

**The**

**BARITONESAX**

**of**

**RONALD WASHINGTON**

**“JACK”**

Solographer: Jan Evensmo  
Last update: April 30, 2015

Born: Kansas City, 1912  
 Died: Oklahoma City, Nov. 1964

*Introduction:*

Listening to Jack Washington with Count Basie's orchestra, we were amazed at the scarcity of baritone sax soli in relation to the excellent quality of his playing and active soloing with Benny Moten. Probably being one of the innovators of jazz baritone sax, he deserves a solography!

*History:*

Played soprano sax from the age of 13, joined Bennie Moten immediately after leaving school. Worked in Paul Banks' band and Jesse Stone's Blues Serenaders before rejoining Moten ca. late 1927. Several years with Moten, then joined Count Basie in Kansas City. To New York with Basie in late 1936 and remained with the band until called up for service in the U. S. Army. Served in the 211<sup>th</sup> AGF band at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, until demobilisation in late 1945. Rejoined Count Basie in spring 1946 and remained until 1949. Returned to Oklahoma City, left full-time music and worked as a redcap at the city airport. Continued to play local 'gigs'; played on a New York recording session in 1958 with ex-Basie colleagues (ref. John Chilton).

*Message:*

Note that information from the Bill Savory collection has been included!

## JACK WASHINGTON SOLOGRAPHY

### **JESSE STONE AND HIS BLUES SERENADERS    St. Louis, April 27, 1927**

Albert Hinton, Slick Jackson (tp), Druie Bess (tb), Glenn Hughes (as), Elmer Burch (ts), Jack Washington (as, bar), Jesse Stone (p, ldr), Silas Cluke (bjo), Pete Hassel (tu), Max Wilkinson (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Okeh, no solo on "St. Louis Blues" but:

Boot To Boot

Brief break. (F)

### **BENNIE MOTEN AND HIS ORCHESTRA                      Chi. June 11&12, 1927**

Ed Lewis, Paul Webster (cnt), Thomas Hayes (tb, vo), Harlan Leonard (cl, sop, as), Woody Walder (cl, ts), LaForet Dent (as, ts, vo), Jack Washington (cl, as, bar), Bennie Moten (p, ldr), Leroy "Buster" Berry (bjo), Vernon Page (tu), Willie Mc Washington (dm).

Eight titles were recorded for Victor, five have baritonesax:

38667-3	Sugar	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
38668-4	Dear Heart	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
38670-3	Baby Dear	Solo 16 bars. (M)
38672-3	Pass Out Lightly	32 bars chase with (ts). Coda. (F)
38674-3	Moten Stomp	Part of intro. Solo 8 bars. (F)

Already from JW's debut he turned out to be one of Bennie Moten's most valuable assets. Not only was he an excellent rhythm man whose big sound created a very solid background to make the Moten orchestra one of the most interesting ones of the late twenties. He was also one of its best soloists, a fact which is largely forgotten today. However, the evidence is overwhelming! Note first "Baby Dear" and observe how fluently he plays his big instrument, more fluently than even most tenorsax players on their instrument! On "Pass Out ..." he has a rapid almost 1/1 bar chase with Walder, having no problems at all. And his stoptime solo on the tenorsax bridge of "Moten ..." is formidable. A long solo on "Dear Heart" is very charming, but here the age of this music is more evident. On "Sugar" he is badly recorded on the first part, but the second part is good. In all, a very interesting session with some of the best saxophone of the twenties!

### **BENNIE MOTEN AND HIS ORCHESTRA    Camden, NJ., Sept. 6&7, 1928**

Personnel as June 11&12 except Booker Washington (cnt) replaces Webster, Dent omitted, James Taylor (vo).

Twelve titles were recorded for Victor, eleven issued, nine have baritonesax:

42924-1	Justrite	As below. (FM)
42924-2	Justrite	Solo 14 bars. (FM)
42924-3	Justrite	As above. (FM)
42926-3	Slow Motion	Brief break. (M)
42925-4	It's Hard To Laugh Or Smile	Break 2 bars to duet with (cl) 16 bars. (M)
42928-2	Sad Man Blues	Solo 12 bars. (M)
42929-1	Kansas City Breakdown	Brief breaks. (M)
42930-1	Trouble In Mind	Brief break. (M)
42930-2	Trouble In Mind	As above. (M)
42931-2	Hot Water Blues	With orch. Coda. (M)
42933-1	Get Low-Down blues	Solo 24 bars. (M)
42935-1	South	Solo 16 bars. (M)

Even if the baritonesax performances on these items mostly are very brief, there are some successful soli to be noted. His tongue slapping but otherwise "modern" "Justrite" is certainly memorable. He plays very nicely together with a clarinet on "... Smile", and "South" has one of his most enjoyable and easy swinging soli from this early period. The blues, however, is somewhat disappointing, "Get ..." could be used as a school demonstration of blues progression but has little swing nor inventiveness, and on "Hot Water ...", only the second half comes to life, almost.

**BENNIE MOTEN AND HIS ORCHESTRA****Chi. July 16-18, 1929**

Personnel as above plus Ira "Buster" Moten (acc, p).

Thirteen titles were recorded for Victor, twelve issued, seven have baritonesax:

55420-1	Terrific Stomp	Solo 8 bars. (F)
55421-3	Let's Get It	Solo 8 bars. (M)
55422-2	Kansas City Squabble	Soli 8 and 18 bars. (M)
55423-1	Rite Tite	Solo 16 bars. (M)
55426-1	That Certain Motion	Solo 12 bars. (M)
55427-3	It Won't Be Long	Solo 16 bars. (M)
55429-1	Just Say It's Me	Solo 16+8 bars, (cl) on bridge. Brief breaks. (SM)

Several good soli in pleasant tempo. The band is becoming more modern, the arrangements give more continuous blowing space, and consequently there are fewer "brief break" items. JW is now "almost" a swing soloist! Note for instance his easy moving "Rite Tite" or "... Motion"! His melody presentation on "... Long" is extremely pleasant, as is the related "Just Say ...". In fact, all items are of interest here!

**BENNIE MOTEN AND HIS ORCHESTRA****Chi. Oct. 23&24, 1929**

Personnel as July 16-18, 1929 plus Eddie Durham (tb, g, arr), Count Basie (p).

Bennie Moten (ldr) only.

Ten titles were recorded for Victor, five have baritonesax:

57305-2	Every Day Blues	Solo 4 bars. (M)
57313-3	Mary Lee	Solo 16+6 bars, (as) on bridge. (FM)
57314-1	Rit-Dit-Ray	As below. (F)
57314-2	Rit-Dit-Ray	Solo 18 bars. Break. (F)
57314-3	Rit-Dit-Ray	As above. (F)
57315-1	New Vine Street Blues	As below? ( )
57315-2	New Vine Street Blues	Solo with orch 8 bars. (SM)
57316-2	Sweethearts Of Yesterday	Solo 8 bars. (F)

Here I find particularly the driving soli on "Rit-Dit-Ray" to advantage. Otherwise, JW is less featured than to be preferred and expected.

**BENNIE MOTEN AND HIS ORCHESTRA****Kansas City, Oct. 27-31, 1930**

Personnel as Oct. 23, 1929. Jimmie Rushing (vo).

Nineteen titles were recorded for Victor, eight have baritonesax:

62910-1	I Wish I Could Be Blue	As below. (M)
62910-2	I Wish I Could Be Blue	Straight with orch 32 bars. (M)
62911-1	Oh! Eddie	As below. (F)
62911-2	Oh! Eddie	Solo 6 bars. (F)
62912-1	That Too Do	With orch 6 bars. (SM)
62912-2	That Too Do	As above. (SM)
62913-1	Mack's Rhythm	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
62914-1	You Made Me Happy	Solo 4 bars. (M)
62921-1	Liza Lee	Solo with orch 22 bars. (FM)
62921-2	Liza Lee	As above. (FM)
62921-3	Liza Lee	As above. (FM)
62924-2	When I'm Alone	Solo 4 bars. (FM)
62927-1	Somebody Stole My Gal	With orch 16 bars to solo 24 bars. (F)

Good baritonesax playing on "... Rhythm", and in particular "... My Gal", one of the most exciting soli with the Moten band!

**BENNIE MOTEN AND HIS ORCHESTRA****NYC. April 15, 1931**

Personnel as above plus Hot Lips Page (tp).

Two titles were recorded for Victor but no baritonesax.

**BENNIE MOTEN AND HIS ORCHESTRA****Camden, NJ., Dec. 13, 1932**

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

Nine titles were recorded for Victor but no baritonesax.

It is very surprising that JW's baritonesax suddenly is pushed to the background. He certainly has been a major contribution to the quality of the orchestra, and he certainly was one of the most "modern" of the soloists. The addition of Hot Lips Page, Eddie Durham and latest, Ben Webster, of course made the competition for solo space tough, but I still feel that omission of JW is a terribly waste of talent and resources.

After leaving Moten joined Count Basie in Kansas City 1935, participating in the recording sessions from the very start. Unfortunately JW is not featured much anymore, and only sessions with baritonesax soli are listed below.

**COUNT BASIE AND HIS ORCHESTRA****Pittsburgh, Feb. 10, 1937**

Buck Clayton, Joe Keyes, Carl Smith (tp), George Hunt, Dan Minor (tb), Caghey Roberts (cl, as), Herschel Evans, Lester Young (ts), Ronald "Jack" Washington (as, bar), Count Basie (p, ldr), Claude Williams (g, vln), Walter Page (b), Jo Jones (dm), Jimmy Rushing (vo).

Broadcast from the Chatterbox Room, William Penn Hotel. One title:

Yeah! Man

Solo 32 bars. (F)

**Pittsburgh, Feb. 12, 1937**

Same personnel and place. One title:

Tattersfield Stomp

Solo 8 bars. (F)

JW opens his Basie career with a fine swinging chorus on "Yeah! ...", a title he obviously enjoyed, since there are other broadcast versions later, it was never recorded in studio though.

**COUNT BASIE & HIS ORCHESTRA****NYC. March 26, 1937**

Personnel as above except Ed Lewis, Bobby Moore (tp), Freddie Green (g) replace Smith, Lewis and Williams.

Recording session for Decca:

62078-A Exactly Like You

Solo 8 bars. (FM)

62079-A Boo-Hoo

Solo 8 bars. (FM)

**NYC. Aug. 9, 1937**

Personnel as above except Earl Warren (cl, as) replaces Roberts, Eddie Durham (tb, g) added.

Recording session for Decca:

62514-A Topsy

Solo with orch 32 bars. (FM)

Count Basie goes to the studio, and so does JW; good solo on "Boo-Hoo", an even more elegant one on "Exactly ..." and a fine, full chorus on "Topsy".

**HARRY JAMES AND HIS ORCHESTRA****NYC. Dec. 1, 1937**

Harry James, Buck Clayton (tp), Eddie Durham (tb), Earl Warren (as), Jack Washington (as, bar), Herschal Evans (ts), Jess Stacy (p), Walter Page (b), Jo Jones (dm), Helen Humes (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Brunswick but no baritonesax soli.

**NYC. Jan. 5, 1938**

Same except Vernon Brown (tb) replaces Durham.

Four titles but no baritonesax soli.

**COUNT BASIE AND HIS ORCHESTRA****NYC. June 6, 1938**

Buck Clayton, Harry Edison, Ed Lewis (tp), Dan Minor, Benny Morton (tb), Earl Warren (cl, as), Herschel Evans, Lester Young (cl, ts), Ronald "Jack" Washington (bar), Count Basie (p), Freddie Green (g), Walter Page (b), Jo Jones (dm), Jimmie Rushing (vo).

Recording session for Decca. One title:

63920-A Doggin' Around

Solo 16 bars. (F)

**NYC. Aug. 23& 24, 1938**

Personnel as above with Dicky Wells (tb), Helen Humes (vo) added.  
CBS broadcast from The Famous Door. Two titles:

Yeah! Man	Solo 32 bars. (F)
Doggin' Around	Solo 32 bars. (F)

**NYC. Sept. 6, 1938**

Same personnel and place. One title:

Indiana	Solo with orch 32 bars. (M)
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**NYC. Sept. 13, 1938**

Same personnel and place. One title:

Indiana	Solo with orch 32 bars. (FM)
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**NYC. Oct. 9 or 10, 1938**

Same personnel and place. One title:

Yeah! Man	Solo 32 bars. (F)
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Fine baritone sax on the Decca version of "... Around" and an even more colourful, twice as long one from The Famous Door. Fine variations on "Yeah" ... " and quite different versions of "Indiana", why didn't Basie use JW more as soloist?

**COUNT BASIE AND HIS ORCHESTRA****NYC. Feb. 4, 1939**

Buck Clayton, Shad Collins, Harry Edison (tp), Dicky Wells (tb), Lester Young (ts), Jack Washington (bar), Count Basie (p), Freddie Green (g), Walter Page (b), Jo Jones (dm).

Recording session for Decca, one title:

64983-A	Jive At Five	With (tb)/orch 16+8 bars, (tb)/orch on bridge. Solo 8 bars. (M)
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A great smallband-Basie record, and JW should have a lot of credit for it with his part in the thrilling opening, later a fine solo.

**COUNT BASIE AND HIS ORCHESTRA****NYC. May 19, 1939**

Buck Clayton, Shad Collins, Harry Edison, Ed Lewis (tp), Dan Minor, Benny Morton, Dicky Wells (tb), Earl Warren (as), Buddy Tate, Lester Young (ts), Count Basie (p), Freddie Green (g), Walter Page (b), Jo Jones (dm), Helen Humes, Jimmie Rushing (vo).

Recording session for Vocalion, one title:

2597-C	Pound Cake	Solo with orch 24 bars. (M)
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Again JW is trusted in setting the mood for a jumping tune, this time, "Pound ...", excellent and elegant work!

**COUNT BASIE & HIS ORCHESTRA****NYC. May 19, 1939**

Personnel as above.

Bill Savory collection, broadcast, two titles have JW:

Topsy	Solo with orch 32 bars. (FM)
Pound Cake	Solo with orch 24 bars. (FM)

Very exciting to hear JW on the air, even the same day as the Vocalion session above, and with a very different but equally good version of "Pound ...", as well as a fine "Topsy"!

**COUNT BASIE & HIS ORCHESTRA****Glendale, Ca. Nov. 3, 1939**

Personnel as above.

Broadcast from Glendale Civic Auditorium.

Pound Cake	Solo with orch 24 bars. (FM)
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Another fine version of "Pound ..." has appeared recently (April 2015)!

**COUNT BASIE & HIS ORCHESTRA****Boston, March 1, 1940**

Personnel as above except Al Killian (tp), Vic Dickenson (tb) replace Collins and Morton.

Broadcast from Southland Theatre Restaurant. One title:

Indiana	Solo with orch 32 bars. (FM)
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**Boston, March 9, 1940**

Same personnel and place. One title:

Topsy

Solo with orch 32 bars. (FM)

**Boston, March 12, 1940**

Same. One title:

Doggin' Around

Solo 32 bars. (F)

Another interesting version of "Indiana" but even more interesting; a broadcast version of the fascinating "Topsy", however the baritonesax is not well recorded here. Postscript: I had forgotten a well-hidden cassette copy of "... Around" with a fine JW solo!

**COUNT BASIE SMALL GROUP****NYC. March 20, 1940**

Harry Edison (tp), Ronald "Jack" Washington (bar), Count Basie (p), Freddie Green (g), Walter Page (b), Jo Jones (dm), Jimmie Rushing (vo).

Recording session for Columbia. One title:

26662-A      Somebody Stole My Gal

Faintly acc. (tp) 40 bars and  
obligato 40 bars to solo  
40 bars. Again faint obligato  
with (tp) 16 bars. (F)

My oh my, almost ten years after doing it with Bennie Moten, JW gets "... My Gal" almost as a feature number!

**COUNT BASIE AND HIS ORCHESTRA****NYC. Jan. 28, 1941**

Buck Clayton, Harry Edison, Al Killian, Ed Lewis (tp), Ed Cuffee, Dan Minor, Dicky Wells (tb), Tab Smith (sop, as), Earl Warren (as), Don Byas, Buddy Tate (ts), Jack Washington (bar), Count Basie (p), Freddie Green (g), Walter Page (b), Jo Jones (dm), Helen Humes (vo).

Recording session for Okeh:

29583-1      Jitters

Solo 8 bars. (F)

29583-2      Jitters

As above. (F)

29583-?      Jitters

As above. (F)

"Jitters" is the only example of alternate takes with JW, but they are short, programmed and not that different.

No further baritonesax soli until JW was drafted in late 1943 to be replaced by Elman "Rudy" Rutherford. And outside the scope of this book: JW returned to Basie in July 1946 and stayed until the band broke up in late 1949. Just a few baritonesax soli in this period:

**COUNT BASIE AND HIS ORCHESTRA****NYC. Aug. 9, 1946**

Personnel later.

AFRS "One Night Stand" programme from Aquarium Restaurant. One title:

Jumpin' Jim / Jive At Five

Solo 56 bars to coda. (M)

Combined titles, and JW enters just to begin the famous "... Jive". This time he gets it more or less for himself, a long, elaborate solo, one of his most noteworthy with Basie and consequently in his whole recorded output!

**COUNT BASIE & HIS  
INSTRUMENTALISTS & RHYTHM****NYC. May 21, 1947**

Paul Gonsalves (ts-"I Never Knew"), Jack Washington (bar), Count Basie (p, org), Freddie Green (g), Walter Page (b), Jo Jones (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Victor, no JW on "I Never Knew" but:

892-1      Lopin'

Solo 32 bars to 32 bars  
4/4 and 2/2 with (p). (FM)

Baritonesax with rhythm, should be an obvious good idea, but it took CB long time to find out, and this is the only example of such a setup. JW plays with great confidence here, and we can only be sorry that he did not record more.

No recording sessions after 1949 with one exception:

**PAUL QUINICHETTE****Hackensack, NJ., Sept. 5, 1958**

Buck Clayton, Shad Collins (tp), Paul Quinichette (ts), Jack Washington (bar), Nat Pierce (p), Freddie Green (g), Eddie Jones (b), Jo Jones (dm).

Five titles were recorded for Prestige, issued as “Basie Reunion”:

1577	Blues I Like To Hear	Solo 36 bars. (SM)
1578	Roseland Shuffle	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (FM)
1579	John’s Idea	Solo 64 bars. (F)
1580	Love Jumped Out	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
1581	Baby Don’t Tell On Me	Solo 24 bars. (SM)

This is a delightful Basie-traditional mainstream session, better than this you don’t get it in the late fifties, swinging just like in the old days with the “world’s best rhythm session”! JW is in amazingly good shape, considering being out of real business for a decade. Maybe a bit rusty sound, but his improvisations are all inspired and alive, fine feeling on the two slow blues items, and youthful technique and energy in uptempo, three choruses on “... Shuffle” is impressive. Jack Washington, a great baritonesax player to be sorely missed!

No further recording sessions.

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