

The

ALTOSAX

of

JOSEPH ELDRIDGE
“JOE”

Solographer: Jan Evensmo
Last update: Feb. 2, 2018

Born: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1908
Died: March 5, 1952

Introduction:

Joe Eldridge, older brother of trumpeter Roy Eldridge, was a much underrated alto sax performer, and there are not many examples of his playing. He certainly deserves a soloography!

History:

With Henri Saparo's band in New York (1927), later led Elite Serenaders at Renaissance Ballroom, and in Pittsburgh. During the early 1930s worked with Speed Webb, Cecil Scott, Ken Murray, etc., then co-led band with Roy in Pittsburgh (1933). With the Cotton Pickers in Baltimore, then with Blanche Calloway from late 1935 until early 1937. Joined Roy's band in Chicago (March 1937) and moved to New York with Roy's band (1938-40). Spell with Buddy Johnson, then with Zutty Singleton's quartet in New York (1941-43), briefly led at Ryan's, then moved to Los Angeles to rejoin Zutty (April 1943). In 1944 worked (on tenor) in Roy's band, with Hot Lips Page (1945). Lived in Canada during the late 1940s, worked with Raymond Vin's band in Quebec (1949). Moved back to New York in 1950 and did some teaching in last year of his life (ref. John Chilton).

JOE ELDRIDGE SOLOGRAPHY

BLANCHE CALLOWAY **NYC. Nov. 6, 1935**
Bigband personnel including Joe Eldridge, Chauncey Haughton (as).
Four titles were recorded for Vocalion, but no altosax soli.

ROY ELDRIDGE & HIS ORCHESTRA **Chi. Jan. 23&28, 1937**
Roy Eldridge (tp), Scoops Carry, Joe Eldridge (as), Dave Young (ts), Teddy Cole (p), John Collins (g), Truck Parham (b), Zutty Singleton (dm), Gladys Palmer (vo).
Six titles were recorded for Vocalion, three have JE:

C1793-1	Wabash Stomp	Solo 16 bars (1 st (as)-solo). (M)
C1793-2	Wabash Stomp	As above. (M)
C1994-1	Florida Stomp	Solo 16+8 bars, (p) on bridge. (SM)
C1994-2	Florida Stomp	As above. (SM)
C1797-1	That Thing	Solo 16 bars (2 nd (as)-solo). (SM)

“Brother” Eldridge is a good and underrated altosax player, as evident from this magnificent Vocalion session. It is possible to mix up with the also important altosax of SC, so hopefully the above is correct. Note particularly “That Thing” where both of them have nice contributions. Postscript: An alternate of “Florida ...” has appeared with the necessary differences.

ROY ELDRIDGE & HIS ORCHESTRA **Chi. prob. Feb. 1937**
Personnel as Jan. 23, 1937.
Privately recorded at the Three Deuces.
Eight titles, issued on Jazz Archives, six have altosax soli, three probably have JE:

Little Jazz (Crazy Rhythm)	Solo 18+8 bars, (tp) on bridge. (M)
Swing Is Here	Solo 8 bars (1 st (as)-solo). (F)
I Never Knew	Solo 8 bars. (F)

Hotter jazz music than this does not exist! JE contributes professionally to the success, a good altosax player, in this group competing with Scoops Carry. It is believed that he takes three soli, note in particular the swinging “Little Jazz”.

ROY ELDRIDGE & HIS ORCHESTRA **Chi. 1937/1938**
Personnel similar to above.
Probably from the Three Deuces. Of the titles on Jazz Archives, two have altosax soli, both by JE:

Peckin’	Solo 28 bars. (F)
Chinatown, My Chinatown	Solo 32 bars. (F)

Two uptempo items, but JE has no problem dealing with high speed.

ROY ELDRIDGE & HIS ORCHESTRA **Chi. 1937/1938**
Personnel similar to above.
Probably additional items from the Three Deuces, found in the Roy Eldridge collection. Four titles have altosax, probably by JE:

Chinatown, My Chinatown alt.	Solo 32 bars. (F)
After You’ve Gone	Solo 40 bars. (F)
Wabash Stomp	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
Body And Soul	Solo 16 bars. (S)

Interesting discoveries!

ROY ELDRIDGE & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Aug./Sept. 1939**
Roy Eldridge, Richard Williams (tp), Eli Robinson (tb), Joe Eldridge (as), Prince Robinson (cl, ts), Franz Jackson (ts), Clyde Hart (p), John Collins (g), Ted Sturgis (b), Panama Francis (dm), Leo Watson (dm).
NBC broadcasts from Arcadia Ballroom, from the JA-14 LP, the following seven have altosax soli (but there may be others, unissued, not available):

Aug. 5, 1939

Mahogany Hall Stomp Solo 24 bars. (F)

Aug. 12, 1939

Heckler's Hop Solo 16+8 bars, (p) on bridge. (F)

Swinging At The Deuces Solo 32 bars. (FM)

The Gasser (Sweet GB) Solo 32 bars. (F)

Aug. 19, 1939

Yellow Fire Solo 8 bars. (F)

Sept. 2, 1939

Woodchopper's Ball Solo 24 bars. (F)

Sept. 9, 1939

Minor Jive Solo 32 bars. (FM)

The Arcadia group has only one altosax, so there is no identification problems. JE seems to thrive in upper tempi and performs well, perhaps not with the creativity of the greatest ones on the altosax, but nevertheless an artist deserving to be remembered for his works. Note how he swings the good old "Sweet ...". Wish though that he had left us some ballads.

ROY ELDRIDGE**NYC. Oct. 1939**

Personnel as Aug./Sept. 1939.

Four titles were recorded for Varsity but no altosax soli.

NYC. Dec. 1939

Same except Ken Kersey (p) replaces Hart.

Four titles, two have JE:

1190-1 Muskrat Ramble Solo 16 bars. (M)

1191-1 Who Told You I Cared? Break. (SM)

The two brothers are having a ball on "Muskrat ...", following a magnificent trumpet solo, JE is showing us he has a lot to say on his altosax.

FRANZ JACKSON & HIS JACKSONIANS**NYC. March 12, 1940**

Personnel including Joe Eldridge (as).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, one has altosax:

67294-A Summer Rhapsody Straight 8 bars. (SM)

BILLIE HOLIDAY & HER ORCHESTRA**NYC. June 7, 1940**

Personnel including Joe Eldridge, Billy Bowen (as).

Four titles were recorded for Okeh, but no altosax soli.

ROY ELDRIDGE**June 28, 1940**

Roy Eldridge (tp), Steve Benoit (cl), Joe Eldridge (as), Hazel Scott (p).

Roy Eldridge collection, one title:

The Sheik Of Araby Solo 32 bars. (FM)

Fine altosax solo here with reasonably good sound.

BUDDY JOHNSON & HIS ORCHESTRA**NYC. April 9, 1941**

Personnel probably as May 1 below.

Three titles were recorded for Decca but no altosax soli.

NYC. May 1, 1941

Shad Collins (tp), Scoville Brown (cl, as), Joe Eldridge (as), Kenneth Hollon (ts), Leonard Ware (g), Frank Clarke (b), Kenny Clarke (dm), Ella Johnson (vo-69114-116).

Five titles were recorded for Decca, four have JE:

69114 I'm My Baby's Baby Solo 16 bars. (M)

69115-B New Please Mr. Johnson Solo with ens 12 bars. (S)

69116 It's The Gold Solo 8 bars. (M)

69117-A Tryon Swing Soli 8 bars. (M)

This is a good small band, and the three medium items have very good altosax soli, particularly "... Baby" is highly noteworthy. The slow item has JE in the introduction and is not that interesting.

ROY ELDRIDGE QUINTET

NYC. Aug./Sept. 1943

Roy Eldridge (tp), Joe Eldridge (as), Cyril Haynes (p), Eddie Robinson (b), Harold "Doc" West (dm).

Broadcast from "Folies Bergere", announced as "New York's newest night club":

The Man I Love	Solo 64 bars. (FM)
St. Louis Blues	Solo 5 choruses of 12 bars. (F)
Theme	No solo.

NYC. Aug. 31, 1943

Same. Two titles, Timme Rosenkrantz collection:

Minor Jive	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
Body And Soul	Solo 16 bars. (SM)

This airshot is very important, not necessary for Roy, since he has left us so much great music anyway, but for Joe, so sparsely featured during his career. Here he stretches out in upper tempi, and the results are highly notable. Postscript: Two more titles have appeared (possibly all five from the same broadcast?) (after "... Jive" the title "Knock Me A Kiss" is announced, but the program is then aborted, to continue with "... Soul", so maybe this title also exists?), and the good impression of JE's music is further strengthened. He swings merrily with fine ideas on "... Jive" and takes a very beautiful half chorus on "... Soul". Yes, important discovery!!

NYC. Sept. 7, 1943

Same. Two titles, Timme Rosenkrantz collection:

Blue Lou	Soli 64, 4 and 4 bars. (FM)
The Man I Love	Solo 64 bars. (M)

Postscript of Jan. 2018: Two additional titles have appeared, and they confirm the good impression of JE's altosax playing, excellent soloing on both items. Note that this "... Love" is different from the one above.

ROY ELDRIDGE & HIS ORCHESTRA

Chi. Nov. 16, 1943

Roy Eldridge (tp), Joe Eldridge, Ernest Archia (as), Andrew "Goon" Gardner, Ike Quebec (ts), Rozelle Gayle (p), Ted Sturgis (b), Harold "Doc" West (dm).

Nine titles were recorded for World Broadcasting Systems transcriptions, two have altosax:

Jump Through The Window	Solo 12 bars. (M)
After You've Gone	Solo 12 bars. (F)

Two rather brief but competent altosax soli.

SAMMY PRICE & HIS BLUSICIANS

NYC. March 1, 1944

Bill Coleman (tp), Joe Eldridge (as), Ike Quebec (ts), Sammy Price (p), Oscar Pettiford (b), Harold "Doc" West (dm).

Eight titles were recorded for World Broadcasting Systems transcriptions, four have JE:

1800-1	That's Kicks	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
1800-2	That's Kicks	As above. (FM)
1800-3	That's Kicks (NC)	As above. (FM)
1800-4	That's Kicks	As above. (FM)
1802-1	A Boogie Woogie Notion	Solo 24 bars. (FM)
1805-1	Boogin' A-Plenty (NC)	Solo 2 bars (NC). (M)
1805-2	Boogin' A-Plenty	Solo 24 bars. (M)
1807-2	Honeysuckle Rose	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
1807-3	Honeysuckle Rose (NC)	Solo 2 bars (NC). (FM)
1807-4	Honeysuckle Rose	Solo 64 bars. (FM)

This interesting session, appearing in several solographies, is also one of JE's most important ones. In "... Kicks" one can through four takes study his fine soloing with small but notable variations. On "Boogin' ..." and "... Notion" he plays the medium blues very nicely, confirming my impression he really could do much more than evidenced by the few records and broadcasts. Finally, his three choruses on the "... Rose"s also are most noteworthy, note also the different layout of the takes. Unfortunately this is JE's last possibility to develop his music, although he takes a few soli on the following bigband sessions by his brother's band.

SAM PRICE & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. May 24, 1944**
Tommy Allison, Dave Nelson (tp), Joe Eldridge (as), Paul Bascomb (ts), Sammy Price (p), Jimmy Butts (b), Harold Wilson (dm), Bettye Logan (vo).
Four titles were recorded for Decca, unissued.

ROY ELDRIDGE & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. June 26, 1944**
Roy Eldridge, Gus Aiken, John Hamilton, Robert "Cookie" Mason, Clarence Wheeler (tp), Ted Kelly, Sandy Williams, George Wilson (tb), Joe Eldridge, Sam Lee (as), Franz Jackson, Hal Singer (ts), Dave McRae (bar), Tony D'Amore (p), Sam "Christopher" Allen (g), Carl "Flat Top" Wilson (b), Les Erskine (dm).
Three titles were recorded for Decca, one has altosax:

72298-A After You've Gone Solo 36 bars. (F)

"After ..." shows that JE certainly has good technique, and he manages to get a lot of music out of this occasion, although tempo is frightening.

WARREN EVANS **NYC. Oct./Nov. 1944**
Dick Vance, Dave Nelson (tp), Benny Morton (tb), George James, Joe Eldridge (as), Lem Johnson (ts), Sammy Price (p), Everett Barksdale (g), Billy Taylor, Sr. (b), Harold "Doc" West (dm), Warren Evans (vo).
Four titles were recorded for National, but no JE.

ROY ELDRIDGE & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Oct. 13, 1944**
Roy Eldridge (tp,vo), Sidney DeParis, Paul Cohen, Robert "Cookie" Mason, Pinky Savitt (tp), Wilbur DeParis, Sandy Williams, Vic Dickenson, George Stevenson (tb), Joe Eldridge, Curby Alexander (as), Franz Jackson, Hal Singer (ts), Dave McRae (bar), Humphrey Ted Brannon (p), Napoleon "Snags" Allen (g), Billy Taylor, Sr. (b), Cozy Cole (dm).
Three titles were recorded for Decca, one has altosax:

72430-A Fish Market Solo 8 bars. (M)

One of the strongest Roy records of the middle forties, and there can be no doubt that his brother plays this nice altosax solo.

JAM SESSION **NYC. Nov. 19, 1944**
Gene Sedric (cl, ts), Joe Eldridge (as), Ted Brannon (p), Freddie Moore (dm).
Two titles (the last given as Oct. 3 but probably not correct), Timme Rosenkrantz collection:

Mood To Boot 8:09 Solo 64 bars. (M)

I Got Rhythm 7:06 Soli 64 and 8 bars. (M)

A soft spoken jam session, nice but no sensation as such. Very interesting though to hear JE playing and swinging quite long medium-tempoed soli in a rather sweet and reticent way. Since there is nothing comparable to this, the conclusion is that we have here a very valuable addition to the brief Joe Eldridge solography!

ROY ELDRIDGE & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Sept. 24, 1946**
Roy Eldridge, Dave Page, Marion Hazel, Thomas "Sleepy" Grider, Sylvester Lewis (tp), Richard Dunlap, Charles Greenlee, George Robinson, Fred Robinson (tb), Sahib Shihab, Joe Eldridge (as), Walt Lockhart, Harold Webster (ts), Cecil Payne (bar), Duke Jordan (p), Carl Pruitt (b), Lee Abrams (dm).
Four titles were recorded for Decca, one has altosax:

73688 Lover Come Back To Me Solo 4 bars. (M)

I am pretty confident that this nice altosax break is played by JE. It is his last effort, although he lives for another six years. He had more talent than commonly realized, but always in the shadow of his younger brother.

No further recording sessions.