

The
VOCAL
of
EARL COLEMAN

Solographer: Jan Evensmo
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Born: Port Huron, Michigan, Aug. 12, 1925
Died: NYC. July 12, 1995

Introduction:

I remember very well how fascinated I was when hearing Earl Coleman sing "Dark Shadows" with Charlie Parker, and now half-a-century later I believe this personal vocalist deserves his solography.

History:

Moved to Indianapolis in 1939, started singing with Ernie Fields and Bardu Ali. Joined Jay McShann orchestra in 1943, later sang with Earl Hines, Billy Eckstine and King Kolax. Went with McShann to California and recorded with Charlie Parker, Fats Navarro and Max Roach in 1948. In 1954 worked with Gene Ammons and recorded with Art Farmer and Gigi Gryce. In 1956 with Sonny Rollins. By 1960 he was recording as a leader and performed with Gerald Wilson. In 1962 was with Don Byas in Paris and in the mid-60s with Billy Taylor and Frank Foster and with pianist Elmo Hope. Recorded with organist Shirley Scott in 1960 (excerpt from Wikipedia).

EARL COLEMAN SOLOGRAPHY

MILES DAVIS / GENE AMMONS**Hollywood, Oct. 18, 1946**

Miles Davis (tp), Gene Ammons (ts), Linton Garner (p), Connie Wainwright (g), Tommy Potter (b), Art Blakey (dm), Earl Coleman (vo).

Two titles were produced by Eddie Laguna (two others with Ann Hathaway (vo) replacing EC), never issued on 78 rpm.:

168-1	Don't Sing Me The Blues	Vocal 24 and 12 bars. (S)
168-2	Don't Sing Me The Blues	As above. (S)
169-1	Don't Explain To Me Baby	Vocal 24 and 12 bars. (S)
169-2	Don't Explain To Me Baby	As above. (S)
169-3	Don't Explain To Me Baby	As above. (S)
169-4	Don't Explain To Me Baby	As above. (S)

This first Earl Coleman session is presenting him together with several jazz greats, and like in the following session, he seems to thrive and sing competently in his personal style. No big difference between the takes though.

CHARLIE PARKER QUARTET**Hollywood, Feb. 19, 1947**

Charlie Parker (as), Erroll Garner (p), Red Callender (b), Harold "Doc" West (dm), Earl Coleman (vo).

Two titles were recorded for Dial (others without EC):

1051-C	This Is Always	Vocal 24 and 8 bars to coda. 3:10. (S)
1051-D	This Is Always	As above. 3:07. (S)
1052-A	Dark Shadows	Vocal 32 and 8 bars to coda. 4:02. (S)
1052-B	Dark Shadows	As above. 3:10. (SM/S)
1052-C	Dark Shadows	As above. 3:06. (SM)
1052-D	Dark Shadows	As above. 2:57. (SM)

This was my first encounter with Earl Coleman, and I immediately fell for his personal and easily identifiable style. Of course it didn't hurt to be part of a legendary session, singing together with Bird and Erroll Garner, but I felt EC had something special. Note that they had problems with finding the right tempo on "... Shadows", personally I like the slowest one best.

CHARLIE PARKER**LA. March 1-13, 1947**

Howard McGhee (tp), Charlie Parker (as), Hampton Hawes (p), Addison Farmer (b), Roy Porter (dm), Earl Coleman (or possibly Danny Knight) (vo).

Recorded live at the Hi-De-Ho Club by Dean Benedetti, issued on Mosaic as "The Complete Dean Benedetti Recordings Of Charlie Parker".

Twentyone titles are listed to have vocal, but only Bird's soli were recorded, thus there is not much singing to be heard. In fact there is not a single case where it is possible to identify EC's presence from a fragment of a bar after an altosax solo.

**EARL COLEMAN WITH
AL KILLIAN ORCHESTRA****LA. July 6, 1947**

Sonny Criss (as), Wardell Gray (ts), Russ Freeman (p), Barney Kessel (g), Red Callender (b), Tim Kennedy (dm).

Concert at Elk's Auditorium, one title:

Body And Soul (NC)	Vocal 21 bars (NC). (S)
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Good sound as long as it lasts ...

GENE AMMONS**Chicago, Oct. 23, 1947**

Gail Brockman (tp), Ernest McDonald (as, bar), Gene Ammons (ts), Junior Mance (p), Gene Wright (b), Ellis Bartee (dm), Earl Coleman (vo).

One title was recorded for Mercury (others without EC):

1134	Hold That Money	Vocal 24 and 12 bars. 2:21. (S)
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EC sings the blues again here with Gene Ammons as very good company, just like his first session in 1946.

HOWARD MCGHEE SEXTET**Chicago, Feb. 1948**

Howard McGhee (tp), Jimmy Heath (as), Milt Jackson (vib), Will Davis (p), Percy Heath (b), Joe Harris (dm), Earl Coleman (vo).

One title was recorded for The Old Swingmaster:

Yardbird Suite / Hot And Mellow Vocal 32 and 8 bars. 2:47. (M)

Except for the fact that the version available is out of center, this is a wonderful melody with suitable singing, backed by Milt's vibraphone.

EARL COLEMAN**NYC. June 23, 1948**

Unknown (p), Al Casey (g), Gene Ramey (b), Earl Coleman (vo).

Five titles were recorded for Savoy, two issued:

35-130 Please Vocal 36 bars. 2:32. (S)

35-131 Pennies From Heaven Vocal 32 and 4 bars. 2:32. (S)

These are nice, particularly I enjoy the unusually slow version of "... Heaven".

CHARLIE PARKER QUINTET**NYC. probably July 6-11, 1948**

Miles Davis (tp), Charlie Parker (as), Duke Jordan (p), Tommy Potter (b), Max Roach (dm), Earl Coleman (vo).

Recorded live at Onyx Club by Dean Benedetti, issued on Mosaic as "The Complete Dean Benedetti Recordings Of Charlie Parker".

Since only Bird's soli were recorded, and the sound quality is pretty bad, it is possible to identify only one item on which EC can be heard clearly for a few bars:

236 Night And Day Vocal 2 and 2 bars (NC). (S)

LINTON GARNER'S ALL STARS**NYC. Oct. 25, 1948**

Allen Eager (ts), Linton Garner (p), Kenny Clarke (dm), Earl Coleman (vo) and others.

Six titles were recorded for Atlantic, two issued:

157 Don't Bring Your Troubles To Me Vocal 24 and 12 bars. (S)

158 I Hadn't Anyone Till You Vocal 32 and 8 bars. (S)

A delicate session with excellent tenorsax backing, EC sings beautifully in very slow tempi, and it is just a shame that only two out of six titles were ever issued.

EARL COLEMAN**NYC. Nov. 29, 1948**

Fats Navarro (tp), Don Lanphere (ts), Linton Garner (p, cel), Al Casey (g), Jimmy Johnson (b), Max Roach (dm), Earl Coleman (vo).

Five titles were recorded for Dial:

1161-B I Wished On The Moon Vocal 32 and 16 bars. 2:43. (SM)

1161-C I Wished On The Moon As above. 2:43. (SM)

1162-A Guilty Vocal 32, 4 and 24 bars. 3:00. (SM)

1163-B Yardbird Suite As below. 2:34. (SM)

1163-C Yardbird Suite Vocal 32 and 8 bars. 2:32. (SM)

1164-A A Stranger In Town Vocal 32 and 8 bars. 2:59. (S)

1165-A As Time Goes By Vocal 32 and 8 bars. 2:59. (S)

1165-B As Time Goes By As above. 3:00. (S)

One of EC's finest sessions from the forties! Contrary to common knowledge all five titles exist, some with an alternate take, in excellent sound, on test pressings. The choice of songs is perfect, and the personnel is remarkable with the great Fats Navarro in front. All titles are highly enjoyable, with excellent contributions by trumpet and tenorsax, for a highlight listen to the background on "... Town"! And EC seems to enjoy himself immensely.

EARL COLEMAN**NYC. 1948**

Billy Taylor (p), John Collins (g), Gene Ramey (b), Kelly Martin (dm), unknown (bgo), Earl Coleman (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Jade, two issued:

4001-5 Searching Blues Vocal 24 and 12 bars. 2:55. (S)

4002-2 Nightingale Vocal 32 and 16 bars and coda. 2:55. (SM)

Two slow titles in well known style, and peaceful if it were not for a persistent bongo.

GENE AMMONS**Hackensack, NJ. Feb. 8, 1955**

Nate Woodyard (tp), Edwin Moore (tb), Gene Ammons (ts), Cecil Payne (bar), Lawrence Wheatley (p), Ernie Shepard (b), George Brown (dm), Earl Coleman (vo).

Two titles were recorded for Prestige (others without EC):

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|-----|----------------|----------------------------------|
| 694 | This Is Always | Vocal 24 and 8 bars. 2:43. (S) |
| 696 | My Last Affair | Vocal 32 and 20 bars. 2:47. (SM) |

Hackensack, NJ. Nov. 4, 1955

Same. Two titles (others without EC):

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|-----|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 812 | Ghost Of A Chance | Vocal 32 and 8 bars. 3:35. (S) |
| 813 | Haven't Changed A Thing | Vocal 32 and 8 bars. 3:32. (S) |

Four ballads with band backing and Jug taking a few bars in the middle, nice but not particularly remarkable compared to the many to follow.

EARL COLEMAN**NYC. March 2, 1956**

Art Farmer (tp), Gigi Gryce (as), Hank Jones (p), Oscar Pettiford (b), Shadow Wilson (dm), Earl Coleman (vo).

Three titles were recorded for Prestige, issued as "Earl Coleman Returns":

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|-----|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 856 | No Love, No Nothin' | Vocal 32 and 16 bars. 5:21. (SM) |
| 857 | It's You Or No One | Vocal 32 and 8 bars. 5:19. (M) |
| 858 | Come Rain Or Come Shine | Vocal 32 and 16 bars. 4:15. (S) |

NYC. June 8, 1956

Art Farmer (tp), Hank Jones (p), Wendell Marshall (b), Wilbert Hogan (dm), Earl Coleman (vo).

Three titles:

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|-----|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| 911 | Social Call | Vocal 32 and 18 bars. 6:29. (SM) |
| 912 | Reminiscing | Vocal 32 and 8 bars. 5:50. (S) |
| 913 | Say It Isn't So | Vocal 64 and 16 bars. 5:38. (SM) |

The LP era has started, and also EC benefits from this. Delicate sessions with excellent accompaniment, note particularly the piano contributions. EC has not changed his style and is the same very personal singer as before. Dig the utterly slow "Reminiscing"

SONNY ROLLINS QUARTET**Hackensack, NJ. Dec. 7, 1956**

Sonny Rollins (ts), Kenny Drew (p), George Morrow (b), Max Roach (dm), Earl Coleman (vo).

Two titles were recorded for Prestige (others without EC):

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| 1032 | My Ideal | Vocal 16 and 10 bars to coda. 4:23. (S) |
| 1034 | Two Different Worlds | Vocal 36 and 16 bars to coda. 7:41. (S) |

EC's voice is getting deeper and darker but his personality is the same, and that he is invited to sing with Sonny Rollins must be a proof of his recognition. Since the tenorsax playing here is gorgeous, the full impression of these titles is very memorable.

SHIRLEY SCOTT TRIO**Hackensack, NJ. April 8, 1960**

Shirley Scott (org), George Tucker (b), Arthur Edgehill (dm), Earl Coleman (vo).

Two titles, "Crazy Rhythm" and "The Things You Are", were recorded for Prestige (seven more without EC), unissued.

ELMO HOPE ORCHESTRA**NYC. Aug. 19, 1963**

Lawrence Jackson (tp), Freddie Douglas (sop, as), John Gilmore (ts), Elmo Hope (p), Ronnie Boykins (b), Philly Joe Jones (dm), Earl Coleman (vo).

Seven titles were recorded for Audio Fidelity, issued as "Sounds From Rikers Island" one has EC:

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| It Shouldn't Happen To A Dream | Vocal 52 bars to coda. 4:06. (S) |
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"... Dream" is a feature number for EC, and he sings the whole item through with the horn men only in the background, but Elmo is prominent and very exciting in

his backing. The tempo is utterly slow, and EC's voice is almost rasping like a cat's tongue, fascinating!

EARL COLEMAN**NYC. Aug. 16, 1966**

Bigband personnel including Jerome Richardson (fl), Billy Taylor (p), Frank Foster, Tom McIntosh (arr), Earl Coleman (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Atlantic, three issued as "Love Songs":

10663	People	3:27. (S)
10665	The Work Song	2:37. (SM)
10666	I've Got You Under My Skin	2:53. (SM)

NYC. Feb. 26, 1967

Eddie Williams (tp), Billy Taylor (p), Gene Bertoncini (g), Reggie Workman (b), Bobby Thomas (dm), Earl Coleman (vo).

Seven titles, issued together with the above session as "Love Songs":

11778	Manhattan Serenade	2:54. (SM)
11779	When Did You Leave Heaven?	2:41. (S)
11780	A Day In The Life Of A Fool	2:46. (SM)
11781	Charade	2:53. (SM)
11782	There's No You	4:51. (S)
11783	I Won't Tell A Soul	5:04. (S)
11784	I Wish I Knew	5:36. (S)

This is one of EC's greatest sessions, not the least based upon the beautiful piano work of Billy Taylor and fine arrangements. I also feel tempted to quote Billy Eckstine's cover comments: "I have always liked Earl Coleman's voice. He always had a good conception, even in his earliest days..Now he has found his own sound by himself. ... He knows what he wants to sing and how he wants to sing it. All he needs is to be heard. This album should do it". And from "Ira Gitler's liner notes: "Earl Coleman is a baritone – a man with a rich, warm, resonant voice whose tones sometimes seem to originate in the nether regions of his body but always are emanating from the depths of his soul". Note as highlights "... Fool", also called "Manha De Carnaval", and "... Heaven?" with fine guitar backing, and "... Soul" with exquisite piano.

EARL COLEMAN**NYC. Sept. 9, 1977**

Hank Jones (p), George Duvivier (b), Leroy Williams (dm), Earl Coleman (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Xanadu, issued as "A Song For You":

What Are You Doing TROY Life?	5:50. (S)
My Funny Valentine	4:34. (S)
All In Love Is Fair	3:53. (S)
Wave	4:53. (SM)

same date

Same with Al Cohn (ts) added. Four titles:

A Song For You	5:58. (S)
Two Different Worlds	7:31. (S)
The Very Thought Of You	6:21. (S)
Dark Shadows	10:52. (S)

Quoting from Don Schlitten's liner notes: "Earl himself seems to add new layers of soul and insight as the years go by. There are few singers who give one such an immediate impression of their real feelings about a song and about life. Coleman has seen life from quite a few angles, and the art he makes out of it is nourishing, to say the least. Listen, it will tell you all you need to know". Ten years have passed since EC's last recording session, and again his success is certain, assisted by another great pianist, Hank Jones. The presence of the fine tenorsax of Al Cohn does not minimize the pleasure either (as on "... Worlds"). For session highlights, try "... Your Life?" and "... Thought ...". And of course, you cannot and shouldn't escape from "... Shadows"...

EARL COLEMAN**NYC. Dec. 12, 1979**

Harris Simon (p), Ted Dunbar (g), George Duvivier (b), Leroy Williams (dm), Earl Coleman (vo).

Ten titles were recorded for Xanadu, issued as "There's Something About An Old Love", six have EC:

It's A Crying Shame	Vocal 40 bars. 3:08. (S)
I Need A Shoulder To Cry On	Vocal 34 bars. 2:28. (S)
Embraceable You	Vocal 32 and 16 bars. 4:08. (S)
You Don't Know What Love Is	Vocal 32 bars. 2:50. (S)
I Guess It's The Mood That I'm In	Vocal 32 bars. 2:48. (S)
There's Something About AOL	Vocal 32 and 16 bars. 4:53. (S)

Another nice Xanadu session. EC's voice is even more rusty down deep than before, and he sticks to the slowest of tempi, particularly on "... What Love".

EARL COLEMAN**NYC. Sept. 1984**

Tom Harrell (tp), Jerry Dodgion (fl, sop, as), Michael Abene (p, arr), George Duvivier (b), Walter Bolden (dm), Earl Coleman (vo).

Ten titles were recorded for Stash, issued as "Stardust":

I Hear A Rhapsody	Vocal 32 and 16 bars. 2:26. (M)
Serenade In Blue	Vocal 32 and 16 bars. 4:23. (S)
Star Eyes	Vocal 36 and 18 bars. 3:53. (SM)
Star Dust	Vocal 48 and 16 bars. 6:10. (S)
Goodbye	Vocal. 2:15. (S)
I Surrender Dear	Vocal 48 bars. 3:30. (S)
The Gypsy	Vocal 32 and 16 bars. 4:43. (S)
This Time The Dream's On Me	Vocal 32 and 24 bars. 2:24. (M)
The Things We Did Last Summer	Vocal 60 bars. 5:02. (S)
Flamingo	Vocal 32 and 16 bars. 3:04. (SM)

EC's last recording session as a leader, but his voice holds and creates a unique atmosphere. A fine pianist and arranger is in charge, making this a very successful session. As a highlight choose "The Gypsy" with lovely trumpet background and solo.

ETTA JONES**Englewood Cliffs, NJ. Oct. 18 & 30, 1989**

Etta Jones, Earl Coleman (vo), Stan Hope (p, arr), Peter Martin Weiss (b), Bertell Knox (dm).

One title, issued (together with many others without EC) as "Sugar":

This Is Always	Vocal 24 bars. Vocal duet 16 bars to coda. 5:07. (S)
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It may not be by coincidence that his old success with Bird, "... Always" was selected as his contribution here, and it is very fitting for a sortie. There are more important vocalists in jazz, but Earl Coleman had something, he was highly personal, cultivating slow ballads with his deep, almost rasping voice, and he deserves to be remembered.

No further recording sessions.

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