

**The**  
**TENORSAX**  
**of**  
**THEODORE McRAE**  
**“TED” “TEDDY”**

Solographer: Jan Evensmo  
Last update: Dec. 5, 2017, Oct. 8, 2023

Born: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Jan. 22, 1908  
Died: NYC. March 4, 1999

*Introduction:*

Ted McRae was identified as a fine tenorsax player, but since he was stuck in the vocal-oriented orchestras of Chick Webb and Ella Fitzgerald, his solo opportunities were much too few. However, Oslo Jazz Circle's jazz quizzes featured him, of course, no problem!

*History:*

Brother of Bobby (guitar/trumpet) and Dave (alto/baritone saxes). Worked in family band whilst studying medicine, also doubled regularly on guitar and trumpet. With June Clark on and off from 1926, led own band at the Club Ebony, New York, in 1927. Spells with Chick Webb, Charlie Johnson, and June Clark. Joined Elmer Snowden (1932). Briefly with Stuff Smith (1934), with Lil Armstrong (1935) to join Chick Webb in Spring 1936. Briefly with Stuff Smith (1934), with Lil Armstrong (1935), Chick Webb in spring 1936. Remained after the leader's death to work for Ella Fitzgerald (briefly as musical director) until late 1941. Remained after Chick Webb's death to work for Ella Fitzgerald (briefly as musical director) until late 1941 (ref. John Chilton).

## TED McRAE SOLOGRAPHY

**BENNY MORTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Feb. 23, 1934**

Henry Allen (tp, vo), Benny Morton (tb), Edward Inge (cl, as), Jerry Blake (cl, as, vo, arr), Ted McRae (ts), Don Kirkpatrick (p), Bobby Johnson (g), Billy Taylor (b, arr), Manzie Johnson (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Columbia, all have TMR:

152717-2	Get Goin'	Soli 6, 6 and 6 bars. (M)
152717-3	Get Goin'	As above. (M)
152718-2	Fare Thee Well To Harlem	Solo 16 bars. (M)
152719-1	Tailor Made	Solo 8 bars. (M)
152720-2	Gold Diggers' Song	Solo 16 bars. (FM)

In 1934 Theodore "Ted" (or "Teddy") McRae was already an established musician, having played with several well known orchestras. His first recording date, at the age of 26, is with a studio group consisting of musicians from the Don Redman orchestra, and it is not evident why McRae is included instead of Robert Carroll. His playing immediately reveals a personal and mature tenorsax player. He has a firm and swinging style, and his sound is light and somewhat sentimental, but never without complete taste. All items on this session show him to advantage. My favorite is the brief but well constructed and charming "Tailor Made". Also "Get Goin'" is particularly noteworthy because of its two takes. The arrangement does not permit too much inventiveness, but several details mark the difference. The stumpy "Gold ..." and the more restrained "... Harlem" also contribute to a promising debut.

**TEDDY WILSON AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Jan. 30, 1936**

Gordon Griffin (tp), Rudy Powell (cl), Teddy McRae (ts), Teddy Wilson (p), John Truehart (g), Grachan Moncur (b), Cozy Cole (dm), Billie Holiday (vo-18612).

Two titles were recorded for Brunswick, both have TMR:

18612-1	Life Begins When You're In Love	Soli 6 and 16 bars. (M)
18613-1	Rhythm In My Nursery Rhymes	Solo 32 bars. (F)

Another casual pickup session after an interval of almost two years. Teddy Wilson's abilities in making his fellow musicians show their very best is not wasted on McRae. He swings merrily and effectively in the medium "Life ..." and has no problem with the tempo in the fast "Rhythm ...". The session only confirms the good impression from the Morton session.

**CHICK WEBB AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Feb. 1936**

Chick Webb (dm, dir), Mario Bauza, Bobby Stark, Taft Jordan (tp), Sandy Williams, Claude Jones (tb), Pete Clarke (cl, as), Edgar Sampson (as, arr), Ted McRae (cl, ts), Wayman Carver (ts, fl), Don Kirkpatrick (p), John Trueheart (g), Bill Thomas (b), Ella Fitzgerald, Charles Linton (vo).

Radio transcriptions. Twelve items were recorded, seven have TMR:

Go Harlem	Solo 8 bars. (FM)
Keepin' Out Of Mischief Now	Soli 4 and 4 bars. (M)
Nit Wit Serenade	Solo 12 bars. (FM)
King Porter Stomp	Soli 16, 16, 16 and 4 bars. (F)
Stompin' At The Savoy	Solo 8 bars. (FM)
Shine	Solo 8 bars. (SM)
Rhythm And Romance	Solo 3 bars. (M)

Contrary to what has been stated, Ted McRae and not Elmer Williams is the featured tenorsax soloist on these recordings. Although McRae must have joined the Chick Webb Orchestra only some days or weeks earlier (if the date is correct), he seems completely at home. In fact, his contributions here rank among the very best with Webb. Particularly the fast "King Porter ..." offers ample opportunity to study his style. A light sound and a flexible rhythmic style are some of his characteristics. His melodic inventiveness is also very well developed, as three quite different choruses demonstrate clearly. He has no problem with the tempo. "Nit Wit ..." has an attractive blues chorus which also should be noted. The remaining soli are rather brief but all personal, and McRae is easily recognizable.

**TEDDY WILSON AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. March 17, 1936**

Frankie Newton (tp), Benny Morton (tb), Jerry Blake (cl, as), Ted McRae (ts), Teddy Wilson (p), John Trueheart (g), Leemie Stanfield (b), Cozy Cole (dm), Ella Fitzgerald (vo-18830,32).

Four titles were recorded for Brunswick, one rejected, two have TMR:

18829-1	Christopher Columbus	Solo 8 bars. (M)
18830-1	My Melancholy Baby	Soli 2 and 8 bars. (M)

McRae does not get much solo space in this second Wilson session, but he does an able job both on "... Columbus" and "... Baby". Note for instance the brief break on the last item, showing a conscious and professional musician.

**CHICK WEBB AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. April 7, 1936**

Personnel as Feb. 1936.

Four titles were recorded for Decca, three have TMR:

60999-A	Love, You're Just A Laugh	Briefly in orch. (SM)
61000-A	Crying My Heart Out For You	Part of coda. (SM)
61002-A	When I Get Low I Get High	Solo 4 bars. (FM)

Only a few very brief parts of tenorsax to be heard, but enough to document McRae's presence.

**PUTNEY DANDRIDGE AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. June 1, 1936**

Bobby Stark (tp), Ted McRae (ts), Teddy Wilson (p), John Trueheart (g), John Kirby (b), Cozy Cole (dm), Putney Dandridge (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Vocalion:

19352-1	It's A Sin To Tell A Lie	Solo 16 bars. Very weak obbligato and background. (M)
19353-2	All My Life	Solo 16 bars. Very weak obbligato and background. (M)
19354-1	Ol' Man River	Solo 32 bars. Very weak obbligato and background. (F)
19355-1	Why Was I Born?	Very weak obbligato and background. (M)

This session belongs to the most memorable ones. Particular "It's A Sin ..." and "All My Life" present soli which rank high among McRae's preserved works. They contain personal and charming melodic constructions which have a high musical value. The style is very easily recognizable, and the sound is not resembling anybody's. That he masters the instrument well is evident in the middle of "It's A Sin ..." and also in the fast "... River". When, in addition to the soli, one can hear tenorsax almost continually in the background, the session contributes heavily to the McRae solography.

**CHICK WEBB AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. June 2, 1936**

Personnel as Feb. 1936, except Nat Story (tb) replaces Claude Jones.

Five titles were recorded for Decca, four have TMR:

61123-A	Go Harlem	Solo 8 bars. (FM)
61125-A	A Little Bit Later On	Solo 4 bars. (M)
61126-A	Love, You're Just A Laugh	In orchestra. (M)
61127-A	Devoting My Time To You	Part of intro. (M)

Apart from a typical but not extraordinary solo in "Go Harlem", McRae's parts are only fill-ins without solo value.

**HENRY ALLEN AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Aug. 31, 1936**

Henry Allen (tp, vo), Albert Nicholas (cl, as), Pete Clarke (as), Ted McRae (ts), Clyde Hart (p), Lawrence Lucie (g), John Kirby (b), Cozy Dole (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Vocalion, three have TMR:

19780-2	Darling, Not Without You	Solo 16 bars. (SM)
19781-1	I'll Sing You A Thousand Love Songs	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
19783-1	Trouble Ends Out Where The Blue Begins	Solo 10 bars. (SM)

Here we have the first opportunity, of very few, to study McRae's style in slower tempi. "Darling ..." seems to be the best example. He plays with rather modest variations from the theme and instead tries to create a warm atmosphere. He succeeds admirably, and the solo is not easily forgotten. "Trouble ..." is similar, but somewhat stiffer and therefore less moving, although a good piece. "I'll Sing ..." is an even and good solo without belonging to the memorable ones.

The HENRY ALLEN & HIS ORCHESTRA session of Oct. 12, 1936 has earlier falsely been presented as Ted McRae, while the tenorsax player in fact is Ben Webster!

**CHICK WEBB AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Oct. 29, 1936**

Mario Bauza, Bobby Stark, Taft Jordan (tp), Sandy Williams, Nat Story (tb), Pete Clarke (cl, as, bar), Louis Jordan (as), Wayman Carver (fl, ts), Ted McRae (ts), Tommy Fulford (p), John Trueheart (g), Beverly Peer (b), Chick Webb (dm), Ella Fitzgerald (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, two have TMR:

61361-A	You'll Have To Swing It	Solo 2 bars. (SM)
61361-B	You'll Have To Swing It	As above. (SM)
61363-A	I Got The Spring Fever Blues	Soli 2 and 2 bars. (SM)

No tenorsax of great importance on this recording date, although the brief pieces of "... Spring Fever ..." are in fact quite nice.

The HENRY ALLEN & HIS ORCHESTRA session of Nov. 17, 1936 has earlier falsely been presented as Ted McRae, while the tenorsax player in fact is Ben Webster!

**ELLA FITZGERALD AND HER SAVOY EIGHT** **NYC. Nov. 18/19, 1936**

Taft Jordan (tp), Sandy Williams (tb), Pete Clark (cl), Ted McRae (ts, bar), Tommy Fulford (p), John Trueheart (g), Beverley Peer (b), Chick Webb (dm), Ella Fitzgerald (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, all have TMR:

61419-A	My Last Affair	Intro 2 bars. (SM)
61420-A	Organ Grinder's Swing	Solo 8 bars. (M)
61421-A	Shine	Solo 16 bars. (M)
61422-B	Darktown Strutter's Ball	Baritonesax solo 18 bars. Tenorsax in ens. (FM)

In a "normal" world one would naturally have expected the Savoy Eight to be an informal group whose music would have had similarities to the Billie Holiday/Teddy Wilson studio recordings. This is not the case, the group is a vehicle for Ella Fitzgerald like the full orchestra is. Ted McRae has several contributions, but there is no chance ever to stretch out and deepen the impression from the Allen sides. "Nice and pretty" is the comment which accompany these sides, "but with not much jazz value". "Shine" is probably the best item on all the Savoy Eight sides where tenorsax is concerned. Also, one must not overlook the baritonesax solo on "Darktown Strutter's Ball", the only prewar one, it shows that McRae is in full command and an able soloist also on this instrument.

**CHICK WEBB AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Jan. 14/15, 1937**

Personnel as Oct. 29, 1936.

Four titles were recorded for Decca, two have TMR:

61529-A	There's Frost On The Moon	Solo 10 bars. (M)
61530-A	Gee, But You're Swell	Soli with orch 16 and 2 bars. (M)

**NYC. Feb. 8, 1937**

Broadcast "Good Times Society". One TMR item:

That's A Plenty	Solo with orch 8 bars. (F)
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**NYC. March 24, 1937**

Same personnel. Eight titles were recorded for Decca, five have TMR:

62064-A	Rusty Hinge	Solo 6 bars. (M)
62065-A	Wake Up And Live	Solo with orch 16 bars. (M)

- 62066-A It's Swell Of You Solo 6 bars. (M)  
 62068-A Clap Hands! Here Comes Charley Solo 16+8 bars,  
 (cl) on bridge. (F)  
 62072-A Love Is The Thing, So They Say Soli 2 and 2 bars. (SM)

These sessions will be given comments together with Oct./Dec. 1937.

**ELLA FITZGERALD AND HER SAVOY EIGHT NYC. May 24, 1937**

Personnel as Nov. 18, 1936, except Louis Jordan (as), Buddy Johnson (g) replace Clark and Trueheart.

Four titles were recorded for Decca, two have TMR:

- 62214-A If You Ever Should Leave Intro 4 bars. Solo 8 bars. (SM)  
 62214-B If You Ever Should Leave As above. (SM)  
 62215-A Everyone's Wrong But Me Solo 8 bars. (M)

Particularly "... Leave" has some attractive tenorsax, but the two takes are not that different, particularly the intro must have been written.

**CHICK WEBB AND HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Oct. 27, 1937**

Personnel as Oct. 29, 1936 except Chauncey Haughton (cl, as), Bobby Johnson (g) replace Clark and Trueheart.

Four titles were recorded for Decca, two have tenorsax:

- 62725-A Just A Simple Melody Straight soli 6 and 6 bars. (M)  
 62726-A I Got A Guy Solo 8 bars. (SM)

**NYC. Nov. 1, 1937**

Same. Three titles were recorded for Decca, but no TMR.

**NYC. Nov. 2, 1937**

Same. Two titles were recorded for Decca, rejected.

**NYC. Dec. 10, 1937**

Personnel as Oct. 27, except Garvin Bushell (cl, as) replaces Haughton.

Broadcast from the Savoy Ballroom.

- Bronzeville Stomp Solo 16 bars. (M)  
 He's Tall, He's Tan, He's Terrific Solo 6 bars. (M)  
 Honeysuckle Rose Solo 8 bars. (FM)

**NYC. Dec. 17, 1937**

Same. Five titles were recorded for Decca, four have TMR:

- 62886-A I Want To Be Happy Solo with orch 16 bars. (FM)  
 62886-B I Want To Be Happy As above. (FM)  
 62888-A If Dreams Come True Part of intro. (M)  
 62889-A Hallelujah Solo with orch 16 bars. (M)  
 62890-A Midnite In A Madhouse Solo 4 bars. (FM)  
 62890-B Midnite In A Madhouse As above. (FM)

There also exists a movie soundtrack from a dance contest approximately around 1937. The titles are "Sweet Sue No. 1-2-3", "Tiger Rag" and "Theme".

As may be seen from the above listing, TMR is featured as a soloist several times. However, rarely do we encounter a freely swinging and active improvisation, the heavy commercial arrangements do not allow this. The most notable contribution is of course "Clap Hands ...", a jazz oasis in a commercial desert, though the fast tempo is not to McRae's advantage here. "Hallelujah", "I Want ..." and "Bronzeville ..." contain good soli without special merits. In fact, brief items like "Midnite ..." and "Rusty Hinge" seem more inspired. "I Got A Guy" should be highlighted, being a fine example of the lyrical, somewhat sentimental approach McRae has in slower tempi. Too bad the soli in this tempo rarely last more than a few bars. Otherwise "Wake Up ..." and "Gee ..." are typical examples of nice quasi-soloing.

**ELLA FITZGERALD AND HER SAVOY EIGHT NYC. Dec. 21, 1937**

Personnel as May 24, 1937. Two titles, no tenorsax.

**NYC. Jan. 25, 1938**

Same. Two titles:

63225-A It's Wonderful Solo 16 bars. (SM)  
 63226-A I Was Doing All Right Intro 4 bars. (SM)

Quite attractive solo on "... Wonderful".

**CHICK WEBB AND HIS ORCHESTRA****NYC. May 2/3, 1938**Personnel as Dec. 10, 1937 plus George Matthews (tb).  
Six titles were recorded for Decca, one has TMR:

63695-A I'm Just A Jitterbug Solo 4 bars. (M)

**ELLA FITZGERALD AND HER SAVOY EIGHT****NYC. May 3, 1938**

Personnel as May 24, 1937.

Six titles were recorded for Decca, three have TMR:

63705-A You Can't Be Mine Solo 8 bars. (SM)  
 63705-B You Can't Be Mine As above. (SM)  
 63706-A We Can't Go On This Way Solo 16 bars. (SM)  
 63709-B Saving Myself From You Intro 4 bars. (SM)

No particular sensations, and the two takes of "... Mine" are very similar, not much improvisation here.

**CHICK WEBB AND HIS ORCHESTRA****NYC. June 9, 1938**

Personnel as May 2, 1938, except Hilton Jefferson (as) replaces Jordan.

Four titles were recorded for Decca, one has TMR:

63937-E Ella Solo 8 bars. (M)

**NYC. Aug. 13, 1938**

Same. Broadcast, Saturday Night Swing Club.

Saving Myself From You Intro 4 bars. (SM)

**NYC. Aug. 17/18, 1938**

Same. Five titles were recorded for Decca, one has TMR:

64465-A I Let A Tear Fall In The River Soli 6 and 6 bars. (SM)

The comparatively straight and sentimental playing in "... River" is quite nice.

**ELLA FITZGERALD AND HER SAVOY EIGHT****NYC. Aug. 18, 1938**

Personnel as May 24, 1937, except Hilton Jefferson (as) replaces Jordan.

Two titles, one has TMR:

64463-A Woe Is Me Soli 4 and 4 bars. (SM)

**CHICK WEBB AND HIS ORCHESTRA****NYC. Oct. 6, 1938**

Personnel as June 9, 1938, except Dick Vance (tp) replaces Bauza.

Four titles were recorded for Decca, but no TMR.

**NYC. Jan. 9, 1939**

Twelve titles recorded by RCA Victor for NBC Thesaurus transcriptions, four have TMR:

How Am I To Know? Solo 18 bars. (M)  
 One O'Clock Jump Solo 24 bars. (FM)  
 Sugar Foot Stomp Solo 22 bars. (FM)  
 Blue Skies Solo 8 bars. (FM)

Several really long and fine soli are to be found here. My favorite is "How Am I ...", where McRae's lyrical vein and relaxed rhythmic playing mode seem to be particularly well suited. He is also successfully featured on "... Jump" and "Sugar ...", although the latter has a faint taste of corn. "Blue Skies" contains a nice brief solo.

**CHICK WEBB AND HIS ORCHESTRA****NYC. Jan. 21, 1939**

Personnel as Oct. 6, 1938.  
Broadcast, Saturday Night Swing Club.

I Let A Tear Fall In The River Solo 6 bars. (SM)

Nice, sentimental playing.

**CHICK WEBB AND HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Feb. 10, 1939**

NBC broadcast from the Cocoanut Grove at the Hotel Park Central. ("One O'Clock Jump" and "The Blue Room" issued on Polydor is supposed to be from the Blue Room at the Hotel Lincoln). Five titles ("no-solo" items being "Getting Together" and "Blue Room"), three have tenorsax:

Deep In A Dream Solo 8 bars. (SM)

One O'Clock Jump Solo with orch 24 bars. (FM)

That Was My Heart Solo 8 bars. (SM)

Two brief slow-medium soli of the romantic kind, but they never have time to develop into something interesting. Therefore one should concentrate on the quite swinging "... Jump".

**CHICK WEBB AND HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Feb. 17, 1939**

Same. Five titles were recorded for Decca, two have TMR:

65039-A Undecided Solo 4 bars. (FM)

65042-A One Side Of Me Solo 2 bars. (SM)

**NYC. March 2, 1939**

Same, except John Trueheart (g) replaces B. Johnson.  
Four titles were recorded for Decca, one has TMR:

65094-A Sugar Pie Solo 8 bars. (M)

Nothing of more than casual interest.

**ELLA FITZGERALD AND HER SAVOY EIGHT NYC. March 2, 1939**

Personnel as Aug. 18, 1939, except John Trueheart (g) replaces B. Johnson.  
Two titles:

65092-A Once Is Enough For Me Solo 8 bars. (SM)

65093-A I Had To Live And Learn Straight soli 6 and 6 bars. (SM)

**NYC. April 21, 1939**

Same. Four titles were recorded for Decca, one has TMR:

65441-A Don't Worry 'Bout Me Solo 16 bars. (SM)

The end of the Savoy Eight recording sessions. A waste of talent. However, the "Don't Worry ..." is one of the better items with a fine tenorsax solo.

**CHICK WEBB AND HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. April 21, 1939**

Personnel as March 2, 1939. Four titles for Decca, but no TMR.

**Boston, May 4, 1939**

Broadcast from the Southland Cafe.  
Nine titles, the following three have tenorsax:

Poor Little Rich Girl Solo 4 bars. (F)

Breakin' 'Em Down Solo 8 bars. (M)

The Stars And Stripes Forever Solo 16 bars. (FM)

It's rather frustrating to have so few and so brief soli, because TMR seems to have been in very good shape in those days. Note for instance "The Stars ...", one of his very best soli of the period!

**ELLA FITZGERALD AND HER FAMOUS ORCHESTRA NYC. June 29, 1939**

Personnel as last Chick Webb, except Bill Beason (dm) to replace Chick.  
Five titles were recorded for Decca, two have TMR:

65905-A I Want The Waiter Solo with orch 8 bars. (M)



65907-A Out Of Nowhere Solo 4 bars. (SM)

**NYC. July 16, 1939**

Broadcast from Savoy Ballroom:

Sugarfoot Stomp Solo with orch 24 bars. (F)

What Is This Thing Called Love? Solo 18 bars. (M)

Everybody Rock Soli with orch 4 and 8 bars. (FM)

Southland Shuffle Solo with orch 20+8 bars, (p)  
on bridge. Solo 8 bars. (M)

**NYC. July 20, 1939**

Broadcast from Savoy Ballroom:

Japanese Sandman Soli 16 and 4 bars. (FM)

**NYC. Aug. 18, 1939**

Same. Five titles were recorded, one has TMR:

66135-A Billy Solo 12 bars. (FM)

**NYC. Aug. 24, 1939**

Broadcast from Savoy Ballroom:

To You Solo 2 bars. (SM)

The Jumpin' Jive Solo 2 bars. (M)

Raggin' The Scale Solo with orch 16 bars. (F)

Copenhagen Soli 4 and 4 bars.  
Behind announcer. (FM)

**NYC. Aug. 26, 1939**

Broadcast from Savoy Ballroom:

I've Found A New Baby Solo with orch 8 bars. (FM)

Blue Lou Solo 8 bars. (FM)

Sly Mongoose Solo with orch 12 bars. (F)

Blue Skies Solo 8 bars. (FM)

Stompin' At The Savoy Solo 8 bars. (FM)

Billy Solo 12 bars. (FM)

**NYC. Sept. 20, 1939**

Broadcast from Savoy Ballroom.

St. Louis Blues Solo 36 bars. (FM)

**Chi. Sept. 21, 1939**

Broadcast from Grand Terrace:

The Harlem Stride Solo 16+8 bars, orch on bridge. (FM)

One O'Clock Jump Solo 8 bars. (FM)

**Chi. Oct. 12, 1939**

Same. Six titles were recorded, three have TMR:

91839-A My Wubba Dolly Soli 6 and 6 bars. (M)

91840-A Lindy Hopper's Delight Solo 8 bars. (FM)

91841-A Moon Ray Duet with (tp) 8 bars. (SM)

**NYC. Dec. 14, 1939**

Broadcast from Savoy Ballroom:

Jubilee Swing Solo with orch 8 bars. (FM)

Sing You Sinners Solo with orch 24 bars. (FM)

My Wubba Dolly Soli 6 and 6 bars. (M)

"Billy" has one of the better soli from this period, and both "... Waiter" and "Moon Ray" have details worth noticing. Postscript: After the above was written, a gorgeous CD with Ella's band without the vocals, has appeared! I was immensely surprised to note how swinging this orchestra was, and how wrong impression Decca's recording policy was, only concentrating on Ella's vocal efforts. There are hot soli everywhere, and TMR gets his share, 16 new items (before New Years Eve), most of them very interesting!! Postscript of June 18, 2016: Note a very interesting version of "St. Louis ...", appearing on CD, with a long tenorsax chorus. Wish that lady could have more breaks and given more opportunities to instrumental numbers...

**ELLA FITZGERALD  
AND HER FAMOUS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Jan. 22, 1940**

Personnel probably as recording session of Feb. 15, 1940.

Broadcast from the Savoy Ballroom. Date falsely given as Dec. 1939 and March 1940.

Theme	No solo.
Traffic Jam	Solo 8 bars. (F)
A Lover Is Blue	Solo 6 bars. (S)
Dodging The Dean	Soli 6, 6 and 6 bars. (M)
T'Ain't What You Do	No solo.
Confessin'	No solo.
Blue Lou	Solo 8 bars. (M)
What's The Matter With Me?	Brief fill-ins. (SM)
Waiter With The Water	Soli 2 and 2 bars. (M)
Theme	Solo 32 bars. (FM)

**NYC. Jan. 25, 1940**

Same. Broadcast from the Savoy Ballroom.

Theme	No solo.
Limehouse Blues	Solo 8 bars. (FM)
This Changing World	Solo 8 bars. (SM)
Oh, Johnny, Oh, Johnny	No solo.
Diga Diga Doo	No solo.
Thank You Lucky Stars (NC)	No solo.
Take It From The Top	Solo 8 bars. (M)
Vagabond Dream	No solo.
Breakin' It Up	Solo 10 bars. (M)
Theme	No solo.

As with the 1938-1939 Chick/Ella orchestras, there is an abundance of TMR soli, but he rarely gets the chance to stretch out. Only on the concluding "Theme" on Jan. 22 is he heard in a "real" solo! It is restrained and rather untypical in many ways, although it certainly belongs to TMR. Of the remaining, note "Waiter ...", "... Dean" and "... Top". It seems, now, that the flexibility of his style, his inventiveness and ability to play nice soli in all tempi made him a natural choice for the Cab under the tragic circumstances nearly two years later.

**ELLA FITZGERALD  
AND HER FAMOUS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Jan. 26, 1940**

Personnel probably as Feb. 15, 1940.

Four titles were recorded for Decca, one has TMR:

67122-A	What's The Matter With Me?	Break. (SM)
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**NYC. Feb. 15, 1940**

Dick Vance, Irving Randolph, Taft Jordan (tp), George Matthews, John Haughton, Sandy Williams (tb), Eddie Barefield, Chauncey Haughton (cl, as), Ted McRae (ts, bar), Sam Simmons (ts), Roger Ramirez (p), John Trueheart (g), Beverley Peer (b), Bill Beason (dm), Ella Fitzgerald (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, one has TMR:

67195-A Baby, Won't You Please Come Home? Solo 20 bars. (SM)

"Baby ..." is typical of the commercial setups of the period. McRae plays rather straight, but manages to create a solo which cannot be mistaken for anybody else's. More than this we cannot expect, and it is not McRae's fault.

**ELLA FITZGERALD**

**HER HER FAMOUS ORCHESTRA**

**NYC. Feb. 26, 1940**

Personnel probably as Feb. 15, 1940.

Broadcast from the Roseland Ballroom.

Eight titles, of the six on Sunbeam SB205, the following three have TMR:

It's A Blue World Solo 6 and 6 bars. (SM)

Is There Somebody Else? Brief break. (SM)

I Wanna Be A Rug Cutter Solo 8 bars. (F)

**NYC. March 4, 1940**

Same. Eleven titles, of the nine on Sunbeam SB205, the following three have TMR:

I Got Rhythm Solo with orch 4, 4, 6 bars. (F)

Sing Song Swing Solo 2 bars. (M)

Make Believe Soli 12 and 4 bars. (M)

**NYC. early 1940**

Same. Four titles, two have TMR:

After You've Gone Coda 4 bars. (S)

Peg O'My Heart Solo 14 bars. (SM)

**NYC. early 1940**

Same (added on June 18, 2016). Two titles:

The Yodelin' Jive Straight with orch 16 bars.(M)

Careless Solo with orch 6 bars. (S)

Again, it is a shameful waste of a good tenorsax to go on like this! Note his beautiful playing on "... World" and "Make Believe", there should have been many choruses!! And also "... Please" and "... Rug Cutter" have their charm, plus a colorful "I Got ..." 32 bars with orchestra. Finally note how nicely he plays almost straight on "... Heart"!

**ELLA FITZGERALD**

**AND HER FAMOUS ORCHESTRA**

**NYC. March 20, 1940**

Personnel as Feb. 15, except Tommy Fulford (p) replaces Ramirez.

Four titles were recorded for Decca, one has TMR:

67361-A Untitled Soli 16 and 16 bars. (M)

**NYC. May 9, 1940**

Same except Pete Clark (cl, as), replaces Barefield and new trombone section: Jimmy Archey, Floyd Brady, John McConnell (tb).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, one has TMR:

67706-A I Fell In Love With A Dream Intro 4 bars. Brief break. (SM)

**NYC. Sept. 25, 1940**

Personnel as May 9, except George Matthews, Earl Hardy (tb), Ulysses Livingston (g) replace Archey, Brady and Trueheart.

Three titles were recorded for Decca, one has TMR:

68146-A Five O'Clock Whistle Solo 3 bars. (SM)

**NYC. Nov. 8, 1940**

Same as Sept. 25 except George Dorsey (as) replaces Haughton.

Three titles were recorded for Decca, two have TMR:

68329-A Taking A Chance On Love Solo 8 bars. (SM)

68330-A Cabin In The Sky Solo 6 bars. (SM)

**NYC. Jan. 8, 1941**

Same as Nov. 8, 1940.

Five titles were recorded for Decca, two have TMR:

68558-A	Three Little Words	Solo with orch 16 bars. (M)
68560-A	Wishful Thinking	Solo 16 bars. (SM)

**NYC. March 31, 1941**

Same as Sept. 25, 1940.

Three titles were recorded for Decca, one has TMR:

68895-A	No Nothing	Solo 2 bars. (S)
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Brief and unimportant soli in general, even the three longer ones seem rather anonymous and pale.

**ELLA FITZGERALD****AND HER FAMOUS ORCHESTRA****L.A. July 31, 1941**

Personnel as March 31, 1941 except Elmer Williams (ts) added, Jesse Price (dm) replaces Beason.

Six titles were recorded for Decca, three have TMR:

2609	When My Sugar Walks Down The Street	Soli 4 and 4 bars. (SM)
2611	Melinda The Mousie	Solo 8 bars. (M)
2612	Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man	Intro. Solo 4 bars. (S)

Not very exciting this last big band session with Ella's "famous" orchestra.

**ELLA FITZGERALD ACCOMPANIED BY****NYC. Oct. 6, 1941**

Ted McRae (ts), Tommy Fulford (p), Ulysses Livingston (g), Beverley Peer (b), Kenny Clarke (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Decca:

69784-A	Jim	Intro 4 bars. Obbligato 16 and 12 bars. (S)
69785-A	This Love Of Mine	Intro 4 bars. Obbligato 48 bars. (S)

This is a proper ending to TMR's association with Ella. After years of rather less well-chosen productions, at last there is a beautiful ballad record! TMR keeps in the background, and we never get close to a Billie/Prez relation, still here we have some very good evidence of his qualities, and hers .... Imagine what TMR really could have made!

Replaced Chu Berry, who died in a tragic car accident Oct. 30, 1941, in the Cab Calloway orchestra.

**CAB CALLOWAY AND HIS ORCHESTRA****NYC. Nov. 3, 1941**

Russell Smith, Shad Collins, Jonah Jones (tp), Tyree Glenn (tb, vib), Quentin Jackson, Keg Johnson (tb), Jerry Blake (cl, as), Hilton Jefferson (as), Andrew Brown (as, bar), Walter Thomas, Ted McRae (ts), Benny Paine (p), Danny Barker (g), Milt Hinton (b), Cozy Cole (dm), Cab Calloway, The Palmer Brothers (vo).

Five titles were recorded for Okeh, three have TMR:

31640-1	Nain, Nain	Solo 8 bars. (M)
31641-1	Tappin' Off	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
31645-1	A Smo-o-oth One	Solo 6 bars. (FM)

There are no TMR soli on the **CAB CALLOWAY** recording sessions of Dec. 24, 1941 and Feb. 2, 1942.

**Albany, NY. Nov. 15, 1941**

Similar. Broadcast from Bob Murphy's Rainbo Room, New Kenmore Hotel.

TMR solos on the following items:

My Coo-Coo Bird	Solo 12 bars. (M)
Nain, Nain	Solo 8 bars. (M)
Red Bank Bounce	Solo with orch 32 bars. (FM)
Hey Doc	Solo 8 bars. (M)

**Same**

Same. TMR solos on the following item:

King Porter Stomp Solo 32 bars. (FM)

I am not sure that TMR thrives with the Cab on these early recordings, there is something passive about his playing with this band, like on "King Porter ...", almost blowing against the wind! On "... Off", even if he plays his own, he seems to emulate Chu's style, a good result but not memorable. It may be mentioned that the two versions of "Nain ..." are quite different.

**CAB CALLOWAY AND HIS ORCHESTRA Cleveland, Ohio, Feb. 25, 1942**

Personnel similar to above.

Quizzicale Show, four titles preserved, two have TMR:

Rose O'Day Solo 8 bars. (FM)

Nain, Nain Solo 8 bars. (FM)

A recent discovery produces two brief but nice tenorsax soli by TMR!

**Cleveland, Ohio, March 4, 1942**

Same. Quizzicale Show, four titles preserved, but no TMR.

Briefly with Jimmie Lunceford in late 1942. Worked as a staff arranger for Artie Shaw, then two stints (on (as) and (ts)) with Lionel Hampton in 1943. Musical director of Louis Armstrong's Big Band for a year from spring 1944.

**LOUIS ARMSTRONG AND HIS ORCHESTRA 1944**

Louis Armstrong (tp, vo), Jesse Brown, Andrew "Fats" Ford, Thomas Grinder, Lester Currant (tp), Taswell Baird, Adam Martin, Larry Anderson (tb), John Brown, Willard Brown (as), Ted McRae (ts, cond), Dexter Gordon (ts), Ernest Thompson (bar), Ed Swanston (p), Emmet Slay (g), Alfred Moore (b), James "Coatsville" Harris (dm), Velma Middleton, Jimmy Ross, Dorothy Dandridge (vo).

TMR is present on sessions from April 1944. Complete details can be found in Hans Westerberg's book on Louis Armstrong. The following items have TMR soli:

**Prob. LA. May 19 or 20, 1944**

ONS No. 240 and 253. For details, see Dexter Gordon. The following items have TMR:

Ain't Misbehavin' Brief break. (M)

Besame Mucho Solo 16 bars. (S)

Easy As You Go Solo 8 bars. (FM)

I Couldn't Sleep A Wink Solo 4 bars. (M)

I'll Be Around Faint obbligato. Solo 4 bars. (S)

**Stockton, June 7, 1944**

AFRS SB 382. Two titles:

It's Love, Love, Love Solo 8 bars. (FM)

Ain't Misbehavin' Brief break. (M)

**LA. Aug. 9, 1944**

Same personnel. Three titles were recorded for Decca, one has TMR:

3500-A Groovin' Solo 16 bars. (FM)

**Fort Wachuka, Ar., Aug. 18, 1944**

Same. AFRS SB 444. Two titles with TMR:

Sweet And Lovely Solo 8 bars. (SM)

Groovin' Solo 16 bars. (FM)

**Camp Reynolds, Phil., Sept. 12, 1944**

Same, except Sid Catlett (dm) possibly replaces Harris.

AFRS SB 465. One title with TMR:

Ain't Misbehavin' Brief break. (M)

**Tuskogee Airfield, Ala., Oct. 5, 1944**

Same/Similar. AFRS SB 486. One title with TMR:

I'm Confessin' That I Love You Solo 8 bars. (SM)

**Unknown loc., Oct. 15, 1944**

Same/Similar. Yank Swing Session. One title:

Solid Sam Solo 16 bars. (FM)

TMR gets quite a few opportunities to solo in the Armstrong band, more than Dexter Gordon, but usually short fill-ins. However, he always makes me regret that he never is allowed to develop his ideas properly. Note how beautifully he plays in the slower tempi, like "Besame ..." and "... Lovely", but also the faster tempi like "Groovin' ..." and "... Sam" are firmly executed. His fate may be likened to that of the dinosaurs, on the verge of extinction, to be replaced by the modern "mammals" (one may however discuss what blood is most hot!), but the dignity of TMR cannot be explained away.

**LOUIS ARMSTRONG AND HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Feb. 13, 1945**

Louis Armstrong (tp, vo) with unknown big band including Ted McRae, probably Wild Bill Moore (ts), Velma Middleton (vo).  
AFRS ONS 540.

When It's Sleepy Time Down South	No solo.
On The Sunny Side Of The Street	No solo.
A Little On The Lonely Side	Solo 4 bars. (S)
Accentuate The Positive	Solo 16 bars. (M)
Saturday Night Is The Loneliest Night	Solo 8 bars. (M)
I Can't Give You Anything But Love	Solo with orch 6 bars. (M)
Always	Solo 8 bars. (M)
T'Ain't For Me	No solo.
I'm Confessin'	Solo 8 bars. (S)
Blame It On Me	No solo.

Listening to "Saturday Night ..." and "... Confessin'", I was surprised by the strength and inspiration in TMR's playing. Far from sounding like an outdated swing musician to drown in a big band, he is still an important jazz personality with a style easily recognizable after a few bars. It confirms my opinion about TMR being one of the most underrated and underrecorded tenorsax stars!

**WALTER THOMAS AND HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. June 27, 1945**

Doc Cheatham (tp), Eddie Barefield, Hilton Jefferson (cl, as), Walter Thomas, Ted McRae (ts), Buddy Saffer (bar), Billy Taylor (p), Milt Hinton (b), Specs Powell (dm).  
Four titles were recorded for Joe Davis, one has TMR:

8132A Back Talk Solo 8 bars. (M)

A brief but quite typical solo, TMR's personal sound from the thirties is still quite recognizable.

**TEDDY McRAE AND HIS ZANZIBAR ORCHESTRA Chi. March 1946**

Personnel including Pete Clarke (as), Ted McRae (ts), Ken Kersey (p), Palmer Brothers (vo-5055), Nita Bradley (vo-5056).

Two titles were recorded for Southern, sold to King/Queen:

K5055 C-i-n-c-i-n-n-a-t-t-i Solo with ens 16 bars. (M)

K5056 Love Solo with ens 4 and 4 bars. (S)

Postscript of Oct. 8, 2023: Nice to hear that unique sound again!

**TEDDY McRAE AND HIS ORCHESTRA Chi. ca. 1946**

Ted McRae (ts), unknown (tp), (as), (p), (cel), (b), (dm), Rena Colloins (vo-12), The Three Barons (vo-group).

Two titles were recorded for Chicago:

N11 Pluggin' Jones No solo.

N12 To Satisfy You Solo 2 bars. (S)

Extreme lack of selfconfidence to record something like "... You"! Could have been a beautiful tenorsax item to judge from a few bars. "... Jones" is without any jazz interest whatsoever.

**DANNY BARKER SEXTETTE  
FEATURING BLUE LU BARKER**

**NYC. Aug. 25, 1946**

Shad Collins (tp), Ted McRae (ts), Norman Lester (p), Danny Barker (g), Ernest Williamson (b), unknown (dm), Blue Lu Barker (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Apollo:

R1050	You Gotta Show It To Me Baby	Weak obligato with (tp). Acc.(tp). (S)
R1051	Don't You Feel My Leg	Weak obligato with tp. Acc. (tp). Solo 8 bars. (S)
R1052	There Was A Lil' Mouse	Weak obligato. (M)
R1053	That Made Him Mad	Weak obligato with (tp). (S)

Unfortunately we do not hear TMR much here, because on his only solo on "... My Leg" he plays very competently in a slightly modernized version of his old style. It would have been very valuable to have this modest but excellent player stretch out and show his proper place in jazz tenorsax history!

**EDDIE "ROCHESTER" ANDERSON  
TALKING ACC. BY**

**NYC. Sept. 1946**

Jonah Jones, Dick Vance (p), Tyree Glenn (tb), Pete Clark (as), Ted McRae (ts), Billy Taylor (p), John Collins (g), Milt Hinton (b), Cozy Cole (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Apollo:

AP3019	Bagel And Lox	No solo.
AP3020	Eighty Six	No solo.

Nice personnel but no soloists, a waste of talent! And the fine, original tenorsax of TMR is gone forever.

TMR records again Sept. 20, Dec. 14, 1955 and 1958 under the name MR. BEAR. However, (vo) only.

No further recording sessions.

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