

**The**

**PIANO**

**of**

**WILLIAM**  
**HENRY JOSEPH**  
**BONAPARTE BERTHOLOFF**  
**SMITH**

**“WILLIE THE LION”**

Solographer: Jan Evensmo with important support from Louis Mazetier,  
Erlend Hegdal and Ola Rønnow  
Last update: Dec. 1, 2022, Jan. 31, March 22, May 8, 2023

Born: Goshen, NY., Nov. 25, 1897  
 Died: NYC. April 18, 1973

*Introduction:*

Sorry to say it, but in Oslo Jazz Circle, the interest and understanding of early or traditional jazz piano was very limited. I recall that the first time I heard Willie "The Lion" Smith on record was because he was a sideman on a session with Frankie Newton, a favourite trumpeter of ours.

*History:*

Mother played piano and organ, Willie Started on organ, then specialized on piano. From 1912 played many residencies in New York and Atlantic City until joining U.S. Army in November 1916. Saw active service in France, also played bass drum in Lt. Tim Brymn's Regimental Band. Demobilised in U.S.A. in late 1919. From 1920 began long residencies in New York including: Leroy's, Small's, Garden of Joy, etc. Did many free-lance recording sessions including accompanying Mamie Smith on "Crazy Blues". Toured theatre circuits and was also featured in "Holiday in Dixieland" revue (1922-23). Led own band at Capitol Palace, Rhythm Club, Hooper's Club, etc., also played and acted in Broadway play "The Four Walls" (1927-28). Featured pianist at Pod's and Jerry's in the late 1920s and early 1930s, also toured as accompanist for Nina Mae McKinney, and took part in Clarence Williams' recording sessions. During the 1930s was featured at many venues in New York: The Onyx, Adrian's Tap Room, The Apollo, etc., etc., also led own recording groups and worked occasionally in the Milt Herth Trio. In the 1940s led own bands at Man About Town, Casa Blanca, Newark, Venetian Room, etc., etc. Toured Europe as a soloist late 1949 to early 1950. Played regularly at The Central Plaza sessions and took part in the film "Jazz Dance". In the late 1950s and 1960s has appeared at many important jazz festivals, frequent appearances in Toronto; in 1966 whilst in Canada was the subject of two short films. Toured Europe in late 1965 and 1966 (ref John Chilton).

## WILLIE "THE LION" SMITH SOLOGRAPHY

Postscript of May 8, 2023: What a mess! It seems that much of the personnel listings given in Rust is not based upon facts but speculations only. K.-B. Ray has gone through all relevant sessions, and it seems that on not a single early session Willie "The Lion" Smith's presence is certain. Possibly we have to go to 1934 to find his first definite session. I have chosen to put in cursive all these 'suspicious' sessions below.

**MAMIE SMITH****ACC. BY THE REGA ORCHESTRA**

NYC. Feb. 14, 1920

Personnel possibly including Willie "The Lion" Smith.

Two titles, 7275 "That Thing Called Love" and 7276 "You Can't Keep A Good Man Down" were recorded for Okeh, but no (p) can be heard.

**MAMIE SMITH & HER JAZZ HOUNDS**

NYC. Aug. 10, 1920

Personnel probably including Willie Smith.

Two titles, 7529 "Crazy Blues" and 7539 "It's Right Here For You", were recorded for Okeh, but no (p) can be heard.

NYC. Sept. 12, 1920

Same. Two titles, 7589 "Fare Thee Honey Blues" and 7590 "The Road Is Rocky", but no (p) can be heard.

**THOMAS MORRIS**

NYC. May 1923

Thomas Morris (tp), Willie Smith (p), others unknown.

Two titles were recorded for Okeh, no (p) can be heard on 71583-C "Bull Blues" but:

71582-B *Just The Blues That's All*

Breaks. (M)

The piano breaks on "Just ..." have been identified by Louis Mazetier as being played by WS. They seem to represent the first examples of WS on record.

**BLUE RHYTHM ORCHESTRA**

NYC. Oct. 29 &amp; Nov. 4, 1925

June Clark or ... Thomas (cnt), Jimmy Harrison (tb), Buster Bailey (cl, sop), Prince Robinson (ts), possibly Willie Smith (p), Buddy Christian (bjo).

Three titles were recorded for Pathe, no (p) on 106358 "Keep Your Temper" and 106381 "Santa Claus Blues" but:

106382 *Hole 'Er Deacon*

Soli 2 and 4 bars. (M)

Could these six bars be played by WS?

**GULF COAST SEVEN**

NYC. Nov. 5, 1925

Personnel same/similar to above.

Two titles, 141245-4 "Santa Claus Blues" and 141246-3 "Keep Your Temper", were recorded for Columbia, but no (p) can be heard.

**HOT & HEAVY**

NYC. ca. July 15, 1926

Duo, possibly being Herb Morand (tp, talk), possibly Willie Smith (p).

Two titles were recorded for Pathe:

106992 *Louisiana Breakdown*

Intro. Duet with (tp).

Soli 16 and 20 bars. (F)

106993 *Memphis Rag*Duet with (tp). Solo with (vo)  
comments 48 bars. Duet to coda. (F)

If this really is WLS, it would be his first real solo session. However, quoting Tom Lord: "... he could not in an interview recall that such a date ever took place".

**GEORGIA STRUTTERS**

NYC. May 23, 1927

Jabbo Smith (cnt), Jimmy Harrison (tb), Herschel Brassfield (cl), Edgar Sampson (as, vln), Willie Smith (p), Gus Horsley (bjo), Harry Hull (tu), unknown (dm), Perry Bradfield (vo, dir).

Two titles were recorded for Harmony:

144202-3 *Rock, Jenny, Rock*

In ens. Acc. (vo). (M)

144203-3 *It's Right Here For You*

In ens. Acc. (vo). Coda. (FM)

If this is WS, it has only academic interest; the piano is well hidden in the back.

**SEVEN GALLON JUG BAND**

NYC. Dec. 6, 1929

Ed Allen (cnt), unknown (cl), Frank Robinson (bassax, hca, vo), possibly Willie Smith (p), Clarence Williams (jug,vo).

Two titles were recorded for Columbia, one issued:

149691-3 What If I Do? Possibly solo 8 bars. (SM)

NYC. Jan. 3, 1930

Same/similar. Three titles, one issued:

149690-6 Wipe 'Em Off Possibly solo 12 bars. Acc. (vo). (FM)

WS's presence here is highly doubtful. "The pianist is difficult to identify in "Wipe 'Em Off", and the guy who speaks has been for a long time thought of being Fats Waller" (ref. Louis Mazetier).

**CLARENCE WILLIAMS' JUG BAND** NYC. May 15, 1933

Albert Nicholas (cl), probably Willie Smith (p), Jimmy McLin (g), Clarence Williams (jug, vo), probably Willie Williams (wbd), Eva Taylor, Clarence Todd (vo). Personnel taken from Tom Lord: Clarence Williams.

Four titles were recorded for Vocalion, two issued:

13475 Mississippi Basin Possibly with (cl) 18 bars. (SM)

TO1301 I Like To Go Back In The Evening Possibly with (cl) 8 bars. (M)

There are no solo spots here, and WS's possible presence has only academic interest.

**WILLIAMS' JUG BAND** NYC. Aug. 7, 1933

Cecil Scott (cl), Herman Chittison, Willie "The Lion" Smith (p), Ikey Robinson (bjo, vo), Clarence Williams (jug, vo), Willie Williams (wbd), Clarence Todd (kazoo, vo), Eva Taylor (vo). Postscript of May 8, 2023: K.-B. Rau states that Chittison has named Claude Hopkins as the other piano player.

Six titles were recorded for Columbia, all have piano backing vocals (not detailed) and two pianos playing:

152463-2 Shim Sham Shimmy Dance Duet with (p) 18 bars. (F)

152464-2 Organ Grinder Blues Duet with (p) 8 bars. (S)

152465-2 Chizzlin' Sam Duet with (p) 16 bars. (FM)

152466-2 High Society As below? ( )

152466-3 High Society Duet with (p) 16 bars. (F)

152467-2 Mister, Will You Serenade? Duet with (p) 8 bars. (M)

152468-2 You Ain't Too Old Duet with (p) 34 bars. (FM)

Music to warm your heart and make your old legs moving! Six highly enjoyable items as such, although the piano contents does not make history, the two brilliant piano players play together all the time, and we can get no clear impression of their capabilities, except ability to swing of course. For a highlight try "... Too Old", if you dare!

**MEZZ MEZZROW** NYC. May 7, 1934

Max Kaminsky, Reunald Jones, Chelsea Quealey (tp), Floyd O'Brien (tb), Mezz Mezzrow (cl, as), Benny Carter (as), Bud Freeman (ts), Willie Smith (p), John Kirby (b), Chick Webb (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Victor:

82392-1 Old Fashioned Love In ens. Break 4 bars. (M)

82393-1 Apologies Intro 4 bars. Solo 12 bars. (FM)

82394-1 Sendin' The Vipers Solo 16 bars. (FM)

82395-1 35<sup>th</sup> And Calumet Solo 12 bars. (FM)

This is in fact the real beginning of "The Lion"-solography, and the man has already become forty years old, an age where dozens upon dozens of the greatest artists already rest in the grave! In this famous early multi-colour session, he makes his 'debut' with three solid swinging soli.

**WILLIE "THE LION" SMITH** NYC. May 14, 1934

Willie Smith solo (p).

Two titles were recorded for ARC, 15211 "I've Got To Have My Moment" is unissued but:

15210-1 Finger Buster 2:53. (F)

And one week later he has his first solo session, although only one single tune has survived. However, "Finger ..." is one of his great compositions, and he takes us through three minutes of gorgeous stride piano. This item alone should be enough to put WS firmly on piano chart!

**CLARENCE WILLIAMS NYC. Aug. 22, 1934**

Ed Allen (cnt), probably Dicky Wells (tb), Cecil Scott (cl), Willie Smith (p), Roy Smeck (g), Richard Fullbright (b), Floyd Casey (dm), Clarence Williams (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Vocalion:

15721-1	I Saw Stars	Acc. only. (SM)
15721-1	I Saw Stars	Acc. only. (SM)
15722-2	Crazy Blues	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
15723-1	The Stuff Is Here	Acc. only. (FM)
15724-1	Rhapsody In Love	Acc. only. (SM)
15724-2	Rhapsody In Love	Acc. only. (SM)

Only "Crazy ..." has got a solo, but it is nice and swinging!

**ALABAMA JUG BAND NYC. Sept. 5, 1934**

Ed Allen (cnt), Cecil Scott (cl), Willie Smith (p), Ikey Robinson (g, bjo, vo), Clarence Williams (jug, vo), Richard Fullbright (b), Floyd Casey (wbd).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, no WS on 38546 "My Gal Sal" and 38552 "I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate" but:

38545	Ida, Sweet As Apple Cider	Solo 14 bars. (FM)
38547	Gulf Coast Blues	Intro 4 bars. (SM)

**NYC. Oct. 3, 1934**

Same except Cyrus St. Clair (tu) replaces Fullbright. Ham & Cabbage (vo-trio). Four titles, no WS on 38781 "Jazz It Blues", 38783 "Crazy Blues" and 38784 "Sugar Blues" but:

38782	Somebody Stole My Gal	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
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The by far most exciting solo here is the swinging "... My Gal".

**BIRMINGHAM SERENADERS NYC. Feb. 1, 1935**

Personnel possibly including Willie Smith (p).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, but no (p) to be heard anyway.

**WILLIE "THE LION" SMITH & HIS CUBS NYC. April 23, 1935**

Ed Allen (cnt), Cecil Scott (cl, ts), Willie Smith (p), Willie Williams (wbd).

Four titles were recorded for Decca:

39489	There's Gonna Be The Devil To Pay	Acc. (wbd). Solo 32 bars. (F)
39490-A	Streamline Gal	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
39491-A	What Can I Do With ALFGLY?	Acc. (wbd). Solo 36 bars. (F)
39491-B	What Can I Do With ALFGLY	As above. (F)
39492-A	Harlem Joys	Solo 32 bars. (F)

WS is now entering the swing era, and for two years he is playing with his cubs. His quartet here has a firm washboard base, going uptempo, and the piano soli are strong and inspired. All items are quite noteworthy, but "... Joys" is my favourite. Note also the immense difference between the piano soli on "What ...", this is really improvisation deluxe!!

**WILLIE "THE LION" SMITH & HIS CUBS NYC. May 22, 1935**

Ed Allen (cnt), Cecil Scott (cl), Willie Smith (p), Willie Williams (wbd), Clarence Williams (p&vo-39536,37). Note this personnel with CW on second piano and vocal on two titles, ref. Louis Mazetier.

Four titles were recorded for Decca:

39535-A	Echoes Of Spring	Soli 16 and 8 bars. (FM)
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39535-B	Echoes Of Spring	As above. (FM)
39535-C	Echoes Of Spring	As above. (FM)
39536-A	Breeze	Intro 4 bars to solo 32 bars. (FM)
39536-B	Breeze	As above. (FM)
39537-A	Swing, Brother, Swing	Acc. (vo). Solo 32 bars. (FM)
39537-B	Swing, Brother, Swing	As above. (FM)
39538-A	Sittin' At The Table	Intro 4 bars. In ens. (M)

Note: The various LPs and CDs have been checked carefully, and the many 'ghost takes' have disappeared, thus the above seems to be the end result. Any objections will be received with interest though scepticism.

Very nice swing session here, with pleasant soloing by all participants! The appearance of alternate takes is very interesting and shows WS's abilities as an improviser, although he might have featured himself more extensively. The most enlightening and exciting example is "Swing, Brother, ...". Note also "Echoes ...", with three takes, one of his most famous compositions with many versions in the years to come.

**MEZZ MEZZROW & HIS SWING GANG NYC. March 12, 1936**

Frankie Newton (tp), Mezz Mezzrow (cl), Bud Freeman (ts), Willie Smith (p), Al Casey (g), Wellman Braud (b), George Stafford (dm), Lucille Stewart (vo-99772,76,77).

Six titles were recorded for Bluebird:

99772-1	A Melody From The Sky	Intro 2 bars. Acc. (vo). Solo 16 bars. (M)
99773-1	Lost	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
99774-1	Mutiny In The Parlour	Solo 32 bars. (M)
99775-1	The Panic Is On	Intro 4 bars. Soli 8 and 8 bars. Acc. (cl/tp/ts). Solo 16 bars. (FM)
99776-1	I'se Muggin' Pt 1	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
99777-1	I'se Muggin' Pt 2	Solo 8 bars. (FM)

A larger mixed swing group, and things really get going for WS now! As always he is sharing solo space with others, but there is always something to keep your ears open, mostly in pleasant fast medium tempo. His soft opening on "Mutiny ..." is charming, the soli on "... Is On" are swinging, and note his coplaying with Newton here, jazz history! Picking a solo highlight, it must be "Lost".

**WILLIE "THE LION" SMITH & HIS CUBS NYC. April 13, 1937**

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

Four titles were recorded for Decca:

61934-B	The Swampland Is Calling Me	Intro 4 bars. Solo 32 bars. (M)
61935-A	More Than That	Intro 4 bars. Soli 32 and 8 bars. (FM)
61936-A	I'm All Out Of Breath	Intro 4 bars. Solo 32 bars. (M)
61937-A	I Can See You All Over The Place	Solo 36 bars. Acc. (cl). (SM)

A different kind of relaxed cubs, and the session was often played in tribute to the vastly underestimated Robert Carroll. Here we are concerned with the piano, and we are closer to the WS-personality than ever before!! Dig his long introduction on "... The Place", as well as "Swampland ...", and be not in doubt about this great original musician. All four sides have in fact gorgeous piano playing firmly in the middle of the swing era.

**FATS WALLER HOME RECORDINGS NYC. prob. May 30, 1937**

Collective personnel: Fats Waller, James P. Johnson, Willie Smith (p, vo), Naomi Waller, Andy Razaf, Eubie Blake (vo, voice), Gene Sedric (ts).

Private party at the Waller home, one title, "The Gathering" has WS' voice, but the few piano bars of introduction are played by Waller.

**WILLIE "THE LION" SMITH**

**NYC. July 14, 1937**

Frankie Newton (tp), Buster Bailey (cl), Pete Brown (as), Willie Smith (p), Jimmy McLin (g), John Kirby (b), O'Neil Spencer (dm, vo).

Four titles were recorded for Decca:

62372-A	Get Acquainted With Yourself	Intro 4 bars. Solo 16+8 bars, (as) on bridge. (FM)
62373-A	Knock Wood	Soli 8 and 16 bars. (M)
62374-A	Peace, Brother, Peace	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
62375-A	The Old Stamping Ground	Solo 8 bars. (SM)

**NYC. Sept. 15, 1937**

Same. Four titles:

62593-A	Blues, Why Don't You Let Me Alone?	Solo with ens 16+8 bars, (tp) on bridge. Solo 8 bars. (SM)
62594-A	I've Got To Think It Over	Solo 8 bars. (M)
62595-A	Achin' Hearted Blues	Intro 4 bars. Solo 12 bars. (SM)
62596-A	Honeymoonin' On A Dime	Intro 4 bars. Solo 8 bars. (M)

As mentioned in other solographies, the programming of Decca sessions is not good; using so much for foolish tunes, space for unnecessary ensembles, not to speak of filling up with vocals when Newton is present! Try therefore not to think about this, and listen to the piano soli, never a full chorus, but always firm, inventive and original. Dig as a good example "... Hearted ...".

**MILT HERTH TRIO**

**NYC. Nov. 11, 1937**

Milt Herth (org), Willie Smith (p, cel), O'Neil Spencer (dm, vo-62760).

Two titles were recorded for Decca:

62760-A	The Dipsy Doodle	2:51. (M)
62761-A	That's A Plenty	2:31. (F)

**NYC. Jan. 7, 1938**

Same, with (vo-63136). Two titles:

63136-A	Bei Mir Bist Du Schon	2:50. (F)
63137-A	The Big Dipper	2:25. (FM)

This trio is an awful idea, and if you are not familiar with it, you are up for a very negative experience. Herth occupies much space, and some items, like "... Doodle" has only an academic piano interest. Eight bars on "... Dipper" is a step forward. Only the two fast titles have some excellent piano inbetween, but the organ comping is incredibly ugly.

**WILLIE "THE LION" SMITH**

**NYC. Jan. 10, 1938**

Willie Smith (p), O'Neil Spencer (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Decca:

63141-A	Passionette	2:31. (FM)
63142-A	Morning Air	2:56. (M)

This is something different (maybe Herth was ill ...), almost four years after the first and till now only solo performance! Two beautiful originals were recorded in unmistakable WS's style, dig these!

**MILT HERTH TRIO**

**NYC. Feb. 11, 1938**

Milt Herth (org), Willie Smith (p, cel), O'Neil Spencer (dm, vo).

Three titles were recorded for Decca:

63279-A	Lost In The Shuffle	2:41. (M)
63280-A	The Campbells Are Swinging	2:33. (FM)
63281-A	Josephine	2:32. (M)

**NYC. March 17, 1938**

Same. Two titles:

63440-A	Sissy	2:51. (M)
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63445-A Pop Corn Man 2:55. (FM)

**NYC. April 7, 1938**

Same, with no (vo) and Willie Smith also (cel-63564).  
Two titles (WS not present on “Jazz Me Blues”):

63562-B The Toy Trumpet 2:44. (FM)

63564-A Copenhagen 2:58. (FM)

This is even worse! Choosing awful of tunes, and giving only background to WS, how is it possible!? Only April 7, the only session without vocal, has something of interest.

**MILT HERTH QUARTET**

**NYC. April 28, 1938**

Milt Herth (org), Willie Smith (p, cel), Teddy Bunn (g, vo), O’Neil Spencer (dm).  
Three titles were recorded for Decca (Teddy Bunn not present on 63680,81, making them trio):

63680-A Three Blind Mice 3:08. (FM)

63681-A Looney Little Tooney 2:53. (FM)

63682-A The Flat Foot Floojie 2:58. (FM)

**NYC. May 17, 1938**

Same. Two titles:

63801-A Shoot The Likker To Me 3:02. (M)

63802-A Egyptian Ella 2:58. (FM)

**NYC. July 27, 1938**

Same. Two titles:

64341-A La De Doody Do 3:09. (M)

64342-A Home Cookin’ Mama WTFP 2:42. (M)

**NYC. Nov. 30, 1938**

Same. Two titles:

64775-A The Spider And The Fly 2:55. (FM)

64776-A Jump Jump’s Here 2:54. (FM)

These are more interesting, but that is mainly due to the presence of the magnificent Teddy Bunn on guitar! WS also gets a few opportunities worth listening to, particularly “... Floojie” and “... Ella”, but also brief soli on “... Doody Do” and “... The Fly”. Thanks for getting rid of Herth!!

**WILLIE “THE LION” SMITH**

**NYC. Nov. 30, 1938**

Willie Smith (cel-75961, p-75962), Joe Bushkin (p), Jess Stacy (p-75961), George Wettling (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Commodore:

75961-A Three Keyboards (cel)-Intro 4 bars to Solo 36 bars. (M)

75961-B Three Keyboards As above. (M)

75962-A The Lion And The Lamb Duet with (p-JB). (F)

The duo of WS and JB creates a magnificent uptempo cooperation in “The Lion ...”, a solid example of what stride piano can accomplish! “Three ...” with the use of celeste and trio format is interesting but also more of a curiosity.

**WILLIE “THE LION” SMITH**

**NYC. Jan. 10, 1939**

Willie “The Lion” Smith solo (p, comp-531-537,543).

Fourteen titles were recorded for Commodore:

531-2 Morning Air 2:42. (M)

532-1 Echoes Of Spring 2:43. (M)

533-2 Concentratin’ On You 3:40. (M)

534-2 Fading Star 2:39. (SM)

535-3 Passionette 2:43. (FM)



536-5	Rippling Waters	2:47. (F)
537-1	Sneakaway	2:34. (FM)
538-2	What Is There To Say?	2:48. (S)
539-2	Between The Devil And The Deep Blue Sea	2:43. (SM/FM)
540-2	The Boy In The Boat	2:54. (M)
541-3	Tea For Two	2:42. (M)
542-4	I'll Follow You	2:41. (M)
543-2	Fingerbuster	3:03. (FM)
544-2	Stormy Weather	2:40. (S)

The Lion had reached the impressive age of 41 years when he recorded this marathon session for Commodore, but nevertheless it represents the real beginning of his recording career. He was a well known performer as such through the twenties and thirties, and we have glimpses of his talents through the previous eight pages of his solography, but this time he really stands forth as the composer (more than half of the tunes here are his) and original piano performer he really was (several takes were made of most tunes, what happened to those 'leftovers'?), and he still had more than thirty years of artistry before him. Dan Morgenstern's liner notes tells you all you need to know; "Usually he's grouped with the Harlem stride pianists, . . . , but he was far too personal to be classified in any "school"; "Never again would he be in such magnificent form in a studio". Stop here: It would be an insult, to both of them, to try to improve or compress the solid and insightful writings. This is jazz piano history!!

**HAITIAN ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Nov. 22, 1939**  
Kenneth Roane (tp), Sidney Bechet (cl, sop), Willie Smith (p), Olin Aderhold (b), Leo Warney (dm).

Thirteen titles were recorded for Varsity, but this session has nothing to do with jazz. The piano can hardly be heard at all, but there is some quite uninteresting accompaniment on "Rose Rhumba", "Baba/Nana" and "Ti Ralph".

**WILLIE "THE LION" SMITH & HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Feb. 17, 1940**  
Sidney DeParis (tp), Jimmy Lane, Johnny Mullins (as), Perry Smith (ts), Willie Smith (p), Bernard Addison (g), Richard Fullbright (b), Puss Johnson (dm), Naomi Price (vo-2668,69).

Four titles were recorded for General:

2668	Peace On You	Acc. only. (M)
2669	Wontcha Do It To Me?	Acc. (vo). (FM)
2670	Rushin'	Intro 4 bars. Solo 16 bars. (FM)
2671	Noodlin'	Solo 14 bars. (SM)

Although WS is the leader of this session, his modesty (!) produces only two brief piano soli, of which "Rushin'" is the most exciting.

**BIG JOE TURNER** **NYC. Nov. 26, 1940**  
Willie Smith (p), Joe Turner (vo).  
Four titles were recorded for Decca:

68394-A	Doggin' The Dog	2:44. (M)
68395-B	Careless Love	2:49. (M)
68396-A	Jumpin' Down Blues	2:35. (SM)
68397-A	Rainy Day Blues	2:53. (SM)

Here we have an important session, WS teaming up with the great blues shouter "Big Joe" Turner! We get both delicate background playing, as well as fine solo contributions on all items.

**SIDNEY BECHET**  
**& HIS NEW ORLEANS FEETWARMERS** **NYC. Sept. 13, 1941**  
Charlie Shavers (tp), Sidney Bechet (cl, sop), Willie Smith (p), Everett Barksdale (g), Wellman Braud (b), Manzie Johnson (dm).  
Four titles were recorded for Victor:

67791-1	I'm Coming Virginia	As below. (FM)
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67791-2	I'm Coming Virginia	Solo 24 bars. (FM)
67792-1	Limehouse Blues	Solo 32 bars. (F)
67793-1	Georgia Cabin	Intro 4 bars. Acc. (sop). (SM)
67793-2	Georgia Cabin	As above. (SM)
67794-1	Texas Moaner Blues	Acc. (cl). (SM)
67794-2	Texas Moaner Blues	As above. (SM)

**same date**

Sidney Bechet (sop), Willie Smith (p), Everett Barksdale (g).  
Two titles:

67795-1	Strange Fruit	Acc. (sop). Soli. (S)
67796-1	You're The Limit	Intro. Acc. (sop). (M). Solo 32 bars. (F)
67796-2	You're The Limit	As above. (M/F)

Some hot and hardswinging "... Virginia" and particularly "Limehouse ..." are highly notable, as also are the two great trio recordings. Easy to understand they managed with one take only on "... Fruit", not many comparable versions in jazz history.

**SIDNEY BECHET****& HIS NEW ORLEANS FEETWARMERS****NYC. Oct. 24, 1941**

Charlie Shavers (tp), Sidney Bechet (cl, sop), Willie Smith (p), Everett Barksdale (g), Wellman Braud (b), Sid Catlett (dm).

Five titles were recorded for Victor:

68112-1	12 <sup>th</sup> Street Rag	Solo 32 bars. (F)
68112-2	12 <sup>th</sup> Street Rag	As above. (F)
68113-1	Mood Indigo	Acc. only. (S)
68113-2	Mood Indigo	Acc. only. (S)
68114-1	Rose Room	Acc. only. (M)
68115-1	Lady Be Good	Solo 8 bars. (FM)
68115-2	Lady Be Good	As above. (FM)
68116-1	What Is This Thing Called Love?	Intro. (SM)
68116-2	What Is This Thing Called Love?	As above. (SM)

We might perhaps call this the end of the vintage era, and although WS is close to fifty years old, he has the most of public attention before him. He gets much less blowing space here compared to the previous Bechet session, although he swings the "... Rag" superbly!

**BEVERLY WHITE & HER BLUES CHASERS****NYC. early 1943**

Willie Smith (p), Al Casey (g), possibly Cedric Wallace (b), Beverly White (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Beacon:

Don't Stop Now	Intro 4 bars. Acc. (vo). Solo 8 bars. (SM)
My Baby Comes First With Me	Intro 4 bars. Acc. (vo). Solo 20 bars. (M)
If Things Don't Get Better	Intro 4 bars. Acc. (vo). Solo 12 bars. (SM)
Hot Bread	Intro 4 bars. Acc. (vo). Solo 8 bars. (M)

Well organized and WS is featured successfully on all items, but if you have heard one, you have heard all.

**WILLIE "THE LION" SMITH****NYC. June 20, 1944**

Willie "The Lion" Smith solo (p).

One title recorded in Timme Rosenkrantz' home, issued on Folkways:

Woodland Fantasy	2:53. (M)
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A lovely piece, a dreaming WS, not much alike the one we know!

**WILLIE "THE LION" SMITH** **NYC. June 24, 1944**

Willie "The Lion" Smith solo (p) with Joe Grauso (dm) added on "... Blues"..  
Eddie Condon Blue Network Show 6 (AFRS 4) from Town Hall, two titles:

What Is There To Say? 2:28. (S)

St. Louis Blues 2:07. (SM/F)

**NYC. July 15, 1944**

Same.

Eddie Condon Blue Network Show 9 (AFRS 7) from Town Hall, two titles:

Echoes Of Spring 1:53. (M)

Polonaise (Chopin) 1:58. (M/F)

**NYC. July 29, 1944**

Same.

Eddie Condon Blue Network Show 11 (AFRS 10) from Town Hall, two titles:

Between The Devil And The DBS 2:18. (S/FM)

The Sneakaway 1:40. (F)

**NYC. Aug. 19, 1944**

Same.

Eddie Condon Blue Network Show 14 (AFRS 12) from Town Hall, two titles:

I'll Follow You 2:20. (S/M)

Here Comes The Band 2:01. (F)

These quite brief items are in fact very nice, following up the Commodore tradition at a time when WS did not record very much. Are we sure the dates are correct, and that WS showed up four times, or could there be some common recording date?

**MAX KAMINSKY & HIS BAND** **NYC. Sept. 29, 1944**

Max Kaminsky (tp), Frank Orchard (vtb), Rod Cless (cl), Willie Smith (p), Eddie Condon (g), Jack Lesberg (b), Clarence McGrath (dm).

Eight titles were recorded for World Transcriptions, six issued on Brunswick:

2703 Black And Blue Solo 18 bars. (SM)

2704 Jazz Me Blues Solo 20 bars. (FM)

2705 Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams Solo 8 bars. (SM)

2706 Dippermouth Blues Solo 12 bars. (M)

2708 Old Fashioned Love Solo 32 bars. (M)

2710 Someday Sweetheart Intro 4 bars. Solo 32 bars. (M)

The Lion in the middle of Dixieland, but don't be scared, this is a very pleasant session, and there are solid piano soli on all six items. He sets the pace on "Old ..." but otherwise fits nicely into the proceedings, sounding inspired. Difficult to choose highlights, but dig "Jazz Me ...", and his "... Sweetheart" is perhaps different from expected.

**same date**

Personnel as above, issued as **THE LION'S BAND**. Willie Smith (vo-29, 32).

Four titles were recorded for Black & White:

29 Let's Mop It Solo 8 bars. (M)

30 Muskrat Ramble Solo 16 bars. (FM)

31 Bugle Call Rag Soli 4 and 12 bars. (F)

32 How Could You Put Me Down? Acc. only. (SM)

Fine swinging piano soli on "... Ramble" and "... Rag".

**WILLIE "THE LION" SMITH** **NYC. Oct. 7, 1944**

Willie "The Lion" Smith solo (p).

Eddie Condon Blue Network Show 21 (AFRS 9) from Ritz Theatre, one title:

Concentration

1:58. (M/F)

See the comments to Eddie Condon above.

The Willie “The Lion” solography will close here, at least temporarily. One reason is that there are no further sessions until 1949, thus a natural pause. More important however is the fact that Smith continues to play a large number of sessions, mostly as solo pianist, until the final one in 1972. This task is too big to undertake, and really not what the solography concept originally was created for. Using the Tom Lord discography, you have most of the information you need anyway, comments seem not that necessary, Willie “The Lion” Smith plays magnificently wherever he appears!

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