

**The**  
**PIANO**  
**of**  
**HERMAN CHITTISON**

Born: Flemingsburg, Kentucky, 1909  
 Died: Cleveland, Ohio, March 8, 1967

*Introduction:*

Herman Chittison did not participate in the numerous, fantastic recording sessions of the 30s and 40s with groups consisting of the most famous of jazz musicians. Consequently he was not identified as a great piano player during those early collecting days of Oslo Jazz Circle. Only much later, and thanks to IAJRC for producing the fine CD, did I understand how important, personal and swinging Herman Chittison was!

*History:*

Began playing at the age of eight, later studied at the Waldron Boys' School in Nashville, Tennessee, brief spell at the Kentucky State College (1927), left to play with the 'Kentucky Derbies' at the Lexington State Fair. Worked with Zack Whyte from 1928 until 1931, then toured as accompanist for comedian Stepin' Fetchit, later toured with Adelaide Hall and Ethel Waters, also did free-lance recordings with Clarence Williams. Joined Willie Lewis in New York (spring 1934) and then sailed to Europe with Lewis. Worked on and off with Lewis in Europe from 1934 until 1938, also toured with Louis Armstrong (1934), led own band and worked in Egypt accompanying vocaliste Arita Day (Dao) early in 1935. Left Lewis late in 1938 and worked with several ex-Lewis sidemen (Bill Coleman, Joe Haymes, etc.) in Egypt as 'The Harlem Rhytmakers'. Returned to New York in spring 1940, formed own trio, also toured again with Stepin' Fetchit in the autumn of 1940. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s led own trio for many New York residencies: The Blue Angel, Le Ruban Bleu, Bobili Club, etc., etc., also did regular weekly broadcasts for seven years in the C.B.S. radio series 'Casey - Crime Photographer'. Continued to play regularly in the early 1960s, residencies in Boston, New York, etc., also recorded LPs in 1962 and 1964. Worked mainly in Cleveland during the last two years of his life; he died of lung cancer (ref. John Chilton: 'Who's Who Of Jazz?').

*Message:*

There are quite many missing items from his post-war period, can anyone help? Note also that I have omitted several unissued recording sessions mentioned in Tom Lord's discography. If they appear, they will be included. Postscript of April 25, 2019: I am very grateful to James M. Doran who sent me his excellent book: Herman Chittison: A Bio-Discography (IAJRC: Monograph 2), and relevant session information from his book has been included below.

## HERMAN CHITTISON SOLOGRAPHY

**ZACH WHYTE'S****CHOCOLATE BEAU BRUMMELS****Richmond, Ind., Jan. 22, 1929**

Zack Whyte (bjo, dir), Sy Oliver, Bubber Whyte, Henry Savage (tp), Floyd Brady (tb), Earl Tribble, Ben Richardson, Clarence Paige (as), Al Sears (ts, bar), Heman Chittison (p), Montgomery Morrison (tu), William Benton(dm).

One title was recorded for Gennett:

14717-A Mandy Solo 2 bars. (M)

**Richmond, Ind., Feb. 11, 1929**

Same. Two titles were recorded, one issued:

14788 Hum All Your Troubles Away Very faint background. (F)

**Richmond, Ind., Feb. 26, 1929**

Same. Two titles:

14836-B? It's Tight Like That Break. Solo 12 bars. (FM)

14836-? It's Tight Like That As above. (FM)

14837-? West End Blues Intro 4 bars. (S)

14837-B? West End Blues As above. (S)

14837-A? West End Blues As above. (S)

**Richmond, Ind., Dec. 19, 1929**

Same except Fred Jackson (ts) replaces Sears, Charlie Anderson (bjo) replaces Whyte, Herman Chittison (p, cel?).

Four titles, two issued:

16005-A Good Feelin' Blues Intro. Solo 14 bars. (SM)

16006 Wailin' Blues Break. (M)

These early recordings give just a glimpse of HC's capabilities. Particularly the two takes of "... That" and his elegant playing on "Good Feelin' ..." should be noted.

**CLARENCE WILLIAMS' NOVELTY BAND****NYC. May 22, 1930**

Cecil Scott (cl), Herman Chittison (p), Ikey Robinson (bjo), Clarence Williams (jug, vo).

Two titles were recorded for Okeh:

404034-A He Wouldn't Stop Doin' It Solo 12 bars. (SM)

404035-B You're Bound To Look LAMWYGO Solo 16 bars. (FM)

Two fine piano soli here! The style is based upon solid, fat chords, this is an artist with confidence!

**ZACH WHYTE'S****CHOCOLATE BEAU BRUMMELS****Richmond, Ind., Nov. 12, 1931**

Personnel unlikely to include Herman Chittison (p).

Three titles were recorded for Gennett, rejected.

**IVORY CHITTISON & BANJO JOE****NYC. July 17, 1933**

Herman Chittison (p), Ikey Robinson (g, vo).

Two titles were recorded for Vocalion:

13553-1 Unlucky Blues Acc. (vo). (S)

13554-1 My Four Reasons Acc. (g). Acc. (vo). Solo 32 bars. (F)

These items should not be overlooked! The vocal is pretty vulgar but the intensity is attractive. Fine elaborate accompaniment on "Unlucky ...", and a swinging solo on "... Reasons".

**WILLIAMS' JUG BAND****NYC. Aug. 7, 1933**

Cecil Scott (cl), Herman Chittison, Willie "The Lion" Smith (p), Ikey Robinson (bjo, vo), Clarence Williams (jug, vo), Willie Williams (wbd), Clarence Todd (kazoo, vo), Eva Taylor (vo).

Six titles were recorded for Columbia, all have piano backing vocals (not detailed) and four-handed piano playing:

152463-2	Shim Sham Shimmy Dance	Duet with (p) 18 bars. (F)
152464-2	Organ Grinder Blues	Duet with (p) 8 bars. (S)
152465-2	Chizzlin' Sam	Duet with (p) 16 bars. (FM)
152466-2	High Society	As below? ( )
152466-3	High Society	Duet with (p) 16 bars. (F)
152467-2	Mister, Will You Serenade?	Duet with (p) 8 bars. (M)
152468-2	You Ain't Too Old	Duet with (p) 34 bars. (FM)

Music to warm your heart and make your old legs moving! Six highly enjoyable items as such, although the piano contents does not make history, the two brilliant piano players play four-handed all the time, and we can get no clear impression of their capabilities, except ability to swing of course. For a highlight try "... Too Old", if you dare!

**HERMAN CHITTISON** **Paris, May 22, 1934**

Herman Chittison (p-solo). Date also given as May 6.

Six titles were recorded for French Brunswick, four issued:

1224	Honeysuckle Rose	Intro 8 bars to solo 5 choruses of 32 bars to 8 bars and coda. (F)
1227	Harlem Rhythm Dance	2:21. (F)
1228	Nagasaki	Intro 8 bars to solo 8 choruses of 32 bars to 8 bars and coda. (F)
1229	You Gave Me Everything But Love	3:06. (S/FM)

**Paris, June 2, 1934**

Same. Six titles:

1244	Swingin'	3:10. (F)
1245	Stormy Weather	Intro 8 bars to solo 4 choruses of 32 bars to coda. (FM)
1246	St. Louis Blues	3:20. (FM)
1247	You'll Be My Lover	3:05. (FM)
1248	Red Jill Rag	3:08. (FM)
1249	Bugle Call Rag	2:22. (F)

**Paris, July 9, 1934**

Same. One title:

1326	Trees	3:08. (S/FM)
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It is Europe that gives HC his real breakthrough! These eleven items present jazz piano of the highest quality th middle thirties could muster. You feel this is a physically big man (was he?) with big hands built for dynamic performance. His concept is a very strong left hand with a flashing full right hand together making the best of stride piano. The technique is superb, and it seems that he prefers the fast tempo. There is no place for tentative and soft emotions here, nor the growing elegance of Teddy Wilson in the same time period; he takes it all out, as evident on the first three titles. The remaining titles are all excellent swingers, and for a particular highlight, "... My Lover" should perfect!

**ARITA DAY**

**Paris, August 1934**

Herman Chittison (p), Arita Day (vo).

Two titles were recorded for Brunswick:

1384	Heat Wave	2:40. (F)
1385	Miss Otis Regrets	2:57. (SM)

The two of them share the blowing space amiably, and although there are better vocalists around, the cooperation works well, and there is fine piano playing here. Dig the nice intro on "... Regrets".

**LOUIS ARMSTRONG & HIS ORCHESTRA**

**Paris, Oct. 1934**

Louis Armstrong (tp, vo), Jack Hamilton, Leslie Thompson (tp), Lionel Guimaraes (tb), Pete Duconge (cl, as), Henry Tyree (as), Alfred Pratt (ts), Herman Chittison (p),

Maceo Jefferson (g), German Arago (b), Oliver Tines (dm).  
Six titles were recorded for French Brunswick:

1478	St. Louis Blues	Acc. (vo). Solo 12 bars with (vo)-comments. (F)
1479	Tiger Rag	Solo 32 bars. (F)
1480	Will You, Won't You Be My Baby?	Solo with (vo)-comments 8 bars. Break. (F)
1481/82	On The Sunny Side Of The Street	In ens. Acc. (vo). Solo 8 bars. In ens. (SM)
1483	St. Louis Blues	As 1478. (F)
1484	Song Of The Vipers	No (p). (M)

A historical session well worth spending time with! However, there are not many opportunities for HC here, just occasionally a few bars, most noteworthy is his solo (dig this one!) and his delicate accompaniment on "... The Street".

**WILLIE LEWIS & HIS ORCHESTRA** **Paris, April 23, 1935**  
Personnel including Herman Chittison (p).  
Two titles were recorded for Pathe:

1983-1	Nagasaki	No (p). (FM)
1984-1	I Can't Dance	No (p). (F)

If there is a piano on this session, it is anyway too weakly recorded to be audible.

**WILLIE LEWIS & HIS ORCHESTRA** **Paris, Jan. 17, 1936**  
Benny Carter (tp, as), Alex Renard (tp), Bobby Martin (tp, vo-2452), George Johnson (as), Willie Lewis (as, vo-2450, dir), Joe Hayman, Coco Kiehn (ts), Herman Chittison (p, cel-2453), John Mitchell (g), Louis Vola (b), Ted Fields (dm), June Cole (vo-2451).  
Six titles were recorded for Pathe:

2450	I've Got A Feeling You're Foolin'	Break. (M)
2451	Stay Out Of Love	Acc. (vo). Solo 8 bars. (M)
2452	Rhythm Is Our Business	Break. Acc. (vo). Break. (F)
2453	Just A Mood	(cel)-Intro 4 bars. (p)-Solo 16 bars. (cel)-Solo 4 bars. (S)
2454	All Of Me	Intro 2 bars. Solo 32 bars. (M)
2455	Star Dust	Break. (SM)

There is much nice to be said about the Willie Lewis sessions, but the emphasis is not only on jazz but pleasing the dancing public. This is however one of the best ones, due to Benny Carter's heavy presence. HC does not get much attention and seems to take it easy. His vocalbacking on "Stay ..." together with BC's trumpet seems more interesting than the solo. Colourful backing on "... Business". His rhapsodical soli on "... Mood" are "All ..." are however examples of modest jazz contents.

**BILL COLEMAN** **Paris, Jan. 24, 1936**  
Bill Coleman (tp), Herman Chittison (p), Eugene d'Hellemmes (b).  
Two titles were recorded for Ultraphone:

77624	What's The Reason?	Intro 4 bars. Acc. (tp). Solo 32 bars. Acc. (tp). (FM)
77625	Georgia On My Mind	Acc. (tp). Solo 16 bars. Acc. (tp). (SM). Break to acc. (tp). (F)

**Paris, Jan. 31, 1936**

Same. Two titles were recorded for HMV:

849-1	I'm In The Mood For Love	Acc. (tp). Solo 32 bars. Acc. (tp). (M)
850-1	After You've Gone	Acc. (tp). Solo 4+40 bars. Acc. (tp). (F)

HC is an excellent companion to the great trumpeter Bill Coleman, and these four items are magnificent! There is solo space for both, and 'the ball' goes back and forth between them. Listen to how HC comps BC on "... My Mind" and then goes into a really subtle solo, advanced for the times. His contributions on "... Gone" and "... Reason?" are highly impressing, and on "... Love" he tells us that one does not have to be hot and have a rhythm section behind you to play swing jazz of the best quality

**JOAN WARNER VOCAL ACC. BY WILLIE LEWIS & HIS ORCHESTRA Paris, April 17, 1936**

Personnel as April 28 below. Note however with reference to the Bill Coleman solography, that the two first items have been believed not to be by Willie Lewis. Can anyone explain?

Four titles were recorded for Pathe:

2611-1	Etre Parisienne	Acc. (vo). (M)
2612-1	Le Coo-Coo-Coo	Acc. (vo). (FM)
2613-1	Magie De La Dance	Acc. (vo). Solo 8 bars. (SM)
2614-1	Mon Proces	Acc. (vo). (M)

This is a vocal session and do not expect too much, but there is one nice piano solo leading up to magnificent Bill Coleman.

**WILLIE LEWIS & HIS ORCHESTRA Paris, April 28, 1936**

Bill Coleman, Bobby Martin (tp), Billy Burns (tb), Willie Lewis (as, vo-2650), George Johnson (as), Joe Hayman (as, ts, bar), Frank Goudie (cl, ts), Heman Chittison (p, cel-2650), John Mitchell (g), Louis Vola (b), Ted Fields (dm), Adelaide Hall (vo-2649,52), Alice Mann (vo-2651).

Two titles were recorded for Pathe:

2630-1	Stompin' At The Savoy	Solo 8 bars. (M)
2631-1	Christopher Columbus	Solo with orch 32 bars. (FM)

**Paris, May 5, 1936**

Same. Four titles:

2649-1	I'm Shooting High	Acc. (vo-AH). Solo 24 bars. (FM)
2650-1	Lost	(cel)-In orch. Acc. (vo-WL). (M)
2651-1	Alone	Acc. (vo-AM). (SM)
2652-1	Say You're Mine	Acc. (vo-AH). (M)

One might expect some really groovy piano playing, but the results are in fact quite ordinary, HC seems to take his work with the Willie Lewis orchestra not too chllenging. The solo on "... High" is the most interesting here, but there is some solid backing on "Lost".

**WILLIE LEWIS & HIS ORCHESTRA Paris, Oct. 15, 1936**

Personnel as April 28 except Arthur Briggs (tp) replaces Martin.

Six titles were recorded for Pathe:

2900-1	Au Rhythme Du Jazz Pt 1	(p) included.
2901-1	Au Rhythme Du Jazz Pt 2	(p) included.
2902-1	Sing, Sing Sing	Acc. (vo) 40 bars. (FM)
2903-1	Knock, Knock, Who's There?	Break. Acc. (vo) 32 bars. (FM)
2904-1	Sweet Sue, Just You	Intro 4 bars. Solo 32 bars. (F)
2905-1	Organ Grinder's Swing	Acc. only. (M)

**Paris, Nov. 12, 1936**

Similar. Willie Lewis (vo-2965,66), Jean Tranchant (vo-2967,68).

Four titles:

2965-1	On Your Toes	In orch. Solo 32 bars. (FM)
2966-1	There's A Small Hotel	(cel)-In orch. Acc. (vo). Solo 24 bars. (M)
2967	Le Soleil S'en Fut	Acc. (vo). (M/F)
2968	Love	Acc. (vo). Break. (SM)

Several interesting details here. A real piano performance on “Sweet Sue ...” but for some reason, the whole band lays off, letting him take it ‘real solo’. Fine solo also on “... Toes”. On “... Hotel” his playing is somewhat unusual, playing chords all the way through. Notable background on “... Fut”.

**WILLIE LEWIS & HIS ORCHESTRA** **Paris, Oct. 2, 1937**

Personnel probably similar to below.

Poste Parisien broadcast from Chez Florence, one title:

Chinatown, My Chinatown Solo 32 bars. (F)

**same date**

Herman Chittison solo (p). One title:

I Got Rhythm 2:20. (F)

Valuable discoveries; a fine piano solo with the bigband and four inventive choruses on “... Rhythm”.

**WILLIE LEWIS & HIS ORCHESTRA** **Paris, Oct. 18, 1937**

Personnel as Oct. 15, 1936 except Jacques Butler (tp) added, Wilson Myers (b) replaces Vola and George Johnson out.

Six titles were recorded for Pathe:

3474-1 Ol’ Man River Acc. only. (FM)

3475-1 Swing, Brother, Swing With orch. Acc. (vo-WL). (FM)

3476-1 Swing Time With orch. (FM)

3477 Doin’ The New Low-Down Intro 8 bars. With orch.  
Solo 4 choruses of 32 bars ((dm)  
on last bridge) to long coda. (F)

3478 Swingin’ For A Swiss Miss With orch. Solo 16 bars. (FM)

3479-1 Basin Street Blues Acc. (vo-WL). With orch. (SM)

Not much HC here with one grand exception, he is the featured soloist on “... Low-Down”, thus ample opportunities to study his style of stride! Also a fine but brief solo on “... Swiss Miss”.

**WILLIE LEWIS & HIS ORCHESTRA** **Hilversum, May 4, 1938**

Personnel as Oct. 18, 1937.

Six titles were recorded for Dutch Panachord:

482-1 The Maid’s Night Off No (p)

483-2 Who’s Sorry Now? Solo 14 bars. (M)

484-1 Swinging At The Chez Florence Solo 4 bars. (M)

484-2 Swinging At The Chez Florence As above? ( )

485-3 Coquette Soli 8 and 16 bars. (M)

486-2 Memphis Blues Intro. Acc. (vo-duet). (SM)

487-1 A Shanty In Old Shanty Town Intro 8 bars to solo 32 bars.  
Acc. (vo). (F)

487-2 A Shanty In Old Shanty Town As above. (F)

This time in Holland, there are some good examples of HC’s playing, though obviously he does not exert himself too much, as in “... Now?” and “Coquette”, there is much cocktail piano here. He introduces “... Shanty Town” with intro and a full chorus, but never manages to swing it properly. The alternate take has the necessary differences!

**EDDIE BRUNNER & HIS ORCHESTRA** **Paris, June 13, 1938**

Bill Coleman (tp), Eddie Brunner (cl, ts), Alex Combelle, Noel Chiboust (ts), Herman Chittison (p), Oscar Aleman (g), Roger Grasset (b), Tommy Benford (dm). Five titles were recorded for Swing:

27-1 In A Little Spanish Town Solo 8 bars. With orch. (M)

28-1 I Double Dare You Solo 36 bars. (FM)

29-1 Bagatelle Acc. only. (M)

- 30-1 Montmartre Blues Intro 4 bars. Solo 24 bars. (FM)  
 31-2 Margie Intro 4 bars to solo 32 bars. (F)

A very exciting session with lots of jazz greats! HC is in very good shape here, playing more 'jazzy' than in general with Willie Lewis. His soli are harmonically exciting in a subtle way, take "... Dare You" and "Margie" as good examples.

**HERMAN CHITTISON** **Paris, June 13, 1938**  
 Herman Chittison (p-solo).  
 Five titles were recorded for Swing:

- 35-1 Medley: My Last Affair / No More Tears 3:09. (FM)  
 36-1 I'm Putting All My Eggs In One Basket 2:38. (FM/F)  
 37-1/2 My Own Blues Solo 7 choruses of 12 bars. (M)  
 38-1 My Melancholy Baby Intro 8 bars to solo 3 choruses of 32 bars to coda. (M)  
 39-1 They Can't Take That AFM Intro 4 bars to solo 3 choruses of 36 bars to coda. (M)

Although the first HC solo sessions obviously were artistic successes, it took almost four years to give him another opportunity. He uses it well, creating four memorable sides. His style is possibly slightly simplified, but also with sparkling runs giving a touch of Tatum, which he admired. His physical strength again comes clearly through, and his ability and creativity to construct fine variations is evident, take "... Baby" and "... Take That ..." as excellent examples. Note: Only one take exists of "My Own Blues", contrary to discographical information.

**GRETA KELLER** **Paris, Sept. 27, 1938**  
 Bill Coleman (tp), Joe Hayman (cl), Herman Chittison (p), John Mitchell (g), Wilson Myers (b), Tommy Benford (dm), Greta Keller (vo), ens (vo-4454).  
 Two titles were recorded for French Decca:

- 4453 Goodbye To Summer Intro 4 bars. Acc. (vo).  
 Acc. (tp). Acc. (cl). (SM)  
 4454 I'm Gonna Lock My Heart Intro 8+6 bars. Acc. (vo). (M).  
 32 bars 2/2 with (tp) to solo 32 bars. Acc. (vo). (FM)

I never forget how we looked for this 78 rpm and John Bergh finally found it, discovering that it was a fine, to us unknown, female singer, cabaret 'Marlene Dietrich'-style, and at the same time a real jazz record! "Goodbye ..." does not give HC any solo opportunities but his backing is superb. Take "... My Heart" however, and discover that here is one of his most brilliant prewar piano soli! After the vocal with excellent backing, we get something so unusual as a trumpet/piano chase going into a piano solo which is more than anytime before a fully conceived and executed 32 bars swing style, dig this!

**WILLIE LEWIS & HIS ORCHESTRA** **Paris, Dec. 1938**  
 Personnel including Herman Chittison (p).  
 Two titles were recorded for Pathe:

- 4471-1 Poor Little Angeline (p) included.  
 4472-1 Lambeth Walk (p) included.

These are not jazz items but exercises in dancing with vocal instructions. HC has a dominant accompanying role, though only for those particularly academically interested.

**MILDRED BAILEY** **NYC. June 13, 1941**  
 Herman Chittison (p), Dave Barbour (g), Franchy Covetti (b), Jimmy Hoskins (dm), Delta Rhythm Boys (vo-quartet-69361), Mildred Bailey (vo).  
 Three titles were recorded for Decca:

- 69361-A Everything Depends On You Acc. (vo). Solo 10 bars. (S)  
 69362-A Lover Come Back To Me Acc. (vo). (M)  
 69363-A All Too Soon Acc. (vo). Acc. (g).  
 Solo 4 bars. Acc. (vo). (S)

**NYC. June 24, 1941**  
 Same, with (vo-quartet), except (g), (b), (dm) omitted. One title:



69412-A It's So Peaceful In The Country Acc. (vo). (S)

HC is back from Europe, and in his first recording session with Mildred Bailey, he really shows he is one of the great swing piano players, making this session highly memorable. Not so much soloing but his backing to the vocal is great!!

**HERMAN CHITTISON NYC. Sept. 17, 1941**

Herman Chittison (p-solo).

Two titles were recorded for Bluebird:

67905-1 Flamingo 3:20. (M)

67906-1 The Man I Love 3:15. (S/M)

First solo session of numerous, permanently back in the US. Two sides only, but dreaming but yet swinging "Flamingo" and "... Love" show that a jazz piano master has returned. Be honest with yourself, how many contemporaries do you find playing on this artistic level?

**HERMAN CHITTISON TRIO NYC. Jan. 3, 1944**

Herman Chittison (p), Jimmy Shirley (g-except 1338,1341), Cedric Wallace (b).

Nine titles were recorded for World Transcriptions (note: the duration given is the full item, not only the piano soloing):

1336-1 How High The Moon 1:51. (F)

1336-2 How High The Moon 2:18. (F)

1336-3 How High The Moon 2:18. (F)

1337-1 The Song Is Ended (FS) 0:56. (SM)

1337-2 The Song Is Ended (NC) 1:12. (SM)

1337-3 The Song Is Ended 3:18. (SM)

1337-4 The Song Is Ended (FS) 0:15. (SM)

1337-5 The Song Is Ended (NC) 1:00. (SM)

1337-6 The Song Is Ended (FS) 0:09. (SM)

1337-7 The Song Is Ended 2:59. (SM)

1337-8 The Song Is Ended 2:58. (SM)

1338-1 Just One Of Those Things 1:38. (F)

1338-2 Just One Of Those Things 2:22. (F)

1338-3 Just One Of Those Things 2:14. (F)

1339-1 Schubert's Serenade (FS) 0:05. (F)

1339-2 Schubert's Serenade 2:45. (F)

1339-3 Schubert's Serenade (FS) 0:08. (F)

1339-4 Schubert's Serenade 2:53. (F)

1339-5 Schubert's Serenade 2:02. (FM)

1339-6 Schubert's Serenade (NC) 0:42. (FM)

1340-1 As Time Goes By 2:57. (SM)

1340-2 As Time Goes By (NC) 1:24. (SM)

1340-3 As Time Goes By (FS) 0:18. (SM)

1340-4 As Time Goes By (NC) 1:06. (SM)

1340-5 As Time Goes By 2:52. (SM)

1341-1 Frasquita Serenade 2:25. (FM)

1341-2 Frasquita Serenade 2:21. (FM)

1342-1 My Old Flame 3:29. (S)

1343-1 Lover 3:24. (F)

1344-1 Persian Rug 2:14. (F)

This is the beginning of a period where HC often is playing with a trio. One may have different opinions on this, personally I find that the piano and guitar often get in each other's way, although it works beautifully here on "The Song ..." as one good example. I prefer solo piano, or guitar as a plain rhythm instrument with solo opportunities, but that is my unimportant opinion. Listening with an open mind, there is some gigantic piano playing (and fine guitar too!) here, particularly in fast tempo. This session belongs to jazz piano history, and one might describe HC's development such as the thirties only represented a period of learning and cultivating. It is now in the middle forties that this enormous talent really has found himself. Play "Just One ..." for good measure, and you will be convinced!

**HERMAN CHITTISON** **NYC. April 25, 1944**

Herman Chittison (p).

Private recordings made by Timme Rosenkrantz at his home, 7 West 46<sup>th</sup> Street, three titles (Timme Rosenkrantz collection), not available:

I Had The Craziest Dream  
My Shining Hour  
April In Paris

**NYC. May 8/9, 1944**

Same. Large number of titles, not available:

Medley: Sweet Lorraine / Ghost Of A Chance /  
Long Ago And Far Away / Don't Blame Me  
Medley: Unidentified Title / How High  
The Moon / Where Or When  
My Heart Stood Still  
Anitra's Dance  
Lullaby Of The Leaves  
Can't Help Lovin' That Man Of Mine  
It's The Talk Of The Town  
You're Mine You  
There's A Lull In My Life  
When Day Is Done  
All Too Soon  
April In Paris  
Minute Waltz  
Tristesse  
Träumerei  
C-Sharp Minor Waltz

**HERMAN CHITTISON TRIO** **NYC. prob. July 15, 1944**

Herman Chittison (p), Jimmy Shirley (g), Carlton Powell (b).

Six titles, "There's A Small Hotel", "Sleep", "For You", "Song Of The Islands", "What Is This Thing Called Love" and "Blue Angel Blues" were recorded for Savoy but unissued.

**HERMAN CHITTISON** **NYC. Sept. 11, 1944**

Herman Chittison (p).

Broadcast from the Redd Evans Radio Show (Timme Rosenkrantz collection), two titles, not available:

Minute Waltz  
Tristesse

**HERMAN CHITTISON** **NYC. Oct. 1, 1944**

Herman Chittison (p).

Private recordings made by Timme Rosenkrantz at his home, 7 West 46<sup>th</sup> Street, six titles (Timme Rosenkrantz collection), not available:

Frasquita Serenade  
I Had The Craziest Dream  
Long Ago  
Can't Help Lovin' That Man  
Tristesse  
Sweet Lorraine

**HERMAN CHITTISON TRIO** **NYC. Dec. 8, 1944**

Herman Chittison (p), Jimmy Shirley (g), Carlton Powell (b).

Four titles were recorded for Musicraft:

5226-2	The Song Is Ended	3:07. (SM)
5227-2	Serenade	3:11. (F)
5228-6	How High The Moon	3:06. (F)
5229-3	There's Beauty Everywhere	2:45. (SM)

Quoting Kenneth G. Noble's liner notes: "On the first session for Musicraft, aided and abetted by Jimmy Shirley's devilish guitar, Chit turns in four marvellously wicked sides with the the two fast numbers the quintessence of hard driving jazz trio. Schubert suffers not in the least". Accepting that HC has chosen the trio format for his artistry, there is much pleasure to be had by listening here. There is some great piano stride particularly on "Serenade", some Tatum-esque runs on "... Ended" and otherwise fine cooperation within the group.

**GEORGE WETTLING'S NEW YORKERS** **NYC. Dec. 12, 1944**

Joe Thomas (tp), Jack Teagarden (tb, vo-72,74), Hank D'Amico (cl), Coleman Hawkins (ts), Herman Chittison (p), Billy Taylor (b), George Wettling (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Keynote:

72-2	Home	Intro 4 bars. Acc. (vo). Solo 16 bars. (M)
72-4	Home	As above. (M)
73-1	Too Marvelous For Words	Solo 32 bars. (F)
73-2	Too Marvelous For Words	Intro 4 bars. Solo 32 bars. (FM)
73-3	Too Marvelous For Words	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
74-1	You Brought A New Kind O' Love	Break to acc. (vo). (SM)
74-2	You Brought A New Kind O' Love	As above plus solo 8 bars. (SM)
75-1	Somebody Loves Me	Intro 4 bars. Solo 32 bars. (F)

This session is quite unique, because it is the only example where HC takes part in a real swing session with many of jazz' most exciting performers! Here he is only one of many. Possibly he is awed by the occasion, as limits his comping compared to what he did in the thirties, and also his soloing, while competent and good enough, seems somewhat modest and not containing his full repertoire as we know it.

**HERMAN CHITTISON TRIO**

**Brooklyn, NY. ca. 1944**

Herman Chittison (p), Jimmy Shirley (g), Carlton Powell (b).

Mutual Coast to Coast broadcast from the Ebony Room of Town Hill Restaurant, total of 6:22, four titles:

Unknown Title (NC)	1:33. (M)
Theme – Melody Mood	0:11. (S)
What Is This Thing Called Love?	3:43. (M)
Theme	0:52. (S)

**same**

Same with Greta McRae (vo-"... Love ..."). Total of 14:10, seven titles:

Theme	0:55. (S)
On The Alamo	3:50. (SM)
Theme	0:15. (S)
Stay As Sweet As You Are / If You Were Mine	5:16. (M)
Theme	0:08. (S)
Don't Mention Love To Me	3:12. (S)
Theme	0:34. (S)

**same**

Same. Total of 2:36, two titles:

Theme	0:55. (S)
The Song Is Ended (NC)	1:41. (M)

Postscript of Aug. 18, 2017: These tapes were gifted to WKCR by Phil Schaap, who received them from a friend of Herman Chittison'. No information on the dates of recording. The titles are separated by the theme, and an announcer interferes but usually without doing much harm. The music is soft and very nice, an excellent trio!

**HERMAN CHITTISON TRIO****possibly 1944**

Herman Chittison (p), unknown (g), (b).

Glass-based acetate, Charles Iselin collection, two titles:

There's A Small Hotel	3:44. (M)
Tiger Rag	3:00. (F)

Postscript of March 4, 2020: Nice additions to the HC treasure!

**HERMAN CHITTISON TRIO****NYC. ca. 1945**

Herman Chittison (p), Everett Barksdale (g), Bill Pemberton (b).

Six titles were recorded for Mary Howard Recordings:

101-B	Minute Waltz	3:05. (FM)
102-B	June Barcarolle	2:46. (FM)
103-B	Tristesse	2:41. (M)
104-A	Menuet	2:54. (M/F)
105-A	Anitra's Dance	3:16. (SM/F)
106-A	C-Sharp Minor Waltz	3:02. (F)

HC and his two companions play the classics on this session, and the results are charming and genuine without being sensational.

**PEARL BAILEY****NYC. Jan. 18, 1945**

Charlie Shavers (tp), Herman Chittison (p), Carl Lynch (g), Carlton Powell (b), Pearl Bailey (vo).

Three titles were recorded for VDisc, two issued:

34121-1	He Didn't Ask Me	Intro 4 bars. Acc. (vo). (S)
34123-1	The Quicker I Gets To Where I'm Goin'	Acc. (vo). (M)

Delicate and highly noteworthy background playing on this session!

**THELMA CARPENTER WITH****HERMAN CHITTISON TRIO****NYC. Feb. 2, 1945**

Herman Chittison (p), Carl Lynch (g), Carlton Powell (b), Thelma Carpenter (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Musicraft, two (non-vocal) issued:

5244-4	I'll Always Be In Love With You	2:57. (M)
5245-3	Poor Butterfly	2:46. (FM)

**NYC. Feb. 16, 1945**

Same. Four titles, Thelma Carpenter (vo-5242,43):

5242-3	I Should Care	3:13. (S)
5243-4	All Of My Life	2:51. (S)
5244-4	I'll Always Be In Love With You	3:02. (M)
5246-6	These Foolish Things	3:07. (S)

I must admit I enjoy most the sections where HC chooses to really solo, even if only part of a chorus. The tight coplaying with guitar seems more disturbing than really fruitful, but HC obviously wanted it that way. Nice music anyway, as for instance the soli on "... Care" and "... Life" represent..

**EVELYN KNIGHT VOCAL ACC.****BY HERMAN CHITTISON TRIO****NYC. Feb. 1945**

Herman Chittison (p), Jimmy Shirley (g), Carlton Powell (b).

Four titles were recorded for VDisc:

VP1199	Grandfather's Clock	Acc. (vo). (FM)
VP1199	The Lass With A Delicate Air	Intro 4 bars. Acc. (vo). (M)
VP1200	Two Little Fishes	Intro 4 bars. Acc. (vo). (S)
VP1200	Too-ra-loo-ra-loo-ral	Acc. (vo). (FM)

Postscript of May 2017: Not much HC to hear on this first Knight session, except for a very delicate "... Fishes" with fine accompaniment and the two brief intri.

**HERMAN CHITTISON****NYC. May 1, 1945**

Herman Chittison (p).

Five titles were recorded for Musicraft, four issued:

5279-3	I Had The Craziest Dream	2:19. (S)
5280-4	Where Or When	3:08. (FM)
5281-1	Triste	2:34. (F)
5282-1	To A Wild Rose	2:55. (M)

Quoting Noble again: “Finally, we come to una dulterated Chittison. Freed from the constraints of a rhythm section, Chit relaxes, stretches ut, and takes the listener on a kaleidoscopic journey through dynamic and tempo shifts, pure stride, arabesque runs, and never ending melodic improvisations. I don’t think Chittison ever played any better than this”. Strong words, but try “... When” and at least agree that this is great piano playing!!

**EVELYN KNIGHT VOCAL ACC.****BY HERMAN CHITTISON TRIO****NYC. Sept. 1945**

Herman Chittison (p), probably Jimmy Shirley (g), probably Carlton Powell (b).

Four titles were recorded for VDisc:

VP1562	Let Him Go, Let Him Tarry	Intro. Acc. (vo). (S). Acc. (vo). (M)
VP1567	There Will Never Be Another You	Intro to acc. (vo). Coda. (S)
	I Dreamt I Dwelt In Marble Halls	Intro. (S). Acc. (vo). (S/M)
	St. Louis Blues	Intro. Acc. (vo). (SM)

Perhaps not the most interesting vocal on “... You”, but the piano is recorded very clearly, offering a rare opportunity to hear HC’s superb accompanying qualities. Postscript of May 2017: The other items have now been available, not exactly jazz proper but again professional piano accompaniment, note particularly “... Blues”.

**HERMAN CHITTISON TRIO****NYC. March 3, 1946**

Herman Chittison (p), possibly Everett Barksdale (g), Carlton Powell (b), unknown female (vo-“Basin ...”), unknown male (vo-“Between ...”).

Three titles from broadcast “Endorsed by Dorsey”, lead by Sy Oliver:

	Basin Street Blues	2:12. (M)
	Dancing In The Dark	2:52. (FM)
	Between The Devil And TDBS	2:01. (FM)

Postscript of Aug. 2018: This session came recently to my attention on the internet, thanks to Uwe Zänisch. While “Basin ...” and “Between ...” have mostly comping behind the vocalists, “Dancing ...” is a sparkling performance, very well worth noticing!

**ETHEL WATERS VOCAL ACC.****BY HERMAN CHITTISON TRIO****NYC. Jan. 21, 1947**

Herman Chittison (p), Everett Barksdale (g), Carlton Powell (b).

Two titles were recorded for Victor:

D7-VB-78-1	Careless Love	Intro 8 bars. Acc. (vo). (SM)
D7-VB-79-1	Blues In My Heart	Intro 4 bars. Acc. (vo). (S)

Some nice background playing to be noted.

**BOB SMITH VOCAL ACC.****BY HERMAN CHITTISON TRIO****NYC. April 14, 1947**

Herman Chittison (p), Everett Barksdale (g), Carlton Powell (b).

Two titles were recorded for Victor:

D7-VB-257-1	Where Is Sam?	Acc. only. (M)
D7-VB-258-1	You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby	Acc. (vo) Solo 20 bars. (SM)

“You Must ...” is nice without being particularly remarkable. “... Sam?” has no interest whatsoever.

**ETHEL WATERS VOCAL ACC.****BY HERMAN CHITTISON TRIO****NYC. June 20, 1947**

Herman Chittison (p), Everett Barksdale (g), Carlton Powell (b).

Broadcast:

“Intro Medley” 0:50. (S)  
 Summertime Obbligato 48 bars. (S)

The introduction is only a run-through of earlier Ethel Waters material such as “Dinah”, “Cabin In The Sky” and “Stormy Weather” with some male comments, only a few bars of each, of very slight value. “Summertime” is the only serious item, but the piano is not so well recorded here, thus you can easily skip this one.

**BARBARA CAMERON / HERMAN CHITTISON NYC. Sept. 5, 1947**  
 Herman Chittison (p), Everett Barksdale (g), Bill Pemberton (b), Barbara Cameron (vo-5249,50).

Two titles were recorded for King:

5248 Love That Boy Solo 32 bars with (g) acc.. Acc. (vo). (M)  
 5249 Feeling Zero Solo 8 bars. Acc. (vo). (S)

Of no particular interest.

**same date**

Herman Chittison solo (p). One title, not available:

5250 Song Of India

**BOB MANNING / VERA BARTON**  
**WITH THE HERMAN CHITTISON TRIO prob. NYC. ca. Nov. 1947**  
 Herman Chittison (p), unknown (g), unknown (b), Bob Manning, Vera Barton (vo).  
 Four titles were recorded for Click, 103 Bob Manning, not available and 104 Vera Barton:

The Wildest Gal In Town Acc. (vo). (S)  
 Please Don't Talk About Me WIG Acc. (vo). Solo 8 bars. (SM)

Postscript of Oct. 2023: Nice to find another brief HC solo!

**EADIE LANG VOCAL ACC.**  
**BY HERMAN CHITTISON TRIO NYC. April 14, 1947**  
 Herman Chittison (p), rest unknown.  
 Two titles were recorded for Opus, not available.

**HERMAN CHITTISON NYC. May 8, 1950**  
 Herman Chittison (p).  
 Eight titles were recorded for Columbia, issued as “Keyboard Capers”:

43235 Memories Of You 3:03. (SM)  
 43236 Let's Fall In Love 3:14. (M)  
 43237 Dancing On The Ceiling 3:10. (S/M)  
 43238 Isn't It Romantic? 2:57. (SM)  
 43239 September In The Rain 3:04. (M)  
 43240 They Can't Take That Away From Me 2:52. (SM)  
 43241 Can't We Be Friends? 3:14. (S)  
 43242 On The Sunny Side Of The Street 3:11. (S)

Some years have passed since the Musicraft sessions, and it interesting to note that HC now seems to have consolidated his style and repertoire, concentrating on the evergreens. His left hand is even more prominent then before, and his confidence seems to be steadily growing. He often slashes his right hand against the keys in a very personal manner, note “... Rain” as a good example. There is nothing wrong with his ability to improvise, nor to swing. Strangely enough HC never was well known to the public; everybody know Art Tatum and Erroll Garner and Earl Hines, but who realize that HC's piano artistry around 1950 in fact belongs to the same category!?

**HERMAN CHITTISON TRIO NYC. Aug. 14/15, 1950**  
 Herman Chittison (p), Everett Barksdale (g), Abie Baker (b).  
 Eight titles were recorded for Columbia:

44231 Serenade 3:23. (SM)

44232	Just A Memory	4:18. (S)
44233	The Continental	2:30. (F)
44234	My Blue Heaven	3:48. (S)
44237	Ain't Misbehavin'	3:19. (S)
44238	On The Alamo	4:03. (SM)
44239	I've Had My Moments	3:04. (M)
44240	Should I?	2:20. (FM)

Another good session, but this time with a trio, thus not giving HC the same opportunity for coherent improvising. Lots of excellent details inbetween however, so you simply have to dig it all!

**HERMAN CHITTISON WITH  
JOE LEAHY's ORCHESTRA**

**NYC. June 1958**

Herman Chittison (p), (strings), Joe Leahy (cond).  
Seven titles were recorded for Rivoli:

Mine	2:12. (FM)
Summer Night	2:36. (S/F)
My Funny Valentine	2:30. (S/M)
I Love You Too Much	2:50. (M)
Pennies From Heaven	2:20. (SM)
On The Street Where You Live	4:05. (M)
South Of The Blues	2:53. (S)

These are nice, in fact some are magnificent, like "... Valentine", "... Heaven" in a unusually slow tempo, and "... Blues". Some but not all have strings background, but the producer could have saved that money.

**same**

Possibly same with Greta McRae (vo).

Five titles: "I Get A Kick Out Of You", "Love Not Subject To Change", "Love For Sale", "I'm In Love" and "Chasing Shadows", but HC's participation in these is very faint, and the items have no interest as such.

**HERMAN CHITTISON**

**NYC. 1959**

Herman Chittison (p).

Transcription Air Force Reserve Volume 5: Elliot Lawrence and the Soundflights All Stars, HC guesting, two titles:

Caravan	0:55. (FM)
They Can't Take That Away From Me	1:08. (M)

Postscript of Feb. 16, 2022: These are now available on YouTube. Only two minutes but excellent piano playing, could be used as a guide to HC's artistry!

**HERMAN CHITTISON**

**unknown, 1960s?**

Herman Chittison (p).

Home recordings, total of 33:02, nine titles:

Indiana	2:02. (FM)
Unknown Title	2:32. (M)
Unknown Title	3:46. (SM)
Unknown Title	2:41. (M)
Cheek To Cheek	7:42. (M)
Unknown Title	3:23. (FM)
Cherry	3:25. (SM)
Unknown Title	2:28. (M)
If I Had You (NC)	3:29. (SM)

**same**

Same, total of 33:16, nine titles:

If I Had You	4:54. (SM)
Unknown Title	3:17. (M)
Just A Memory	2:50. (SM)
Anything Goes	2:26. (M)
Unknown Title	2:04. (M)
Unknown Title	3:08. (M)
The Girl In My Dreams	3:25. (SM)
Smoke Gets In Your Eyes	5:15. (SM)
September Song	5:06. (SM)

Postscript of Aug. 18, 2017: These also comes from a friend of HC, and although undated, they seem very much to be from the same period as the sessions presented below. They represent a nice supplement to what we already have. One might wish for more variation in tempo, particularly some fast items, but it was HC to choose. Of all the eighteen items one should note the unusually long "Cheek To Cheek", giving a better perspective on HC's improvisational capabilities compared to the many brief items, great discovery!!

**HERMAN CHITTISON**

**NYC. April 22, 1962**

Herman Chittison (p).

Ten titles were recorded for L'Elegant, issued as "That's All" and "88 Up Right":

That's All	2:50. (SM)
Little Girl Blue	4:25. (S/M)
It's Easy To Remember	2:56. (M)
Smoke Gets In Your Eyes	4:30. (S/M)
Drop Me Off At Harlem	2:43. (M)
The Touch Of Your Lips	3:59. (SM)
Tangerine	3:41. (FM)
My Funny Valentine	4:56. (S/M)
Why?	4:05. (SM)
Dancing On The Ceiling	3:11. (S/FM)

**same date**

Same. Ten titles were recorded for L'Elegant:

South Of The Blues	4:52. (SM)
I Got The Sun In The Morning	3:44. (S/M)
When The Sun Comes Out	3:22. (S)
Mad About The Boy	3:46. (S/M)
Cuttin' The Blues	3:30. (SM)
Trouble Is A Man	5:11. (S/M)
Gone With The Wind	4:09. (SM)
Route 66	2:53. (M)
Blues Magenta	3:30. (SM)
Take Me In Your Arms	3:30. (SM)

A dozen years fly away so easily since HC's last session with a trio, and here, and for the rest of his recording life, he goes even further and plays solitaire. This is understandable, because his style has again changed, now emphasizing even more the strong left hand with fat chords. He does not in fact need a bass player, nor a drummer. His trademark is the way he almost splashes his hands on the keyboard, then he cannot be mistaken for anybody else in this jazz piano world. But he also created dreaming sequences in slow tempo, and "Smoke ..." is a good example of both traits. There is no uptempo here like in the old days, just personal and creative



mingling around, like he obviously could do for hours. For another highlight try "... The Boy". Quoting Charles Delauney from the liner notes: "I never heard any jazz pianist practice as much as Herman". The results came, and this excellent solo session is evidence enough!

**HERMAN CHITTISON****NYC. June 3, 1963**

Herman Chittison (p).

TV-program, music privately recorded, five titles, not available:

More Than You Know  
 Thou Swell  
 It's Easy To Remember  
 Blues Magenta  
 The Surrey With The Fringe On Top

**HERMAN CHITTISON****NYC. June 5, 1964**

Herman Chittison (p).

Eleven titles were recorded, ten issued on Jansara (Jansara, HC's own label, is named after his mother, Sarah Jane, who was known as "Janie"):

Theme From 'Picnic'	2:31. (SM)
On The Street Where You Live	4:03. (M)
If Ever I Should Leave You	5:06. (SM)
Alone Together	1:44. (F)
Never On Sunday	4:30. (S)
The Sound Of Music	2:53. (M)
Loads Of Love	2:41. (SM/F)
New Orleans	2:16. (S)
The Most Beautiful Girl In The World	2:43. (SM/FM)
Easy To Love	2:49. (SM/FM)

**same date**

Same. Eleven titles, ten issued on IAJRC CD 1006 ("Let's Face The Music And Dance" is unissued):

There Is No Greater Love	2:42. (SM)
Here Lies Love	2:08. (M)
More Than You Know	3:30. (SM)
Tonight	3:39. (SM)
September Song	3:15. (M)
Getting To Know You	2:55. (SM)
Jealousy	4:25. (S/M)
Danny Boy	3:04. (SM)
The Sweetest Sounds	3:07. (M)
Falling In Love With Love	2:55. (S/M)

This CD is one of the greatest accomplishments of the IAJRC! There is no sign of any reduction of artistic capabilities in HC's playing, in fact he has never played better. The tempi are generally slower than before, but that does not mean that his technique has suffered with the times. It seems to me that he is even more personal in his style than before, blending flashing chords with just as much runs as is needed. There is no need to single out particular items, you will enjoy them all. Rarely I have heard a more satisfying solo piano player than Herman Chittison. Postscript: Right after writing the above, I happened to hear the Jansara LP from the same date, equally beautiful!!

**same date**

Same. Benny Carter (comp).

Ten titles were planned to be issued on Jansara as “Blues In My Heart” but they never did:

Blues In My Heart  
 Take My Word / Lonesome Nights  
 Blue Interlude  
 Just A Mood  
 Moppin’ And Boppin’  
 When Lights Are Low  
 Nightfall  
 Synthetic Love  
 Dream Lullaby  
 Everybody Shuffle

**HERMAN CHITTISON** **Cleveland, Ohio, early 1967**

Herman Chittison (p).

Nine titles recorded in the “Frontier Room”, issued on IAJRC CD 1006:

Gone With The Wind	3:36. (SM)
So In Love	3:26. (F)
People	5:44. (SM)
Our Love Affair	3:28. (S/M)
The Sound Of Music	4:23. (M)
Nobody Else But Me	2:32. (S/FM)
Let’s Face The Music And Dance	3:13. (F)
Fly Me The Moon	1:43. (S)
Tonight (NC)	2:50. (SM)

This seems to be the final recorded session, made probably only a few weeks before he passed away only 58 years old. There is no evidence in his playing of the lung cancer that was going to kill him, in fact there is more up tempo here than on the previously noted solo sessions. If this had been the only session he ever made, it would have been more than enough to give him a name among the greatest of jazz piano players.

Appendix:

**IRENE WILLIAMS / HERMAN CHITTISON**

**unknown date**

Herman Chittison (p), Irene Williams (vo).

Two unissued titles:

Asleep In The Deep  
 The Clock Song

**HERMAN CHITTISON TRIO**

**unknown date**

Herman Chittison (p), unknown (g), unknown (b).

Unissued 7 inch 78 rpm. disc discovered by Duncan Schiedt:

Smoke Gets In Your Eyes  
 Stompin’ At The Savoy

No further recording sessions.

...ooo...