

The
VOCAL
of
UNA MAE CARLISLE

Solographer: Jan Evensmo
Last update: Aug. 25, 2018, July 18, 2022

Born: Xenia, Ohio, Dec. 26, 1918
Died: NYC. Nov. 7, 1956

Introduction:

It was Lester Young on Bluebird that led us to Una Mae Carlisle, but apart from that, she did not make much impression on Oslo Jazz Circle's youngsters and Billie Holiday fans. Much later I realized how fine and original singer she was!

History:

A protegee of Fats Waller, was discovered by Fats whilst he was working in Cincinnati in late 1932. Worked with Waller for a while, was then featured as a solo act. Worked (and recorded) in Europe 1937-39, appeared in England, France (including long residency at Boeuf sur le Tout), Germany etc.. Returned to U.S.A., solo work at Village Vanguard (late 1940), spell in hospital (1941), then played at Kelly's Stables, Plantation Club, Hotel Dixie etc.. Enjoyed considerable success with compositions "Walkin' By The River" and "I See A Million People". Own radio and television series in the late 1940s. Suffered for many years with mastoid trouble, this eventually forced her to retire in 1954 (ref. John Chilton).

UNA MAE CARLISLE SOLOGRAPHY

UNA MAE CARLISLE & HER JAM BAND **London, May 20, 1938**
 Dave Wilkins (tp), Bertie King (cl, ts), Una Mae Carlisle (p, vo), Alan Ferguson (g), Len Harrison (b), Hymie Schneider (dm).
 Six titles were recorded for British Vocalion:

3654-1	Don't Try Your Jive On Me	2:52. (FM)
3655-1	I Would Do Anything For You	2:57. (M)
3656-1	Hangover Blues	2:51. (SM)
3657-1	Love Walked In	2:38. (M)
3658-1	Mean To Me	2:40. (FM)
3659-1	I'm Crazy 'Bout My Baby	2:40. (FM)

Una Mae Carlisle's first recording session took place during her visit to Europe, where she meets examples of good and professional British swing. She demonstrates fine strong-handed jazz piano capabilities on all items, and while her vocal not yet has achieved the later elegance and personality, her potential is quite evident.

DANNY POLO & HIS SWING STARS **Paris, Jan. 30, 1939**
 Philippe Brun (tp), Danny Polo (cl), Alix Combelle (ts), Una Mae Carlisle (p), Oscar Aleman (g), Louis Vola (b), Jerry Mengo (dm).
 Two titles were recorded for Decca:

4862	Montparnasse Jump	(p)-Solo 24 bars. (M)
4863	China Boy	(p)-Solo 32 bars. (F)

UMC does not make any particularly great impression with her piano playing on this session, compared to the previous one, at least not on me.

FATS WALLER & HIS RHYTHM **NYC. Nov. 3, 1939**
 John Hamilton (tp), Gene Sedric (cl, ts), Fats Waller (p, vo), John Smith (g), Cedric Wallace (b), Slick Jones (dm), Una Mae Carlisle (vo).
 One title was recorded for Bluebird:

43351-1	I Can't Give You Anything But Love	Vocal duet 32 bars. (S)
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This item can easily be considered a pure gimmick with UMC trying to sing the song, and Fats on his part trying to destroy any such effort. Better then to enjoy a great and historic performance, fresh today as then, demonstrating the genius of Fats with the lady playing her carefully designed stage part.

UNA MAE CARLISLE VOCAL ACC. BY **NYC. Aug. 2, 1940**
 John Hamilton (tp), own (p), Al Casey (g), Cedric Wallace (b), Slick Jones (dm).
 Four titles were recorded for Bluebird:

54675-1	Now I Lay Me Down To Dream	3:03. (S)
54676-2	Papa's In Bed With His Britches On	2:40. (M)
54677-2	If I Had You	3:24. (S)
54678-1	You Made Me Love You	2:52. (S)

Now we are getting close to the reason for an UMC vocal solography. Her voice has become quite personal, easily identifiable, and she sings with an expression which to me is a beautiful mix of warmth and coolness. Except for the corny "... Britches ...", the other items here are highly noteworthy, also because of very nice support from the band.

UNA MAE CARLISLE VOCAL ACC. BY **NYC. Nov. 13, 1940**
 Benny Carter (tp-57641), own (p), Everett Barksdale (g), Slam Stewart (b), Zutty Singleton (dm).
 Two titles were recorded for Bluebird:

57641-1	Walkin' By The River	3:02. (S)
57642-1	I Met You Then, I Know You Now	2:52. (SM)

The good impression from the first Bluebird session is continued here, and also now with fine backing. My favourite is the slowly swinging "... Now".

UNA MAE CARLISLE WITH ORCHESTRA NYC. March 10, 1941

Shad Collins (tp), Lester Young (ts), Clyde Hart (p), John Collins (g), Nick Fenton (b), Hal West (dm), Una Mae Carlisle (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Bluebird:

062747-1	Blitzkrieg Baby	3:18. (M)
062748-1	Beautiful Eyes	3:00. (SM)
062749-1	There'll Be Some Changes Made	3:00. (SM)
062750-1	It's Sad But True	2:42. (SM)

When I wrote about this session many years ago in connection with Pres, the following came out: "The surroundings are not the very best, Una Mae Carlisle never had the depth of Billie Holiday, and does not seem to be inspired by Lester in the same way Billie was. But she functions perfectly as a vocal base upon which Lester builds his improvisations". Then several years later upon revision, I modified my viewpoint like this: "I believe I have underestimated Una Mae. After listening to Astrud Gilberto with Stan Getz twenty years later, the perspective changes!". An now I am writing her solography! My feelings of today can be stated easily like this: After Billie Holiday, there is no female vocalist (except Mildred Bailey) from before the middle forties that sings beautifully with such constrained emotion like UMC! This session is a wonderful treasure, because of the meeting between two great artists that inspire each other mutually. No more shall be said.

UNA MAE CARLISLE VOCAL ACC. BY NYC. May 1, 1941

Charlie Shavers (tp), Buster Bailey (cl), Russell Procope (as), Billy Kyle (p), John Kirby (b), O'Neil Spencer (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Bluebird:

63837-1	I See A Million People	3:00. (S)
63838-1	Oh, I'm Evil	2:20. (M)
63839-1	You Mean So Much To Me	2:47. (SM)
63840-1	The Boogie Woogie Piggy	2:41. (M)

UMC teams up with the Kirby organization, and her resulting records are much more interesting than the non-vocal ones in general... In "... Evil" she shows a sense of drama, and while they could have skipped "... Piggy", the remaining two also have nice singing.

UNA MAE CARLISLE NYC. July 22, 1941

Personnel as May 1.

Four titles were recorded for Bluebird:

66879-1	Can't Help Loving Dat Man	2:43. (SM)
66880-1	It Ain't Like That	2:27. (FM)
66881-1	Anything	2:36. (SM)
66882-1	City Called Heaven	2:54. (S)

Fine and straightforward singing here, "Anything" is the highlight.

UNA MAE CARLISLE NYC. Oct. 3, 1941

Personnel as May 1 except Specs Powell (dm) replaces Spencer.

Four titles were recorded for Bluebird:

67962-1/2	I'm The One That Loves You	3:01. (M)
67963-1	My Wish	3:02. (S)
67964-2	Coffee And Cakes	2:52. (SM)
67965-1	Moonlight Masquerade	2:30. (SM)

The music material could have been more exciting, but UMC's vocal is always pleasant, and the piano gets quite many opportunities on her sessions.

UNA MAE CARLISLE NYC. Feb. 13, 1942

Personnel as May 1, 1941.

Four titles were recorded for Bluebird:

71908-1	Don't Fetch It	2:18. (FM)
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71909-1	So Long Shorty	2:27. (M)
71910-1	I'm Tryin'	2:52. (S)
71911-1	Sweet Talk	3:00. (SM)

The end of Kirby and Bluebird and Brian Rust's recording sessions. Nothing to add to the previous sessions, really. Try "... Talk" for a highlight.

UNA MAE CARLISLE **NYC. May 23&25, 1944**

Ray Nance (tp), Budd Johnson (ts), Una Mae Carlisle (p, vo), Snags Allen (g), Bass Robinson (b), Shadow Wilson (dm).

Eight titles were recorded for Beacon:

'Tain't Yours	2:53. (M)
Without You Baby	3:08. (S)
I'm A Good Good Woman	2:50. (M)
Ain't Nothing Much	3:01. (S)
I Like It 'Cause I Love It	3:06. (SM)
You Gotta Take Your Time	2:53. (SM)
He's The Best Little Yankee To Me	2:38. (M)
I Speak So Much About You	3:02. (S)

Exquisite vocal on this session, eight items of great quality. If some should be highlighted, "... Baby" is a very strong candidate, love that one! This is also one of my favourite UMC sessions because of the excellent horn companions and rhythm she works with here. A real swing session! NYC.

UNA MAE CARLISLE **NYC. June 12-17, 1944**

Una Mae Carlisle (p, vo).

Soundies (unknown recording studio, Filmcraft Studios for the photography):

I'm A Good Good Woman	1:57. (M)
'Tain't Yours	2:36. (M)
I Like It Cause I Love It	2:09. (M)

UNA MAE CARLISLE **NYC. Aug. 30, 1944**

Billy Butterfield (tp), Vernon Brown (tb), Bill Stegmeyer (cl), Una Mae Carlisle (p, vo), Bob Haggart (b), George Wettling (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Beacon:

Teasin' Me	2:39. (SM)
You And Your Heart Of Stone	3:09. (S)
You're Gonna Change Your Mind	2:45. (M)
I've Got A Crying Need For You	2:56. (SM)

The year of 1944 is obviously a very good one for UMC, and this is session with the same vocal qualities as the previous one for Beacon. An easy swinging "... Mind" is only one of four fine items, and "... Crying Need ..." should also be noted in particular.

**UNA MAE CARLISLE ACC. BY
WALTER THOMAS & HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Oct. 20, 1944**

Doc Cheatham (tp), Trummy Young (tb), Walter "Foots" Thomas (ts), Una Mae Carlisle (p, vo) and others.

Two titles were recorded for Beacon:

The Rest Of My Life	2:47. (S)
The Rest Of My Life alt.	2:47. (S)
That Glory Day	2:41. (M)

A more modest Beacon session with only two titles, and only "... Life" is a song with lyrical qualities.

**SECOND ANNUAL
AMERICAN SWING FESTIVAL** **NYC. Feb. 4-11, 1945**

Una Mae Carlisle (p, vo, talk), Al Casey (g), Cedric Wallace (b), Arthur Trappier (dm).

WNEW “Fats Waller Memorial Show; two titles, (p) only on the brief “St. Louis Blues” (0:19) but:

I Can’t Give You Anything But Love 2:40. (SM)

A nice recreation of an old success. UMC sings one chorus, then takes 8 bars piano to start a second chorus and continues to sing to the end.

UNA MAE CARLISLE
VOCALIST WITH QUINTET **probably mid 1940s**
 Unknown (tp), (cl), Una Mae Carlisle (p, vo), unknown (g), (b), (dm).
 The Voice Of America 16” transcriptions, PV-23, 26 and 53, total of thirteen titles:

I Ain’t Got Nobody 2:13. (M)
 How Deep Is The Ocean? 3:19. (S)
 Super Song 2:11. (M)
 If I Had You 4:10. (S)
 Them There Eyes 2:23. (M)
 Tonight Be Tender To Me 3:41. (S)
 When Our Country Was Born 1:57. (M)
 Mean To Me 2:27. (FM)
 Coffee And Cakes 2:06. (M)
 Mad About Love 2:47. (M)
 I See A Million People 2:38. (S)
 Ain’t Misbehavin’ 2:23. (SM)
 One Hundred Years From Today 3:39. (S)

UNA MAE CARLISLE **Fort Lee, NJ. early 1946**
 Una Mae Carlisle (p, vo).
 Film “Stars On Parade”, produced at Cinema Studios:

‘Tain’t Yours
 Why Do You Treat Me So?

UNA MAE CARLISLE **NYC. July 3, 1946**
 Johnny Letman (tp), Gene Sedric (ts), Una Mae Carlisle (p, vo), Jimmy Shirley (g),
 Cedric Wallace (b), Slick Jones (dm).
 Four titles were recorded for Savoy:

3313 That’s My Man 2:59. (S)
 3314 If It Ain’t Mine 2:41. (SM)
 3315 I’m Crazy ‘Bout My Baby 2:37. (FM)
 3316 Throw It Out Of Your Mind 2.43. (M)

This seems to be close to the end of UMC as a jazz singer, and the last recording session of any importance, with good accompaniment. Four titles in different tempi, all with qualities, and we can only wish that she had continued to sing jazz for us.

UNA MAE CARLISLE **NYC. Nov. 20/21, 1947**
 Una Mae Carlisle (vo) with unknown accompaniment.
 Eight titles were recorded for National, only one issued, not available:

278 Where The River Meets The Sea

UNA MAE CARLISLE **NYC. Dec. 22, 1947**
 Una Mae Carlisle (vo), unknown (p), (g), (b), (dm).
 Eight titles were recorded for National, only one issued:

336 Stop Going Through The Motions 2:56. (S)

Nice performance, but the sound quality of the recording is not the best.

UNA MAE CARLISLE **NYC. early 1948**
 Una Mae Carlisle (p, vo), unknown (g), most probably Lee Norman (b).
 Film “Boarding House Blues”:

It Ain't Like That 1:29. (FM)
 Throw It Out Of Your Mind 1:27. (FM)

UNA MAE CARLISLE VOCAL ACC. BY LOUMELL MORGAN TRIO NYC. prob. mid-1948

Loumell Morgan (p), James "Ham" Jackson (g), probably Jimmy Smith (b), Una Mae Carlisle (vo).
 AFRS Jubilee 304, re-broadcast of a "Negro Stage Revue" done in front of a live audience, probably broadcasted over a local station, one title, not available:

Them There Eyes

UNA MAE CARLISLE VOCAL ACC. BY ALAN HOLMES & HIS NEW TONES NYC. Jan. 18, 1950

Dominic Cortese (accordeon), Peter Sacripanti (org), Herbert Sweet (p), Michael Storme (b), Hal Marquess (dm).
 Two titles were recorded for Columbia:

42662 Tonight Be Tender To Me 2:43. (S)
 42663 Ohi-Ohio Boogie 2:58. (SM)

UMC is now progressively leaving the realm of real jazz. Slow titles like "... To Me" may be considered nice and sweet, but "... Boogie" is corn.

UNA MAE CARLISLE NJ. March 13, 1950

Una Mae Carlisle (p, vo, org?).
 WJZ broadcast "Harlem USA" (also including an interview conducted by Dorothy Chappelle), one title:

Ohio Boogie 2:21. (FM)

Postscript of July 2022: This one turned up recently!

UNA MAE CARLISLE VOCAL ACC. BY BOB CHESTER's ORCHESTRA NYC. March 17, 1950

Riley Norris (tp), Herbert Winfield (tb), Sal Pace (cl, as), Gene Di Novi (p), John Chance (b), Nat Ray (dm).
 Four titles were recorded for Columbia:

43003 Frenzy 3:12. (S)
 43004 I Bought Myself A Book 2:29. (M)
 43005 The Best Idea You Had 2:18. (M)
 43006 Mad About Love 2:09. (M)

NYC. April 18, 1950

Alec Fila (tp), Herbert Winfield (tb), Sal Pace (cl, as), Leo Balandyk (bar), Gene Di Novi (p), John Chance (b), Nat Ray (dm).
 Two titles:

43153 We've Got A Lesson To Learn 2:41. (M)
 43154 Three Little Bugs 2:38. (M)

As said above, UMC does not go for jazz anymore, even with some dixieland background on several titles. She is still an excellent vocalist, but I doubt her performances will interest the readers of this document.

UNA MAE CARLISLE VOCAL ACC. BY DON REDMAN's ORCHESTRA NYC. May 8, 1950

Dick Vance (tp), George Dorsey (as), George Nicholas (ts), Linton Garner (p), Billy Taylor (b), Jo Jones (dm).
 Four titles were recorded for Columbia:

43231 Tired Hands 2:49. (S)
 43232 Strange 3:03. (S)
 43233 Long 2:54. (S)
 43234 Gone 3:12. (S)

This looks on paper like a jazz session, but is only vocal with straight background of no particular interest (though some notable tenorsax on "Gone"). The result is in fact pretty boring. So UMC is fading away from the jazz scene by now. But at

her best she was a fascinating and very personal singer that deserves to be remembered.

UNA MAE CARLISLE

NYC. 1950

Una Mae Carlisle (p, vo, talk), unknown (g).

Seventeen titles, assembled in six groups each lasting approximately like a 78 rpm. side. No reason to go into details, if you are interested, check Classics(F) CD1265.

No further recording sessions.

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