

The
GUITAR
of
EDWARD DURHAM
“EDDIE”

Solographers: Kim Altsund & Jan Evensmo
Last update: April 4, 2018, March 8, 2022

Born: St. Marcos, Texas, Aug. 19, 1906
 Died: NYC. March 6, 1987

Introduction:

Oslo Jazz Circle learned to appreciate Eddie Durham's guitar through the sessions for Commodore, and it is regrettable that he was not recorded more on this instrument.

History:

Brother of Joe (bass), Allen (trombone), Roosevelt (violin/piano/guitar), Earl (piano), Clyde (bass) and Sylvester (piano/organ). First played guitar in co-led 'Durham Brothers' Orchestra', then began doubling on trombone. Toured (on trombone) with the 101 Ranch Circus Band until 1926, then worked with Edgar Battle's Dixie Ramblers. During the late 1920s played in the Middle West with Eugene Coy, Jesse Stone, Terrence Holder, and Walter Page's Blue Devils. Briefly with Elmer Payne's 'Ten Royal Americans' (summer 1929), then joined Bennie Moten (1929). Remained with Moten until 1933, worked for a week with Cab Calloway, briefly with Andy Kirk. Worked as a staff arranger for Willie Bryant, then joined Jimmie Lunceford (early in 1935) as trombonist-arranger, was also featured as solo guitarist, was one of the pioneers of amplified guitar work. Joined Count Basie in 1937, principally as arranger, but also featured on trombone and guitar. Left (ca. July 1938) to concentrate on full-time arranging; scored regularly for Ina Ray Hutton, Glenn Miller, Jan Savitt, Artie Shaw, etc. Formed own big band in June 1940, later that year was musical director for Bon Bon (Tunnell) and his Buddies. In 1941-43 toured as musical director for all-girl 'International Sweethearts of Rhythm', later he directed his own all-girl band. During 1947 he toured with the 'Cavalcade of Jazz', and in 1952-53 led small touring band accompanying vocalists Wynonie Harris and Larry Darnell. Continued regular arranging throughout the 1950s and 1960s, including scoring for and playing with the 'Swingers Inc.'. From 1957 through the 1960s led own small band for residencies on Long Island (ref. John Chilton).

Durham began to experiment with his acoustic guitar in 1929 by enhancing its volume with an affixed pie pan. Later he got a National metalbodied resonator guitar. On stage he experimented with electric amplification but on records 1929 – 1937 the sound is that of an acoustic resonator guitar, near the microphone. Several sources says that Durham played "electric/amplified guitar" on records with Lunceford 1935 and with Basie 1937 but aurally it is not so. The first times on record he plays a true electric guitar is on Nov 3 1937 (live broadcast - Good Morning Blues) and on March 18 1938 with KC 5. Here is the key to Durham's guitar style (according to Dann Baker, Dec 1, 2003): He was trying to duplicate the phrasing of a trombone, both by amplifying it (widening its tone and enhancing its sustain) and playing with uncharacteristic intervals and attack. In these respects he is remarkably similar to another overlooked great from the same era, Bob Dunn, who played electric guitar for Milton Brown on record as early as Jan 1935.

Eddie Durham was a very competent performer on trombone and guitar, as well as arranger. However, below are presented only his guitar contributions.

EDDIE DURHAM GUITAR SOLOGRAPHY

BENNIE MOTEN's KANSAS CITY ORCHESTRA Chi. Oct. 23/24, 1929
 Ed Lewis, Booker Washington (cnt), Thamon Hayes (tb), Eddie Durham (tb, g, arr), Harlan Leonard, Woody Walder, Jack Washington (reeds), Count Basie (p), Leroy Berry (bjo), Vernon Page (tu), Willie McWashington (dm), Ira "Buster" Moten (accordion), Bennie Moten (ldr).

Ten titles were recorded for Victor, seven have guitar soli:

57301-1	Rumba Negro	Solo 8 bars. (FM)
57303-1	Band Box Shuffle	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
57304-2	Small Black	Solo 8 bars. Coda. (FM)
57304-3	Small Black	As above. (FM)
57305-2	Every Day Blues	Soli 16 and 6 bars. (M)
57312-3	Boot It	Solo 4 bars. (F)
57315-1R	New Vine Street Blues	As below. (SM)
57315-2	New Vine Street Blues	Solo 24 bars. (SM)
57316-2	Sweetheart Of Yesterday	Solo 30 bars. (F)

Eddie Durham's guitar style seems to be developed rather early. If one, like me (JE), discovered ED first on the Commodore recordings and later went back in time to discover the roots, one finds the same style, more or less. The Moten background is no real swing orchestra yet, but quite lovely with its spirit, heavy rhythm, slaptongueing reeds, accordeon, Rushing's vocal and ED's solo guitar, and it sets the stage for good guitar performances. In fact, there are surprisingly many guitar soli to be found on the Moten sessions, obviously he was much appreciated. One of the most memorable items here is "Band Box ..." where he switches deftly between single string and chording in a most ingenious manner. Also the fast "Sweetheart ..." and the slower "New Vine ..." are extremely important items. Note from the alternate takes that there are small but noticeable differences in the soli on "Small ..." and "New Vine ...". One can see ED as an important pioneer on solo- and later electric guitar in jazz and popular music.

LAURA HENTON Kansas City, early Nov. 1929
 Bennie Moten (p), Eddie Durham (g), Vernon/Jo Page (tu), Laura Henton (vo).
 Date also given on JSP Records as June 14, 1929.
 Four titles were recorded for Brunswick:

KC579	Lord, You've Sure Been Good To Me	No solo. (M)
KC580	I Can Tell The World About This	No solo. (M)
KC581	Plenty Good Room In My Father's Kingdom	No solo. (M)
KC582	Lord, I Just Can't Keep From Crying Sometimes	No solo. (M)

Good gospel singing but all items in the same mood and tempo. The piano is barely audible. ED mainly strums on his dominant resonator guitar with no soloing.

BENNIE MOTEN's KANSAS CITY ORCHESTRA KC. Oct. 27-31, 1930
 Personnel as above plus Hot Lips Page (tp), Jimmie Rushing (vo).
 Eighteen titles were recorded for Victor, seven have guitar:

62910-1	I Wish I Could Be Blue	Intro 4 bars. (M)
62910-2	I Wish I Could Be Blue	As above. (M)
62912-1	Thar Too Do	Obbligato wth (acc) og (p) 24 bars. (M)
62912-2	That Too Do	As above. (M)
62914-1	You Made Me Happy	Solo 8 bars. (M)
62921-1	Liza	Obbligato 32 bars. (FM)
62921-2	Liza	As above. (FM)
62922-2	Get' Goin'	Soli 4 and 4 bars. (FM)
62923-1	Professor Hot Stuff	Solo 30 bars. (F)
62924-2	When I'm Alone	Soli 8 and 16 bars. (FM)

NYC. April 15, 1931

Same. Two titles, one has guitar:

68900-2 I Wanna Be Around My Baby Soli with orch 24 and 8 bars. (M)

Also on these sessions there are several original guitar soli. The extended "Professor ..." must certainly be recognized, but I have a certain affection for "... Happy" (with nice strumming banjo behind ED as also on "... Hot Stuff"), and the lovely "... Alone", one of my favourite Moten records, has really gorgeous guitar. Certainly these sides show ED to be the most underrated of guitar performers in jazz. And note the very rare beauty of his coplaying with orchestra on "I Wanna ...", something quite special!

BENNIE MOTEN'S

KANSAS CITY ORCHESTRA

Camden, NJ. Dec. 13, 1932

Hot Lips Page, Joe Keyes, Dee Stewart (tp), Dan Minor (tb), Eddie Durham (tb, g), Eddie Barefield (cl, as), Jack Washington (as, bar), Ben Webster (ts), Count Basie (p), Leroy Berry (g), Walter Page (b), Willie McWashington (dm), Jimmie Rushing, Josephine Garrison (vo), The Sterling Russell Trio (vo-group, Sterling Russell, Hamilton Stewart, Clifton Armstrong), Bennie Moten (ldr).

Ten titles were recorded for Victor, five have guitar:

74846-1 Toby Solo 8 bars. (F)

74847-1 Moten Swing Solo 8 bars. (FM)

74849-1 Imagination Intro 8 bars. Obligato (vo-group)
48 bars. Solo 4 bars. More obbl. (SM)

74851-1 The Only Girl I Ever Loved Brief break. (M)

74855-1 Two Times In orch. (M)

Paradoxically, the development of the Moten organization into one of the most exciting swing orchestras of the period, and we can imagine the later Count Basie orchestra, also reduced the possibilities for ED's solo guitar. On these immortal big band sides, there are two brief chorded opportunities in "Toby" and "Moten ...", good but not up to the previous exciting performances. In fact, the least interesting items from all other points of view are the most important for ED! "Imagination" features guitar all the way through, though most prominent in the first half, and he makes the most out of it. No longer is it only a 'vocal-group'-record, although of good quality, but a real guitar gasser!

JIMMIE LUNCEFORD & HIS ORCHESTRA

NYC. May 29, 1935

Eddie Tompkins (tp, vo), Paul Webster (tp), Sy Oliver (tp, vo, arr), Russell Bowles, Elmer Crumbley (tb), Eddie Durham (tb, g, arr), Willie Smith (cl, as, bar, vo, arr), Laforet Dent (as), Dan Grissom (cl, as, vo), Joe Thomas (cl, ts), Earl Carruthers (cl, as, bar), Eddie Wilcox (p, cel, arr), Al Norris (g, vln), Moses Allen (b), Jimmy Crawford (dm, vib, glsp, bells), Jimmie Lunceford (dir).

Six titles were recorded for Decca, two have ED's guitar:

39552-A Bird Of Paradise Solo 4 bars. (M)

39553-A Rhapsody Jr. Solo 4 bars. (M)

NYC. Sept. 23/24, 1935

Same. Six titles, five issued, but no ED.

NYC. Sept. 30, 1935

Same. Four titles, three have ED's guitar:

60013-A ... I'll Take The South Obligato (vo-group) 32 bars. (F)

60014-A Avalon Intro 8 bars. (FM)

60016-A Hittin' The Bottle Solo 8 bars to obligato (vo-SyO)
to solo 4 bars. (FM)

NYC. Dec. 23, 1935

Same. Four titles, but no ED.

"Hittin' ..." is the gem of ED's few soli with Lunceford, with stringbending and vibrato but still no electric guitar.

JIMMIE LUNCEFORD & HIS ORCHESTRA

NYC. Aug. 31/Sept. 1, 1936

Personnel as above except Ed Brown (cl, as, ts) replaces Dent.

Five titles were recorded for Decca, but no ED.

NYC. Oct. 14, 1936

Same. Three titles, but no ED.

NYC. Oct. 26, 1936

Same. Two titles, but no ED.

JIMMIE LUNCEFORD & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Jan. 18&20, 1937

Personnel as above.

Three titles were recorded for Decca, one has ED's guitar:

61531-A Honey Keep Your Mind On Me As below. (SM)

61531-B Honey Keep Your Mind On Me Intro 8 bars.
Soli 2, 2 and 2 bars. (SM)

NYC. Jan. 26, 1937

Same. Four titles, one has ED's guitar:

61550-A He Ain't Got Rhythm Solo with orch 22 bars. (M)

NYC. June 15, 1937

Same. Five titles, but no ED.

NYC. July 8, 1937

Same. Four titles,

62346-A Honey Keep Your Mind On Me As above. (SM)

ED at his very best on "... Rhythm" with single strings and chording. One can regret that he wasn't more featured on guitar on Lunceford's, and later Basie's, records. Not much difference between the takes of "Honey ..." though.

COUNT BASIE & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Aug. 9, 1937 – June 6, 1938

Bigband personnel including Eddie Durham (tb, g), Jimmie Rushing (vo).

The dates represent the first and last of the five recording sessions. Out of a total of eighteen items, there is only one guitar solo:

NYC. Aug. 9, 1937

62513-A Time Out Solo 8 bars. (FM)

On the numerous broadcasts there is also only one guitar item:

Meadowbrook, NJ. Nov. 3, 1937

Good Morning Blues Obligato with (p) 36 bars. (SM)

Here ED plays true electric guitar behind Rushing's vocal.

KANSAS CITY FIVE /

EDDIE DURHAM & HIS BASE FOUR NYC. March 18, 1938

Buck Clayton (tp), Eddie Durham (el-g), Freddie Green (g), Walter Page (b), Jo Jones (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Commodore:

22580-1 Laughin' At Life Soli 34 and 8 bars. (FM)

22581-1 Good Morning Blues Solo 13 bars. Acc (b). (S)

22582-1 I Know That You Know Solo 32 bars. (F)

22583-1 Love Me Or Leave Me Intro 4 bars to solo 16+8 bars,
(tp) on bridge. Solo 8 bars. (SM)

The reason for an Eddie Durham solography is buried here! With only a quintet, and no Prez, there is ample room for guitar soling, and he uses the opportunity to maximum benefit. One is surprised to note how original ED really is. On all items he shows that he really is an innovator on the electric guitar. Probably his talents for arranging destroyed his possibilities for developing his guitar talents? On all items you can enjoy his accompaniment to Buck's trumpet or Page's bass soli, and his soli are really intriguing. I prefer "... Life" and "Good Morning ...", but note for instance the eight after the trumpet bridge on "... Leave Me". This session should be remembered as an important start of modern jazz guitar!

KANSAS CITY SIX

NYC. Sept. 27, 1938

Personnel as above plus Lester Young (cl, ts). Freddie Green (vo-423).

Five titles were recorded for Commodore:

23421-1 Way Down Yonder In New Orleans Solo 28 bars.

Acc. (tp) and (ts). (FM)

23421-2	Way Down Yonder In New Orleans	As above. (FM)
23422-1	Countless Blues	Intro 12 bars. Solo 24 bars. Straight coda 10 bars. (FM)
23422-2	Countless Blues	As above. (FM)
23423-1	Them There Eyes	Intro 4 bars. Solo 8 bars. (FM)
23423-2	Them There Eyes	As above. (FM)
23424-1	I Want A Little Girl	Acc. (tp) and (ts). (SM)
23424-2	I Want A Little Girl	As above. (SM)
23425-1	Pagin' The Devil	Acc. (tp). (SM)
23425-2	Pagin' The Devil	As above. (SM)

On the second Commodore session, ED has a more modest role as guitar soloist, being mostly concerned with the beautiful arrangements. However, he has nice solo contribution on three items. Particularly "Way Down ..." and "Countless ..." have extended soli, again showing how fine and original player ED was. His variations from take to take are perhaps not like Charlie Christian's, but nice elements show his qualities. As a relevant example, compare the two eight bars' soli on "... Eyes"!

EDDIE DURHAM & HIS BAND **NYC. Nov. 11, 1940**
Joe Keyes (tp), Willard Brown, Henry Smith (as), Lem Johnson (ts, vo-68338), Conrad Frederick (p), Eddie Durham (g), Averil Pollard (b), Arthur Herbert (dm).
Four titles were recorded for Decca:

68336-A	I Want A Little Girl	Intro to solo with ens 32 bars. Solo with ens 16 bars. Coda (SM)
68337-A	Moten Swing	With ens. (M)
68338-A	Fare Thee Honey, Fare Thee Well	Intro with ens. Solo 16 bars. With ens. (M)
68339-A	Magic Carpet	With ens/Breaks. (M)

ED's first session under his own name with a nice group. He is heard all over with intros, soli, fills and codas. The sound is somewhat different than 1938, perhaps with different equipment?

BON BON & HIS BUDDIES **NYC. July 23, 1941**
Joe Thomas (tp), Eddie Durham (tb, g), Buster Smith (cl), Jackie Fields (as), James Phipps (p), Al Hall (b), Jack Parker (dm), George "Bon Bon" Funnell (vo).
Four titles were recorded for Decca, no guitar on 69558-A "Blow, Gabriel, Blow" but:

69557-A	I Don't Want To Set TWOF	Obbligato 32 bars. (SM)
69559-A	Sweet Mama, Papa's Getting Mad	Intro 4 bars. Coda. (SM)
69560-A	All That Meat And No Potatoes	Soli 4 and 4 bars. (M)

Modest featuring of ED's guitar, but one highlight is "I Don't Want ..." with trademarks as fingerslides and stringbends.

No further guitar sessions until 1964.

EDGAR BATTLE & HIS JAZZ PIONEERS **NYC. 1964**
Eddie Barefield (cl, as), Tate Houston (bar), Lloyd Phillips (p), Eddie Durham (g), Al Hall, Bill Pemberton (b), Slick Jones (dm), Edgar Battle (ldr, arr).
Twelve titles were recorded for Cosmopolitan, issued as "House Rent Party Music For A Harlem House Hop", three have guitar:

Slow Train	Solo with ens 8 bars. (SM)
Cat Walk	Solo 8 bars. (M)
Seventh Avenue Strut	Coda. (M)

The band as such is not exactly among JE's favourites, but KA is more positive, also to hear Sidney Bechet's favourite piano player Lloyd Phillips. "... Train" has a fine chord solo in triplets, while "... Walk" has a single string solo. It is nice to hear how ED alters his playing from tune to tune.

THE COSMOPOLITAN REEDS & RHYTHM**NYC. 1964**

Collective personnel: Eddie Barefield (cl, as), Pete Clark (fl, as, bar, arr), Russ Andrews (fl, ts), Arthur "Babe" Clarke (ts, bar), George Kelly (ts, arr), Floyd "Horsecollar" Williams (ts, arr), Harold Ashby (ts), Sonny White (p), Eddie Swanston (org), Eddie Durham, Lucius Fowler (g), Lawrence Lucie (el-b), Slick Jones (dm), Edgar Battle (arr).

Twelve titles were recorded for Cosmopolitan, issued as "Seven Swinging Saxophones & Five Frantic Frappers", three have guitar:

Deep South	Intro 4 bars. Solo 12 bars. Coda. (SM)
K. C. Rhythm	Intro 4 bars. (M)
South Of South	Solo with ens 8 bars. (M)

ED seems to enjoy playing in this rough and hard swinging band. He takes a quite confident blues chorus on "Deep ..." and a typical chord solo on "South ...".

EDDIE BAREFIELD SEPTETTE**NYC. July 9, 1973**

Taft Jordan (tp, flh), Vic Dickenson (tb), Eddie Barefield (cl, as), Cliff Smalls (p), Eddie Durham (g), Richard Davis (b), Johnny Blowers (dm).

Five titles were recorded for RCA Victor, no ED on "Oh Baby" but:

Moonglow	Solo 16 bars. (S)
Warm Up Blues	Solo 12 bars. Acc. (p). (S)
Sonny Boy	In ens. Solo 34 bars. (FM)
Star Dust	Acc. (tp/as). (S)

A very competent band! "Sonny ..." shows that ED is as good as ever, also an unmistakable very slow blues chorus on "Warm Up ...". "Moonglow" has a very relaxed single string solo. "Willow ..." is a showcase for Taft with ED chording behind. Important ED session.

EDDIE DURHAM / JIMMY NOTTINGHAM**NYC. July 10, 1973**

Collective personnel: Jimmy Nottingham (tp, flh), Snub Mosley (tb), Eddie Durham (tb, g), Earl Evans (cl, ts), Red Richards (p), Thomas Barney (b), Wilbert Kirk (dm).

Five titles were recorded for RCA Victor, no (g) on "Lester Leaps In" and "Indiana" but:

Blues In F	6:26. (M)
I Can't Give You Anything But Love	2:38. (M)
Willow Weep For Me	Acc. (tp). (S)

A very good blues session! Nice playing on all hands. ED is prominent in the ensemble on "... F" and takes two solo choruses with assurance and feeling. "... But Love" is all ED in good shape using all his trademarks.

EDDIE DURHAM**NYC. Feb. 13, 1974**

Raymond Tunia (p), Eddie Durham (g), Leonard Gaskin (b), Herman Bradley (dm, vo-"Good ...", "... Mac", "St. Louis ...").

Six titles were recorded for RCA Victor:

Good Morning Blues	4:17. (FM)
Good Morning Blues alt.	4:19. (FM)
I Surrender Dear	4:59. (S)
Blues For Mac	5:46. (S)
Perdido	4:17. (M)
Star Dust	4:07. Solo 64 bars. (S)
St. Louis Blues	3:44. (M)

On this session one can really study ED's guitar playing. Very personal and unpredictable. His sound differs from previous sessions. On the LP-cover he has a 12-string guitar, which he obviously plays on this session with lots of overtones. Due to his technique you sometimes get the feeling of slide-playing. At least one of the treble-strings is slightly out of tune, so if you got perfect pitch this is not for you! Never the less it is fine music and "I Surrender..." and "Stardust" stand out. Intense and varied playing from ED on the three blues numbers. Bradley's blues singing is superb in the style of Cleanhead Vinson and Rubberlegs Williams.

EDDIE DURHAM**London, July 1981**

Eddie Durham (tb, g), Danny Moss (ts), Russ Henderson (p), Johnny Williams (b),
Ronnie Verrell (dm).

Ten titles were recorded for JSP, issued as "Blue 'Bone", three have guitar:

Out Of Nowhere	Solo 32 bars. (S)
Front And Centre	Intro 4 bars. Solo 32 bars. 48 bars 4/4 with (ts). (FM)
Guitar Piece No. 2	Solo/acc. (b) 9 choruses of 12 bars. (M)

ED at almost 75 years plays as good as ever and with a clean tone this time. Pleasant guitar soli and really nice tenorsax by Moss.

EARL WARREN & THE COUNT'S MEN**NYC. July 9, 1985**

Eddie Durham (tb), Earl Warren (as, vo), Don Coates (p), Jimmy Lewis (b),
Clarence "Tootsie" Bean (dm).

Ten titles were recorded for Muse, but although discos include guitar, no such can be heard.

No further guitar recording sessions.

... 000 ...