

The

ALTOSAX

of

HALLIE DISMUKES

Solographer: Jan Evensmo
Last update: April 8, 2012

Born: Pittsburgh, Kansas, 1910
Died: No info

Introduction:

The recordings of Todd Rhodes from 1947 and onwards are treasures, so original and exciting, a modern group so different from anything else. The saxes are all excellent soloists, and when I heard the altosax for the first time, I almost flipped backwards, such a beautiful sound and ideas!! One of the great unknowns, but not even 'legendary'!!

History:

Named 'Hallie' after Halley's comet!! Birthdate is related to the comet's appearance in 1910. Known for his participation in the Todd Rhodes orchestra in Detroit. Quoting: Lars Bjørn with Jim Gallert: "Before Motown – "A History of Jazz in Detroit": "Todd Rhodes had some standout musicians, like alto saxophonist Hallie Dismukes, whose wailing solos added much to Rhodes' records. His style reflects his love of Johnny Hodges and Charlie Parker. He had perfect pitch and played piano well enough to sub for Rhodes on occasion. The best-known soloist to work with Rhodes was saxophonist Ted Buckner, who played baritone sax alongside Hallie Dismukes. Dismukes reputation was such that although Buckner was better known on the alto, Rhodes appreciated the former's playing and asked Buckner to take up the baritone, which he handled with the same ease and assurance as the smaller saxophone. The two occasionally duetted on alto sax and created wild and spontaneous energy that inspired the band and the audience".

HALLIE DISMUKES SOLOGRAPHY

TODD RHODES & HIS SEPTET**Detroit, Feb. 28, 1947**

Howard Thompson (tp, cnt), Hallie Dismukes (as), Louis Barnett (cl, ts), George Favors (bar), Todd Rhodes (p, ldr), Walter Bragg (b), Huestell Talley (dm). Band vocals.

Private recordings, "Sunny Side Of The Street" and "Squeeze Me", not available.

Detroit, March 4, 1947

Same. Private recordings, "Intermission Riff" and "Flying Disc", not available.

TODD RHODES & HIS SEPTET**Detroit, July 1947**

Personnel as above, except Joe Williams (b) replaces Bragg.

Four titles were recorded for Vitacoustic/Sensation/King:

Dance Of The Redskins	Solo with ens 80 bars. (FM)
Dance Of The Redskins (alt.)	As above. (FM)
Blue Sensation	Feature number for altosax. (S)
Bell Boy Boogie	Solo with ens 36 bars. (M)
Flying Disc	Solo 16+8 bars, orch on bridge. (FM)

The first commercial recording session only indicates HD's talents. "Dance ..." features him extensively but in a kind of unswinging concerto, and even two takes cannot make it very interesting. "Bell Boy ..." has some uptempo blues, but with a very noisy background. Only when coming to "... Disc", we get some idea of a personality. Finally, "Blue Sensation", sweet and heavily arranged with orchestra, a most beautiful and personal altosax sound. The amount of improvisation seems to be slight, but HD plays with such conviction, that at least this listener is confident that we have met a great altosax performer here.

TODD RHODES & HIS ORCHESTRA**Cincinnati, Oct. 15/16, 1947**

Same. Louie Saunders (vo) added.

Twenty titles were recorded for Sensation, seven have HD:

1885	I Love You Truly	Solo/straight 32 bars. (M)
1886	Annie Laurie	Solo 18 bars. Solo with orch 8 bars to coda. (M)
1890	Toddlin' Boogie	Solo 5 choruses of 12 bars. (M)
1894	Blues For The Red Boy	Solo with orch 24 bars to coda. (S)

Several very interesting altosax contributions here. First and foremost HD swings "Toddlin' ..." together with his fellow saxophonists. Here he really shows his professionalism, and his style is easily identifiable, nobody plays like him! Then a strong slow blues on "... Red Boy", singing brilliantly with echo, only a highly recognized musician will have a recording opportunity like this! "... Truly" is also quite impressive. On "Annie ..." we have the chance for once to hear him play a familiar tune, also without orchestral background, and it makes me convinced he could do very exciting things in the right circumstances.

TODD RHODES & HIS ORCHESTRA**Cincinnati, Nov. 1947**

Same. Four titles were recorded for Sensation, three have HD:

1901	She Don't Love Me Anymore	Solo 4 bars. (S)
1935	That Ain't Right	Obbligato parts. (SM)
1937	Fool For You	Soli 8 and 8 bars. (M)

Nice, clean and convincing soli on "Fool ..." and "... Anymore".

TODD RHODES & HIS TODDLERS**Cincinnati, Jan. 25, 1949**

Same/similar.

Six titles were recorded for Sensation, three have HD:

7095	Teardrops	Straight 16 and 8 bars to long coda. (S)
7097	Red Boy At The Mardi Gras	Solo 12 bars. (S)
7098	Midnight Session	Soli 8, 4, 4 and 4 bars. (M)

HD seems to thrive with slow and intense ballads on an orchestral background, and "Teardrops" is a beautiful example. On "... Mardi Gras" however, he has only the piano behind him, and this one of my favourite HD items, very simple and yet very personal! Note also "Midnight ..." with brief but swinging soli.

TODD RHODES & HIS TODDLERS **Detroit, 1949/50**

Same/similar, sources differ between Louis Barnett and Cranford Wright (ts). Kitty Stevenson (vo).

Eight titles were recorded for Sensation, five have HD:

8023	Rhapsody In Blue Pt 1	Straight 4 bars. (S)
8024	Rhapsody In Blue Pt 2	Solo 10 bars. (S)
8025	I'm Just A Fool In Love	Solo 8 bars. (M)
8025-alt.	I'm Just A Fool In Love	As above. (M)
8026	Comin' Home	32 bars 8/8 to 32 bars 4/4 with (ts). Solo 8 bars. (FM)
8026-alt.	Comin' Home	As above. (FM)
8033	Make It Good	Straight intro. (S)

Here comes my favourite HD item, "Comin' Home" with two takes!! In an extended chase with tenorsax, he really shows everything he has got, first rate technique, swinging strongly and with a singing tone that is quite unique. There are interesting differences between the two versions, the originally issued one is the better. Also "... In Love" shows that HD could improvise his soli, if you were in doubt! Note also his nice introduction to the pt 2 of "... Blue".

TODD RHODES & HIS TODDLERS **Cincinnati (or Detroit), June 1950**

Same/similar with Emmitt Slay (g, vo-8046,47) added.

Four titles were recorded for Sensation, one has HD:

8045	Brenda	Straight with (p) 4 bars. (S)
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TODD RHODES & HIS ORCHESTRA **Cincinnati, May 24, 1951**

Howard Thompson (tp), Hallie Dismukes (as), Charles "Lefty" Edwards (ts), Ted Buckner (bar), Todd Rhodes (p), Joe Williams (b), Huestell Tally (dm), Kitty Stevenson (vo-9046,48).

Four titles were recorded for King, two have HD:

9046	I Shouldn't Cry But I Do	Straight 8 and 2 bars. (S)
9047	Red Boy Is Back	Soli with ens 12 and 12 bars. (S)

Not much altosax jazz on "... But I Do" but note his beautiful, penetrating sound. More interesting is "... Is Back", a variation on the "... Mardi Gras" two years earlier, same intensity.

WYNONIE HARRIS & HIS ALL STARS **Cincinnati, July 2, 1951**

Howard Thompson (tp), Ted Buckner, Hallie Dismukes (as), Charles "Lefty" Edwards (ts), Todd Rhodes (p), Joe Williams (b), Bill Benjamin (dm), Wynonie Harris (vo).

Four titles were recorded for King, one has altosax:

8039	Luscious Woman	Intro 4 bars to obbligato all through, 4 choruses of 12 bars. (S)
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This item was my first encounter with HD. Wynonie Harris was already one of my favourite jazz/blues vocalists (still is), and here he has a fine altosax player, slightly echoed, behind him. Not everything seems to be completely improvised, the stint where the HD mocks the lyrics "pet me pet me baby, like a mother does her baby child" "is too good to be true, but that does not matter the least, this is great!!

TODD RHODES & HIS ORCHESTRA **Cincinnati, July 6, 1951**

Howard Thompson (tp), Hallie Dismukes (as), Charles "Lefty" Edwards (ts), Ted Buckner (bar), Todd Rhodes (p), Joe Williams (b), Bill Benjamin (dm), Connie Allen (vo-9051,52).

Four titles were recorded for King, two have HD:

9049	Evening Breeze	Straight. (S)
9051-2	Your Daddy's Doggin' Around	Solo/straight with (vo-ens) and orch 24 and 32 bars. (M)

The altosax on "Evening ..." is very straight, sweet and echoed and will probably not ignite even the most enthusiastic HD followers. "Your Daddy's ..." however has lots of swinging altosax behind the band vocal, with a fine and groovy tenorsax in the middle.

DAVE BARTHOLOMEW

Cincinnati, Aug. 5, 1951

Dave Bartholomew (tp, vo), Willie Wells (tp), Hallie Dismukes (as), Charles "Lefty" Edwards (ts), Ted Buckner (bar), Todd Rhodes (p), Willie Gaddy (g), Joe Williams (b), Bill Benjamin (dm).

Five titles were recorded for King, two have HD:

9071-1	Sweet Home Blues	Intro 4 bars. (S)
9072-1	Bad Habit	Solo 12 bars. (S)

Cincinnati, Aug. 16, 1951

Same except John Faire (g) replaces Gaddy. Four titles, two have HD:

9081-1	High Flying Woman	Intro 4 bars to obbligato 36 bars. (S)
9082-1	I'll Never Be The Same	Solo 12 bars. (S)

One of HD's most memorable performances is to be found on "... Woman". After a sweet intro, he plays elaborate and delightful background through the record, beautiful. Also very nice slow blues on "... Habit" and "... Same".

WYNONIE HARRIS & HIS ALL STARS

Cincinnati, Jan. 8, 1952

Willie Wells (tp), Hallie Dismukes (as), Ted Buckner (as, bar), Louis Stephens (ts), Todd Rhodes (p), Joe Williams (b), Bill Benjamin (dm).

Three titles were recorded for King, one has altosax:

9098	Married Woman, Stay Married	Intro 2 bars. Solo with ens 16 bars to obbligato 48 and 32 bars. (M)
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The second and last Wynonie/Hallie cooperation has also some excellent altosax playing, although the tune itself has not the sovereign impertinence of "... Woman" above.

**LONNIE JOHNSON WITH
TODD RHODES' BAND**

Cincinnati, June 3, 1952

Charlie Hooks (tp), Hallie Dismukes (as), Louis Stephens (ts), Ted Buckner (bar), Todd Rhodes (p), Joe Williams (b), Bill Benjamin (dm), Lonnie Johnson (g, vo).

Four titles were recorded for King, one has HD:

9145-4	Just Another Day	Straight intro 4 bars. Obbligato parts. Solo 8 bars. Coda. (S)
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Only one out of four items features HD's altosax, but to compensate, this one is a very fine example, many small but nice parts.

TODD RHODES & HIS ORCHESTRA

Cincinnati, July 1, 1952

Personnel same/similar to above. LaVern Baker (vo-9152,55).

Four titles were recorded for King, three have HD:

9152	Trying	Intro 2 bars. (S)
9153-1	Blue Autumn	Straight 16 and 12 bars. (S)
9154-1	Snuff Dipper	Solo with ens 24 bars. (M)

Cincinnati, Oct. 14, 1952

Similar. LaVern Baker (vo). Four titles, two have HD:

9193-1	Lost Child	Obbligato 16 and 4 bars. (S)
9195-1	Hog Maw And Cabbage Slaw	Solo with ens 24 bars. (M)

Strong soli on "... Cabbage Slaw" with band riffing behind, and on "... Dipper". Some nice parts behind Baker on "... Child" should also be noted. "Blue ..." is straight and sweet, HD is obviously assigned to such items, nice but some improvisation would have been better.

TODD RHODES & HIS ORCHESTRA

Cincinnati, June 20, 1953

Charlie Hooks (tp), Hallie Dismukes (as), Louis Stephens (ts), Robert Fort (bar), Todd Rhodes (p), Joe Williams (b), George DeHart (dm), Pinnocchio James, Sadie Madison (vo-9301), unknown (vo-9302).

Four titles were recorded for King, but no HD.

Cincinnati, July 16, 1954

Same except Harold Wallace (bar) replaces Fort.
 Four titles were recorded for King, three have HD:

9473-1	Silver Sunset	Solo/straight 16 and 8 bars to coda. (S)
9474-1	Specks	Straight 12 and 12 bars. (M)
9475-1	Echoes	Solo/straight 16 and 8 bars to coda. (S)

“Silver ...” and “Echoes” are rather similar to “Blue Autumn above, so much more could have been done with these titles. And we have already arrived at the end of Hallie Dismukes’ recorded jazz career. I have a feeling a great altosax player has gone almost unnoticed through jazz history. Maybe this solography can open a few ears!?”

No further recording sessions.

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