48 bars. (SM)

82048 I Heard Brief vocal. (M)

NYC. Sept. 10, 1953

Personnel including Don Redman (arr, dir, vo).
Three titles were recorded for Coral, one has DR's vocal:

85201 Me And My Shadow Brief vocal. (M)

Brief and of academic interest only.

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