

The
TENORSAX
of
ROBERT NEWBOLD
CARROLL

Born: Louisville, Kentucky, Feb. 3, 1909 (new information)
 Died: NYC. Oct. 19, 1952 “

Introduction:

Robert Carroll had a very personal tenorsax style, one of the most original voices of the 1930s. I was quite fascinated and his solography was part of Vol. 2 in my Jazz Solography Series (1975).

History:

Worked with local bands including the Kentucky Derbies, left Louisville as a member of Benny Carter's band. With Horace Henderson (1930), subsequently with Don Redman from 1931 to 1936. Joined Teddy Hill in spring of 1937 (replacing Cecil Scott). Rejoined Don Redman in the late 1930s, with Teddy Wilson bigband from January 1940, briefly with Edgar Hayes until July 1940. With Horace Henderson (autumn 1941). Worked with Fats Waller in 1941 and 1942. After serving in the US Army he did less and less playing and led a vagrant existence in NYC, he died of a combination of malnutrition and alcoholism. (ref. John Chilton: Who's Who of Jazz).

Message of Aug. 2018:

Jazz researcher and film educated Matthew Rivera from Louisville has recently done extensive research on Robert Carroll and found a lot of interesting information: His wife was Lottie Carroll (1912 – 1970). His parents were Jeremiah Carroll (1880 – 1927) and Minnie Dorsey Jackson (1877 – 1950). He did military service Sept. 28, 1942 – Oct. 3, 1945 in 373 ASF Band AGD (military band). He is buried in Long Island Cemetery, East Farmingdale, Plot: O 0 36774.

ROBERT CARROLL SOLOGRAPHY

DON REDMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Sept. 24, 1931**

Don Redman, (as, vo, arr, ldr), Leonard Davis, Bill Coleman, Henry Allen (tp), Claude Jones, Fred Robinson, Benny Morton (tb), Edward Inge, Rupert Cole (cl, as), Robert Carroll (ts), Horace Henderson (p, arr), Talcott Reeves (bjo, g), Bob Ysaguirre (b, tu), Manzie Johnson (dm, vib), Lois Deppe (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Brunswick, three have RC:

E-37222-A I Heard Soli 4, 4, 2 and 8 bars. (F)

E-37223-A Trouble, Why Pick On Me? Solo 6 bars. (SM)

E-37224-A Shakin' The African Solo 8 bars. (F)

NYC. Oct. 15, 1931

Personnel as Sept. 24, 1931, except Langston Curl (tp) replaces Bill Coleman.

Two titles were recorded, both have RC:

E-37291-A Shakin' The African Solo 8 bars. (F)

E-37292-A I Heard Soli 4, 4, 2 and 8 bars. (F)

Note: A lot of confusion exists concerning the number of versions of "Shakin' The African". As far as I have found, there are only two, E-37224 and E-37291-A. The idea of E-37291-B on French Brunswick originates from the fact that it is dubbed from Br A-9250, side B.

The first recording session with the Don Redman Orchestra features a musician which in my opinion deserves to be included among the better tenorsaxophone players of the thirties. His name is Robert "Bob" Carroll, and he is easily recognizable by his personal sound. Particularly slower tempi, like "Trouble ..." show him to his advantage. He plays in a rather intense way with a fine rhythmic sense. If his style should be compared to anybody else's, it must be to Chu Berry. In faster tempi his personality is not as dominant, but competence is definitely present. "Shakin' ..." has got spirit, but the tempo is too fast and difficult for any particularly interesting melodic construction to be created. However, the two takes I have heard are surprisingly different in details and show that Carroll definitely was an improviser. The longest solo on "I Heard" is a good example of his melodic sense.

DON REDMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Feb. 26, 1932**

Personnel as Oct. 15, 1931, except Shirley Clay, Sidney de Paris (tp), replace L. Davis and H. Allen. Talcott Reeves also (speech).

Three titles were recorded for Brunswick, two issued, one has RC:

11367-A Try Gettin' A Good Night's Sleep Solo with orch 8 bars. (M)

The solo is very promising, as it shows Carroll's ability to swing easily in a medium tempo and to create a nice melody. The orchestra, however, is too dominant.

BING CROSBY ACCOMPANIED BY THE DON REDMAN ORCHESTRA AND THE BOSWELL SISTERS **NYC. April 13, 1932**

Personnel as Feb. 26, 1932. (Benny Berigan (tp) said to be present).

One title was recorded, no RC.

HARLAN LATTIMORE AND HIS CONNIE'S INN ORCHESTRA**NYC. June 17, 1932**

Personnel as Don Redman and his orchestra Feb. 26, 1932, except Quentin Jackson (tb) replaces F. Robinson. Harlan Lattimore (vo-152218,19).

Four titles were recorded for Columbia, two have RC:

152218-1 I Heard Soli 4, 4, 2 and 8 bars. (FM)

152220-2 Reefer Man Solo 4 bars. (FM)

Another version of "I Heard", slightly slower and also better, again showing personality and melodic feeling. However, it is a pity that Carroll never had the chance to stretch out with the Don Redman Orchestra, 10 bars are his maximum allowance (with one unimportant exception).

DON REDMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. June 28, 1932**

Personnel as Harlan Lattimore and his Connie's Inn Orchestra, June 17, 1932.

Four titles were recorded for Brunswick, two have RC:

11994-A If It's True Solo 8 bars. (SM)
 11995-A It's A Great World After All Solo 8 bars. (FM)

NYC. June 30, 1932

Personnel as June 17, 1932.

Three titles were recorded for Brunswick, two have RC:

12006-A Hot And Anxious Solo 10 bars. (M)
 12007-A I Got Rhythm Solo 8 bars. (F)

These are the best sessions up to now. "... True" is a fine sensitive piece of music, and the style is completely personal. Note particularly his legato phrasing. "... All" is fast medium, but sure and well constructed. The way he "rolls" into his solo is certainly original. Also "Hot ..." and "... Rhythm" are elaborate and interesting.

DON REDMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA

NYC. Sept. 16, 1932

Personnel as June 17, 1932.

Two titles were recorded for Brunswick, one has RC:

12307-A Two-Time Man Solo 3 bars. (M)
 12307-B Two-Time Man As above. (M)

NYC. Oct. 6, 1932

Personnel as June 17, 1932.

Four titles were recorded, two have RC:

12445-A Ain't I The Lucky One? Solo 10 bars. (FM)
 12446-A Doin' What I Please Solo 8 bars. (M)

NYC. Dec. 29, 1932

Personnel as June 17, 1932 + Bill Robinson (vo, tapdancing-12810), Cab Calloway + The Mills Brothers (vo-12811):

12810-A Doin' The New Low-Down No solo.
 12811-A Doin' The New Low-Down Solo 8 bars. (FM)
 12811-B Doin' The New Low-Down As above. (FM)

Among these tracks, "... Please" is particularly noteworthy and belongs to Carroll's best soli with Redman, while "Ain't I ..." and "... Low-Down" are more ordinary. It is too bad that the two takes of "Two-Time Man" present the tenorsax too briefly for any fruitful comparison to be made. Postscript of June 2017: An alternate of "... Low-Down" has a slightly different tenorsax solo.

DON REDMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA

NYC. ca. Jan. 1933

Personnel as above. Date also given as mid-Sept. 1932.

"Betty Boop" – Original motion picture soundtrack.

Five titles, RC can be heard on the following two:

I Know A Gal Named Betty Boop Break. (M)
 I Heard Soli 4, 4 and 2 bars. (F)

Too brief and not well enough recorded to merit any comments, but it is RC alright, no doubt!

DON REDMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA

NYC. Feb. 2, 1933

Personnel as June 17, 1932, except Don Kirkpatrick (p) replaces Horace Henderson.

Four titles were recorded for Brunswick, two have RC:

13006-A How Ya Feelin'? Solo 2 bars. (M)
 13007-A Shuffle Your Feet, Bandanna Babies Solo with orch 4 bars. (FM)
 13010-A Shuffle Your Feet, Bandanna Babies As above. (FM)

NYC. April 26, 1933

Personnel as Feb. 2, 1933.

Four titles were recorded for Brunswick, two have RC:

- 13286-A That Blue Eyed Baby From Memphis Solo 6 bars. (FM)
 13287-A It's All Your Fault Solo 6 bars. (FM)

NYC. Aug. 2, 1933

Personnel as Feb. 2, 1933.
 Two titles were recorded, one has RC:

- 13695-A Watching The Knife and Fork Spoon Soli with orchestra
 4 and 6 bars. (M)

Only very brief soli by Carroll. His style is easily recognizable, but his possibilities are not exploited.

DON REDMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Oct. 19, 1933

Personnel as Feb. 2, 1933, except Gene Simon (tb) replaces C. Jones.
 Four titles were recorded for Brunswick, two have RC:

- 14180-A You Told Me But Half Of The Story Solo 4 bars. (M)
 14182-A She's Not Bad Soli 5 and 8 bars. (M)

NYC. Oct. 20, 1933

Personnel as Oct. 19, 1933. One title:

- 14192-A No-One Loves Me Like That Dallas Man Solo with orch
 8 bars. (M)

NYC. Nov. 14, 1933

Personnel as Oct. 19, 1933. Chick Bullock (vo).
 Six titles were recorded for Melotone, three have RC:

- 14315-1 Puddin' Head Jones Solo with orch 4 bars. (M)
 14316-1 My Old Man Soli 6, 6 and 6 bars. (FM)
 14317-1 Tired Of It All Solo with orch 16+8 bars,
 orch on bridge. (SM)

The only item of some length is "Tired ...", however, Carroll's part is rather straight and not particularly exciting where improvisation is concerned. His best contribution is probably to be found in "She's Not Bad".

DON REDMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Dec. 22, 1933

Personnel probably as Oct. 19, 1933.
 Broadcast from Casino de Paris, six titles, no RC on "Theme & Intro", "You Told Me But Half Of The Story", "Odds And Ends", "Redman Rhythm" and "Theme & Sign Off" but:

- Watchin' The Knife And Fork Spoon Solo 8 bars. (FM)

Not even a broadcast offers poor Robert an opportunity to show his potential. The only solo is brief and without anything particularly memorable.

DON REDMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Jan. 5, 1934

Personnel as Oct. 19, 1933, except Henry Allen (tp) replaces L. Curl and Jerry Blake (cl, as) added.
 One title was recorded for Brunswick, no RC.

NYC. Jan. 9, 1934

Personnel as above. One title was recorded, no RC.

DON REDMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA Probably 1934

Personnel unknown. (Date also given as ca. 1932).
 Music from the film "Sweepstake", no RC on "Ill Wind", "Nagasaki" and "Why Should I Be Tall" but:

- Yeah Man Solo 6 bars. (F)

A brief and quite ordinary solo.

FATS WALLER, HIS RHYTHM AND HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Dec. 4, 1935

Herman Autrey, Sidney de Paris (tp), Benny Morton (tb), Ed Inge (cl), Rudy Powell (cl, as), Don Redman (as), Gene Sedic, Robert Carroll (ts), Fats Waller (p, cel, vo),

Hank Duncan (p), James Smith (g), Charles Turner (b), Yank Porter (dm), Alex Hill, Don Donaldson (arr).

Three titles were recorded for Victor, one has RC:

98197-1 Functionizin' Solo 16 bars. (M)

Almost two years have passed since the last Redman session, but Carroll's style is more or less the same. His solo on "Functionizin'" is easy-swinging and personal but not particularly noteworthy.

BOB HOWARD AND HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. March 26, 1936

Personnel includes Robert Carroll (ts-60936), Bob Howard (vo) but is not the same as April 3, 1936 (ref. K.-B. Rau). Personnel listed in Rust, including Bunny Berigan (tp) is most certainly wrong.

Five titles were recorded, two issued, no RC on 60939-A "The Best Things Happen At Night" but:

60936-A If Love Is Blind Solo 32 bars. Obligato 16 bars. (M)

A new Bob Carroll discovery! In "... Blind" he introduces the melody with a whole chorus and is heard behind Howard at the end. The music is ballroom style, and there is no exciting improvisations, but the sound is nice and personal, and the solo certainly has groove.

BOB HOWARD / CAHN-CHAPLIN ORCHESTRA NYC. April 3, 1936

Probably Sidney de Paris (tp), Benny Morton (tb), Edward Inge (cl), Dick Stabile (as), Robert Carroll (ts), Don Kirkpatrick (p), probably Bob Ysaguirre (b), Manzie Johnson (dm). (Ref. K.-B. Rau).

60979/60980/60981 as Bob Howard And His Orchestra. Bob Howard (vo).

60982 as Cahn-Chaplin Orchestra. It is usually listed under Don Redman, which hardly is correct. This is probably a studio band with musicians from Redman's orchestra but without Redman.

Four titles were recorded for Decca/Champion, 60979 "No Use Knockin'" was rejected, no RC on 60980 "Public Weakness No. 1" but:

60981-A Let's Not Fall In Love Solo 8 bars. (FM)

60982-A Christopher Columbus Solo 8 bars. (FM)

Good, somewhat aggressive soli, typical of Carroll's style. Particularly "... Love" is a cleverly constructed piece, in fact one of the best he has recorded.

RC is listed among the personnel at the **DON REDMAN** session of May 7, 1936, but no tenorsax soli. He participates in the Rudy Vallee Show of June 4, 1936 by **FATS WALLER**, but no tenorsax soli. He is listed among the personnel at the **DON REDMAN** session of Sept. 30, 1936, but no tenorsax soli.

WILLIE SMITH (THE LION) AND HIS CUBS NYC. April 13, 1937

Dave Nelson (tp), Buster Bailey (cl), Robert Carroll (ts), Willie "The Lion" Smith (p), Jimmy McLin (g), Ellsworth Reynolds (b), Eric Henry (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, three have RC:

61934-B The Swampland Is Calling Me Solo 32 bars. (M)

61935-A More Than That Solo 16 bars. (FM)

61937-A I Can See You All Over The Place Solo 18 bars. (SM)

This is in fact the first occasion when Carroll's style can be scrutinized to some extent. The impression he leaves from the Redman period is rather incomplete, but here we have the opportunity to hear three quite long and well recorded soli. "The Swampland ...", one of his longest recordings, is characterized by a daring attack and a balanced swing of a kind similar to that offered by Chu Berry on so many occasions. The solo is pleasant and attractive, but the melodic construction is not too impressive, it seems that Carroll repeats himself here. However, the two remaining are better, and "More ..." is perhaps his best solo till now, swinging gaily and with a bold atmosphere. "... Place" is also excellent in a slower tempo. This session, together with the following ones, constitutes the main reason for making a solography of Robert Carroll's music.

LIL ARMSTRONG AND HER ORCHESTRA NYC. April 15, 1937

Joe Thomas (tp), Buster Bailey (cl), Robert Carroll (ts), James Sherman (p), Arnold Adams (g), Wellman Braud (b), George Foster (dm), Lil Armstrong (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, three have RC:

- 61945-A Born To Swing Solo 16+8 bars, (g) on bridge. (FM)
 61946-A Sit Down Strike For Rhythm Break. Obbligato 8 bars. Solo
 16+8 bars, (b) on bridge. (FM)
 61947-A Bluer Than Blue Solo 8 bars. (S)

Like the previous one, this session gives a clear and composite picture of a fine tenorsaxophone player. The best track is "Bluer ...", his solo is pure and elaborate. Do not overlook the original and smartly conceived ending. "Born ..." and "Sit Down ..." also have good and representative soli comparable to "The Swampland ..." and "... Place".

TEDDY HILL AND HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. May 17, 1937

Teddy Hill (ts, dir), Bill Dillard, Shad Collins, Dizzy Gillespie (tp), Dicky Wells (tb), Russell Procope (cl, as), Howard Johnson (as), Robert Carroll (ts), Sam Allen (p), John Smith (g) Richard Fullbright (b), Bill Beason (dm).
 Six titles were recorded for Bluebird, five have RC:

- 010206-1 San Anton Solo 5 bars. (M)
 010208-1 Yours And Mine Soli 4 and 4 bars. (M)
 010209-1 I'm Feeling Like A Million Solo 10 bars. (M)
 010210-1 King Porter Stomp Solo 16 bars. (FM)
 010211-1 Blue Rhythm Fantasy Solo with orch 32 bars. (M)

Already one has arrived at Carroll's last recording session of importance. Luckily there are several tracks to remember. Especially "Blue Rhythm ..." gives him room for stretching out. Backed by the orchestra he plays a very fine and well constructed solo, definitely one of his three or four best. It shows us a personal musician and lets us feel that his talent was far from unimportant. What he was able to create when not hampered by the three-minute limit we will never know for sure. He seems to have certain shortcomings compared to the big names of the era. However, I feel that he deserves a solography in memoriam, and I hope that many others share my feelings.

There is no particular reason to believe RC is present at the DON REDMAN recording session of May 28, 1937, since he is a member now of the Teddy Hill orchestra, and certainly there are no RC soli.

OLLIE SHEPARD ACCOMPANIED BY HIS KENTUCKY BOYS NYC. May 17, 1938

Unknown (tp), Lester Boone (cl), Robert Carroll (ts), unknown (p), Teddy Bunn (g), unknown (b), (dm).
 Four titles were recorded for Decca, all have tenorsax:

- 63793-A This Place Is Leaping In ensemble. Solo 8 bars. (M)
 63794-A Solid Jack Faintly in ensemble. (FM)
 63795-A Little Pigmeat Obbligato parts. (SM)
 63796-A Frankenstein Blues Solo 12 bars. Faint obbligato parts. (SM)

The two soli on this session is so much in RC's style, that I am quite confident he is the man! Note also that he was from Kentucky! Postscript of Aug. 24, 2018: The clarinettist was hitherto unknown, but Phil Schaap has interviewed Boone who identified himself. He could not recall RC's participation, but that does not matter, we are sure about him!

DON REDMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Jan. 17, 1940

Don Redman (cl, sop, as, vo, dir), Tom Stevenson, Otis Johnson, Al Killian (tp), Claude Jones, Gene Simon (tb), Scoville Browne, Tapley Lewis, Edward Inge (as), Robert Carroll (ts), Nicholas Rodriguez (p), Bob Lessey (g), Bob Ysaguirre (b), Manzie Johnson (dm), Bootsie Garrison (vo).
 Four titles were recorded for Bluebird, one has RC:

- 045948-1 Shim-Me-Sha-Wabble Solo 4 bars. (M)

The last solo, brief and unimportant. Why could not Robert Carroll have had the opportunity of a "Blue And Sentimental", "Body And Soul", "Cottontail", "Shoe Shine Swing" or "Special Delivery"?

RC is present on the **FATS WALLER** recording session of July 1, 1941, but has no soli. Nor has he any soli on a broadcast of Dec. 21, 1941 by a similar group. His last recording session with **FATS WALLER** is on March 16, 1942, but again no soli.

No further recording sessions. However:

LOUIS ARMSTRONG & HIS ORCHESTRA

LA. 1944

Bigband personnel including unknown (ts) who may be Robert Carroll.
AFRS Jubilee No. 58.

Ain't Misbehavin'

Brief break. Solo 18+8 bars,
(cl) on bridge. (M)

This item has a well conceived solo in the swing tradition. Who is it? I seem to hear Louis say "blow it Bob? Boss?" or something like that. In fact, it sounds like what might be believed to be a RC in good shape, but I admit it is pure speculation. Comments will be appreciated! Postscript of Aug. 2018: Since RC served in the military in 1944, he cannot be the tenorsax player here, sorry.

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