

The
VIOLIN
of
RAY PERRY

Solographer: Jan Evensmo
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Born: Boston, Massachusetts, Feb. 25, 1915
Died: NYC. Autumn 1950

Introduction:

While listening to the Sabby Lewis jam session a few days ago, I decided immediately to make a Ray Perry violin solography, wow!!

History:

Began on violin and made a feature of singing and bowing in unison, this inspired Slam Stewart to experiment. Worked on alto and violin with Dean Earl's band from 1935, with Clarence 'Chic' Carter from 1937 until 1939. Joined Blanche Calloway from January until September 1940, then with Lionel Hampton from September 1940 until October 1943 when he was forced to quit through illness. With J. C. Heard's band early 1946, in summer 1946 led own band at The Spotlight, Ontario, Canada. Led own band in 1947, worked with Sabby Lewis in 1948, re-formed own band in late 1948. During the last few months of his life he worked in octet led by tenorist Illinois Jacquet (ref. John Chilton: "Who's Who of Jazz"). More detailed history in liner notes by Anthony Barnett on CD: AB Fable ABCD1-006 "Ray Perry".

RAY PERRY VIOLIN SOLOGRAPHY

LIONEL HAMPTON & HIS SEXTETTE Hollywood, Dec. 19/20, 1940

Marshall Royal (cl, as), Lionel Hampton (vib, p, vo), Sir Charles Thompson (p), Ray Perry (el-vln), Irving Ashby (g), Vernon Alley (b), Lee Young (dm), Evelyn Myers, Hampton Rhythm Girls (vo).

Eight titles were recorded for Victor, five have violin soli:

55230-1	Altitude	Solo 8 bars. (M)
55231-1	Fiddle Dee Dee	Soli 8 and 16 bars. (FM)
55234-1	Bogo Jo	Solo 8 bars. (M)
55235-1	Open House	Solo 8 bars. (M)
55236-1	Smart Aleck	Solo 16 bars. (M)

Lionel Hampton's incredible series of recording sessions for Victor is getting close to and end, but this one is very much alive! Everybody contribute to a most swinging party, and we are introduced to a brilliant violinists, a real challenge to the great Stuff Smith. History tells us that Ray Perry had been active for at least five years, and we have really missed something, because this is really great!! The brief "Altitude" opens the ball with a great bridge, and then comes the "Fiddle ..." in which particularly the last solo is truly gorgeous!! "Smart ..." also has this lovely groove, so stimulating and exciting. "... Jo" and "Open ..." are not quite on that high level but still noteworthy. In total, this is one of the major violin sessions from the swing era!

LIONEL HAMPTON & HIS ORCHESTRA Feb. 2, 1941

Personnel similar to below.

Broadcast, one title:

Flying Home	Solo 30 bars (NC). (M)
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Found this item recently on a cassette from Otto Flückiger long time ago! The opening bars are missing, otherwise this solo is longer than the versions below.

LIONEL HAMPTON & HIS ORCHESTRA Chi. Feb. 19, 1941

Personnel similar to below.

Broadcast from Grand Terrace, one title has violin:

Flying Home	Solo 16 bars. (M)
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Chi. Feb. 20, 1941

Same. Two titles:

Flying Home	Solo 16 bars. (M)
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Cherry	Solo 16 bars. (M)
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Chi. Feb. 21, 1941

Same. One title:

Flying Home	Solo 16 bars. (M)
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Chi. Feb. 26, 1941

Same. One title:

Frenesi	Straight 6 bars. (M)
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Chi. Feb. 28, 1941

Same. One title:

Flying Home	Solo 16 bars. (M)
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Rather embarrassing, but I had forgotten I had these Hampton acetates, have not played them for years. RP's violin is featured on the various versions of "... Home", and they are all different!

LIONEL HAMPTON & HIS ORCHESTRA Chi. April 8, 1941

Karl George (tp), Marshall Royal (cl, as, vo), Lionel Hampton (vib, dm, vo), Sir Charles Thompson (p), Ray Perry (el-vln), Irving Ashby (el-g), Vernon Alley (b), Shadow Wilson (dm), Rubel Blakey (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Victor, two have violin soli:

64055-2R Give Me Some Skin Solo 8 bars. (M)
 64058-1 Three-Quarter Boogie Solo 8 bars. (M)
 64058-2 Three-Quarter Boogie As above. (M)

In "... Skin", RP is again in a very fine groove, and we can only regret he doesn't get a full chorus on this otherwise vocalovercrowded item. Fine playing also on "... Boogie", and the two takes are quite different, full improvisation!

LIONEL HAMPTON & HIS ORCHESTRA **Chi. Sept. 12, 1941**
 Bigband personnel including Ray Perry (as, vln).
 Broadcast from The Panther Room, one title has violin:

Flying Home Solo 16 bars. (M)

Chi. Sept. 26, 1941

Same. One title has violin:

It's You Again Solo 16 bars. (FM)

A few more broadcast additions, note a new title, "... Again"

LIONEL HAMPTON & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Dec. 24, 1941**
 Bigband personnel including Ray Perry (as, vln).
 Four titles were recorded for Decca, "Just For You", "Southern Echoes", "My Wish" and "Nola", but no violin soli.

LIONEL HAMPTON SEXTET **NYC. March 2, 1942**
 Marshall Royal (cl, as), Jack McVea (bar), Ray Perry (vln), Lionel Hampton (vib, vo), Milt Buckner (p), Irving Ashby (g), Vernon Alley (b), George Jenkins (dm).
 Four titles were recorded for Brunswick, one has violin solo:

70418-A Blues In The News Solo 12 bars. (M)

Why RP should be so badly treated, getting only one solo opportunity here, is difficult to understand, because he is the star of the session with his single blues chorus on "... News", magnificent!

LIONEL HAMPTON & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. May 26, 1942**
 Bigband personnel including Ray Perry (as, vln).
 Four titles were recorded for Decca, "Flying Home", "In The Bag", "Now I Know" and "Half A Loaf Is Better Than None", but no violin soli.

LIONEL HAMPTON & HIS ORCHESTRA **Hollywood, Autumn 1942**
 Bigband personnel including Ray Perry (as, vln).
 AFRS Jubilee no. 3, one title has violin solo.

HAM-2 Flying Home Solo 32 bars, last 8
 fadeout with announcer. (F)

Another "Flying ..." has appeared, exciting!

SABBY LEWIS SEXTET **Boston, 1944**
 George "Big Nick" Nicholas, Jerry Heffron (ts), Sabby Lewis (p), Ray Perry (vln), Al Morgan (b), Joe Booker (dm).
 Three titles were recorded on laquer discs by C. W. French, issued on AB Fable ABCD1-006:

Sweet Georgia Brown Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (F)

I Surrender Dear Soli 64 and 16 bars to long coda. (S)

Undecided Solo 5 choruses of 32 bars. (F)

This is nothing for those without strong nerves!! Going straight into three choruses on an uptempo "Sweet ...", possibly with some choruses missing, this swings like mad!! The solo on "Undecided" is complete, five choruses, another tour-de-violin-force, strongly swinging, in the groove, rarely one hears something like this! Comparing RP with Stuff Smith, they are two of a kind with a similar approach to the music, a volcanic energy, and I believe a cutting contest would end with a draw, which says something of the former's qualities. Postponing the raisin in the pie, "... Dear" in a slow tempo represents to me some of the most groovy and exciting violin playing I have ever heard!! You won't believe this until you have heard it!! Brilliant first chorus and then going a magnificent second one, unbelievable, and dig the final bars of this opening solo!!!

RAY PERRY TRIO**NYC. May 12, 1945**

Ray Perry (vln), Argonne Thornton (p), Wilson Ernest Myers (b).

Six titles were recorded on laquer discs by Timme Rosenkranz, issued on AB Fable ABCD1-006:

What Is This Thing Called Love?	Solo 32 bars (SM) to 32 bars (FM). Soli 32 and 8 bars. (FM)
Just You, Just Me	Solo 64 bars. 92 bars solo and chase with (p). (M)
Out Of Nowhere	Soli 64 and 32 bars to long coda. (S)
How High The Moon	Straight 32 to solo 64 bars. Solo 64 bars to coda. (FM)
Summertime	Soli 32 and 12 bars to coda. (S)
Ghost Of A Chance	Soli 64, 32 and 16 bars to coda. (S)

Quoting Anthony Barnett's liner notes: "Ray Perry is the transitional link between Stuff Smith's harmonically adventurous swing and the bebop innovations of Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker". On this session only we can glimpse the truth of this statement, and we can only wonder how he sounded on jams together with the great beboppers. The piano player with his monomelic and hypnotical runs is no perfect companion for RP, but there is much very exciting violin playing here, and the session lasts a total of more than forty minutes, so this is a violin treasury, and more RP than all other sessions added together. The slowest items make the most impression, dig "... Nowhere" and "Summertime"!

ETHEL WATERS ACC. BY**J. C. HEARD's ORCHESTRA****NYC. April 16, 1946**

George Treadwell (tp), Dickie Harris (tb), Ray Perry (vln, as), Reggie Beane (p), Mary Osborne (g), Al McKibbin (b), J. C. Heard (dm).

Eight titles were recorded for Continental, four have violin (note also fine altosax soli on "Man Wanted" solo 12 bars (M) and "I Should Have Quit When I Was Ahead" solo 8 bars (M)):

W3528	You Took My Man	Obbligato parts to solo 12 bars. (M)
W3529	Honey In A Hurry	Intro 4 bars to obbligato 48 bars. (S)
W3530	Cabin In The Sky	Obbligato parts. (SM)
W3531	Am I Blue?	Obbligato parts. (SM)

On RP's last violin session there are two thrilling and extremely groovy titles, "... My Man" and "... Hurry", fitting well with the daring lyrics, and showing that RP has a violin performer was in the same class as the much more known Stuff Smith. Those two titles alone are reasons enough to include Ray Perry in jazz archeology!!

No further recording sessions on violin but on altosax with Illinois Jacquet Aug. 1946 (Apollo), Jan. 7, April 1, 1947 (Aladdin), Dec. 14, 1949, May 22, 1950 (Victor).

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