

**The**  
**TRUMPET**  
**of**  
**JACQUES BUTLER**  
**“JACK”**

Born: April 29, 1909  
Died: 2003

*Introduction:*

There is no doubt: Jacques Butler was well known in the Norwegian jazz community, because he was visiting Oslo in 1940 and recorded one 78 rpm. together with our own best jazz performers. So, we grew up with him!

*History:*

Raised in Washington, D.C., studied dentistry at Howard University, began playing trumpet at the age of 17. Moved to New York City, worked with Cliff Jackson in the late 1920s, with Horace Henderson (1930-1). Led own band (in New York and on tour) 1934-35, worked with Willie Bryant, then to Europe. Joined Willie Lewis band (late 1936), worked mainly with Willie Lewis until 1939, then toured Scandinavia from June 1939. Was in Norway at the commencement of World War II, returned to the U.S.A. in April 1940. Led own band, worked with Mezz Mezzrow (spring 1943), with Art Hodes (summer 1943-44), with Bingie Madison (1945), with bassist Cass Carr (summer 1947). Worked in Toronto, Canada (1948). Returned to Europe in late 1950, led own band on various tours, then played long residency at 'La Cigale', Paris, from 1953 until returning to the U.S.A. in 1968. Still plays regularly in New York (at the time of writing). Appeared in the film 'Paris Blues' (1961). (ref. John Chilton).

## JACK BUTLER SOLOGRAPHY

### **SAMMY LEWIS**

#### **& HIS BAMVILLE SYNCOPATORS**

**NYC. June 14, 1926**

Edwin Swayze (cnt, arr), Jack Butler (cnt, cl?), Oscar Hammond (tb), Eugene Eikelberger (cl, as), Paul Serminole (p), Jimmy McLin (bjo), Lester Nichols (dm), Sammy Lewis (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Vocalion, two have trumpet, possibly JB:

- |       |                       |  |
|-------|-----------------------|--|
| E3224 | Hateful Papa Blues    | Possible intro 4 bars, obligato parts, solo 12 bars and coda 2 bars. (S) |
| E3227 | Leaving Town To WYOMM | Possibly intro 4 bars and break. (S)                                     |

Impossible to tell who is playing the trumpet, no particular resemblance to later JB recordings.

### **MAMIE SMITH VOCAL ACC. BY**

#### **BILLY FOWLER & HIS ORCHESTRA**

**NYC. March 30, 1929**

Jack Butler (tp), George Scott (cl, as), Gene Rodgers (p), Eddie Gibbs (bjo, g), Herbert Cowans (dm), Billy Fowler (dir), Mamie Smith (vo) and others.

Three titles were recorded for Columbia, one has trumpet, probably JB:

- |            |                 |                             |
|------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| 401761-B/D | My Sportin' Man | Break. Obligato parts. (SM) |
|------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|

Some quite competent trumpet playing here, could easily be JB.

### **WILLIE BRYANT & HIS ORCHESTRA**

**NYC. April 9, 1936**

Richard Clarke, Jack Butler (tp), Taft Jordan (tp, vo), John Haughton, George Matthews (tb), Glyn Paque, Stanley Payne (as), Charles Frazier (fl, ts), Johnny Russell (ts), Ram Ramirez (p), Arnold Adams (g), Ernest Hill (b), Cozy Cole (dm), Willie Bryant (vo).

Six titles were recorded for Bluebird, one has JB (not "The Glory Of Love" that has been suggested):

- |         |                 |                             |
|---------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| 99976-1 | Ride, Red, Ride | Solo with orch 20 bars. (F) |
|---------|-----------------|-----------------------------|

Time has passed and JB is in the middle of the bigband swing era. Three good trumpeters in the Bryant orchestra, and the strong swinging solo on "Ride ..." is definitely his, compared to later sessions.

**NYC. June 3, 1936**

Same. Four titles, one has JB:

- |          |                        |  |
|----------|------------------------|--|
| 102003-1 | Mary Had A Little Lamb | Solo 16+12 bars, (ts-JR) on bridge. (FM) |
|----------|------------------------|--|

Postscript of Sept. 1, 2022: How could I forget this excellent solo in previous versions of the solography!? The phrasing is typical JB.

### **WILLIE LEWIS & HIS ORCHESTRA**

**Paris, Nov. 12, 1936**

Jack Butler, Bobby Jones (tp), Billy Burns (tb), Willie Lewis (as, vo), George Johnson (as), Joe Hayman (as, ts, bar), Frank Goudie (cl, ts), Herman Chittison (p), John Mitchell (g), Louis Vola (b), Ted Fields (dm), Jean Tranchant (vo).

Four titles were recorded for French Pathe, one has trumpet:

- |        |              |   |
|--------|--------------|---|
| 2965-1 | On Your Toes | Possibly obligato parts. Possibly solo 8 bars. (FM) |
|--------|--------------|---|

**Paris, Oct. 18, 1937**

Same except Bill Coleman (tp), Ernest Myers (b) replace Jones and Vola.

Six titles, one has JB:

- |        |            |                             |
|--------|------------|-----------------------------|
| 3476-1 | Swing Time | Solo with orch 8 bars. (FM) |
|--------|------------|-----------------------------|

The first trumpet performer on "Swing ..." is Bill Coleman, but JB comes in at the end. The solo on "... Toes" is similar, but I am not quite confident.

### **BOBBY MARTIN**

**Hilversum, April 1938**

Bill Coleman, Bobby Martin, Jack Butler, Billy Burns (tb), Glyn Paque (as), Ernest Purce (as, bar), Johnny Russell (cl, ts), Ram Ramirez (p), John Mitchell (g), Ernest Hill (b), Kaiser Marshall (dm), Martin, Russell, Paque (vo-trio-"Let's Dance").

Four titles were recorded for French Brunswick, two issued, no JB on "Let's Dance" but:

- |  |              |                  |
|--|--------------|------------------|
|  | Crazy Rhythm | Solo 8 bars. (F) |
|--|--------------|------------------|

Typical JB on this hot one.

**WILLIE LEWIS & HIS ORCHESTRA**

**Hilversum, May 4, 1938**

Personnel as Oct. 18, 1937.

Six titles were recorded for Dutch Panachord, three have JB:

483-2	Who's Sorry Now?	Break. (FM)
486-2	Memphis Blues	Solo 12 bars. (M)
487-1	A Shanty In Old Shanty Town	Solo 48 bars (mute) to coda. (F)
487-2	A Shanty In Old Shanty Town	As above. (F)

Now doubt about JB's presence here! "... Shanty Town" has one of his most interesting soli, and his typical slightly staccato style is quite identifiable. Same goes for the two other items. Postscript: Nice to hear an alternate take of "... Town" with the necessary differences for a real improviser. The problem obviously was that he is located too far from the microphone, thus making the trumpet difficult to hear properly, the quality seems equal.

**FRANK "BIG BOY" GOUDIE**

**Paris, May 28, 1939**

Jack Butler (tp), Andre Ekyan (cl, as), Frank Goudie (ts), Joe Turner (p), Norman Langlois (g), Ernest Wilson Myers (b), Tommy Benford (dm).

Five titles were recorded for French Swing, all have JB:

OSW77-1	You And I Babe	Solo 32 bars. In ens 32 bars to coda. (FM)
OSW78-1	You In My Arms And Sweet Music	Soli with ens 32 and 32 bars to coda. (FM)
OSW79-1	Heebie Jeebies	Soli with ens 18 and 36 bars to coda. (FM)
OSW80-1	It's A Sin To Tell A Lie	Soli with ens 32 and 32 bars to coda. (M)
OSW81-1	Who's Sorry Now?	Soli with ens 32 and 32 bars to coda. (FM)

This is an excellent swing session in all respects, lovely soli by all participants, and it must also be considered as one of JB's very best sessions, if not the best one. He swings this session with great inspiration and conviction, and there are good reasons to believe that he was a trumpeter on a higher level than many of his more well known contemporaries. He certainly had his own style quite easy to recognize. The highlights are "... Babe" and "... Jeebies", but all items are important and should be played repeatedly, these are also among the best of French vintage recordings!

**OSLO SWINGKLUBBS BAND**

**MED JACK BUTLER**

**Oslo, Feb. 14, 1940**

Jack Butler, Rowland Greenberg (tp), Ivan Jacobsen (tb), Per Nilsen, Arvid Gram Paulsen (ts), Jan Fredrik Dahl (p), Robert Normann (g), Fred Lange-Nielsen (b, arr), Stein Lorentzen (dm).

One title was recorded for Norwegian HMV:

ona520	I'm Coming Virginia	Soli 4 and 24 bars. (M)
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This is something special!! Not only is the session the first under JB's own name. It was made right here in my hometown of Oslo with the cream of local soloists. It is also the first studio recording session with an American soloist, although we had several visits before this time. The clouds of war were creeping close, and JB narrowly escaped back to the US before the occupation of Norway April 9, 1940. He plays here in his typical style, with our own trumpet great Rowland Greenberg solos in the middle.

**JACK BUTLER AND HIS SWINGPATROL**

**Oslo, Feb. 14, 1940**

Jack Butler (tp, vo), Kalle Engström (cl), Gunnar Sönstevold (p), Robert Normann (g), Fred Lange-Nielsen (b), Kjell Björnstad (dm).

One title was recorded for Norwegian HMV:

ona521	After The Ball	Solo 32 bars (mute). Vocal 32 bars. Solo/duet with (cl) 48 bars (open) to coda. (F)
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The HMV budget must have been quite limited, because only two JB titles were made, each with a different personnel. While he played competently on "... Virginia", this "... Ball" shows him to much greater advantage. Strong and confident soloing with and without mute, separated by a nice vocal chorus. This

item must be considered as one of the very best JB left us, and I don't state this just because it happened here!!

**ART HODES TRIO / QUINTET**

**NYC. 1943/44**

Jack Butler (tp, vo-"Danny ..."), Rod Cless (cl), Art Hodes (p), unknown (g), (dm).  
Broadcast, four titles:

Liberty Inn Drag	Solo 12 bars, partly with (cl). (SM)
Danny Boy	Intro. Solo 16 bars, partly with (cl). (SM)
Lady Be Good	Duet with (cl) 32 and 32 bars. (F)
Royal Garden Blues	Ens/duet with (cl). Solo 12 bars. (F)

This broadcast announces JB clearly, and particularly on "Danny ..." his fine open horn is noteworthy. The titles are quite brief though, altogether only 7 ½ minutes.

**MERCER ELLINGTON OCTET**

**NYC. March 18, 1946**

Jacques Butler (tp, vo-1001,03), Lawrence Brown (tb), Al Sears (ts), Harry Carney (bar), Mercer Ellington (p-1000,03), Leonard Feather (p-1001), Luther Henderson (p-1002), Mary Osborne (g), Bill Pemberton (b), Heyward Jackson (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Aladdin, no JB on 1000 "Ditty A La Dizzy" but:

1001	She's Got The Blues For Sale	Vocal. (S)
1002	The Willies	Solo 16 bars. (F)
1003	Messy Bessie	Vocal. Solo 36 bars to coda. (SM)

JB gets one opportunity to record in the turbulent late forties, and it is a pleasure to note that he has all his capabilities intact. His three blues choruses on "Messy ..." are trumpet playing of highest class! Postscript of Nov. 3, 2022: At last the two remaining titles have appeared (thanks to Yves Fernand), and there is a physically strong solo on "The Willies", typical of his style too.

**JACQUES BUTLER / SIDNEY BECHET**

**Milano, Italy, March 1957**

Personnel as below.

Concert, not available. Could the date be one year too early, see below?

**JACQUES BUTLER /  
SIDNEY BECHET**

**Sion, Switzerland, March 18, 1958**

Jacques Butler (tp, vo), Eirc "Bibus" Dufour (tb), Sidn 32 bars.ey Bechet (sop), Eddie Bernhard (p), Jean-Marie Ingrad (b), Kansas Fields (dm).

Concert in Cinema Arlequin, three titles:

5:00	Pennies From Heaven	Duet with (sop) 32 bars. Vocal 32 bars. Solo with (sop) acc. 16 bars to coda. (S)
3:36	Les Oignons	Solo with (sop) acc. 32 bars. (FM)
8:09	Saint Louis Blues	Solo 5 choruses of 12 bars. (FM)

Exciting jazzarcheological discovery!! Interesting strong uptempo playing, but the highlight is the very slow "... Heaven", where JB really gives all in, and together with Bechet they create a memorable item!!

**JACQUES BUTLER QUINTET**

**Paris, 1966**

Jacques Butler (tp), Benny Waters (ts), unknown (rhythm).

Movie soundtrack from La Cigale, one title:

2:13	Chappaqua Jump (NC)	Solo 36 bars. Solo 20 bars (NC). (F)
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Very interesting item! JB blows hot and inspired trumpet, sounding like a staccato mixture of swing and bebop!

**CLYDE BERNHARDT  
& HIS HARLEM BLUES & JAZZ BAND**

**NYC. July 17, 1972**

Jacques Butler (tp), Clyde Bernhardt (tb, vo-all items), Charlie Holmes (as), Happy Caldwell (ts), Earl Knight (p), Napoleon "Snags" Allen (g), Jimmy Shirley (b), James "Rip" Harewood (dm).

Twelve titles were recorded for Saydisc, eight issued as "Blues And Jazz From Harlem", no JB on "After You've Gone" and "Georgia On My Mind" but:

Good Rolling Blues	Solo 12 bars. (S)
Lazy River	Solo 6 bars. Obligato parts (mute). (SM)
Triflin' Woman Blues	Intro 4 bars. Solo 12 bars. (S)

Sugar Blues	Solo 18 bars. (SM)
Nobody's Sweetheart	Solo 40 bars. (FM)
There'll Be Some Changes Made	Intro with ens 4 bars. (SM)

More than thirty years after he thrilled our Norwegian ancestors, JB is back in studio for a final recording session! In this amiable atmosphere, there is much good music to be recommended, and JB contributes very nicely. In fact, there is some evidence for jazz having suffered a loss by not letting him frequent the recording studios more often. He plays with strength and conviction wherever he is featured, and I have the feeling he could play on the same level as many of the more famous of his trumpet mainstream fellows. Listen to his uptempo chorus on "... Sweetheart" with numerous fluffs and far from a really great solo, but remember he is more than sixtythree years old, and then use your imagination to dream up a similar prewar solo... His contributions in slower tempi are all interesting, fine soli on "Good Rolling ..." "Triflin' ..." (notable intro here but a small fluff) and "Sugar ..." should all be noted. The Jack/Jaques Butler solography is much too brief!!

No further recording sessions.

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