

The
ALTOSAX
of
FRANK STROZIER

Solographer: Jan Evensmo
Last updated: July 14, 2021

Born: June 13, 1937
Died: Probably not (June 2021)

Introduction:

Frank Strozier was an unknown artist in the old Oslo Jazz Circle days, but was 'discovered' through his playing with trumpeter Booker Little, who was highly recognized. Only recently I rediscovered this excellent musician, among the very best on both alto sax and flute, and this solography may reach him, as he is still with us.

History:

He began learning piano while at school in Memphis; after moving to Chicago (1954) he worked with other Memphis musicians such as Harold Mabern, George Coleman and Booker Little, and also played with Walter Perkins's group MJT + 3. In 1959 he moved to New York, where he appeared with Miles Davis for a brief period in 1963 and with Roy Haynes's quartet. After six years in Los Angeles, during which he performed with Chet Baker (recording in 1965) and groups led by Shelly Manne (1965 – c1967) and Don Ellis (1968), he returned to New York in 1971; he joined the Jazz Contemporaries, led by the drummer Keno Duke (recording in 1974), and the New York Jazz Repertory Company. He recorded as a leader in 1976-77, and also played with Horace Parlan (1977). Strozier is a dynamic and committed performer with a blues-based style that enlivens any context in which he appears. His tone and phrasing have a biting edge (ref. The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz).

Message:

Read Noal Cohen's Jazz History Website to learn more about this great artist, and what happened to him!

FRANK STROZIER SOLOGRAPHY

HOUSTON STOKES**Memphis, Nov. 18, 1952**

Matthew Garrett (tp), Frank Strozier (as), Gilmore Daniels (ts), Erskine McLellan (g), Evans Bradshaw (b), Houston Stokes (dm, vo).

Four titles were recorded and issued by Sun (others unissued, ref. Noel Cohen), but no altosax soli (note that FS is only 15 years old but nevertheless already active on his instrument, so the above may be correct).

ERSKINE McLELLAN**Memphis, 1952**

Frank Strozier, Gilmore Daniels (saxes), Evans Bradshaw (b), Houston Stokes (dm), Erskine McLellan (g, vo).

One title issued on Sun 38 (CD), "Got Me A Horse And Wagon", no altosax soli but a tenorsax solo 12 bars (SM), could that be FS?

FRANK STROZIER QUARTET**Chi. ca. 1958**

Frank Strozier (as), Billy Wallace (p), Bill Lee (b), unknown (dm).

Seven titles were recorded for Mercury, but unissued, fate unknown.

EDWARD "BUNKY" REDDING**Chi. 1959**

Sonny Cohn (tp), Morris Brice (fth), Frank Strozier (as), Von Freeman (ts), McKinley Easton (bar), Floyd Morris (p), Lefty Bates (g), Quinn Wilson (b), Marshall Thompson (dm), (strings), Edward Redding (vo).

Two titles were recorded for Apex, no FS on "Come On Home", while "Devoted To Debbie" has not been available.

YOUNG MEN FROM MEMPHIS**NYC. Jan. 30, 1959**

Booker Little, Louis Smith (tp), Frank Strozier (as), George Coleman (ts), Phineas Newborn (p), Calvin Newborn (g), George Joyner (b), Charles Crosby (dm).

Date also given falsely as April 15, 1959, late 1959 and Feb. 1960.

Two titles were recorded for United Artists, issued as "Down Home Reunion":

- | | | |
|-------|-----------------------------------|--|
| 10:47 | Things Ain't What They Used To Be | Straight 8 and 8 bars. Solo 6 choruses of 12 bars. Straight 8 and 8 bars. (SM) |
| 8:13 | Blue 'N Boogie | Solo 15 choruses of 12 bars. (F) |

same date

Frank Strozier (as), Phineas Newborn (p), Calvin Newborn (g), George Joyner (b), Charles Crosby (dm). One title:

- | | | |
|-------|-----------|---|
| 10:24 | Star Eyes | Straight 1 to solo 3 choruses of 36 bars. 36 bars 4/4 with (p). Solo/straight 36 bars to long coda. (M) |
|-------|-----------|---|

The "Young Men" blow the blues! An excellent and exciting session, already appearing in two other solographies! We meet a young altosax player, combining strength and intensity with flashing runs, and he seems to get more than his even share of solo space. No problem with the fast "... Boogie", and in "Things ..." he gets both the melody presentation and the conclusion and in addition a long and colourful solo. If this is not enough, the session highlight is "Star Eyes", a great recording debut for a youngster, and enough for selecting him for a solography!

MJT PLUS 3**Chi. June 17/18, 1959**

Willie Thomas (tp), Frank Strozier (as), Harold Mabern (p), Bob Cranshaw (b), Walter Perkins (dm).

Twelve titles were recorded for Vee Jay, seven issued, five available:

- | | | |
|------|------------------------|---|
| 1181 | Sleepy (short version) | |
| 1182 | Whiffenpoof Song | |
| 1183 | Whiffenpoof Song | Straight 32 to solo 64 bars. Soli 4 and 4 bars. Solo/straight 48 bars. (M) |
| 1184 | Sleepy | Solo 36 bars. (SM) |
| 1185 | Brother Spike | Solo 32 bars. (M) |
| 1187 | Big Hands | Solo 32 bars. (SM) |
| 1188 | Rochelle | Soli 64, 8 and 8 bars. (F) |

This is an excellent quintet, and the only reason for not being better known must be its appearance on Vee Jay label, not among the easiest to come by, then, without streaming. FS is magnificent in all tempi here, whether the cooking “Rochelle” or the slow “Sleepy”, or inbetween. He has the ability to combine groovy attack with soft elegance. Of the five hitherto heard items, my slight favourite is the solo on “... Hands”, relaxed and just great.

FRANK STROZIER**NYC. Dec. 9, 1959**

Booker Little (tp), Frank Strozier (as), Wynton Kelly (p), Paul Chambers (b), Jimmy Cobb (dm).

Six titles were recorded for Vee Jay:

| | | |
|-----------|--------------------|---|
| 60-1453 | W. K. Blues | Solo 48 bars. (M) |
| 60-1454-4 | A Starling's Theme | Solo 64 bars. (FM) |
| 60-1454-6 | A Starling's Theme | As above. (FM) |
| | Runnin' | In ens. Soli 64, 4, 4 and 8 bars. (F) |
| | Lucka Duce | Solo 36 bars. (S) |
| | Lucka Duce alt. | As above. (S) |
| | Tibbit | Straight 12 bars. Solo 7 choruses of 12 bars. Straight 12 bars. (SM) |
| tk2 | Just In Time | Straight 1 to solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. Soli 4, 4 and 40 bars to coda. (M) |
| tk3 | Just In Time | As above but 48 bars to coda. (M) |

NYC. Feb. 3, 1960

Same. Four titles:

| | | |
|-----------|---------------------|---|
| 60-1455-3 | I Don't Know | Solo 6 choruses of 12 bars. Solo 4 and 4 bars. (M) |
| 60-1455-6 | I Don't Know | Solo 6 choruses of 12 bars. Solo 4 bars. (M) |
| 60-1456-1 | Waltz Of The Demons | Solo 32 bars. (SM) |
| 60-1456-3 | Waltz Of The Demons | Solo 36 bars. (SM) |
| 60-1457-4 | Runnin' | In ens. Solo 5 choruses of 32 bars. (F) |
| 60-1457-7 | Runnin' | In ens. Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (F) |
| 60-1458-3 | Off Shore | Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. Straight 32 bars. (M) |
| 60-1458-5 | Off Shore | As above. (M) |

Quoting the Booker Little solography: “... and this is a magnificent quintet led by a fine alto sax player deserving his own solography someday. Everything is highly enjoyable here, “Blue Note quality” if you see what I mean ...”. Yes, now he gets one, and it is a pleasure to promote his music. Probably he will make the greatest impression on you through the slower tunes, and the intense way he plays the blues. One of the highlights is certainly “Tibbit”, and the two takes of the slow “...Duce” are equally great, all excellent reasons for solography work. Great uptempo on “Runnin’” and 6/8 waltzing on “... The Demons” are only examples; there is not a single weak spot on these two dates, with one of the greatest trumpeters in modern jazz, as well as a perfect rhythm section.

MJT PLUS 3**Chi. Feb. 5&8, 1960**

Willie Thomas (tp), Frank Strozier (as), Harold Mabern (p), Bob Cranshaw (b), Walter Perkins (dm).

Seven titles were recorded for Vee Jay, issued as “Make Everybody Happy”:

| | | |
|------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1459 | Make Everybody Happy | Solo 24 bars. (SM) |
| 1460 | The Trolley Song | Solo 80 bars. (M) |
| 1461 | Sweet Silver | Solo 48 bars. (M) |
| 1462 | Don't Get Around Much A-m | Straight. Solo 32, 4 and 4 bars. (M) |

| | | |
|------|------------------|------------------------------|
| 1463 | My Buddy | Soli 16, 40 and 16 bars. (M) |
| 1464 | Richie's Dilemma | Solo 32 bars. (M) |
| 1465 | Love Letters | Solo 34 bars. (M) |

Fine follow-up session for this group, although one may wonder what kind of music policy it had; all kind of tunes, old and new, brief and long. The main point must be that the playing is good, which it is for the group as a whole, and FS is the strongest soloist. There is nice listening everywhere, and my favourite highlights are "... Happy" and "... Letters".

THE YOUNG LIONS

NYC. April 25, 1960

Lee Morgan (tp), Frank Strozier (as), Wayne Shorter (ts), Bobby Timmons (p), Bob Cranshaw (b), Louis Hayes (dm-1520,21,24), Al Heath (dm-1522,23).

Five titles were recorded for Vee-Jay:

| | | |
|--------|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1520 | Scourn' | Solo 50 bars. (FM) |
| 1520-3 | Scourn' alt. | As above. (FM) |
| 1521 | Seeds Of Sin | Solo 32 bars. (M) |
| 1521-4 | Seeds Of Sin alt. | As above. (M) |
| 1522 | Fat Lady | Soli 32 and 4 bars. (FM) |
| 1522-3 | Fat Lady alt. | As above. (FM) |
| 1523 | Peaches And Cream | Solo 44 bars. (FM) |
| 1524 | That's Right | Solo 5 choruses of 12 bars. (SM) |

Vee Jay continues its output of first class modern jazz sessions, and this one with Wayne Shorter compositions and superb personnel is a magnificent one. Perhaps a greater variation in tempi would have made the session even more interesting, but there is enough memorable music for several solographies. FS is in fine shape, and the presence of alternate takes again shows his improvisational capabilities. All items are highly noteworthy, but since this writer has a rather simple taste, the highlight must be the surging slow blues on "... Right" with some brilliant piano playing before FS takes his five choruses, wow!

MJT PLUS 3

Chi. May 12, 1960

Willie Thomas (tp), Frank Strozier (fl-1530, as), Harold Mabern (p), Bob Cranshaw (b), Walter Perkins (dm).

Seven titles were recorded for Vee Jay, six have been available:

| | | |
|------|-------------------------------|--|
| 1527 | Branching Out | Solo 5 choruses of 12 bars. (M) |
| 1528 | Li'l Abner | Solo 64 bars. 64 bars 4/4 with (dm/tp). (F) |
| 1529 | Don't Ever Throw My Love Away | Solo 32 bars. (S) |
| 1530 | Raggity Man | (fl). (SM) |
| 1531 | To Sheila | Solo 32 bars. (M) |
| 1532 | Love For Sale Burney | In ens. 2/2 with (dm/tp). (F) |

Fine variation in the third session by this group, although one might wish for a really gorgeous uptempo altosax solo on "... Sale" instead of the strange approach chosen. Dig the intense slow "... My Love ...", here one gets the essence of FS's music. Fine blues on "Branching...", good "... Sheila", and "... Abner" is played in an unearthly tempo; thus something for all. Note also that this is the first time FS records on his second instrument flute.

JOHNNY GRIFFIN

NYC. May 31 & June 3, 1960

Personnel including Frank Strozier (as), Johnny Griffin (ts).

Five titles were recorded for Riverside, but no FS.

BILL HENDERSON WITH MJT + 3

Chi. Aug. 29, 1960

Personnel as MJT + 3 above. Bill Henderson (vo).

One title, 1580 "Sleepy", was recorded for Vee Jay, but no FS.

FRANK STROZIER QUARTET

Chi. Oct. 13, 1960

Frank Strozier (as), Billy Wallace (p), Bill Lee (b), Vernell Fournier (dm).

Nine titles were recorded for Vee Jay, seven issued as "Cloudy And Cool":

| | | |
|---------|-------------------------------|---|
| 1654 | Day In, Day Out | Straight 1 to solo 2 choruses of 56 bars. Solo/straight 56 bars to coda. (F) |
| 1654-2 | Day In, Day Out alt. | As above. (F) |
| 1655 | Nice N' Easy | Straight 36 to solo 72 bars. Solo 8 bars. Long coda. (M) |
| 1655-3 | Nice 'N Easy alt. | As above. (M) |
| 1656 | Nice 'N Easy short version | Straight 36 bars to solo 46 bars. Long coda. (S) |
| 1659 | She | Straight 32 bars. Soli 8 and 8 bars. Solo 64 bars to straight 32 bars. (M) |
| 1659-3 | She alt. | As above. (M) |
| 1660 | Chris | Straight 1 to solo 3 choruses of 36 bars. Straight 36 bars. (F) |
| 1660-4 | Chris alt. | As above plus soli 4 and 4 bars. (F) |
| 1661 | No More | Soli 28 and 10 bars. (S) |
| 1661-11 | No More alt. | As above. (S) |
| 1662 | Stairway To The Stars | Solo 32 bars to long coda. (S) |
| | Cloudy And Cool | Straight 24 bars to solo 36 bars. Solo 12 bars to straight 12 bars. (S) |
| | Cloudy And Cool alt. | Straight 24 bars to solo 48 bars. Solo 24 bars to straight 12 bars. (S) |
| | Cloudy And Cool short version | Straight 24 bars to solo 24 bars. Solo 12 bars to fade out. (S) |

This is FS's first opportunity to stand completely on his own legs, with only the rhythm section to support him, an excellent one though, producing also fine piano soli (on a bad piano). After playing through the sessions included in this solography, I believe this narrowly manages to be the most exciting. Here you get everything from the very slowest and surging blues in Cloudy ..." and the beautiful "No More", and the delightful "Stairways ...", to as fast as possible in "Day In ..." and "Chris". Adding the relaxed and yet intense "Nice ..." and "She", and you have a magnificent alto sax session. Why didn't FS become better known?

MJT PLUS 3

Chi. Oct. 20, 1960

Personnel as May 12.

Seven titles were issued on Koch Jazz 8558, issued as "Message From Walton Street", not available.

FRANK STROZIER QUARTET/SEXTET

NYC. Sept. 12, 1961

Quartet: Frank Strozier (fl, as), Chris Anderson (p), Bill Lee (b), Walter Perkins (dm). Sextet: George Coleman (ts), Pat Patrick (fl, bar) added.

Eight titles were recorded for Jazzland, first four with quartet, last four with sextet, issued as "Long Night":

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| How Little We Know | Solo/straight 48 and 16 bars. (S/M) |
| The Man That Got Away | Solo/straight 64 bars to fade out. (S) |
| Happiness Is Just A Thing Called Joe | Straight 8 bars. Solo 36 bars. Solo 20 bars to coda. (S) |
| Pacemaker | Solo 4 choruses of 36 bars. 2 choruses 4/4 with (dm) to solo 36 bars to coda. (F) |
| Long Night | In ens. Solo 24 bars. (S) |
| The Need For Love | Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (FM) |
| The Crystal Ball | (fl/fl). (SM) |
| Just Think It Over | In ens. Solo 44 bars. (FM) |

Jazzland is no Vee Jay, although it has a better piano, and there is too much wool in the sound picture here, evident from the very first "How Little ...", although FS plays with great intensity. The same goes for "The Man ..." and "... Joe", FS in the background, comping in front, not very smart. However, on the fast "Pacemaker"

they put him up front, making everything much more interesting. Why it was decided to use two more saxes to create some unnecessary background arrangement on "... Night" and "... Love", and let them play a few choruses only on "... Over", who knows. Because there is really nothing wrong with FS's playing on this session.

FRANK STROZIER QUARTET

NYC. March 28, 1962

Frank Strozier (fl, as), Harold Mabern (p), Bill Lee (b), Al Dreares (dm).

Eight titles were recorded for Jazzland, issued as "March Of The Siamese Children":

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| March Of The Siamese Children | (fl). (FM) |
| Extension 27 | Straight 1 to solo 2 choruses of 54 bars. Solo/straight 54 bars. (F) |
| Something I Dreamed Last Night | Straight 56 bars. Solo 56 bars to straight 28 bars to long coda. (M) |
| Don't Follow The Crowd | Solo 64 bars to long coda. (S) |
| Our Waltz | Soli/straight. (FM) |
| Will I Forget? | (fl). (M) |
| Lap | Intro to solo 10 choruses of 12 bars. Solo 24 bars to coda. (FM) |
| Hey, Lee! | Straight. Solo 2 choruses of 36 bars. Straight with (p). (FM) |

Here you cannot avoid the slow but very intense "... The Crowd", this is FS at his very best in this tempo! Nor would you dislike an uptempo swinging blues on "Lap"! The remaining items are of high quality without being particularly noteworthy.

SAM JONES

NYC. Aug. 15, 1962

Frank Strozier (fl), Joe Zawinul (p), Sam Jones (cello), Ron Carter (b), Ben Riley (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Riverside, issued as "Down Home":

| | |
|---------------------------|------------|
| Down Home | (fl). (M) |
| 'Round Midnight | (fl). (S) |
| O. P. | (fl). (FM) |
| Falling In Love With Love | (fl). (FM) |

same date

Clark Terry, Blue Mitchell (tp), Jimmy Cleveland (tb), Frank Strozier (as), Jimmy Heath (ts), Pat Patrick (fl, bar), Wynton Kelly (p), Sam Jones, Ron Carter (b), Ben Riley (dm), Ernie Wilkins (arr, cond).

Two titles:

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Come Rain Or Come Shine | Solo with orch 40 bars. (M) |
| Strollin' | Solo 16 bars. (M) |

same date

Personnel as above except Snooky Young (tp) replaces Terry, Joe Zawinul (p) replaces Kelly, Ron Carter out.

Two titles, "Unit 7" and "Thumbstring", but no FS.

Two nice altosax soli without being particularly remarkable.

BOOKER ERVIN

Englewood Cliffs, NJ. June 19, 1963

Frank Strozier (as), Booker Ervin (ts), Horace Parlan (p), Butch Warren (b), Walter Perkins (dm).

Six titles were recorded for Prestige, issued as "Exultation":

| | | |
|------|----------------|---------------------------------|
| 3942 | Mooche Mooche | Solo 5 choruses of 24 bars. (F) |
| 3943 | Tune In | Solo 48 bars. (SM) |
| 3944 | Mour | Solo 32 bars. (FM) |
| 3945 | Black And Blue | Solo 16 bars. (S) |
| 3946 | Just In Time | Solo 64 bars. (FM) |

3947 No Man's Land Solo 32 bars. (M)

Very fine session, the two sax players have both an unusual intensity in their playing and seems to work well together here. Perfection variation in tempi, from the fast "Mooche ...", taken without problems to a very slow and emotional "... Blue", and inbetween four exciting solo contributions, of which "Tune ..." and "... Time" are particularly fascinating.

ROY HAYNES QUARTET NYC. Sept. 10, 1963

Frank Strozier (fl, as), Ronnie Matthews (p), Larry Ridley (b), Roy Haynes (dm).
Five titles were recorded for New Jazz, issued as "Cymbalism":

3962 Modette (fl). (F)

3963 La Palomeinding (fl). (S)

3964 I'm Getting Sentimental Over You Straight 36 bars. Solo
3 choruses of 36 bars to
straight and long coda. (FM)

3965 Go 'N' Git It Straight. Solo 32 bars. (M)

3966 Medley: Cymbalism/Hag/Oleo Solo 8 bars. Soli 14, 1 and 1
of 12 bars. Straight 24 bars. (F).
Solo 36 bars. 36 bars 6/6 with (dm).
Straight 12 bars to long coda. (M).
Straight 16+8 bars, solo on bridge. (F)

Very exciting to have FS featured on a standard number like "... Sentimental..."! The highlight is nevertheless the great eleven minutes long 'medley' with the first half in fast tempo and then follows a medium section, while the "Oleo" at the end seems to be only a brief theme. FS and Haynes are great here, so this is an item to be noted! As a curious detail; cannot remember before to have heard a chase on a blues where they split 6/6!

ROY HAYNES QUARTET NYC. May 1964

Frank Strozier (fl, as), Sam Dockery (p), Larry Ridley (b), Roy Haynes (dm).
Ten titles were recorded for Pacific Jazz, issued as "People":

Invitation Soli/straight 48 and 96 bars. (FM)

The Party's Over (fl). (FM)

What Kind Of Fool Am I? Solo/straight 3 choruses of 32 bars.
Solo 40 bars to fade out. (M)

People Intro to solo 40 bars to coda. (S)

Softly As In A Morning Sunrise Straight 32 bars to solo 64 bars.
64 bars 8/8 with (dm).
Straight 36 bars to coda. (F)

Wives And Lovers (fl). (M)

Alone Together Intro 16 bars to solo 3 choruses of
40 bars. Solo 28 bars to coda. (F)

Jamaica Farewell Soli/straight 8, 8, 24, 8 and 8 bars. (M)

A Shanty In Old Shanty Town (fl). (M)

Mr. Lucky Straight 32 bars to solo 64 bars.
Solo/straight 48 bars. (FM)

A fine session with a strong leader, although FS does not dig so deep here, solo/straight is commonly used. Note the beautiful ballad "People". However uptempo makes the most impression, both "Softly ..." and "Alone ..." show how FS easily seems to treat such challenges.

CHET BAKER SEXTET NYC. Jan. 14, 1965

Chet Baker (flhm), Frank Strozier (fl, as), Phil Urso (ts), Hal Galper (p), Michael Fleming (b), Charles Rice (dm).

Five titles were recorded for Limelight/EmArcy, issued as "Baby Breeze", no FS on 34085 "Baby Breeze", (fl) in ensemble only on 34088 "One With One", but:

34084 Pamela's Passion Solo 64 bars. (F)

34086 This Is The Thing Solo 64 bars. (F)

34087 Comin' Down Solo 32 bars. (FM)

One quality session among many. Chet and Frank do not necessarily have the same intensity, and compared to the Haynes sessions, the rhythm is quite passive here, but there are three good alto sax soli.

SHELLY MANNE BIGBAND

Hollywood, Feb. 24/25, 1965

Bigband personnel including Frank Strozier (as).

Seven titles were recorded for Capitol, issued as "Manne – That's Gershwin", two have FS:

| | | |
|-------|------------|--|
| 53416 | Mine | Duet with (tp) 30 bars to solo 40 bars. Duet with (tp) to coda. (M) |
| 53421 | Summertime | 2:33. (S/F) |

These are concertos and have exciting music. "Summertime" has a quite original arrangement with tempo extremes.

SHELLY MANNE QUINTET

Hollywood, Feb. 26, 1965

Conte Candoli (tp), Frank Strozier (as), Russ Freeman (p), Monty Budwig (b), Shelly Manne (dm).

Three titles were recorded for Capitol, issued as "Manne – That's Gershwin!":

| | | |
|-------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 53424 | How Long Has This Been Going On? | Solo 40 bars. (M) |
| 53425 | Love Is Here To Stay | Straight 16 bars. (FM) |
| 53426 | The Man I Love | Soli 32 and 8 bars. (FM) |

One should in general have gotten much more out of this session. FS seems not to have a good grasp on "How Long ...", and while "The Man ..." is better, the way of chopping up the tune to give FS the last half of a chorus, does not appeal to me.

The solography stops here for the moment, but there are good reasons for prolonging it!!

... 000 ...