

The
ALTOSAX
of
DON STOVALL

Solographer: Jan Evensmo
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Born: St. Louis, Missouri, Dec. 12, 1913
Died: NYC. Nov. 20, 1970

Introduction:

I don't think anybody in Oslo Jazz Circle recognized Don Stovall, in the old days we simply did not play that kind of music, and we hated the Decca recording company for all their mediocre sessions. Ghus missing out on things we should have noted and appreciated.

History:

Began playing violin as a child before settling on alto. Played in St. Louis, Missouri with Dewey Jackson and Fats Marable on riverboats in the 1920s, and then played with Eddie Johnson's Crackerjacks in 1932-33. In the 1930s he lived in Buffalo, New York, where he led his own ensemble and played with Lil Armstrong. He moved to NYC. in 1939, and played there with Sam Price, Eddie Durham and Cootie Williams. Following this he recorded extensively with Red Allen, remaining with him until 1950. He retired from the music industry in 1950, and spent the remainder of his life working for a telephone company (ref. Wikipedia).

DON STOVALL SOLOGRAPHY

BUDDY JOHNSON & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Nov. 16, 1939**

Courtney Williams (tp), Don Stovall (as), Sonny Fredericks (ts), Buddy Johnson (p, vo-66891), unknown (g), (b), (dm), The Mack Sisters (vo-66889,90,91).
Four titles were recorded for Decca:

66889-A	When You're Out With Me	Obbligato 6 bars. (FM)
66890-A	Jammin' In Georgia	Solo 8 bars. (M)
66891-A	Stop Pretending	Solo with ens 16 bars. (M)
66892-A	Reese's Idea	Solo with ens 16+8 bars, (tp) on bridge. (M)

Don Stovall's appears for the first time with the Buddy Johnson and his jump band, and he turns out to be a highly competent alto sax player. "Stop ..." is rather straight, but "... Idea" gives him more blowing space, and the brief solo on "... Georgia" is the highlight, very promising! Note however that he is already 26 years old and has missed recording opportunities in the golden thirties.

SAM PRICE & HIS TEXAS BLUSICIANS **NYC. March 13, 1940**

Joe Brown, Ed Mullens (tp), Don Stovall (as), Ray Hill (ts), Sam Price (p, vo-67307), Duke Jones (b), Wilbert Kirk (dm).
Four titles were recorded for Decca:

67304-A	Fetch It To Me	Solo with ens 32 bars. (M)
67305-A	Cow Cow Blues	Solo with ens 10 bars. (M)
67306-A	Sweepin' The Blues Away	Solo 12 bars. (S)
67307-A	Swing Out In The Groove	Solo 4 bars. FM)

DS seems to belong to the Decca stable with participation in various recording sessions with different leaders. Colourful break in the opening of "... Groove" and groovy blues on "Sweepin' ...". His main contribution is on "Fetch It ...", jumping nicely. He confirms the impression of a very competent musician, but one gets the feeling that he can so much more.

LIL ARMSTRONG **NYC. March 18, 1940**

Jonah Jones (tp), Don Stovall (as), Russell Johns (ts), Lil Armstrong (p), Wellman Braud (b), Manzie Johnson (dm), Midge Williams (vo-67333), Hilda Rogers (vo-67334).

Four titles were recorded for Decca:

67331-A	Sixth Street	Solo with ens 16 bars. (M)
67332-A	Riffin' The Blues	Solo 24 bars. (FM)
67333-A	Why Is A Good Man So Hard To Find?	Solo 16 bars. (SM)
67334-A	My Secret Flame	Solo 8 bars. (S)

DS is back in studio after a few days, now with Lil Armstrong, soloing on all four items. An impressive solo on "... Good Man ..." shows confidence and personality, as does the slow "... Flame". MORE LATER!!

SAM PRICE & HIS TEXAS BLUSICIANS **NYC. Sept. 26, 1940**

Personnel possibly as March 13. Sam Price (vo-68150,51,52).
Four titles were recorded for Decca, two have DS:

68150-A	Oh Red	Solo with ens 24 bars. (M)
68151-A	Oh! Lawdy Mama	Solo 12 bars. (SM)

The second Sam Price session gives DS only two solo opportunities, but his surging blues choruses on "... Mama" and "... Red" are nice.

BUDDY JOHNSON & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Oct. 25, 1940**

Personnel possibly as Nov. 16, 1939. Ella Johnson (vo-68290,92), The Mack Sisters (vo-68293).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, three have DS:

68290-A	Southern Echoes	Soli 2, 6 and 8 bars. (M)
68292-A	Please Mr. Johnson	Solo with ens 12 bars. (S)

68293-A Swing Along With Me Solo with ens 8 bars. (M)

Not much to work on here, DS's capabilities should have been used to better advantage. Note however his fine tone upon introducing "... Mr. Johnson".

PETE JOHNSON'S BAND/

HOT LIPS PAGE AND HIS BAND

NYC. Nov. 11, 1940

Hot Lips Page (tp), Eddie Barefield (cl, as), Don Stovall (as), Don Byas (ts), Pete Johnson (p), John Collins (g), Abe Bolar (b), A.G. Godley (dm).

Three titles were recorded for Decca, 68332 issued as PETE JOHNSON and 68334/35 HOT LIPS PAGE, no DS on 68335-A "South" but:

68332-A 627 Stomp Solo 24 bars. (M)

68334-A Lafayette Solo 16 bars. (FM)

Pleasant blues playing on "627 ..." in this exciting session, controlled par excellence by the great Pete Johnson. The highlight is nevertheless the dynamic "Lafayette", where DS's fine altosax solo fits well into the sequence of other greats.

JOE BROWN & HIS BAND

NYC. Dec. 3, 1940

Joe Brown (tp), Don Stovall (as), unknown (ts), (p), (b), (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Decca:

68433-A Red Bank Romp Solo 16+8 bars, (tp) on bridge. (FM)

68434-A Beaumont Street Blues Solo 24 bars. Break. (F)

Ample blowing space for DS here, two notable soli.

HOT LIPS PAGE

NYC. Dec. 3, 1940

Personnel as Nov. 11. Bea Morton (vo-68436).

Two titles were recorded for Decca:

68435-A Harlem Rhumbain' The Blues Solo 24 bars. (FM)

68436-A No Matter Where You Are Solo 16 bars. (SM)

"Harlem ..." does not sound very promising, but DS takes a highly competent solo on this one. The elegant slow medium solo on "No Matter ..." is however the highlight and also one of DS's best soli from this period.

SAM PRICE

NYC. April 3, 1941

Shad Collins, William Johnson (tp), Don Stovall (as), Lester Young (ts), Sam Price (p, vo-68920,22), Duke Jones (b), Harold "Doc" West (dm), Yack Taylor (vo-68921).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, two have DS:

68920-A The Goon Drag Solo 8 bars. With orch 16 bars to coda. (M)

68923-A Just Jivin' Around Solo 16 bars. (FM)

A famous session as evident from the personnel listing! "The Goon ..." is a quite original song with DS taking a nice solo in the opening, and after a beautiful tenorsax solo comes back with a soft but dramatic ending. An elegant solo on "... Around" strengthens the good impression of DS's music.

BUDDY JOHNSON & HIS ORCHESTRA

NYC. April 9, 1941

Personnel possibly as Oct. 25, 1940 but including (cl).

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

JEWEL PAIGE & HER BROWN BERRIES

NYC. June 12, 1941

Joe Brown (tp), Don Stovall (as), unknown (ts), (p), (b), (dm), Jewel Paige (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, three issued, two have DS:

69346-A I Ain't Gonna Give Nobody NOTJR Solo 16 bars. (M)

69349-A I'm Left With A Broken Heart Break. Obligato parts. (M)

Swing rather than blues here, and DS takes a nice laidback solo on "... Give ...".

SAM PRICE

NYC. June 13, 1941

Chester Boone (tp), Floyd Brady (tb), Don Stovall (as), Elbert "Skippy" Williams (ts), Sam Price (p, vo-69365,66,67), Ernest Hill (b), Herbert Cowans (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, two have DS:

69366-A I Know How To Do It Solo 12 bars. (M)

69368-A Boogie Woogie Moan Solo 12 bars. (SM)

More blues from Sam Price, and DS seems to enjoy this; his laidback solo chorus on "... Moan" is one of his very best ones, and he jumps "... Do It" nicely.

SNUB MOSLEY **NYC. Oct. 21, 1941**
Courtney Williams (tp), Snub Mosley (slide-sax, tb, vo-69842,44), Don Stovall (as), Hank Duncan (p), John Brown (b), A. G. Godley (dm), Tampa Boys (vo-69845).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, three have DS:

69842-A Swampland Solo with ens 8 bars. (M)

69843-A Snub's Blues Solo 12 bars. (S)

69844-A Sing A Little Ditty Solo 8 bars. (M)

DS takes a great chorus on the slow "... Blues", the session highlight, the other two items are more ordinary.

SAM PRICE **NYC. Dec. 10, 1941**
Emmett Berry (tp), Ray Hogan (tb), Fess Williams (cl, as), Don Stovall (as), Sam Price (p), Billy Taylor (b), J. C. Heard (dm), Ruby Smith, Jack Meredith (vo).
Four titles were recorded for Decca, three issued, but no DS.

SAM PRICE **NYC. July 25, 1942**
Freddy Webster (tp), Don Stovall (as), unknown (ts), Sam Price (p), unknown (b), (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Decca, one has DS:

71196-A Frantic Solo 12 bars. (M)

The end of the Sam Price sessions and an intermediate halt of two years in DS's recording activities. A competent blues chorus on "Frantic" should be noted.

HENRY RED ALLEN **Chi. May 5, 1944**
Henry Allen (tp, vo), J. C. Higginbotham (tb), Don Stovall (as), Al Williams (p), Benny Moten (b), Alvin Burroughs (dm).
Seven titles were recorded for World Transcriptions, no DS on 25189 "Dear Old Southland" but:

25185 The Theme Soli 32 and 8 bars. (M)

25186 Ride, Red, Ride Solo 16 bars. (F)

25187 Just A Feeling Solo/straight 32 and 6 bars to coda. (S)

25188 Dark Eyes Coda. (SM)

25190 Red Jump Soli 8, 8 and 8 bars. (FM)

25191 Get The Mop Solo 24 bars with vocal comments. (M)

Almost two years have passed since DS's last session, and now he teams up with Henry "Red" Allen, to stay with him for the rest of his recording career. In the Henry Allen solography I have expressed my distaste for his choice of appearance in this period, and it makes it difficult for anybody with serious ambitions to develop anything like art. DS shows in the upper tempi that he has good tone and technique, as on "... Ride", but not much more can be said. Note however "... The Mop" which has fine altosax soloing, his best on the session, although he is disturbed by Red. Note also that he gets a kind of feature number in "... Feeling", showing that he knows the tricks of the great Johnny Hodges, but otherwise the item is more feeling than improvisation.

HENRY RED ALLEN **Chi. Aug. 1, 1944**
Personnel as above.
Broadcast from the Downbeat Room of Garrick Stage Lounge, five titles:

3:45 Get The Mop Solo 36 bars. (FM)

3:36 Pomona Solo 32 bars. (F)

0:43 On The Sunny Side OTS (NC) Solo with orch 24 bars (NC). (M)

1:56 St. James Infirmary Solo 8 bars. (SM)

2:12 The Crawl (NC) Straight/ens. Solo 32 bars. (M)

DS sounds more enthusiastic here on a broadcast than in studio. On "... The Mop" he gets an extra chorus and also can play without being disturbed by Red's

comments. He really goes for it in the fast "Pomona", one of his best soli, and also "The Crawl" has a noteworthy solo. The other two items are more ordinary.

PETE JOHNSON'S ALL STARS

NYC. Jan. 2, 1946

Hot Lips Page (tp), Clyde Bernhardt (tb), Don Stovall (as), Budd Johnson (ts), Pete Johnson (p), Jimmy Shirley (g), Abe Bolar (b), Jack Parker (dm), Etta Jones (vo-97,98).

Six titles were recorded for National, no DS on 97 "I May Be Wonderful" and 98 "Man Wanted" but:

99	1280 Stomp	Solo 24 bars. (FM)
101	Atomic Boogie	Solo 12 bars. (FM)
102	Backroom Blues	Solo 8 bars. (SM)
102-alt.	Backroom Blues	As above. (SM)

A typical Pete Johnson session rolling the blues and boogie. DS executes his parts satisfactory, most interesting are the two laidback "Backroom ..." versions.

HENRY RED ALLEN

NYC. Jan. 14, 1946

Henry Allen (tp, vo), J. C. Higginbotham (tb), Don Stovall (as), Bill Thompson (p), Benny Moten (b), Alvin Burroughs (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Victor:

1560-1	The Crawl	Straight/ens. Solo 32 bars. (FM)
1561-1	Buzz Me	Obbligato parts. (SM)
1562-1	Drink Hearty	Solo 8 bars. Obbligato parts. (SM)
1563-1	Get The Mop	Solo 24 bars. (F)

Back to recording with Red, after more than a year's silence. The music has not changed much, and again one gets the impression that DS could do so much more. On "The Crawl" and "... The Mop", it is obvious that he is an excellent craftsman and can play as fast as he wants to, otherwise nothing out of the ordinary here.

HENRY RED ALLEN

NYC. Jan. 28, 1946

Personnel as above.

Soundies:

2:50	Drink Hearty	Solo 10 bars. (SM)
2:52	Mop (Get The Mop)	Solo 24 bars. (F)
2:59	Crawl, Red, Crawl	Straight/ens. Solo 16 bars to ens. (FM)
2:34	Count Me Out	Straight/ens. Solo 32 bars. (F)
2:34	House Of 52 nd Street	Solo 16 bars. (FM)

These films have 'arrangements' close to the studio recording versions. Again "... The Mop" is an interesting item, and listen to the elegance with which he performs "House ...", a great altosax player!

HENRY RED ALLEN

NYC. July 16, 1946

Personnel as above except Eddie "The Mole" Bourne replaces Burroughs.

Four titles were recorded for Victor:

2262-1	Count Me Out	Soli 32 and 6 bars. (F)
2500-1	Check Up	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
2501-1	If It's Love You Want	Solo 8 bars. (SM)
2502-1	Let Me Miss You	Intro 2 bars. (SM)

Two items should be noted here; an interesting solo with groovy aspects on "Check Up" and particularly a brief but strong and emotional solo on "... Want", dig this one!

SID CATLETT BAND

NYC. late Sept. 1946

Dick Vance (tp), Benny Morton (tb), Don Stovall (as), Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis (ts), Ram Ramirez (p), Johnny Simmons (b), Sid Catlett (dm, ldr).

Movie "Boy! What A Girl!", released early 1947 (ref. Mark Cantor), two titles have DS:

Just A Riff Solo 24 bars (NC). (F)
 Crazy Riffin' Solo 8 bars. (M)

Brief but good solo in medium tempo, and DS can also be seen on the screen while playing here. The beginning of the solo on the fast item is partly inaudible, but DS has no problem with the tempo.

HENRY RED ALLEN

NYC. probably early Aug. 1947

Personnel as above.

Five titles were recorded for Apollo, no DS on 1293 "Old Folks, Do You Know Me Now?" and 1295 "My Alcoholic Baby" but:

R1292 Mr. Wamp Walks Solo 24 bars. (M)
 R1294 Bill's Downbeat Soli 32 and 8 bars. (FM)
 R1296 A Shanty In Old Shanty Town Solo/straight 32 bars. (M)

We have already arrived at the end of DS's recording career, a very competent altosax player with an unrealized potential. "Mr. Wamp ..." can be held as an excellent example of his capabilities, here he opens the solo sequence with a strong and personal solo. On "... Town" he plays sweet and nicely with some vocal comments by Red. Also notable soli on "... Downbeat". A representative session with which to end this solography. May Don Stovall be remembered!

WYNONIE HARRIS

NYC. Dec. 16, 1947

Bob Merrill (tp), Gerald Valentine (tb), Don Stovall (as), Dexter Gordon, William Parker (ts), Rene Hall (g), unknown (p), (b), (dm), Wynonie Harris (vo).

Four titles were recorded for King, only 5321 "Your Money Don't Mean A Thing" issued, but no DS.

No further recording sessions.

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