

The
TRUMPET & CORNET
of
PHILIP SUNKEL

Solographer: Jan Evensmo
Last update: July 22, 2020

Born: Zanesville, Ohio, Nov. 26, 1925
Died: No info

Introduction:

Phil Sunkel is the result of a long process starting with the appreciation of cool jazz, represented by Chet Baker, then we were led to Tony Fruscella and Don Joseph, and only now, fifty years too late, is Phil Sunkel becoming a name, together with Don Ferrara and other fine and forgotten white trumpeters. Sorry for that.

History:

Played cornet when he was fourteen, later also trumpet and attended the conservatory in Cincinnati. From 1950 played in local groups, then worked with Claude Thornhill, Charlie Barnet and other band leaders. In 1955 he played in Stan Getz' band. Member of Gerry Mulligan Concert Band. No info after 1961 except playing with Dick Meldonian 1981/82 (ref. Wikipedia).

PHIL SUNKEL SOLOGRAPHY

HAL McKUSICK / BETTY ST. CLAIR

NYC. Jan. 1955

Phil Sunkel (tp), Billy Byers (tb), Hal McKusick (as), Gene Di Novi (p), Jimmy Raney (g), Clyde Lombardi (b), Jimmy Campbell (dm), Betty St. Clair (vo).
Four titles, "Out Of Nowhere, What Is There To Say?", "Almost Like Being In Love" and "Here Comes Trouble Again" were recorded for Jubilee, but no trumpet soli.

same

Same without (vo). Three titles, "Byers Market", "Willow Weep For Me" and "The Thrill Is Gone", not available.

WILL BRADLEY, JR.

NYC. Feb. 25 & March 9, 1955

Phil Sunkel (cnt), J. R. Monterose (ts), Wade Legge (p), Doug Watkins (b), Will Bradley jr. (dm).

Eleven titles were recorded for Epic, six issued:

My Old Flame	Solo 16 bars. With ens to coda. (S)
Jay Walkin'	Solo 48 bars. (FM)
Brainwasher	In ens. Solo 32 bars. (F)
Spice	Solo 16 bars. (SM)
Bradley's Beans	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
Sugar Hips	Solo 32 bars. (M)

This fine quintet session gives Phil Sunkel ample solo opportunities. His style fits nicely into the white-based cool style but with his own sound. He is creative, somewhat staccato in upper tempi like the four blues choruses in "Jay ...", more fluent on "... Beams", his own composition "Brainwasher", and "... Hips". The highlights on this session are nevertheless in the slow tempi; "Spice" and "... Flame" are played most beautifully. Note that this session in fact is the only proper studio occasion with a small band, and where he does not have to fight with other trumpeters to be heard!

AL COHN

NYC. May 16, 1955

Joe Newman, Thad Jones, Phil Sunkel (tp), Nick Travis (tp, vtb), Al Cohn (ts), Dick Katz (p), Freddie Green (g), Buddy Jones (b), Osie Johnson (dm).

Four titles were recorded for RCA Victor, issued as "The Jazz Workshop – Four Brass, One Tenor ... Al Cohn", 3738-5 "Sugar Cohn", 3739-3 "I'm Coming Virginia" and 3741-6 "Linger Awhile" all have trumpet soli but unlikely PS (note the colourful 64 bars trumpet chase on "... Awhile") but one seems to have PS:

3740-9	Haroosh	Solo 8 bars. (S)
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This beautiful but brief solo sounds very much like PS to me, but I am open for feedback.

LAWRENCE BROWN

NYC. Sept. 14, 1955

Ernie Royal, Phil Sunkel (tp), Lawrence Brown (tb), Arthur Clarke, Al Cohn (ts), Danny Bank (bar), Hank Jones (p), Wendell Marshall (b), Jo Jones (dm), Ralph Burns (cnd, arr).

Eight titles were recorded for Verve, one has PS:

2521-2	Ill Wind	Solo with ens 20 bars. (SM)
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One chance only but an emotional solo on "... Wind".

STAN GETZ SEXTET

NYC. 1955

Phil Sunkel (cnt), Bob Brookmeyer (vtb), Stan Getz (ts), John Williams (p), Ted Kotick (b), Frank Isola (dm).

Three Mutual broadcasts from Birdland. Johan Helø collection. Several titles is by quintet without PS, and although he is heard in the sextet ensembles, particularly the themes "Lullaby Of Birdland", the sound quality is rather lousy, so only the six solo items are listed below:

Lester Leaps In	Soli 64 and 4 bars. (FM)
Get Happy	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (F)
Home Cooking	Soli 40 and 4 bars. (M)
Old Wives' Tales	Solo 34 bars. (M)

New York Central	Solo 64 and 4 bars. (FM)
Get Happy No. 2	Soli 64, 4 and 8 bars. (F)

We should be most happy for the existence of these programs. Although the sound quality is not the best, it is good enough to present this exciting sextet to great advantage. PS seems to fit elegantly into the group and its concepts, two compositions of his, "... Tales" and "... Central" are included, and his soloing is of high quality. The cooking "... Happy"s are my favorite items, and the trumpet solo on the first one, in fast tempo, is astonishing, tense as if life depends upon it. Noteworthy soli also on the other four items.

BOB PRINCE & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Jan. 4, 1956**
Bigband personnel including Nick Travis, Al Stewart, Phil Sunkel, Jon Eardley (tp), Bob Prince (vib, ldr).
Five titles were recorded for Columbia, but no PS.

DON STRATTON **NYC. Feb. 1956**
Don Stratton, Phil Sunkel (tp), Dave McKenna (p), Chuck Andrus (b), Karl Kiffe (dm).
Five titles were recorded for ABC-Paramount, issued as "Modern Jazz With Dixieland Roots", no PS on "Yesterdays" but:

R. H. S.	(F)
Royal Garden Blues	(M)
Charleston	Solo 32 bars (2 nd (tp)-solo) (open). 32 bars 4/4 with (dm/tp). (F)
Sow Goo Mang	Solo 32 bars (2 nd (tp)-solo) (open). (M)

To my surprise, this session, which is to be found on spotify, is very interesting in spite of the corny title, featuring two very professional trumpeters. However they play tightly together, using both mute and open horn, and identification is more difficult than expected. I am quite confident of the session highlight solo "... Mang" and also "Charleston", but for the other two I will be happy receiving feedback.

PHIL SUNKEL's JAZZ BAND **NYC. May 13, 29 & June 14, 1956**
Phil Sunkel, Al Stewart, Ziggy Schatz (tp), Gene Hessler (tb), Dick Meldonian (as), Buddy Arnold (ts), Gene Allen (bar), George Syran (p), Bob Peterson (b), Harold Granowshy (dm).
Ten titles were recorded for ABC-Paramount:

Jack's Theme	Solo 64 bars. (M)
Polka Dots And Moonbeams	Soli 32 and 8 bars to long coda. (S)
Train Ride	Solo 34 bars, last 16 with ens. (FM)
Old Wives' Tales	Solo 68 bars. (M)
Every Mornin'	Solo 64 bars. (M)
How Strange	Solo 64 bars. Solo 32 bars. Long coda. (FM)
The Animal Man	Solo 32 bars. (M)
Chomp Chomp Blues	No solo. (FM)
Joe The Architect	Solo 36 bars. (F)
T. Blues	Solo 24 bars. (FM)

If there is one reason better than others for a Phil Sunkel solography, it is these recording sessions for ABC-P. One must not forget, as I understand it, that PS is better known as a composer and arranger rather than a horn player, and here we get everything properly planned, rehearsed and executed, giving a firm basis for solo improvisations. One might perhaps wish for greater variation in tempo, but "... Moonbeams" where PS is introducing with a rather straight but beautiful solo helps a lot. Otherwise there are great trumpet soli of unusual length, for PS that is, and to choose highlights is not that easy, but try "... Tales" and "... Strange". The trumpet playing here shows that PS was much better than jazz history and recording sessions have documented, and if you are not moved and impressed by his music, this solography is nothing for you...

THE COOL GABRIELS **NYC. June 1956**
Conte Candoli, Nick Travis, Don Stratton, Bernie Glow, Phil Sunkel (tp), Elliot Lawrence (p), Burgher Jones (b), Sol Gubin (dm).
Three titles were recorded Groove (others without PS), issued as "Cool Gabriels":

Each Others Arms	Solo 18 bars. (S)
Swinging Scots	Solo 16 bars (1 st (tp)-solo). (F)
Swinging Scots alt.	As above. (F)
Nick	Solo 16 bars (2 nd (tp)-solo). (M)

With five white trumpeters of overlapping styles, it is not easy to identify the soloists perfectly. However, the CD cover of "Cool Gabriels" has given their facts or opinions, who knows, and I have no reason to protest. The highlight is the beautiful slow solo on "... Arms", a good reason to consider a solography. But, with so many good trumpeters, I consider it shameful to get so little out of it; take "... Scots", lasting only 1 ½ minutes!

URBIE GREEN **NYC. Aug. 23, 1956**

Doc Severinsen, Phil Sunkel (tp), John Carisi (tp, arr), Urbie Green, Lou McGarity, Rex Peer (tb), Bill Barber (tu), Ray Beckenstein, Hal McKusick (as), Al Cohn (ts), Danny Bank (bar), Dave McKenna (p), Vinnie Burke (b), Osie Johnson (dm).
Four titles were recorded for ABC-Paramount, one has PS:

Plain Bill From Bluesville	Solo 24 bars. (M)
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The two fine blues choruses here sound very much like PS to me.

AARON SACHS OCTET **NYC. Feb. 18 & 21, 1957**

Phil Sunkel (tp, arr), Bernie Glow (tp), Frank Rehak (tb), Aaron Sachs (cl, ts, arr), Gene Allen (bar), Nat Pierce (p, arr), Aaron Bell (b), Osie Johnson (dm), Billy Ver Planck, Benny Golson (arr).

Seven titles were issued on Fresh Sound, issued as "Clarinet & Co.", one has PS:

Blue Sophisticate	In ens to solo 12 bars. (M)
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A vey nice, laidback blues chorus here!.

GERRY MULLIGAN CONCERT JAZZ BAND **NYC. April 19/20, 1957**

Bigband personnel including Don Ferrara, Don Joseph, Jerry Lloyd, Phil Sunkel (tp), Gerry Mulligan (bar, p, arr).

Four titles were recorded for Columbia, but no PS.

ERROLL GARNER WITH ORCHESTRA **NYC. May 31, 1957**

Bigband personnel including Phil Sunkel (tp), Erroll Garner (p).

Three titles were recorded for Columbia, but 'of course' no trumpet soli.

BILLY VER PLANCK / JAZZ IS BUSTING ALL OVER **Hackensack, NJ. July 30, 1957**

Bernie Glow, Phil Sunkel (tp), Bill Harris (tb), Phil Woods (cl, as), Seldon Powell (fl, ts), Sol Schlinger (bar), Eddie Costa (p, vib), Wendell Marshall (b), Gus Johnson (dm), Billy Ver Planck (arr, cnd).

Three titles were recorded for Savoy, no trumpet on "Playgirl Stroll" but:

Walkin'	Solo 36 bars. (M)
Jan Cee Brown	Solo 16 bars. (M)

Fine session and two very nice trumpet soli, obviously played by the same guy, and to my ears, PS seems to be the one.

PHIL SUNKEL **NYC. Oct. 14, 1957**

Phil Sunkel (cnt), Nick Travis, Al Stewart, Don Stratton, John Wilson (tp), Frank Rehak (tb), Bob Brookmeyer (vtb), Eddie Bert (btb), Don Butterfield (tu), Dick Meldonian (as), Cliff Hoff, Bill Slapin (ts), Gene Allen, Gerry Mulligan (bar), Milt Hinton (b), Osie Johnson (dm).

One title was recorded for ABC-Paramount:

15:41	Jazz Concerto Grosso	Solo 80 bars. (M)
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NYC. Oct. 15, 1957

Phil Sunkel (cnt), John Wilson (frhn), Bob Brookmeyer (vtb), Jim Reider (ts), Gerry Mulligan (bar), Wendell Marshall (b), Harold Granowsky (dm).

Two titles:

9:08	Something For The Ladies	Solo 64 bars. (M)
7:34	Song For Cornet	Long intro. Solo/straight 108 and 24 bars to coda. (M)

Clark Terry, Ernie Royal, Phil Sunkel (tp), Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis (ts), Lloyd Mayers (p), Larry Gales (b), Ben Riley (dm), Ray Barretto (cga, bgo, quinto), Johnny Pacheco, Ray Mantilla (latin-perc).

Five titles were recorded for Riverside, issued as “Wild Rice”, fine trumpet soli by Terry and Royal but no PS.

No further recording sessions until a few final ones with Dick Meldonian’s bigband in 1981/82.

DICK MELDONIAN/ SONNY IGOE BIG BAND NJ. May 4, 1981

Bigband personnel including Leo Ball, Spanky Davis, Chris Pasin, Phil Sunkel (tp, flh), Dick Meldonian (sop, as, ts), Sonny Igoe (dm).

Nine titles were recorded for Progressive, one has PS:

Abscam Solo 12 bars. (FM)

Although only PS solo, this is great bigband music!

NJ. Nov. 30, 1981

Similar with Paul Cohen, Phil Sunkel, Barry Bryson, Chris Griffin (tp).

Three titles were recorded for Progressive, but no PS.

DICK MELDONIAN & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. March 2&3, 1982

Paul Cohen, Phil Sunkel, John Eckert, Johnny Glasel (tp), Bob Pring (tb), Dick Meldonian (sop, ts), Gary Klein, Cliff Hoff, Arthur Sharp, Chuck Fisher (ts), Dick Bagni (bar, bcl), Derek Smith (p), Marty Grosz (g), Frank Tate (b), Fred Stoll (dm), Gene Roland (arr).

Fourteen titles were recorded for Circle, issued as DM “swing the arrangements of Gene Roland”, eight have trumpet soli of which the following six are sounding very much like what one could expect PS to do these days:

‘S Wonderful Solo 16 bars. (M)

The Great Lie Solo 16 bars (1st (tp)-solo). (FM)

Love Is Here To Stay Solo 16 bars. (M)

You Rang? Solo 16 bars. (FM)

Tom Thumb Soli 8 and 8 bars (1st and 3rd (tp)-soli). (M)

If I Love You Solo 16 bars. (M)

A great swinging bigband session you really should not miss, it is available on spotify! Fine arrangements, the presence of a perfect rhythm guitar, good soli on the various instruments, what more can one ask for? With regard to trumpet playing, it seems there are only two soloists, and there can be no doubt about PS’s presence. However, one can be quite amazed at how great he is playing, what on earth did he do the preceding twenty years? Six memorable items and note “Tom ...” where he trades 8/8 with another trumpeter.

No further recording sessions.

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