

**The**  
**TENORSAX**  
**of**  
**KENNETH HOLLON**

Solographer: Jan Evensmo  
Last update: April 30, 2013

Born: Brooklyn, NYC. Nov. 26, 1909  
Died: New York, Sept. 30, 1974

*Introduction:*

I heard Kenneth Hollon first time with Putney Dandridge, and "Santa Claus Came In The Spring" was must exciting! He certainly deserves attention for his juicy tenorsax style!

*History:*

Taught by cousin, Clifton Glover. First gigs with "Hat" Hunter in 1931, then worked with The Louisiana Stompers. Despite having a daytime government job was much in demand as a musician, and during the 1930s and early 1940s worked with Luis Russell, Charlie Johnson, Teddy Hill, Claude Hopkins, Vernon Andrade, Frankie Newton, Fats Waller's Big Band, Don Redman, Buddy Johnson, and Louis Jordan (ref. John Chilton).

## KENNETH HOLLON SOLOGRAPHY

**PUTNEY DANDRIDGE AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Oct. 21, 1935**

Shirley Clay (tp), Kenneth Hollon (ts), Teddy Wilson (p), Clarence Holiday (g), John Kirby (b), Manzie Johnson (dm), Putney Dandridge (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Vocalion, all have tenorsax:

- |         |                                |   |
|---------|--------------------------------|---|
| 18183-1 | I'm On A See Saw               | Solo 12 bars. Very faint obbligato with (tp) 24 and 14 bars. (SM)                               |
| 18184-1 | Eeeney-Meeney-Miney-Mo         | Solo 16+8 bars, (p) on bridge. Acc. (tp) 32 bars. Some obbligato at the end. (FM)               |
| 18185-1 | Double Trouble                 | Part of intro 2 bars. Sporadic obbligato. Solo 16+8 bars, (p) on bridge. Acc. (tp) 32 bars. (M) |
| 18186-1 | Santa Claus Came In The Spring | Solo 16+8 bars, (tp) on bridge. Very faint obbligato. Solo 8 bars. (FM)                         |

The tenorsax player on this session was once believed to be Ben Webster, something I questioned in my first Jazz Solography work in 1968. I characterized the style as "rather different from what we are used to hear (from BW), it is far more "groovy", rhythmically more in the direction of Chu Berry. The soli are all of musically excellent quality, original and inspired, and the records have a grand atmosphere. Particularly "Eeeney ..." and "Santa ..." are unusually juicy". I have the same high opinion of this tenorsax playing today. What is amazing, however, is that nobody discovered his identity at a much earlier date. If you play this session first and then the next with Slim and Slam, you will immediately understand that it is the same man, no doubt at all!!

**SLIM AND SLAM** **NYC. Aug. 17, 1938**

Kenneth Hollon (ts), Sam Allen (p), Slim Gaillard (g, vo), Slam Stewart (b, vo), Pompey "Guts" Dobson (dm).

Three titles were recorded for Vocalion:

- |       |                        |                                    |
|-------|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 23357 | Jump Session           | Solo 16+8 bars, (p) on bridge. (M) |
| 23358 | Laughin' In Rhythm     | Solo 32 bars. (M)                  |
| 23359 | Vol Vist Du Gaily Star | Solo 32 bars. (M)                  |

**NYC. Nov. 9, 1938**

Same. Four titles were recorded for Vocalion:

- |         |                           |                                     |
|---------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 23683-1 | Dopey Joe                 | Solo 32 bars. Faint obbligato. (F)  |
| 23684-1 | Sweet Safronia            | Solo 32 bars. Faint obbligato. (F)  |
| 23685-1 | It's Gettin' Kinda Chilly | Solo 32 bars. Faint obbligato. (FM) |
| 23686-1 | Buck Dance Rhythm         | Solo 32 bars. Faint obbligato. (FM) |

The seven sides with Slim and Slam represent the best opportunity to get acquainted with Kenneth Hollon and his style. As mentioned before, his roots are near Chu Berry and also Robert Carroll, happy and swinging, with nice but not sensational improvisations. Two items are outstanding, "... Rhythm" and "... Star" from the first session in a pleasant medium tempo. Listen closely and you will find the resemblance to Putney's "Santa Claus ..." quite conclusive. When the tempo gets faster, the style gets, not unexpectedly, more staccato. Of these items, I suggest "Buck Dance ...". Otherwise, he seems to thrive very much in the background, accompanying the vocal parts.

**SWING SESSION** **NYC. Jan. 11, 1939**

Charlie Shavers (tp), Jack Teagarden (tb), Kenneth Hollon (ts), Bill Miller ? (p), Teddy Bunn (g), Johnny Williams (b), unknown (dm), Leo Watson, Johnny Mercer (vo).

Bill Savory collection, broadcast, four titles, no KH on "Jeepers Creepers" and "Blues" but:

Honeysuckle Rose Solo 32 bars. (M)  
China Boy Solo 32 bars. (FM)

This was a very pleasant surprise, long and exciting jam session! KH gets two opportunities and his soli are singing and personal as we know him from earlier.

**BILLIE HOLIDAY AND HER ORCHESTRA NYC. March 21, 1939**

Hot Lips Page (tp), Tab Smith (sop, as), Kenneth Hollon, Stanley Payne (ts), Ken Kersey (p), Jimmy McLin (g), John Williams (b), Eddie Dougherty (dm), Billie Holiday (vo).

Five titles were recorded for Vocalion, only one has tenorsax:

24245-1 You're Too Lovely To Last Solo 8 bars. (SM)  
24245-2 You're Too Lovely To Last As above. (SM)

Quite sweet and not particularly noteworthy.

**FRANK NEWTON AND HIS CAFE SOCIETY ORCHESTRA NYC. April 12, 1939**

Frankie Newton (tp), Tab Smith (sop, as), Stanley Payne (as), Kenneth Hollon (ts), Kenny Kersey (p), Ulysses Livingston (g), John Williams (b), Eddie Dougherty (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Vocalion, two have tenorsax:

24366-A Jitters Solo 24 bars. (F)  
24368-A Jam Fever Solo 32 bars. (F)  
24368-B Jam Fever As above. (F)

In this fast tempo, KH plays quite well, but not as convincingly as in the lower tempi. This was also evident on the Slim and Slam session. The style becomes more staccato. There is no doubt, however, that "Jitters" has a forceful solo, and that the two takes of "Jam Fever" show the necessary differences for a competent improviser.

**BILLIE HOLIDAY AND HER ORCHESTRA NYC. April 20, 1939**

Frankie Newton (tp), Tab Smith (as), Kenneth Hollon, Stanley Payne (ts), Sonny White (p), Jimmy McLin (g), John Williams (b), Eddie Dougherty (dm), Billie Holiday (vo).

Three titles were recorded for Commodore, but no tenorsax to be heard. However, one title was recorded with Billie Holiday, KH and rhythm only:

24404-A Yesterdays Weak obbligato with (p). Brief break. (SM)  
24404-B Yesterdays As above. (SM)

A historical session, but for other reasons than tenorsax, which is heard only on one item and very faintly.

**BILLIE HOLIDAY AND HER ORCHESTRA NYC. July 5, 1939**

Charlie Shavers (tp), Tab Smith (sop, as), Kenneth Hollon, Stanley Payne (ts), Sonny White (p), Bernard Addison (g), John Williams (b), Eddie Dougherty (dm), Billie Holiday (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Vocalion, three have tenorsax:

24878-A Our Love Is Different Solo 7 bars. (S)  
24879-A Them There Eyes Solo 16 bars. (FM)  
24880-A Swing, Brother, Swing Solo 16 bars. (FM)

Interesting soli these, particularly "Swing, Brother, ..." which demonstrates a fine dramatic talent.

**FRANK NEWTON AND HIS CAFE SOCIETY ORCHESTRA NYC. Aug. 15, 1939**

Personnel probably as April 12, 1939 plus Dicky Wells (tb).

Two titles were recorded for Vocalion, one has tenorsax:

25203-1 Vamp Solo 14 bars. (FM)

An even and good solo without special merits.

**SLIM GAILLARD****AND HIS FLATFOOT FLOOGIE BOYS****NYC. Oct. 11, 1939**

Al Killian or Cyril Newman (tp), possibly Kenneth Hollon (ts), Loumell Morgan (p), Slim Gaillard (g, vo), William Smith (b), Hubert Pettaway (dm).

Five titles were recorded for Vocalion, four have tenorsax:

26149-A	Look Out	Solo 16 bars. In ensemble 8 bars. (M)
26150-A	Matzoh Balls	Solo 32 bars. (F)
26152-A	Chitlin' Switch Blues	In ensemble. (SM)
26153-A	Huh! Uh-Huh!	In ensemble. (M)

I have been much in doubt about this session, even volunteering the idea that Herman Flintall might have changed from (as) to (ts) for the occasion. However, close listening may give some evidence to KH. And particularly the thrilling solo on "Look Out" may give the cue; it has an uncanny resemblance to Dick Wilson, something we also find later with Buddy Johnson.

**FRANK NEWTON****AND HIS CAFE SOCIETY ORCHESTRA****1939**

Personnel probably as April 12, 1939 with Billie Holiday (vo-"I'm Gonna Lock My Heart"), Joe Turner (vo-"On The Sunny Side ... II").

Broadcast(s) from Cafe Society, recorded on aluminum disks.

	I'm Gonna Lock My Heart	No solo.
	On The Sunny Side Of The Street I	Solo 32 bars. (M)
	Honeysuckle Rose	Solo 64 bars. (F)
	On The Sunny Side Of The Street II	Solo 32 bars. (M)

Here we have a rare occasion to hear KH stretch out a bit, something he does convincingly, proving that he was one of the major tenorsax players at this time. He is obviously influenced by Tab Smith on "... Sunny Side ... I", not quite to my taste, but still he plays beautifully in the first part of the solo. The "... Sunny Side ... II", however, is masterly all the way through, the solo just manages to close before the recording runs out. And then, two excellent choruses on "... Rose" make these airshots a real find for the KH fan!!

**LOUIS JORDAN AND HIS TYMPANY FIVE****NYC. March 13, 1940**

Nathanael "Courtney" Williams (tp), Louis Jordan (cl, as, bar, vo, ldr), Kenneth Hollon (tp), Arnold Thomas (p), Charlie Drayton (b), Walter Martin (dm), Mabel Robinson, Daisy Winchester (vo).

Six titles were recorded for Decca, five have KH:

67308	You've Got To Go When The Wagon Comes	Solo 4 bars. (M)
67309	Lovie Joe	Solo 4 bars. (SM)
67310	Somebody Done Hoodooed The Hoodoo Man	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
67318	Penthouse In The Basement	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
67319	After School Swing Session	Soli 4 and 4 bars. (FM)

**NYC. April 29, 1940**

Same. Four titles were recorded, all have KH:

67634	Oh Boy I'm In The Groove	Solo 8 bars. (FM)
67635-A	Never Let Your Left Hand	Solo 4 bars. (M)
67636-A	Don't Come Crying On My Shoulder	Solo 2 bars. (FM)
67637-A	Waitin' For The Robert E. Lee	Solo 4 bars. (F)

**NYC. Sept. 30, 1940**

Same plus the Tympany Five (vo).

Four titles were recorded, two have tenorsax:

68169-A	A Chicken Ain't Nothin' But A Bird	Solo 4 bars. (FM)
68170-A	Pompton Turnpike	Solo 4 bars. (SM)

**NYC. Jan. 24, 1941**

Same? Alternate personnel with Stafford Simon (ts) has been suggested, impossible to verify the identity of the tenorsax.

Four titles were recorded, two have tenorsax:

68622-A	The Two Little Squirrels	Obbligato 8 bars. (FM)
68623-A	T-Bone Blues	Obbligato 8 and 6 bars. (SM)

To put it bluntly, the Tympany Five is just a waste of talent. I never quite understand why the records with the least musical contents always are those which sell best. All the musicians present on these sessions are obviously able to play, so why do all this crap? There are only two important tenorsax items, "... Hoodoo Man" and "Penthouse ...", and they are certainly promising.

**BUDDY JOHNSON AND HIS BAND** **NYC. April 9, 1941**

Personnel is not the one listed in Rust but of a similar setup, having (tp), (cl), Kenneth Hollon (ts), unknown (amplified steel g-68969), rhythm.

Three sides were recorded for Decca, two have KH:

68969-A	Boogie Woogie's Mother-In-Law	Solo 24 bars. (FM)
68971-A	In There	Intro 8 bars. Soli 32 and 32 bars. (FM)

"In There" is almost a feature number for Kenneth Hollon, and one of his most important records. He plays inspiredly with great dynamics, throwing himself in with a forceful intro. The first of the two extended soli is the best one, with a lot of interesting details, note for instance the bridge. In general a tenorsax record you shouldn't miss! "... Mother-In-Law" has two blues choruses, quite acceptable but not of the quality of "In There".

**BUDDY JOHNSON AND HIS BAND** **NYC. May 1, 1941**

Shad Collins (tp), Joe Eldridge, Scoville Browne (as), Kenneth Hollon (ts), Woodrow W.W. "Buddy" Johnson (p, vo, ldr), Lennie Ware (g), Frank Clarke (b), Kenny Clarke (dm), Ella Johnson (vo).

Five titles were recorded, two have KH:

69116	It's The Gold	Solo with orch 16 bars. (M)
69117-A	Trylon Swing	Solo 8 bars. Solo 16+8 bars, rhythm on bridge. (FM)

"Trylon ..." has an interesting solo, not unlike Harlan Leonard's saxes, and also a kind of Putney Dandridge atmosphere with some modern flavor!

**BUDDY JOHNSON AND HIS BAND** **NYC. Nov. 6, 1941**

Courtney Williams (tp), Chester Boone (tp, vo), Dan Minor (tb), Leslie Johnkins, Bill Bowen (as), Kenneth Hollon (ts), Buddy Johnson (p, vo, ldr), Frank Clarke (b), Alfred Taylor (dm), Warren Evans, Ella Johnson (vo).

Five titles were recorded for Decca, two have KH:

69912-A	I Wonder Who's Boogiein' My Woogie Now	Solo with orch 16 bars. (M)
69916-A	Without The One You Love	Brief coda. (S)

**NYC. Jan. 26, 1942**

Same/similar. Five titles were recorded for Decca, one has KH:

70224-B	Deep Down In The Miz	Soli 4 and 4 bars. (S)
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Delicious playing on "... Miz", and in the otherwise ordinary "... My Woogie ..." we get a touch of Dick Wilson!

**BUDDY JOHNSON AND HIS BAND** **NYC. July 30, 1942**

Unknown personnel, maybe similar to the one on Nov. 6, 1941, but Tab Smith (as) and Kenneth Hollon (ts) possible only.

Four titles were recorded for Decca, two have tenorsax:

71270-A	I Done Found Out	Solo 8 bars. (S)
71271-A	Let's Beat Out Some Love	Solo 16 bars. (M)

Some very nice tenorsax playing, particularly on the slow "... Out". However, the style seems somewhat rougher than usual, and I am not sure this really is KH.

**KENNY WATTS AND HIS JUMPIN' BUDDIES** **NYC. Aug. 9, 1946**

Kenneth Hollon, Jimmy Brown (ts), Kenny Watts (p), Carroll Walrond (b), Ray Nathan (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Savoy:

S3325	Watts My Name	Solo 64 bars (last (ts)-solo). (F)
S3326	Doin' The Thing	Solo 24 bars. (S)
S3327	Brooklyn Bridge	Solo 5 choruses of 12 bars (last (ts)-solo). (FM)
S3328	Putnam Avenue Breakdown	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (F)

This session "falls between chairs", unsuccessful arrangements and an unresolved conflict between swing and modern trends, thus the general impression is somewhat disappointing. Nevertheless it is interesting to hear KH trying to adopt to bebop, with his typical swing vibrato and energy still intact. The best items are "... Name" and "... Bridge", while "Putnam ..." struggles uphill, and the only slow item is not very exciting. Note KH's debt to Tab Smith, his old co-mate with Frankie Newton, to appear in his phrasing quite often.

No further recording sessions.

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