

**The**  
**GUITAR**  
**of**  
**LEONARD WARE**

Solographer: Jan Evensmo  
Last update: April 30, 2015

Born: Richmond, Virginia, Dec. 28, 1909  
Died: March 30, 1974

*Introduction:*

Leonard Ware was one of the first jazz performers on the electric guitar, and that fact should be enough reason for a solography! And after I heard his recording debut session with Sidney Bechet, he was definitely a candidate for further studies!

*History:*

Originally an oboeist - studied at Tuskegee. Switched to guitar in the early 1930s and formed own highly successful trio which played many residencies in New York during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Recorded with other leaders including Sidney Bechet (1938), Herbie Fields (1944), Don Byas (1945), etc., etc. Left full-time music many years ago to work for the New York Postal authorities. (ref. John Chilton).

## LEONARD WARE SOLOGRAPHY

**SIDNEY BECHET & HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Nov. 16, 1938**  
 Sidney Bechet (cl, sop), Ernie Caceres (bar), Dave Bowman (p), Leonard Ware (el-g), Henry Turner (b), Zutty Singleton (dm), The Two Fishmongers (vo-duet).  
 Four titles were recorded for Vocalion:

924-1	What A Dream	Solo 14+8 bars, (bar) on bridge. (FM)
924-2	What A Dream	As above. (FM)
925-1	Hold Tight	Solo 16 bars. (M)
925-2	Hold Tight	As above. (M)
926-1	Jungle Dreams	Solo 16+8 bars, (bar) on bridge. (FM)
927-1	Chant In The Night	Solo 32 bars with (bar) acc. (M)

This is a real swing session!! The great Sidney Bechet really jumps with this group, and Ernie Caceres shows that he is one of the finest baritone sax performers in swing era. In the middle of this we encounter an electric guitar of undisputably quality, so surprising!! He is featured abundantly as a major soloist, and the results are amazing. All four items have fine swinging soli, and LW has his own style. My favourite item is "Jungle ...", dig this one! For some reason, he never made it to high recognition, possibly because of the unbeatable genius of Charlie Christian, but he was a fine soloist and one of the pioneers on the electric guitar. This session is his best and most important, give it a try!!

**KANSAS CITY SIX** **NYC. Dec. 23, 1938**  
 Buck Clayton (tp), Lester Young (cl, ts), Count Basie (p), Leonard Ware (el-g), Freddie Green (g), Walter Page (b), Jo Jones (dm).  
 Dates also given as June 3, 1938 and Feb. 1939, also falsely with Eddie Durham (el-g) and even Charlie Christian.  
 John Hammond's Carnegie Hall Concert No. 1, two titles:

After You've Gone	Solo 40 bars. (F)
Way Down Yonder In New Orleans	Solo 28 bars. (FM)

For a long time the guitar soloing on this concert was attributed to Charlie Christian and also Eddie Durham. It seems not to be common knowledge that Benny Goodman used LW in his small group before he eventually settled for Christian in Autumn 1939. Two personal and interesting guitar soli here!

**BENNY GOODMAN SEXTET** **NYC. Jan. 10, 1939**  
 Benny Goodman (cl), Lionel Hampton (vib), Teddy Wilson (p), Leonard Ware (el-g), Al Hall (b), Buddy Schutz (dm).  
 Camel Caravan broadcast, one title:

Umbrella Man	Solo 36 bars. (FM)
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Benny introduces LW and asks him first to play a few bars, then they go into "...Man". He takes it in his personal style, interesting but not sensational.

**BUDDY JOHNSON & HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. April 9, 1941**  
 Personnel probably as May 1 below.  
 Three titles were recorded for Decca, one has guitar:

68969-A	Boogie Woogie's Mother-In-Law	Duet with (p). (F)
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**NYC. May 1, 1941**  
 Shad Collins (tp), Scoville Brown (cl, as), Joe Eldridge (as), Kenneth Hollon (ts), Leonard Ware (el-g), Frank Clarke (b), Kenny Clarke (dm), Ella Johnson (vo-69114-116).  
 Five titles were recorded for Decca, one has guitar solo:

69118-A	Southern Exposure	Solo 12 bars. (SM)
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A nice blues chorus on "... Exposure", mostly in the lower register, should be noted. "Boogie ...", however, is not that interesting, with more than a touch of Hawaiian atmosphere.

**BIG JOE TURNER** **NYC. July 17, 1941**  
 Sam Price (p), Leonard Ware (el-g), Billy Taylor (b), Joe Turner (vo).  
 Four titles were recorded for Decca:

69523-A	Nobody In Mind	Obbligato with (p) 24 bars. Solo 8 bars. Obbligato 16 bars. (S)
69524-A	Somebody's Got To Go	Obbligato with (p) 60 bars. (S)
69525-A	Ice Man	Obbligato with (p) 60 bars. (S)
69526-A	Chewed Up Grass	Obbligato parts with (p). Soli 16 and 8 bars. (SM)

Compared to the numerous rolling Joe Turner sessions, assisted by Pete Johnson, this one is almost timid. There is not much space for guitar soloing, although "... Grass" has some, but there is a lot of nice background, and although rather static showing LW's qualities to advantage.

**LEONARD WARE TRIO** **NYC. March 1943**

Luther Henderson (p, vo), Leonard Ware (el-g, vo), Sanford Harewood (b, vo).  
WQXR Studio recording included in a "Food for Victory" campaign.

Giddap Mule	No solo. (M)
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This is only a singing trio without soloing, but it is nice to see Leonard Ware! The "... Mule" is an LW composition (ref. Mark Cantor).

**HERBIE FIELDS BAND** **NYC. April 14, 1944**

Taft Jordan (tp), Herbie Fields (cl, as, ts), John Mehegan (p), Leonard Ware (el-g), Rodney Richardson (b), Sidney Catlett (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Signature, two issued:

You Can Depend On Me	Solo 32 bars. (M)
These Foolish Things	Solo 8 bars. (S)

This was a nice record, clean and serious with fine soloing by all participants, also LW who takes a beautiful, highly noteworthy solo on the slow "... Things" as well as a swinging and typical full chorus on "... Depend ...".

**ALBINIA JONES** **NYC. Dec. 22, 1944**

Frankie Newton (tp), Edmond Hall (cl), Cliff Jackson (p), Leonard Ware (el-g), Oscar Smith (b), unknown (dm), Albinia Jones (vo).

Six titles were recorded for National, three issued:

26	Fine And Mellow	Intro 4 bars. (S)
	I Love My Man	Solo 4 bars. (S)
	What's The Matter With You?	Solo 12 bars. (FM)

Fine guitar contributions on these items, typical of LW's style. The slow one-third of a chorus on "... My Man" is delightful, as well as the intro on "... Mellow". Note also "... The Matter ...", showing how original LW was, could not be mistaken for anybody else on his instrument. There is also some guitar audible behind the vocal, if you listen closely.

**BIG JOE TURNER VOCAL ACC. BY**

**PETE JOHNSON'S ALL STARS** **NYC. Feb. 2, 1945**

Frankie Newton (tp), Don Byas (ts), Pete Johnson (p), Leonard Ware (el-g), Al Hall (b), Harold "Doc" West (dm), Joe Turner (vo).

Four titles were recorded for National:

33	S. K. Blues Pt 1	Obbligato with (p) 12 bars. (S)
34	S. K. Blues Pt 2	Solo 12 bars. (S)
35-alt.	Johnson And Turner Blues	Solo 8 bars. Obbligato with (p) 12 bars. (SM)
35	Johnson And Turner Blues	Solo 8 bars. (SM)
36	Watch That Jive	Obbligato 12 bars. (SM)

LW gets opportunities on all items in this groovy blues session and second session with blues shouter Joe Turner, and he uses them well. Particularly the solo on "... Pt 2" and the background playing on "... Jive" show his important qualities and personal approach to the blues.

**ALBINIA JONES VOCAL ACC. BY**

**DON BYAS' SWING SEVEN** **NYC. April 14, 1945**

Dizzy Gillespie (tp), Gene Sedric (cl), Don Byas (ts), Sammy Price (p), Leonard Ware (el-g), Oscar Smith (b), Harold "Doc" West (dm).

Four titles were recorded for National, no guitar solo on 49 “Evil Gal Blues” but:

50	Salty Papa Blues	Solo 12 bars. (SM)
51	Albinia’s Blues	Acc. (vo) with (p) 12 bars. (SM)
52	Don’t You Wear No Black	Acc. (vo) 12 bars. (M)
52	What’s The Matter With Me?	Solo 12 bars. (FM)

Note: “What’s The Matter ...” on Savoy SJL 2233 is in fact an alternate take of the National 78 rpm. Version of “Don’t You Wear ...”.

The background playing is weakly recorded, but there are two very nice and typical soli on this exciting multi-style session.

**LEONARD WARE TRIO**

**NYC. 1947**

Willie Spottswood (p), Leonard Ware (el-g), Sanford Harewood (b), trio also (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Majestic:

1161	Doughnuts	Intro 4 bars. Solo 16+8 bars, (p) on bridge. Solo 8 bars. (M)
1162	Whoeee, Whoeee, The Bumble Bee	Solo 16+8 bars, (p) on bridge. Solo 8 bars. (FM)
1163	Keep Your Big Mouth Shut	Solo 8 bars. (SM)
1164	Hey! Hey! Little Doggie	Solo 16+8 bars, (p) on bridge. (M)

LW’s last session, and the only one under his own name, does not look very exciting on paper, the titles do not exactly point towards a true jazz session. However, they are much better than they look, after the nonsense vocal efforts there are fine guitar soli on all items. On the two first titles, guitar takes the bridge in the piano solo and vice versa. This is a fine conclusion for a guitar player almost forgotten today but playing an important role in the development of the instrument!

No further recording sessions.

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