

The
ALTOSAX
of
WILLIAM McLEISH SMITH
“WILLIE”

Solographer: Jan Evensmo
Last update: May 31, 2021, Aug. 23, 2021, Nov. 10, Dec. 20, 2021,
Aug. 24, Sept. 22, 2022

Born: Charleston, South Carolina, November 25, 1910
 Died: Los Angeles, California, March 7, 1967

Introduction:

Jimmie Lunceford & His Orchestra visited Oslo, Norway with concerts Feb. 24&25, 1937 as its first stop on its one and only trip to Europe. Willie Smith was present but is not mentioned in reviews. Nevertheless, Lunceford was never a popular orchestra in Oslo Jazz Circle, primarily because of the perceived lack of exciting soloists (with Joe Thomas on tenorsax as an exception). Nor had Willie Smith any high standing with us, sorry to say, and I may be influenced by this even until this very day almost sixty years later. However, WS certainly deserves his solography.

History:

Began on clarinet at 12, two years later played at local concerts accompanied by his sister on piano. Played in the Boston Serenaders in Memphis (ca. 1926). Studied at the Case Technical University before attending Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. In 1927 during summer vacation worked in Belmar, New Jersey, with Beaty Connor Quartet. Whilst at Fisk he first met Jimmie Lunceford, after majoring in chemistry he left the college to join Jimmie Lunceford in Memphis (summer of 1929). Remained with Lunceford until the summer of 1942, then joined Charlie Spivak. In April 1943 he left Spivak to serve as a musical instructor in the U. S. Navy. After his release in late 1944 he joined Harry James, remained with James until March 1951 (except for a brief absence in summer 1947). With Duke Ellington for a year from March 1951, left in spring 1952 to join Billy May's orchestra. In early 1953 toured Europe with JATP, then brief tour in Benny Goidman all-star band (directed for most of the tour by Gene Krupa). Returned to California, did brief tours with Billy May, then led own band at the Oasis Club, Los Angeles. Rejoined Harry James in spring of 1954, remained with James until summer of 1963 – during this period also worked regularly with Billy May and other West Coast studio orchestras. After a long spell of ill health, he joined Johnny Catron's band in Los Angeles (autumn 1964), worked with Johnny Rivers in Las Vegas during the following year, then returned to studio work. In late 1966 he played in New York in a big band specially formed by Charlie Barnet. The last weeks of his life were spent in the Veterans' Administration Hospital in Los Angeles. He died of cancer (ref. John Chilton).

Message:

The sections on Jimmie Lunceford are heavily based upon the fine work by Bertil Lyttkens: "The Jimmie Lunceford Legacy on records (1996)". I have chosen to omit Willie Smith (cl)-soli and (vo) with Jimmie Lunceford. Also you will see that lots of broadcast material with Harry James have not been researched. You are welcome to assist in getting this solography complete!

WILLIE SMITH SOLOGRAPHY

JIMMIE LUNCEFORD**& HIS CHICKASAW SYNCOPATORS****Memphis, June 6, 1930**

Probable personnel Sy Oliver, unknown (tp), Henry Wells (tb), Willie Smith (as), Earl Carruthers or George Clark (ts), Ed Wilcox (p), unknown (bjo), Moses Allen (tu), Jimmy Crawford (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Victor:

62599-2 In Dat Morning Solo 6 bars. (SM)
62600-1 Sweet Rhythm Solo 16 bars. (M)

Willie Smith offers us a strong and confident altosax voice with very good technique. Both items should be noted but "... Rhythm" is most exciting. Few could do better in the very early thirties.

JIMMIE LUNCEFORD & HIS ORCHESTRA**NYC. May 15, 1933**

Eddie Tompkins, Tommy Stevenson, William Tomlin (tp), Russell Bowles, Henry Wells (tb), Laforet Dent, Willie Smith (cl, as), Joe Thomas (cl, ts), Earl Carruthers (cl, as, bar), Eddie Wilcox (p), Al Norris (g), Moses Allen (b), Jimmy Crawford (dm, vib, tymp), Jimmie Lunceford (dir).

Two titles were recorded for Timely Tunes:

1299 Flaming Reeds And Screaming Brass Break. Solo 8 bars. (F)
1300 While Love Lasts Solo 4 bars. (M)

Good solo on "Flaming Reeds ..." but rhythmically somewhat stiff.

JIMMIE LUNCEFORD & HIS ORCHESTRA**NYC. Jan. 26, 1934**

Personnel as above except Sy Oliver (tp) replaces Tomlin.

Four titles were recorded for Victor, but no altosax soli.

NYC. March 20, 1934

Same. Four titles, two have WS:

82218-1/2 Swingin' Uptown Solo 30 bars. (F)
82219-2 Breakfast Ball Break. Solo with orch 20 bars. (FM)

On "... Uptown" he gets the chance really to stretch out and takes a competent solo but showing that he not always has the best of taste in the choice of solo progress. In "... Ball" he is more or less drowned in the orchestra.

JIMMIE LUNCEFORD & HIS ORCHESTRA**NYC. Sept. 4&5, 1934**

Personnel as Jan. 26.

Nine titles were recorded for Decca, three have altosax:

38535-A Stratosphere Solo with orch 8 bars. (F)
38544-A Star Dust Coda 4 bars. (SM)
38544-B Star Dust As above. (SM)

NYC. Oct. 29, 1934

Same. Four titles, one has WS:

38917-A Stomp It Off Solo 8 bars. (M)

NYC. Nov. 7, 1934

Same. Three titles, one has WS:

38967-A Because You're You Break to solo with orch 8 bars. (M)
38967-B Because You're You As above. (M)

NYC. Dec. 17&18, 1934

Same. Six titles, three have WS:

39169-A Rain Solo 16 bars. (M)
38916-C Shake Your Head Solo 16 bars. (M)
39172-A Rhythm Is Our Business Solo 16 bars. (FM)
39172-B Rhythm Is Our Business As above. (FM)

Decca takes over but WS remains. Altosax soli in 1934 are of varying quality, my favourites are the flashing "Stratosphere" and "Shake ...", and "... Business" is also noteworthy, although the two takes are quite similar. The same goes for "Because ...". "Rain" is sweet and pleasant. The two versions of "Star Dust" are clearly different. Finally "Stomp ..." which is awfully comy.

JIMMIE LUNCEFORD & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. May 29, 1935**

Eddie Tompkins, Paul Webster, Sy Oliver (tp), Russell Bowles, Elmer Crumbley, (tb), Eddie Durham (tb, g), Laforet Dent, Willie Smith (cl, as), Joe Thomas (cl, ts), Earl Carruthers (cl, as, bar), Eddie Wilcox (p), Al Norris (g), Moses Allen (b), Jimmy Crawford (dm, vib, tym), Jimmie Lunceford (dir).

Five titles were recorded for Decca, two have WS:

39552-A Bird Of Paradise Solo with orch 8 bars. (M)
39553-A Rhapsody Jr. Solo 16 bars. (M)

NYC. Sept. 23&24, 1935

Same. Six titles, five issued, two have WS:

39997-A Swanee River Soli 4 and 4 bars. (M)
39999-A Oh Boy Soli with orch 20 and 6 bars. (FM)

NYC. Sept. 30, 1935

Same. Four titles, one has WS:

60014-A Avalon Soli 16 and 8 bars. (FM)

NYC. Dec. 23, 1935

Same. Four titles:

60274-A My Blue Heaven (bar)-In ens. (M)
60275-B I'm Nuts About Screw Music Solo 4 bars. (FM)
60276-A The Best Things In Life Are Free Soli with orch 4 and 16 bars. (M)
60277-A The Melody Man Solo with orch 8 bars. (FM)
60277-B The Melody Man As above. (FM)

Continuing into 1935 with Decca, Lunceford does not seem to utilize WS much. His technique is evident on "Avalon", good soloing on "Rhapsody ..." and "Oh Boy", and some brief but nice pieces on "... River". Note also that he is active on baritone sax on "... Heaven". At this point of time there is little evidence of WS being a great jazzman, but his instrumental capabilities make great contribution to the Lunceford orchestra as such.

JIMMIE LUNCEFORD & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Summer 1936**

Personnel including Willie Smith (as).

Vitaphone Film Short, six titles, one has WS:

Nagasaki Solo with orch 32 bars. (F)

Noisy band, altosax drowned and of no interest.

**JIMMIE LUNCEFORD
& HIS ORCHESTRA**

NYC. Aug. 31 & Sept. 1, 1936

Personnel as above except Ed Brown (cl, as, ts) replaces Dent.

Five titles were recorded for Decca, one has WS:

61248-A Me And The Moon Straight 8 bars. (M)

NYC. Oct. 14, 1936

Same. Three titles, one has WS:

61325-A Harlem Shout Solo 8 bars. (FM)

NYC. Oct. 26, 1936

Same. Two titles, one has WS:

61346-A Running A Temperature Solo with orch 12 bars. (M)

NYC. Jan. 18&20&26, 1937

Personnel as above except Dan Grissom (cl, as) added.

Nine titles, two have WS:

- 61533-A I'll See You In My Dreams Solo with orch 32 bars. (M)
 61550-A He Ain't Got Rhythm Obligato parts. (M)

NYC. June 15, 1937

Similar. Five titles, two have WS:

- 62262-A Hell's Bells Solo 8 bars. (SM)
 62263-A For Dancers Only Solo with orch 8 bars. (M)

NYC. July 8, 1937

Same. Four titles, but no altosax soli.

The heavily arranged "... My Dreams" and "... Temperature" are good examples of WS's craftsmanship. The highlight is however "... Bells", exciting this one!

JIMMIE LUNCEFORD & HIS ORCHESTRA LA. Nov. 5, 1937

Eddie Tompkins, Paul Webster, Sy Oliver (tp), Russell Bowles, Elmer Crumpley, Trummy Young (tb), Willie Smith (cl, as), Ted Buckner, Dan Grissom (as), Joe Thomas (ts), Earl Carruthers (bar), Eddie Wilcox (p), Al Norris (g), Moses Allen (b), Jimmy Crawford (dm, vib, tymp), Jimmie Lunceford (dir).

Five titles were recorded for Decca, one has WS:

- 1012-A Teasin' Tessie Brown Soli 8 and 6 bars. (M)

NYC. Jan. 6, 1938

Same. Three titles, two have altosax, by TB on "Margie", one by WS:

- 63134-A The Love Nest Solo 8 bars. (M)

NYC. April 12, 1938

Same. Four titles, altosax solo by TB on "Down By The Old Mill Stream", two have WS:

- 63585-A Down By The Old Mill Stream Break. (M)
 63588-A By The River Sainte Marie Solo 12 bars (last (as)-solo). (M)

Note that the Lunceford orchestra now have two competent altosax players capable of playing soli. Both of them get a chance in "... Marie".

JIMMIE LUNCEFORD & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Jan. 3, 1939

Personnel including Willie Smith, Ted Buckner (as).

Five titles were recorded for Vocalion, one has WS:

- 23905-1 'Tain't What You Do Solo/straight with orch 8 bars
 (1st (as)-solo). (M)
 23905-2 'Tain't What You Do As above? ()

NYC. Jan. 28, 1939

Same. Broadcast "Saturday Night Swing Club", two titles, one has WS:

- 'Tain't What You Do As above. (M)

NYC. Jan. 31, 1939

Same. Five titles, two have WS:

- 24051-1 Baby, Won't You Please Come Home? Straight 10 bars. (M)
 24051-2 Baby, Won't You Please Come Home? As above. (M)
 24051-3 Baby, Won't You Please Come Home? As above? ()
 24053-1 The Lonesome Road Solo 16+8 bars, orch on
 bridge (1st (as)-solo). (F)

NYC. Feb. 7, 1939

Same. Four titles, three have WS altosax:

- 24083-1 What Is This Thing Called Swing? Solo with orch 8 bars. (FM)
 24083-2 What Is This Thing Called Swing? As above. (FM)
 24084-1 Mixup Solo with orch 22 bars. (F)
 24086-1 Blue Blazes Break to solo 32 bars. (F)

Same. Four titles, but no WS (TB on "Ain't She Sweet"). **NYC. April 7, 1939**

Same. Four titles, one has WS (TB on "Well, All Right Then"): **NYC. May 17, 1939**

24643-B Oh Why, Oh Why Solo 4 bars. (SM)

Broadcast, one title but no WS (TB on "Well, All Right Then"). **NYC. June 11, 1939**

Same/similar. Five titles, one has WS: **NYC. Aug. 2, 1939**

24967-A Sassin' The Boss Duet with (tp-PW) 24 bars. (M)

Same. Four titles, two have altosax: **NYC. Sept. 14, 1939**

26068-A Think Of Me Little Daddy In orch. (SM)

26069-A Liza Intro with orch. (FM)

Similar. Eight titles, six have WS altosax: **NYC. Dec. 14, 1939**

25749-1 Put It Away Break. (FM)

25750-1 I'm Alone With You Break. (SM)

25751-1 Rock It For Me Solo with orch 4 bars. (M)

25753-1 Wham Solo with orch 8 bars. (M)

25753-2 Wham As above. (M)

25755-1 Uptown Blues Solo with orch 24 bars. (S)

25756-1 Lunceford Special Solo 18 bars. (FM)

late 1939

Similar. Broadcast, one title:

Honeysuckle Rose Solo with orch 16 bars. (M)

The Columbia company and its label Vocalion is taking over from Decca, but WS is not used very much and mostly brief soli. The only which really shows him with some excitement is "... Blazes", and he certainly had technique! He also shows strong professionalism in the slow "Uptown ...".

JIMMIE LUNCEFORD & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Jan. 5, 1940

Same. Four titles, three have WS altosax (TB on "I Wanna Hear Swing Songs"):

26397-A Bugs Parade Solo with orch 12 bars. (M)

26398-A Blues In The Groove Solo with orch 8 bars. (FM)

26400-A It's Time To Jump And Shout Soli with orch 6 and 8 bars. (FM)

LA. Feb. 28, 1940

Same. Four titles, one has WS altosax:

2164-C Dinah Pt 1 Solo with orch 32 bars. (FM)

Chi. May 9, 1940

Same. Five titles, three have WS (TB on "Chopin's Prelude No. 7"):

3067-A I Got It Solo 6 bars. (M)

3069-A Swingin' On C Solo 16 bars. (F)

3069-B Swingin' On C As above. (F)

3071-A Monotony In Four Flats Solo with orch 8 bars. (M)

Nothing much of importance on these sessions, most interesting is "... On C".

JIMMIE LUNCEFORD & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. June 7 – July 4, 1940

Same.

MBS broadcasts from Fiesta Danceteria, six have WS altosax (TB on “Chopin’s Prelude No. 7”, “I Ain’t Gonna Study War No More” and “By The River Sainte Marie”):

Swingin’ On C	Solo 16 bars. (F)
Lunceford Special	With orch behind ann. (NC). (F)
Make Believe	Soli 16 and 8 bars. (M)
My Blue Heaven	Solo with orch. (FM)
Wham	Solo with orch 8 bars. (M)
Impromptu	Solo 10 bars. (F)

NYC. June 19, 1940

Same. Four titles were recorded for Columbia, one has WS:

26938-A	I Ain’t Gonna Study War No More	Straight intro. (M)
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NYC. July 9, 1940

Same. Four titles were recorded for Columbia, two have WS altosax:

28005-A	Whatcha Know Joe?	Obbligato parts (vo-TY). (M)
28008-A	Please Say The Word	Solo 34 bars. (M)
28008-B	Please Say The Word	As above? ()

NYC. Nov. 12, 1940

Same. Lang-Worth Transcriptions, eight titles, three have WS altosax:

There I Go	Solo with orch 4, 4 and 4 bars. (SM)
The Morning After	Solo 4 bars. (S)
I’m A Heck Of A Guy	Solo with orch 12 bars. (FM)

Here one should note “... The Word”, a swinging solo of best WS quality.

ROY ELDRIDGE

NYC. Nov. 19, 1940

Collective personnel: Roy Eldridge (tp), Willie Smith (as), Herbie Fields (ts), Tony D’Amore, Buddy Weed (p), Mike Bryan (g), George Simon (b), Margie Harris (vo).

Nine titles recorded by Jerry Newman in his apartment, issued on Xanadu LP 186, four have WS:

Body And Soul	Solo 14 bars to fade out. (S)
Jazz Rose	Solo 64 bars to coda. (F)
Sweet Lorraine	Solo 16 bars. (SM)
I Can’t Give You Anything But Love	Solo 16 bars. (SM) Obbligato parts. (SM)

WS’s first non-Lunceford recording, can we learn something from that? Not much really, because Roy and his magnificent trumpet takes most of the blowing space, and WS only participates on four titles. He plays very nicely on “... Soul”, but the solo is aborted, and it seems that this is not in the original recording but on the LP. He swings the “... Rose”, which is nothing but the “Honeysuckle...”, like the best of his contemporaries. My feeling is that Lunceford in no way gave WS the chance to show what potential he had as a real jazz man. These four items give raise to optimism!

JIMMIE LUNCEFORD & HIS ORCHESTRA

NYC. Dec. 11, 1940

Same. Lang-Worth Transcriptions, eight titles, three have WS altosax (TB on “Okay For Baby”):

Battle Axe	Solo 4 bars. (FM)
The Morning After	Solo 5 bars. (SM)
I’m Walking Through Heaven With You	Solo 2 bars. (S)

NYC. Dec. 23, 1940

Same. Three titles was recorded for Columbia, one has WS altosax (TB on “Okay For Baby”):

29294-1 Flight Of The Jitterbug Solo/straight. (F)

The Columbia period finishes with a "... Jitterbug", utterly corny, how could they hit upon something like that!?

JAM SESSION

NYC. Jan. 1941

Herbie Fields (cl), Tab Smith, Willie Smith (as), Buddy Tate, Joe Thomas, Elbert "Skippy" Williams (ts), unknown (p), (dm).

Two titles were recorded by Jerry Newman, issued on Xanadu LP 112 with the personnel given above, but "On The Sunny Side Of The Street" is a feature number for Tab Smith, and "Body And Soul" is a feature number for Buddy Tate.

JIMMIE LUNCEFORD & HIS ORCHESTRA

NYC. March 26, 1941

Paul Webster, Snooky Young (tp), Russell Bowles, Elmer Crumbley, Trummy Young (tb), Willie Smith (cl, as), Ted Buckner, Dan Grissom (as), Joe Thomas (ts), Earl Carruthers (bar), Eddie Wilcox (p), Al Norris (g), Moses Allen (b), Jimmy Crawford (dm, vib, tymp), Jimmie Lunceford (dir).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, three have WS altosax (TB on "I Had A Premonition"):

68874-A Blue Prelude Solo with orch 16 bars. (FM)
 68875-A Twenty-Four Robbers Solo with orch 8 bars. (M)
 68877-A Battle Axe Solo with orch 4 bars. (F)

NYC. April 22, 1941

Same. Two titles, but no altosax soli.

LA. June 23, 1941

Same. Four titles, two have WS altosax:.

2447-A I'm Walking Through Heaven With You Obligato parts (vo-DG).
 Break. (SM)
 2448-A You're Always In My Dreams Solo 8 bars. (M)

NYC. Aug. 26, 1941

Same except Truck Parham (b) replaces Allen.

Four titles were recorded for Decca, three have WS altosax (TB on "Hi Spook"):

69680-A Gone Soli with orch 2 and 8 bars. (SM)
 69682-A Yard Dog Mazurka Solo with orch 4 bars. (FM)
 69683-A Impromptu Solo 8 bars. (FM)

NYC. Dec. 22/23, 1941

Same. Four titles, one has WS altosax (TB on "Life Is Fine"):

70093-A Blues In The Night Pt 1 Solo/straight 24 bars. (S)

Jan. 1942?

Same. AFRS Jubilee No. 8, five titles, no WS (probably 1943).

NYC. April 14, 1942

Same. Three titles, but no altosax soli.

LA. June 26, 1942

Paul Webster, Freddie Webster, Harry Jackson (tp), Russell Bowles, Fernando Arbelo, Trummy Young (tb), Willie Smith (cl, as), Dan Grissom (as), Joe Thomas, Benny Waters (ts), Earl Carruthers (bar), Eddie Wilcox (p), Al Norris (g), Truck Parham (b), Jimmy Crawford (dm), Jimmie Lunceford (dir).

Four titles, one has WS altosax:

3063-A Strictly Instrumental Solo with orch 16 bars. (M)

LA. July 14, 1942

Same except Bob Mitchell (tp) added.

Two titles, one has WS altosax:

3096-A I Dream A Lot About You Solo with orch 8 bars. (SM)

Back to Decca, but nothing much happens. Consider "Blues ..." as a nice swan song.

This is the end of the Jimmie Lunceford period. Time to make a sum-up. A quote from jazz critic John S. Wilson is a good start: "WS, one of the trumvirate of great jazz alto saxophonists before Charlie Parker arrived. The other two were Johnny

Hodges, who had a fat, luscious tone, and Benny some of Carter's Carter, a model of clean, pure-toned playing. Stylistically, WS fell between Carter and Hodges for he combined some of Carter's clarity and singing directness with a variant of Hodges' gut sound". This is as far from reality as you can get! One is here comparing WS to two of the alto sax giants in vintage jazz, great improvisers. There is very little in the Lunceford catalogue that makes it possible to judge WS's improvisational capabilities. He is an effective bigband alto sax player with a tone that can often be very beautiful, a professional musician, but he is sparsely featured and there is simply no evidence of a great jazz artist, yet. Lunceford was a very special orchestra, exciting arrangement and perfection in execution, but no playground for improvisers. Great musicians (like Pres with Basie) could create wonderful art in a few bars, but nothing of this kind happens with WS and Lunceford. Thus we have to look to the future, to find what WS could do, and whether the comparison above can make sense after all.

CHARLIE SPIVAK & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. July 1&6, 1942**
Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as, vo). Postscript of June 2021: WS is still with Lunceford. He probably joins Spivak at Cedar Point in Sandusky, Ohio between July 31 and Aug. 6 (ref. Tom Buhmann). Six titles were recorded for Columbia, but no WS.

NYC. mid 1942
Same, probably not including WS.
Twenty titles were recorded for World Transcriptions, fifteen issued on Circle but no WS on any of those, a few items missing.

NYC. mid 1942
Same. Broadcast from Cafe Rouge, Hotel Pennsylvania:

Loveless Love Vocal. (SM)

NYC. late 1942
Same. Broadcast "Fitch Bandwagon":

I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles Solo with orch 16 bars. (M)

For Me And My Gal Vocal. (M)

Swinging The Blues Solo with orch 24 bars. (M)

Sandwiched between Lunceford and James, WS is part of the Spivak orchestra, and there certainly are soli to be found on broadcasts, possibly more than those above. On "... Bubbles" he is well hidden in orchestra, probably a good thing, but "Swinging ..." has a solo to be noted.

TOMMY DORSEY /
HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **Ocean Park, Ca., Aug. 12, 1944**
Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Broadcast from Casino Gardens Ballroom, but no WS.

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **Nov. 1944 – Jan. 1951**
Personnels including Willie Smith (cl, as, vo).
There are vast numbers of broadcasts, and obviously it is not possible to dive into this material with ordinary solography expectations. Thus, below you will only find Harry James studio sessions, most which are available on spotify. If you want to assist in researching the broadcasts, please go ahead!!

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **Hollywood, Nov. 21, 1944**
Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Three titles were recorded for Columbia, but no WS.

same date
Harry James (tp), Willie Smith (as), Arnold Ross (p), Allan Reuss (g), Ed Mihelich (b), Carl Maus (dm).
One title:

1138-1 I'm Confessin' Break 2 bars (SM) to solo 32 bars. (FM)

1138-2 I'm Confessin' Break 2 bars (S) to solo 32 bars. (M)

Great alto sax here, some of the best I have heard by WS! Postscript: Note that take 2 is much longer than take 1 due to an added guitar solo, and because the tempo is notable slower, both in James' introduction and later. Very exciting!!

Hollywood, Jan. 3, 1945
Same/similar. Two titles, one issued, but no WS.

DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS ORCHESTRA **L.A. Jan. 17, 1945**
Bigband personnel including guests, Willie Smith (as) is one of them.
Live at the Philharmonic Auditorium, one title:

92-2	Moten Swing	Soli 8 and 32 bars. (FM)
92-5	Moten Swing	As above. (FM)
93-2	Willie Weep For Me	Soli 12 and 12 bars to long coda. (S)

This is WS's first recording session under his own name, and which company arranges it but the one and only Keynote, visiting the West Coast also for the first time! We get a nice smallband session based upon relations to the Harry James orchestra, with good soloing all over, and the leader makes a good impression. Quoting Dan Morgenstern's liner notes on "Moten ...": WS's soli are lively; his playing is much less cliché than it would, alas, soon become". Fine blues to be noted on "Willie ...", the highlight for me.

CORKY CORCORAN's COLLEGIATES **LA. May 15, 1945**

Emmett Berry (tp), Willie Smith (as), Corky Corcoran (ts), Dodo Marmarosa (p), Allan Reuss (g), Ed Mihelich (b), Nick Fatool (dm), Johnny Thompson (arr).
Four titles were recorded for Keynote, no WS altosax solo on 97-3 "Lullaby Of The Leaves" but:

94-3	What Is This Thing Called Love?	Solo 16 bars. (M)
95-3	Minor Blues	Solo 12 bars. (S)
96-2	You Know It	Solo 16 bars. (M)
96-5	You Know It	As above. (FM)

Another quite Harry James-oriented session for Keynote, but WS has to step down as leader this time, letting the fine tenorman "Corky" to be in charge. Some very fine WS here; swinging "What ..." and "... Know It"s and a very minor "... Blues" have him at his very best, he really could play when he wanted to.

LAMPLIGHTER's JAZZ SESSION **Hollywood, May 27, 1945**

Emmett Berry (tp), Willie Smith (as), Corky Corcoran (ts), Arnold Ross (p), Allen Reuss (g), Ed Mihelich (b), Zutty Singleton (dm).
Four titles were recorded live at Billy Berg's Vine Street Supper Club:

Sweet Georgia Brown	Solo 64 bars. (M)
These Foolish Things	Solo 16 bars to coda. (S)
Honeysuckle Rose	Solo/straight 64 bars. (FM)
Body And Soul (NC)	Solo with announcer 8 bars. (S)

This belongs to the better WS sessions with a two choruses swinging "... Brown", and a "... Rose" where he opens the proceedings by stating the melody, then improvises one chorus. Two nice contributions also on the two slow items.

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **Hollywood, May 30, 1945**

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Four titles were recorded for Columbia, three issued, but no WS.

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. July 12, 1945**

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Four titles were recorded for V-Disc, three issued, no WS on "September In The Rain" and "9:20 Special" but:

VP1629	Rose Room	Break to solo 14 bars. Break to solo 8 bars. (M)
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Quite elegant playing on "... Room"!

TRUMMY YOUNG **NYC. July 18, 1945**

Buck Clayton (tp), Henry Wells, Trummy Young (tb, vo), Willie Smith (as), Don Byas (ts), Ken Kersey (p), Mike Bryan (g), Bob Haggart (b), Jimmy Crawford (dm).

Four titles were recorded for V-Disc, one issued:

1563	I Want A Little Girl	Solo 8 bars. (SM)
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Lots of good music here, and WS takes a nice and brief solo towards the end.

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. July 24, 1945**

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Three titles were recorded for Columbia, two have WS:

35081-1	It's Been A Long Time	Solo 8 bars. (S)
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35081-2 It's Been A Long Time As above. (S)
 35082-1 Autumn Serenade Solo 4 bars. (S)

NYC. Aug. 7, 1945

Same/similar. Two titles, one has WS:

35098-1 The Wonder Of You Straight 8 bars. (SM)

NYC. Aug. 20, 1945

Same/similar. Two titles, but no WS.

Note nice slow soloing on "... Long Time", although the two takes are rather similar.

EDDIE HEYWOOD SEXTET **Hollywood, ca. autumn 1945**
 Vic Dickenson (tb), Willie Smith (as), Eddie Heywood (p), Les Paul (g), unknown (b), Sid Catlett (dm).
 Two titles on Jazum 3:

Just You, Just Me Duet with (tb) 32 bars.
 Soli 32 and 8 bars. (M)
 I've Found A New Baby Soli 64 and 8 bars. (F)

Good alto sax soloing on the fast "... Baby", but quite typical of WS; the first chorus is pleasant and balanced, but the second one is less impressive. Just You, ... is also quite pleasant.

same
 Personnel conventionally given as Jonah Jones (tp), Vic Dickenson (tb), Willie Smith or Pete Brown (as), Eddie Heywood (p), unknown (b), (dm), Helen Humes (vo-"St. Louis ..."). Jones is wrong, Brown may have something, but nevertheless this session is listed under Lem Davis (as). What is your opinion? Three titles, "Please Don't Talk About Me", "On The Alamo" and "St. Louis Blues", issued on Jazum 58.

LAMPLIGHTER's JAZZ SESSION **Hollywood, Sept. 9, 1945**
 Jake Porter (tp), Barney Bigard (cl), Willie Smith (as), Corky Corcoran (ts), Arnold Ross (p), Allen Reuss (g), Ed Mihelich (b), Zutty Singleton (dm).
 Three titles were recorded live at Billy Berg's Vine Street Supper Club:

Sweet Georgia Brown Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (M)
 It's The Talk Of The Town No solo.
 Tea For Two (NC) Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (FM)

Another session at Billy Berg's, and another "... Brown", ten minutes long, now a bit slower than the previous version, and with three full choruses. The fine rhythm section helps to make it swing, and the solo is fully controlled all through. One does not find much better WS than this! The same goes for "Tea ...", and I am sure that WS was quite satisfied with his playing here!

THE DOUBLE QUINTET **LA. Oct. 1945**
 Emmett Berry (tp), Eddie Rosa, Willie Smith (as), Eddie Lucas (oboe), Clint Davis (reeds), Arnold Ross (p), Allen Reuss (g), Billy Hadnott (b), Keg Purnell (dm), Joe Macanamy, Herb Jeffries (vo), Johnny Thompson, Herschel Gilbert (arr).
 Four titles were recorded for Fran-Tone, "Love For Sale" and "You're Blase" not available but:

Louise Solo 8 bars. (M)
 Prelude To A Kiss Solo 16 bars. (S)

Postscript from Emmett Berry of July 2020: "An exciting discovery, obviously an ambitious and very serious project of which I should like to know more. Sophisticated arrangements and surprises. WS plays an important role".

HARRY EDISON **LA. Oct. 1945**
 Harry Edison (tp), Willie Smith (as), Arnold Ross (p), Billy Hadnott (b), Shadow Wilson (dm).
 Four titles were recorded for Philo/Aladdin, no WS on "Laura" but:

Blowed And Gone Solo 32 bars. (M)
 Exit Virginia Blues Solo 12 bars. (S)
 Ain't Cha Gonna Do It? Solo 16 bars. (M)

Some of the better WS; note particularly the fine blues chorus on "Exit ..." and a swinging solo on "... Gone"!

THE JUBILEE ALL STARS**Hollywood, ca. Oct. 1945**

Harry Parr Jones (tp), Willie Smith (as), Corcy Corcoran (ts), Calvin Jackson (p), Oscar Pettiford (b), + Miguelito Valdez & his Cuban Rhythm, with members of Johnny Otis orchestra and Ivie Anderson, Joe Turner (vo) added on "... Blues".
AFRS Jubilee No. 152:

How High The Moon	Solo 64 bars to coda. (M)
Jam Session Blues	Solo 24 bars. (M)

This session is almost disturbed by putting a cuban rhythm into pure swing jazz, awful. Trying to overhear it, WS plays quite well on both items, on "How High ..." he terminates it.

THE JUBILEE ALL STARS**Hollywood, ca. Oct. 1945**

Bobby Hackett, Manny Klein, Emmett Berry, Frank Wiley (tp), Vic Dickenson, Ray Conniff, Henry Coker (tb), Lem Davis, Willie Smith (as), Corcy Corcoran, Babe Russin (ts), Jack Martin (bar), Juan Rolando (p), Slim Gaillard (g, mc), Tiny Bam Brown (b), Nick Glicco (dm, vib).
AFRS Jubilee No. 153, two titles:

Rough Idea	Solo with orch 16 bars. (FM)
Sonny Boy	Solo 32 bars. (FM)

same date

Bobby Hackett (tp), Willie Smith (as), possibly Harry Gibson (p), Slim Gaillard (g), Tiny Bam Brown (b), Nick Glicco or Leo Watson (dm).
One title:

September In The Rain	Solo 8 bars. Solo 16+8 bars, (tp) on bridge. (M)
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Nice to hear WS together with the great Bobby Hackett on "... The Rain", sweet but controlled. On "... Boy" everybody get a chance with one solo chorus, nothing remarkable from WS there, and on "... Idea" he is almost drowned in orchestra.

HELEN HUMES & HER ALL STARS**LA. ca. Nov. 1945**

Snooky Young (tp), Willie Smith (as), Tom Archia, Corcy Corcoran (ts), Arnold Ross (p), Allen Reuss (g), Red Callender (b), Henry Tucker Green (dm), Helen Humes (vo).

Three titles were recorded for Philo/Aladdin, "Did You Ever Love A Man", "Voo-it" and "Central Avenue Boogie" but no WS.

KAY STARR /**JIMMY MUNDY & HIS ALLSTARS****Hollywood, ca. Nov. 1945**

Probable personnel: Mannie Klein (tp), Willie Smith (as), Corcy Corcoran (tsa), Milt Raskin (p), Alan Reuss (g), Van Clark (b), Ray Hagan (dm), Kay Starr (vo).
AFRS Jubilee No. 162, two titles:

Good-For-Nothing Joe	Obbligato 16 bars. (S)
Honeysuckle Rose	Solo 8 bars. (M)

Note these; a very nice background playing on "... Joe" as a highlight!

WILLIE SMITH SIX**Hollywood, Nov. 5, 1945**

Buddy Childers (tp), Willie Smith (as), Vido Musso (ts), Andre Previn (p), Eddie Safranski (b), Lee Young (dm).

Three titles were recorded for Sunset:

160	I Never Knew	Soli 64 and 64 bars to coda. (FM)
126-2	All The Things You Are	Solo 16 bars. (SM)
126-3	All The Things You Are	As above. (SM)
126-6	All The Things You Are	As above. (SM)
127-5	I Found A New Baby	Break to solo 32 bars. (FM)

Fine swinging smallband session worthy of general attention. WS takes long and moderate soli on the almost eight minutes "... Knew", he is certainly not lacking command of his instrument! "All The Things ..." is not played as one might expect as a feature for WS but arranged and with a modest introductory altosax role.

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **Hollywood, Nov. 6/7, 1945**
Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Two titles were recorded for Columbia, but no WS.

WILLIE SMITH SIX **L.A. Nov. 12, 1945**
Howard McGhee (tp), Willie Smith (as), Lucky Thompson (ts), Arnold Ross (p),
Eddie Safranski (b), Lee Young (dm).
Four titles were recorded for Sunset:

127-14	I Found A New Baby	As below. (F)
127-15	I Found A New Baby	As below. (F)
127-16	I Found A New Baby	Break to solo 32 bars. (F)
132-7	Windjammer	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
133-3	Skylark	Soli with ens 16, 8 and 4 bars. (S)
134/35	Experiment Perilous I & II	Solo 64 bars. (F)

The personnel makes this Sunset session even more exciting than the previous one. "Experiment ..." is in fact "Lover Come Back To Me" and has WS playing fast and furious. Good soloing all over and a nice slow "Skylark".

SAM DONAHUE SWING SEVEN **L.A. Dec. 12, 1945**
John Best (tp), Dick LeFave (tb), Willie Smith (as), Sam Donahue (ts), Rocky Coluccio (p), Tom Scully (b), Jimmy Pratt (dm).
Four titles were recorded for Encore, issued on Hep LP:

101	Hollywood Hop	Break. Solo with ens 16 bars. (FM)
102	Encore Essence	Solo with ens 16 bars. (M)
103	Round The Block	Solo 8 bars. (SM)
104	Catch As Catch Can	Soli 4 and 20 bars. (F)

Rather ordinary session as such, and we have heard WS more interesting.

LAMPLIGHTER /
CRYSTALETTE ALL STARS **L.A. Dec. 12&18, 1945**
Collective personnel: Ray Linn (tp), Vic Dickenson (tb), Barney Bigard (cl), Willie Smith (as), Calvin Jackson (p), Allen Reuss (g), Red Callender (b), Zutty Singleton (dm), Kay Starr (vo-"... Lorraine", "... Leave Me").
Five titles were recorded for Lamplighter/Crystalette, no WS on "Sweet Lorraine" but:

Sweet Georgia Brown	Solo 32 bars. (F)
Uncle Willie	Intro. (S). Solo 24 bars. (FM)
Love Me Or Leave Me	Solo 16 bars. (SM)
My Melancholy Baby	Solo 8 bars. Break. (M)

Quite well conceived altosax soli found on this date, hopefully more appearing. Interesting to hear him go for the good old "... Brown", he certainly loved to play!

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTR A **Hollywood, Dec. 18/19, 1945**
Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as, vo-1630), (strings-1628-29).
Five titles were recorded for Columbia, four have WS:

1627-1	I'm In Love With Two Sweethearts	Solo 20 bars. (M)
1628-1	Ain't She Sweet?	Solo 16+8 bars, orch on bridge. (M)
1629-2A	Friar Rock	Solo 4 bars. (M)
1630-1	Who's Sorry Now?	Break. Vocal 32 bars. Solo 26 bars. (M)

For once, WS is featured on all items on a James session. Nice soloing!

HELEN HUMES & HER ALL STARS **L.A. Dec. 22, 1945**
Snooky Young (tp), Willie Smith (as), Maxwell Davis, Lester Young (ts), Jimmy Bunn (p), Dave Barbour (g), Jimmy Rudd (b), Henry Tucker Green (dm), Helen Humes (vo-except "Blues Without Helen").
Six titles were recorded for Philo/Aladdin, two have WS:

If one finds WS's potential greatness controversial, the JATP recordings here can give you much ammunition! Tempo means a lot. On the slow "... Love" and "... Started", his playing is quite nice, although rather sweet and somewhat pompous, and since he is succeeding Bird on the latter, some conclusions can be made. But when the tempo increases, his shortcomings with regard to rhythmic flexibility and pure taste become much more audible. On "Lady ..." he still manages to hang on to the rhythm, and when he starts the performance of "Crazy ...", he also has good control. However, the remaining three quite fast items are really doubtful efforts to play and listen to, in fact quite nerve wrecking. They are played with great enthusiasm, but his tone which can be so nice in slow tempo, now becomes vulgar, and when the tones pour out in a stream of meaninglessness, well, this is not my cup of tea.

SHORTY SHEROCK & HIS ORCHESTRA **LA. Jan. 31, 1946**

Shorty Sherock (tp), Willie Smith (as), Corcy Corcoran (ts), Arnold Ross (p), Allen Reuss (g), Ed Mihelich (b), Dave Coleman (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Signature, one has WS:

1945-4 The Willies Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (F)

One solo feature for each (first four), and WS gets "The Willies". A long and quite noteworthy solo.

JIMMY MUNDY & HIS ORCHESTRA **Hollywood, ca. late Jan./early Feb. 1946**

Bigband personnel possibly including Willie Smith (as).

Four titles from AFRS Jubilee No. 171 & 172, "Queer Street", "Jimmy's Idea", "Everything But You" and "One O'Clock Rhythm", but no WS.

CHARLIE VENTURA SEPTET **LA. ca. Feb. 14, 1946**

Red Rodney (tp), Willie Smith (as), Charlie Ventura (ts), Arnold Ross (p), Barney Kessel (g), Billy Hadnott (b), Nick Fatool (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Black & White:

207 Who's Sorry Now? Solo 24 bars. (M)

208 Nobody Knows The Trouble I've Seen Solo 16 bars. (M)

209 The Man I Love Solo 8 bars. (S)

210 'S Wonderful Solo 32 bars. (FM)

A smallband session on the average. WS makes four competent contributions, note particularly "... Love" with a certain elegance.

THE KEYNOTERS **LA. Feb. 16, 1946**

Willie Smith (as), Nat King Cole (p), Red Callender (b), Jackie Mills (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Keynote:

121-1 I Can't Believe That YILWM Solo 32 bars. Solo 16+8 bars, (b) on bridge, to coda. (SM)

121-2 I Can't Believe That YILWM As above. (M)

122-1 The Way You Look Tonight Solo 32 bars. Coda. (S)

122-4 The Way You Look Tonight As above. (S)

123-1 Airiness A La Nat Soli 8 and 32 bars. 16 bars 4/4 with (p). (F)

123-2 Airiness A La Nat As above. (F)

124-3 My Old Flame Soli 16 and 24 bars to long coda. (S)

This session was made during Keynotes's (Harry Lim) second trip to Los Angeles. It is unavoidable to mention that the star is the pianist, the man who 'unfortunately' was such a good singer that it overshadowed his brilliance as a true jazz pianist! Very nice altosax soloing on "I Can't ...", but I love to quote DanM on "... Tonight", played slower than usual: "WS positively oozes here, stretching his sweet, long notes to the point just before they get sticky, making the most of Kern's lovely melody". Highly competent playing also on the fast "... A La Nat", while "... Flame" is sort of sweet solo feature for WS., but note the lovely piano comping behind here.

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **Hollywood, Feb. 20/21, 1946**

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).

Four titles were recorded for Columbia, one has WS:

1728-1 As If I Didn't Have Enough OMM Solo with orch 16 bars. (S)

A nice altosax introduction on this item.

JIMMY MUNDY & HIS ORCHESTRA **Hollywood, ca. late March 1946**

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).

Five titles from AFRS Jubilee No. 181 & 182, no WS on “Hello-Goodbye-Forget It”, “Everything But You”, “Step And Fetch It”, and “Skymaster / That Rhythm Man” but:

Fiesta In Brass Solo 24 bars. (FM)

THE ALLSTARS (JATP) **LA. March-April 1946**

Benny Carter, Charlie Parker, Willie Smith (as), Nat King Cole (p), Oscar Moore (g), Johnny Miller (b), Buddy Rich (dm), Ernie “Bubbles” Whitman (mc).

AFRS Jubilee No. 186 three titles played as a medley but different tempi, WS first on “Tea For Two”, Benny Carter next on “Body And Soul” and Charlie Parker finishing off with “Cherokee”:

Tea For Two Long intro. (S) to solo 64 bars. (SM)

This is of course a jazzarcheological gem with three of the most famous altosax players in jazz playing together! No contest is planned nor produced, each one obviously chooses his favourite song. No surprise that WS takes “Tea ...” to open the proceedings, and the result is very successful, to be very proud of!

JUAN TIZOL & HIS ORCHESTRA **LA. April 7, 1946**

Dick Cathcart (tp), Juan Tizol (vtb), Willie Smith (as, vo-152), Babe Russin (ts), Arnold Ross (p), Irving Ashby (g), Ed Mihelich (b), Nick Fatool (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Keynote, no WS altosax solo on 152-1 “You Can’t Have Your Cake And It” but:

149-2 Keb-lah Solo 16 bars. (M)

150-2 The Sphinx Soli 8 and 8 bars. (SM)

151-3 Zanzibar Solo 8 bars. (SM)

Fine session based upon Tizol’s remarkable melodies, and it seems that all participants are playing up to their very best, including WS, his highlight is “Keb-Lah”.

JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC **LA. April 22, 1946**

Buck Clayton (tp), Charlie Parker, Willie Smith (as), Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young (ts), Ken Kersey (p), Irving Ashby (g), Billy Hadnott (b), Buddy Rich (dm).

Five titles were recorded at the Embassy Theatre, no WS on “Slow Drag” but:

10:53 JATP Blues Solo 5 choruses of 12 bars. (M)

12:58 I Got Rhythm Solo 64 bars. (F)

10:27 I Surrender Dear Solo 32 bars to coda. (S)

8:13 I Found A New Baby Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (F)

same

Personnel same except Ray Linn (tp), Corey Corcoran, Babe Russin (ts) added, Charlie Parker, Lester Young omitted.

One title:

5:16 Bugle Call Rag Solo 4 choruses of 12 bars. (FM)

The comments to the previous JATP concert still stand. His concluding solo on “... Dear” is a quite beautiful piece of music, but nevertheless on the very edge of taste, he pushes it too far. “... Blues” works out ok, at least the first choruses, while “... Rhythm” and “... Baby” have much of the same intrusive phrasing without necessary rhythmic variation. But the public likes it, so maybe it’s my fault?

ELLA LOGAN & ALL STARS **LA. ca. May-August 1946**

Unknown (tp), (tb), Willie Smith (cl, as), unknown (cl, ts), possibly Phil Moore (p), unknown (b), (dm), Ella Logan (vo).

Two titles were recorded for Black & White, supervised by Norman Granz, no (as) on 253 “Tea For Two” but:

254 Sometimes I’m Happy Solo 8 bars. (SM)

Postscript of Aug. 2022: Very nice!

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **Hollywood, May 22, 1946**

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).

Three titles were recorded for Columbia, two have WS:

1827-1 I've Never Forgotten Solo 8 bars. (M)
 1828-1 And Then It's Heaven Solo with orch 10 bars. (S)

Hollywood, May 27, 1946

Same/similar. Two titles, one has WS:

1845-1 Why Does It Get So Late So Early? Solo 8 bars. (M)

Ashbury Park, NJ. June 30, 1946

CBS broadcast from Convention Hall, nine titles, four have WS:

Seems Like Old Times Solo 16 bars. (SM)
 Indiana Solo with orch 8 bars. (FM)
 As If I Didn't Have Enough OMM Solo/straight 18 bars. (S)
 Who's Sorry Now? Break. Vocal. Solo 24 bars. (M)

Hollywood, Aug. 26, 1946

Same/similar. One title, but no WS.

Hollywood, Sept. 13, 1946

Same/similar. Four titles, one has WS:

2028-1 Keb-lah Solo 26 bars. (M)

A couple of items to note here, like the slow "... Heaven". However, there is a real great item here, the swinging "Keb-lah", created by Juan Tizol, a fine jazz record with WS contributing nicely! Postscript of Sept. 22, 2022: The broadcast excavated has some nice WS, particularly "... Old Times" and "... Sorry ..." should be noted.

LENA HORNE

LA. autumn 1946

Gerald Wilson (tp), Murray McEachern (tb), Willie Smith (cl, as), Marshal Royal (cl, ts), Phil Moore (p, ldr), Irving Ashby (g), Red Callender (b), Lee Young (vl), Lena Horne (vo).

Three titles were recorded for Black & White, but no WS.

JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC

LA. Oct. 7, 1946

Buck Clayton (tp), Trummy Young (tb), Willie Smith (as), Flip Phillips, Coleman Hawkins (ts), Ken Kersey (p), Benny Fonville (b), Buddy Rich (dm).

Three titles were recorded at the Philharmonic Auditorium, two issued:

6:18 Bell Boy Blues Solo 6 choruses of 12 bars. (FM)
 10:12 How High The Moon Solo 64 bars. (FM)

Same thing, and the ensemble riffs behind do not make things better.

IVIE ANDERSON

LA. Oct. 1946

Bigband personnel including Karl George (tp), Willie Smith (as), Lucky Thompson (ts), Phil Moore (p, arr), Irving Ashby (g), Lee Young (dm), Ivie Anderson (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Black & White, but no WS.

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA

Hollywood, Oct. 22, 1946

Personnel including Willie Smith (as).

Two titles were recorded for Columbia, but no WS.

Hollywood, Nov. 11, 1946

Same/similar. Two titles, one has WS:

2138/39-1 Moten Swing Solo 32 bars. (M)

Hollywood, Nov. 13, 1946

Same/similar. Four titles, two have WS:

2146-1 The Man With The Horn Soli/straight 24, 2 and 8 bars. (S)
 2147-1A Lover Come Back To Me Solo 16 bars. (M)

James is jazzing it up here! Note "Moten ..." (and I will use the opportunity to mention Arnold Ross, an excellent pianist who certainly deserves his own solography). WS takes a good solo in the second part. Also "Lover ..." is quite interesting.

JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC

NYC. May 24, 1947

Roy Eldridge (tp), Pete Brown, Willie Smith (as), Flip Phillips (ts), Hank Jones (p), Les Paul (g), Benny Fonville (b), Alvin Stoller (dm).

Three titles, one issued:

Blues Soli 2 and 8 choruses of 12 bars. (F)

A typical WS blues performance in uptempo.

**MARY ANN McCALL WITH
RALPH BURNS' ORCHESTRA**

L.A. June 19, 1947

Howard McGhee (tp), Willie Smith (as), Dexter Gordon (ts), Jimmy Rowles (p), possibly Barney Kessel but probably Al Hendrickson (g), Red Callender (b), Jackie Mills (dm), Mary Ann McCall (vo), Ralph Burns (arr, cond).

Three titles were recorded for Columbia, one has WS:

2393-1 On Time Intro 4 bars. Solo 8 bars. (S)

"On Time" has one of the best WS soli from this period!

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA

Hollywood, June 22, 1947

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).

Four titles were recorded for Columbia, "The Last Mile" not available, one has WS:

2403 East Coast Blues Solo with orch 16 bars. (SM)

A quite nice item.

GENE NORMAN's "JUST JAZZ"

Pasadena, Ca., June 23, 1947

Charlie Shavers (tp, vo-"The Blues"), Willie Smith (as, vo), Stan Getz (ts), Red Norvo (vib, vo), Nat King Cole (p, vo), Oscar Moore, Barney Kessel (g), Johnny Miller (b), Louie Bellson (dm).

AFRS "Just Jazz" from Civic Auditorium, four titles (James Accardi collection):

How High The Moon Solo 64 bars. (M)

Body And Soul Solo 8 bars. (S)

The Blues Solo 36 bars. (SM)

I/Charlie's Got Rhythm Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (F)

A quarter of a chorus on "... Soul" is a sort of highlight here, and good playing "The Blues". "I Got ..." and Charlie's ..." are typical examples of what I intensely dislike with WS in fast tempo.

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA

Hollywood, June 24/25, 1947

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).

Six titles were recorded for Columbia, two have WS:

2416 Blue Turning Grey Over You Solo with orch 12 bars. (SM)

2417 Cotton Tail Solo 32 bars. (F)

Well executed altosax soli, and particularly "Cotton ..." should be noted.

**LIONEL HAMPTON /
JUST JAZZ ALL STARS**

Pasadena, Ca., Aug. 4, 1947

Charlie Shavers (tp), Willie Smith (as), Corky Corcoran (ts), Lionel Hampton (vib-"Stardust"), Tommy Todd (p), Barney Kessel (g), Slam Stewart (b), Jackie Mills (dm-"... Jump"), Lee Young (dm).

Gene Norman concert from Civic Auditorium, four titles:

15:15 Stardust Solo 32 bars. (S)

13:29 The Man I Love Solo 32 bars. (S)

7:05 Oh, Lady Be Good Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (F)

7:55 One O'Clock Jump Solo 5 choruses of 12 bars. (FM)

same date

Personnel as above except Milt Buckner (p) replaces Todd, Lionel Hampton (vib, p, dm, vo).

Seven titles, two have WS:

Flying Home Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (FM)

Perdido Solo 32 bars. (F)

A great and swinging concert, and I feel it has more soul than many of the JATP concerts described earlier. WS opens "Stardust" with a lovely and delicate solo, some of the very best he ever recorded, and "... Love" is also beautifully played, so dig these! Even the uptempi are played with better taste and seriousness than usual, so this is a concert to be noted for WS enthusiasts!!

WOODY HERMAN & HIS ORCHESTRA Hollywood, Aug. 15&26, 1947

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Six titles were recorded for Columbia, four issued, but no WS.

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA Hollywood, Aug. 24, 1947

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Four titles were recorded for Columbia, three issued, one has WS:

2562 I Still Get Jealous Solo with orch 8 bars. (M)

HARRY JAMES & BAND Hollywood, Aug. 28, 1947

Smallband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Two titles were recorded for Columbia/V-Disc:

2565-1 Pagan Love Song Soli 8 and 8 bars. (F)

2565-2 Pagan Love Song As above? ()

2566 Vine Street Blues Solo 12 bars. (S)

Hollywood, Nov. 3, 1947

Same/similar.

One title was recorded for Columbia:

2746 Tuxedo Junction Pt 1 Solo 64 bars. (FM)

A nice blues chorus on "Vine...", but the highlight is a long and well executed solo on "... Junction"!

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA Hollywood, Nov. 3&6&10, 1947

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Eight titles were recorded for Columbia, two have WS:

2759 Ab-Mur Solo with orch 16 bars. (SM)

2772 Lone Star Moon Solo with orch 14 bars. (M)

WILLIE SMITH QUINTET L.A. ca. Nov. 1947

Willie Smith (as), Dodo Marmarosa (p), Barney Kessel (g), Red Callender (b), Jo Jones (dm).

Three titles were recorded for Mercury/Clef:

1898 Not So Bop Blues Soli 36 and 36 bars. (FM)

Not So Bop Blues alt. As above. (FM)

1899 Tea For Two Long free intro to solo 32 bars. (S)
to solo 36 bars. (FM) to solo 8 bars. (S)

Tea For Two alt. As above but final solo 16 bars. (S)

1900 Sophisticated Lady Long free intro to solo 32 bars.
Solo 16 bars. (S)

An excellent session to get familiar with WS's music, strong and confident, but somewhat schmalzig, with "Tea ..." as a typical example, and not much difference between the takes, but with all honesty he swings perfectly when the tempo goes up. The "... Lady" is played with sophisticated elegance. "Not So ..." have the necessary differences between the two takes.

MILLS BLUE RHYTHM BAND L.A. Nov. 15, 1947

Ray Linn, Jimmy Zito (tp), Juan Tizol (vtb), Eddie Rosa (cl, as), Willie Smith (as), Herbie Haymer (ts), Butch Stone (bar), Walter Welscher (p), Barney Kessel (g), Arnold Fishkin (b), Irv Cottler (dm), Charles Garble (vib).

Four titles were recorded for Royale,

Blue Rhythm Ramble Solo 16 bars. (M)

Blue Rhythm Bounce Solo 8 bars. (M)

Blue Rhythm Serenade Soli with orch 16 and 12 bars. (M)

Blue Rhythm Chant Solo 18 bars. (SM)

Fine bigband sides these, and WS has some good contributions; particularly “... Ramble” and “... Chant” should be noted.

GERALD WILSON ORCHESTRA **LA. late 1947**
Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as), Dan Grissom (vo).
Four titles were recorded for United Artists, no WS on “Dissonance In Blues” but:

My Last Affair	Intro/straight. (S)
What A Fool I Was	Intro/straight. (S)
Vance	Solo with orch 16 bars. (M)

“Vance” has some good altosax.

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **Hollywood, Dec. 19-30, 1947**
Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Twentyone titles were recorded for Columbia at several sessions, seventeen issued, four have WS:

3065	Nina	Solo 16 bars. (M)
3078-1	Snooty Fruity	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
3099-2	Poppin’ Off	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
51714	Stompin’ At The Savoy Pt 2	Solo with orch 32 bars. (FM)

“Nina” is the highlight here, but one might be impressed by the elegance of “... Fruity” and “... Off”, the latter a blues.

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **Hollywood, early 1948**
Personnel including Willie Smith (as).
AFRS Jubilee No. 267, two titles have WS:

9:20 Special	Solo 8 bars. (M)
Rosetta	Solo with orch 28 bars. (M)

This “Rosetta” is quite nice and well worth listening to.

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **Hollywood, Feb. 14, 1949**
Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Four titles were recorded for Columbia, two issued, one has WS:

3581	Don’t Cry, Cry Baby	Solo with orch 10 bars. (SM)
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Hollywood, July 19, 1949

Same/similar. Two titles, one has WS:

3851-1	Forgotten Pt 1	Solo/straight 16 bars. (S)
3852-1	Forgotten Pt 2	With orch. Coda. (S)

Beautiful item, with altosax of authority (and other reed soli too!).

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **Hollywood, Dec. 5, 12, 28, 1949**
Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Eight titles were recorded for Columbia, seven issued, five have been available, but no WS.

DORIS DAY VOCAL WITH
HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **Hollywood, Jan. 25, 1950**
Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Four titles were recorded for Columbia, but no WS.

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **Hollywood, Jan. 27, 1950**
Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Four titles were recorded for Columbia, two have WS:

4014	Melancholy Rhapsody	Solo 8 bars. (S)
4016	Get Happy	Break. (M)

Hollywood, March 2, 1950

Same/similar. Two titles, but no WS.

NYC. June 19, 1950

Same/similar. Five titles, one has been available:

43947-1 New Two O'Clock Jump Solo with orch 36 bars. (M)

NYC. July 10, 1950

Same/similar. Three titles, one has been available:

44085-1 Deep Purple Break to solo with orch 8 bars. (S)

Hollywood, July 24, 1950

Same/similar. Two titles, but no WS.

Hollywood, Sept. 1, 1950

Same/similar. Two titles, but no WS.

Hollywood, Sept. 11, 1950

Same/similar. Three titles, but no WS.

WS is sparsely featured on these studio recordings, and nothing much happens really. No wonder he took other opportunities.

DORIS DAY VOCAL WITH HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **Hollywood, Jan. 5, 1951**

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Four titles were recorded for Columbia, one has WS:

4414 When The Sun Comes Out Solo with orch 6 bars. (S)

DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS ORCHESTRA **March 27, 1951 – late March 1952**

Personnels including Willie Smith (as).
Below is given only Duke sessions which contain WS, and which are issued (according to DESOR).

THE CORONETS **NYC. April 17, 1951**

Cat Anderson (tp), Juan Tizol (vtb), Willie Smith (as), Paul Gonsalves (ts), Billy Strayhorn (p), Wendell Marshall (b), Louie Bellson (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Mercer, no WS on 4029 "Night Walk" and 4032 "The Happening" but:

4030 Moonlight Fiesta Solo with ens. (M)

4031 She Solo with ens. (S)

The sound quality of this session is pretty bad, and it is difficult to appreciate what is going on. Nothing indicates any altosax of importance.

DUKE ELLINGTON **NYC. May 3, 1951**

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
MBS Telecast from Birdland:

5105h Jam With Sam

THE CORONETS **NYC. May 18, 1951**

Quentin Jackson, Britt Woodman (tb), Juan Tizol (vtb), Willie Smith (as), Duke Ellington (p), Billy Strayhorn (p), Wendell Marshall (b), Louie Bellson (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Mercer:

4033 Swamp Drums Solo with ens. (S)

4034 Sultry Serenade Solo 16 bars. (M)

4035 Indian Summer Solo 48 bars to long coda. (S)

4036 Britt And Butter Blues Soli partly with ens
24, 12 and 24 bars. (M)

The sound quality is not much better here. However, WS solos on all four items, and particularly his solo feature "... Summer" is well worth listening to.

DUKE ELLINGTON **NYC. May 24, 1951**

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Recording session for Columbia:

45831-1 Brown Betty Duet with (tp) 6 bars. (S)

THE CORONETS **NYC. June 1, 1951**

Juan Tizol (vtb), Willie Smith (as), Duke Ellington (p), Billy Strayhorn (org), Wendell Marshall (b), Louie Bellson (dm).

Three titles were recorded for Mercer, one issued:

4039 Caravan Solo 64 bars. (F)

Quite interesting this one!

DUKE ELLINGTON Cedar Grove, NJ. June 6, 1951

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
MBS broadcast from Meadowbrook Ballroom:

5112c Indian Summer

Cedar Grove, NJ. June 9, 1951

MBS broadcast from Meadowbrook Ballroom:

51151 Things Ain't What They Used To Be

Cedar Grove, NJ. June 10, 1951

MBS broadcast from Meadowbrook Ballroom:

5116c Tea For Two

THE CORONETS NYC. June 19, 1951

Juan Tizol (vtb), Willie Smith (as), Jimmy Hamilton (cl, ts), Duke Ellington (p),
Billy Strayhorn (p), Wendell Marshall (b), Louie Bellson (dm).

Three titles were recorded for Mercer:

4040 Alternate Soli 12, 12, 12 and 12 bars. (M)

4041 Hoppin' John Solo 32 bars. (M)

4042 Jumpin' With Symphony Sid Solo 12 bars. (M)

By far the most interesting of the Mercer sessions and better sound too. Very good contributions by WS, and particular the solo on "... Sid" is successful. Note also "Alternate" which is in fact a chase between WS and Hamilton on tenorsax.

DUKE ELLINGTON NYC. June 23, 1951

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
WMCA broadcast from Birdland:

5120e Swamp Drum

NYC. June 1951

WMCA broadcast from Birdland:

5121f Sophisticated Lady Solo 30 bars. (S)

AL HIBBLER NYC. July 19, 1951

Juan Tizol (vtb), Willie Smith (as), Jimmy Hamilton (cl, ts), Billy Strayhorn (p),
Wendell Marshall (b), Louie Bellson (dm), Al Hibbler (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Mercer, no WS on "Trees" but can be heard on:

Summertime In intro. (S)

Ol' Man River Obbligato part. (F)

Of no altosax interest.

DUKE ELLINGTON NYC. Aug. 7, 1951

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Recording session for Columbia:

5123c Please Be Kind Solo/straight 32 and 16 bars to coda. (S)

5123d Please Be Kind As above. (S)

NYC. Dec. 11, 1951

Same. Recording session for Columbia:

5128a Blues At Sundown Solo with orch 14 bars. Coda. (S)

5128b Blues At Sundown As above. (S)

5128i Vagabonds Solo 18 bars. (M)

5129i Vagabonds As above. (M)

There are only a few studio recording sessions with the Duke from this period, and these are the most important ones. "Please ..." and "... Sundown" are mostly colours on the maestro's rainbow, but the "Vagabonds" have real improvised choruses.

Three titles were recorded at the Penguin Club:

16:00	Perdido	Solo 4 choruses of 32 bars. (M)
12:20	The Man I Love	Solo 2 choruses of 64 bars. (FM)
8:45	Mop Mop	Solo 5 choruses of 32 bars. 3 choruses 4/4 with (tp-RG). (F)

Another jam session at “Penguinklubben” connected to a JATP visit. One has to admit a certain disappointment, it never reaches the great memorable heights. Nevertheless there is some hot music to be heard. WS is one of those most active, grabbing solo space. There is certainly much jatp in his playing, particularly “Mop ...”, and that is not meant as a compliment. Nor is “Perdido” very exciting, and the opening is chaotic. However, “The Man ...” is absolutely noteworthy. Postscript of May 31, 2021: Forgot to include this jam session in the first version of the solo-graphy, can you imagine, in my home town!!

GENE KRUPA SEXTET **NYC. April 14, 1953**

Charlie Shavers (tp), Willie Smith (as), Teddy Wilson (p), Steve Jordan (g), Israel Crosby (b), Gene Krupa (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Clef:

1204-3	Capitol Idea	Solo 16 bars. (M)
1205-4	Coronation Hop	Solo 36 bars. (F)
1206-5	Paradise	Soli 8 and 8 bars. (S)
1207-11	Overtime	Solo 16 bars. (M)

This was a very pleasant session!! Also, WS plays on top of his capabilities, all four items are quite noteworthy.

LOUIS BELLSON ORCHESTRA **LA. July 1953**

Harry Edison, Maynard Ferguson, Conrad Gozzo, Ray Linn (tp), Hoyt Bohannon, Herbie Harper, Tommy Pederson (tb), Benny Carter, Willie Smith (as), Wardell Gray, Bumps Myers (ts), Bob Lawson (bar), Jimmy Rowles (p), Barney Kessel (g), John Simmons (b), Louie Bellson (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Clef, but no WS.

NORMAN GRANZ JAM SESSION **Hollywood, Aug. 18, 1953**

Harry Edison (tp), Buddy DeFranco (cl), Benny Carter, Willie Smith (as), Wardell Gray, Stan Getz (ts), Count Basie (p-1259,60, org-1261), Arnold Ross (p-1262), Freddie Green (g), John Simmons (b), Buddy Rich (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Clef:

1259-6	Apple Jam	Solo with ens 11 choruses of 12 bars. (F)
1260-2	Lady Be Good	Solo 5 choruses of 32 bars. (F)
1261-2	Blues For The Count	Solo 7 choruses of 12 bars. (M)
1262-4	Ballad Medley – Indian Summer	Solo 32 bars. (S)

This is a very civilized session with much good music and carried firmly and strongly on the shoulders of the one and only Freddie Green. Long soli by all participants. WS's contributions are certainly some he was very satisfied with, although I question again his taste in the frantic tempo of “... Jam” and “... Good”. Highly pleasant is however the tempo on “... The Count”, and it is interesting to hear WS follow right after Carter; the former manages very well in comparison with the great master. Note also “... Summer” with WS as the first soloist, very nice.

JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC **NYC. Sept. 19, 1953**

Collective personnel: Roy Eldridge, Charlie Shavers (tp), Bill Harris (tb), Benny Carter, Willie Smith (as), Lester Young, Ben Webster, Flip Phillips (ts), Oscar Peterson (p), Herb Ellis (g), Ray Brown (b), J. C. Heard, Gene Krupa (dm).

Four titles were recorded at concert in Carnegie Hall, no WS on “Flying Home” and “One O’Clock Jump” but:

Cool Blues	Solo with ens 13 choruses of 12 bars. (M)
Ballad Medley – Young Man With A Horn	Solo 32 bars. (S)

unknown place, late Sept. 1953

Same except Lester Young and J. C. Heard omitted.

One title:

Concert Blues Solo 6 choruses of 12 bars. (M)

Lots of blues here, of which "Concert ..." works out best for WS.

JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC Tokyo, Nov. 4, 5 & 8, 1953

Personnel as Sept. 19 except Lester Young and Gene Krupa omitted, Ella Fitzgerald (vo).

Many titles were recorded at concerts in Nichigeki Theatre, two have been available on youtube:

Jam Session (Tokyo) Blues Solo 13 choruses of 12 bars. (F)

Ballad Medley: Stardust Solo 32 bars. (S)

Two extremes; a very nice version of "Stardust", and a "... Blues" representing the worst of WS and of JATP.

BUDDY RICH ALL STARS L.A. Aug. 27, 1954

Harry Edison (tp), Milt Bernhardt (tb), Willie Smith (as), Tom Brown (ts), Bob Poland (bar), Gerald Wiggins (p), Joe Comfort (b), Buddy Rich (dm).

Three titles were recorded for Norgran:

1904-3 Sweets' Opus No. 1 Solo 16 bars. (FM)

1904-4 Sweets' Opus No. 1 As above. (FM)

1906-3 Strike It Rich Break to solo 8 bars. (F)

1906-6 Strike It Rich As above. (F)

1907-3 Sportin' Life Solo 8 bars. (M)

This is so definitely Rich's date, and WS's contributions are rather brief but competent as always.

LOUIE BELLSON & HIS ORCHESTRA L.A. Aug. 30 & Sept. 1, 1954

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).

Ten titles were recorded for Norgran, issued as "Journey Into Love", two have WS:

1913-3 Love Me Forever Straight 8 bars. (S)

1917-5 Unforgettable Solo 8 bars. (S)

Highly commercial and very disappointing sessions. Only "Unforgettable" may seem to have some slight value.

BILLIE HOLIDAY L.A. Sept. 3, 1954

Harry Edison (tp), Willie Smith (as), Bob Tucker (p), Barney Kessel (g), Red Callender (b), Chico Hamilton (dm), Billie Holiday (vo).

Eight titles were recorded for Clef/Verve, six issued:

1930-2 Love Me Or Leave Me Obbligato parts. (SM)

1931-4 P. S. I Love You Obbligato parts. (S)

1932-6 Too Marvelous For Words Obbligato parts. (M)

1933-7 Softly Intro. (S)

1937-4 Willow Weep For Me Intro. Obbligato parts. (S)

1938-3 Stormy Blues Intro 4 bars to solo 12 bars. (S)

This is Billie Holiday's session, and the accompaniment does not matter much, nor is it very prominent. For WS, "Stormy ..." has a real solo though.

BILLY ECKSTINE L.A. Sept. 20 + ??, 1954

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).

Seven titles were recorded for MGM, two not available, but WS soli highly unlikely.

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA Hollywood, Sept. 22, 1954

Personnel including Willie Smith (as).

Five titles were recorded for Columbia, one has WS:

33225-1 Oop Shoop Solo 16 bars. (M)

Swinging item this one!

HARRY JAMES SEXTET Hollywood, Sept. 30, 1954

Harry James (tp), Willie Smith (as), (ts), (p), (b), (dm).

TV-program "Shower of Stars":

Cottontail Solo 16 bars. (F)

CHARLIE BARNET & HIS ORCHESTRA Hollywood, Nov./Dec. 1954
Personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Several recording sessions for Victor (Nov. 29, Dec. 6, Dec. 20), but no WS.

CHARLIE BARNET & HIS ORCHESTRA Hollywood, Dec. 1, 1954
Personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Four titles were recorded for Clef, one has WS:

2095 Bluehound Bus Greys Solo 16 bars. (S)

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA Hollywood, Dec. 13, 1954
Personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Four titles were recorded for Columbia, two issued:

33283-1 The Great Lie Soli with orch 8 and 8 bars. (FM)

33284-1 Three For The Show Solo with orch 18 bars. (S)

Hollywood, Dec. 30, 1954

Same/similar. Six titles, three have WS:

33290-1 Route 66 Solo with orch 36 bars. (M)

33291-1 Bali Hai
Straight with orch 36 bars.
Solo/straight 16 bars to coda. (S)

33292-1 Moonlight Fiesta Solo with orch 16 bars. (F)

Hollywood, Feb. 15, 1955

Same/similar. Six titles, one has WS:

33326 Perdido Solo with orch 32 bars. (M)

A variety of WS contributions but none very remarkable. This represents the end of a long connection with Columbia, and a change is long time due.

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA Hollywood, July 18, 20 & 21, 1955
Personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Fifteen titles recorded for Capitol, issued as "Harry James In Hi-Fi", only one has WS:

14239-8 It's Been A Long, Long Time Solo 8 bars. (S)

Harry James has now joined Capitol, but no change yet in the music concepts; everything still revolves around the leader's trumpet and personality, with vocalists added. Note however that WS takes a very nice solo on "... Time".

BILLY ECKSTINE LA. Nov. 3, 1955
Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Three titles were recorded for MGM, two issued, one may have WS:

55S82 Lonely Avenue Possibly straight intro. (S)

DIZZY GILLESPIE & HIS ORCHESTRA LA. Nov. 8, 1955
Personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Four titles were recorded for Clef, but no WS.

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA LA. Nov. 28-30 & Dec. 1, 1955
Personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Twelve titles were recorded for Capitol, ten issued, four have WS:

14730 Keblah Solo with orch 24 bars. (FM)

14732 Autumn Serenade Solo 4 bars. (S)

14749 April In Paris Solo with orch 16 bars. (SM)

14777 Ram's Horn Solo with orch 5 choruses of 12 bars. (M)

Particularly the blues on "... Horn", and the good old "Keblah" are nicely played.

THE ALL STARS LA. Dec. 2, 1955
Harry Edison, Shorty Sherock (tp), Murray McEachern (tb, as), Gus Bivona (cl), Benny Carter (tp, as), Willie Smith (as), Plas Johnson, Babe Russin (ts), Jimmy Rowles (p), Al Hendrickson (g), Mike Rubin (b), Irv Cottler (dm).

Six titles were recorded for Capitol, issued as "Session At Midnight", no WS on 14785 "Sweet Georgia Brown" but:

14781	Moten Swing	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
14782	Stompin' At The Savoy	Solo 32 bars. (M)
14783	Session At Midnight	Solo 36 bars. (FM)
14786	Makin' The Scene	Solo 24 bars. (SM)
14787	Blue Lou	64 bars 4/4 with (as-MME, as-BC). (M)

A pleasant jam session, and to have WS together with Benny Carter is also an attraction. The former plays much more moderate than with JATP recordings some years earlier, all soli are quite good, and in fact seems not to have lost any of his capabilities from the vintage days. The triple altosax chase on "... Lou" may be the session highlight.

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **L.A. Dec. 2&3, 1955**

Personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Seven titles were recorded for Capitol, three have WS:

14798	Blue Again	Solo 32 bars. (SM)
14799	Melancholy Rhapsody	Solo with orch 12 bars. (S)
14800	These Foolish Things	Solo with orch 6 bars. (S)

Some nice brief contributions here.

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **Hollywood, Jan. 20, 1956**

Personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Three titles were recorded for Capitol, but no WS.

NAT KING COLE **L.A. Sept. 14, 1956**

Willie Smith (as), Nat King Cole (p, vo), John Collins (g), Charlie Harris (b), Lee Young (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Capitol, issued as "After Midnight":

15895-10	Don't Let It Go To Your Head	Obbligato parts. Solo 16 bars. (SM)
15896-11	You're Looking At Me	Obbligato parts. Solo 8 bars. (S)
15896	You're Looking At Me	As above. (S)
15897-7	Just You, Just Me	Solo 16+8 bars, (g) on bridge. Solo 4 bars. (FM)
15898-8	I Was A Little Too Lonely	Obbligato parts. Solo 16+8 bars, (g) on bridge. (M)

Famous record, including several sessions, and of course to hear Nat King Cole also playing the piano is of course a great pleasure. WS is given more space than expected, doing a good job, and particularly the background playing on the slow titles "... Head" and "... At Me" is noteworthy.

CHARLIE BARNET & HIS ORCHESTRA **Hollywood, Sept. 24, 1956**

Personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Four titles were recorded for Verve, but no WS.

Hollywood, Nov. 8, 1956

Similar. Four titles, one has WS:

20462-2	Lumby	Solo 24 bars. (M)
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ROSE MURPHY **L.A. Jan. 15 & 22, 1957**

Willie Smith (as), Rose Murphy (p, vo), Barney Kessel (g), Bruce Lawrence (b), Alvin Stoller (dm).

Thirteen titles were recorded for Verve, issued as "Not Cha-Cha But Chi-Chi", eleven have WS:

20577-2	Honeysuckle Rose	Solo 16 bars. (M)
20578-1	You Were Meant For Me	Solo 16 bars. (M)
20579-1	Mr. Wonderful	Solo 24 bars. (M)
20580-5	A Shanty In Old Shanty Town	Solo 16 bars. (M)
20592-3	Watcha Gonna Lose	In ens. (M)

20593-8	Sympathetic Little Star	Solo 16 bars. (SM)
20594-6	Sweet Georgia Brown	Solo 32 bars. 32 bars 4/4 with (g). (FM)
20595-2	Please Don't Talk AMWIAG	Solo 16 bars. (M)
20597-3	I Ain't Got Nobody	Solo 16 bars. (S)
20598-4	Coquette	Solo 16 bars. (M)
20599-1	Pennies From Heaven	In ens. (M)

Surprise, surprise, who had guessed that this session contains so much altosax!! Rose is a fine pianist and vocalist, but she distributes gladly blowing space to WS and Kessel. Nothing of great historical importance happens really, but this is a very pleasant change from the unending bigband sessions.

LOUIE BELLSON **LA. Jan. 23/24, 1957**

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).

Eight titles were recorded for Verve, issued as "Drumorama!", one has WS:

20677-3	Far Eastern Weekend	Soli with orch 32 and 6 bars. (SM)
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Quite nice this sole contribution.

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **Hollywood, May 2-4, 1957**

Personnel including Willie Smith (as).

Ten titles were recorded for Capitol, issued as "Wild About Harry!", four have WS:

17027-1	Countin'	Solo with orch 8 bars. (F)
17030-5	Cotton Pickin'	Soli with orch 6, 4, 2, 2 and 2 bars. (SM)
17032-3	Blues For Lovers Only	Solo 12 bars. (S)
17034-5	Barn 12	Solo with orch 24 bars. (M)

Harry James has got a real jazz orchestra now, although WS continues more or less as before, for good and not so good. Here "... Lovers Only" represents a really nice altosax solo!

BILLY DANIELS VOCAL ACC. BY BENNY CARTER'S ORCHESTRA **LA. June 12, 1957**

Bigband personnel including Harry Edison (tp), Willie Smith (as), Ben Webster (ts), Benny Carter (arr, cond).

Six titles were recorded for Verve, issued as "You Go To My Head", but no WS.

BILLY MAY & HIS ORCHESTRA **Hollywood, June 15, 1957**

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).

Seven titles were recorded for Capitol, six available, issued as "Jimmie Lunceford In Hi-Fi", three have WS (missing "I Love You"):

16959	Blues In The Night	Solo/straight with orch 24 bars. (S)
16961	Uptown Blues	Solo with orch 24 bars. (S)
16964	Margie	Solo/straight 30 bars. (M)

Hollywood, June 16, 1957

Same. Six titles, five available, three have WS (missing "Never Hold Me"):

17167	Well All Right Then	Solo/straight 18 bars. (M)
17168	'Tain't What You Do	Solo with orch 8 bars. (M)
17169	For Dancers Only	Solo with orch 8 bars. (M)

Hollywood, June 18, 1957

Same. Five titles, two have WS:

17194	Ain't She Sweet	Straight 36 bars. (M)
17198	Rhythm Is Our Business	Solo 16 bars. (FM)

These are magnificent recreations of the most famous Jimmie Lunceford hits, perfect for nostalgia (and dancing if you still are able to ...), an excellent idea!! However, WS is recreating too, and just therefore, these items have only academic interest with regard to him, nothing new.

LOUIE BELLSON **LA. July 24/25, 1957**

Harry Edison (tp), Juan Tizol (vtb), Willie Smith (as), Buddy Collette (fl, ts), Bob Poland (cl, bar), Jimmy Rowles (p), Red Mitchell (b), Louie Bellson (dm).
Twelve titles were recorded for Verve, issued as "Music, Romance And Especially Love", six have WS:

21142-1	Feather's Nest	Solo 34 bars. (FM)
21145-3	Hamer's Hang-up	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
21146-3	Music, Romance And EL	Straight 16 bars. (M)
21147-5	Delightfully Yours	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
21149-2	Undecided	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
21153-3	Cire's Thought	Solo 20 bars. (FM)

Active and energetic playing, but sometimes the penetrating sound gets slightly on the nerves, like on "... Nest" and "... Hang-Up". Most enjoyable is "... Yours".

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **Hollywood, Nov. 4, 1957**

Personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Two titles were recorded for Capitol, but no WS.

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **1957**

Personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Recreation of the version from 1945:

Who's Sorry Now?	Break. Vocal. Solo 26 bars. (M)
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RED NORVO & HIS ORCHESTRA **LA. Jan. 28, 1958**

Don Fagerquist, Ed Leddy, Ray Linn, Don Paladino (tp), Ray Sims (tb), Willie Smith (as), Harold Land (ts), Chuck Gentry (bar), Red Norvo (vib), Jimmy Rowles (p), Jimmy Wyble (g), Lawrence "Red" Wooten (b), Mel Lewis (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Victor, three issued as "Red Plays The Blues":

0134	Britt's Blues	Solo 24 bars. (M)
0136	I Sing The Blues	Solo with ens 12 bars. (S)
0137	Shed No Tears	Solo 24 bars. (M)

WS seems to thrive in this very nice swing session; his soloing is of high quality.

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **Hollywood, April 1&2, 1958**

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Nine titles were recorded for Capitol, issued as "The New James", four have WS:

18705-7	Fair And Warm	Solo with orch 12 bars. (M)
18706-3	Bangtail	Solo with orch 34 bars. (M)
18712-7	Here's One	Solo with orch 12 bars. (M)
18728-3	Walkin' On Air	Solo with orch 8 bars. (SM)

There has obviously been a great change, Harry James has got himself a solid swinging jazz orchestra, where the emphasis on the leader is much reduced. However, I don't think WS get so much out of it yet; mostly routine tasks here.

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **Hollywood, June 9, 1958**

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Two titles were recorded for Capitol, but no WS.

Hollywood, July 1, 1958

Same. Six titles, two have WS:

19578-6	Willow Weep For Me	Straight 8 bars. (S)
19613-2	The New Two O'Clock Jump	Solo 36 bars. (M)

I must admit I prefer his sweet and straight playing on "Willow ..." to the way he tries to jump "... Two ...".

In Jan. 1959, Harry James changes recording company again, from Capitol to MGM. Below are some incomplete findings:

HARRY JAMES & HIS ORCHESTRA **LA. Feb. 10, 1959**

Personnel including Willie Smith (as).
Four titles were recorded for MGM, three issued, no WS found.

WS does not seem to have lost anything of his music qualities.

WILLIE SMITH**LA. Aug. 13, 1965**

Willie Smith (as), Tommy Gumina (accordeon), Johnny Guarneri (p), Irving Ashby (g), Paul Rubland (b), Stan Levey (dm).

Four titles were recorded for GNPCrescendo, issued as "Alto Saxophonist Supreme!":

I Remember You	Solo 36 bars. (SM)
Never On Friday	Solo 5 choruses of 12 bars. (M)
Who Can I Turn To?	Long intro to straight acc. (p) to long coda. (S)
Willie's Blues	Solo 36 bars. (M)

Quite modest ambitions here, although this session, and the one below, are WS's only ones under his own name in the uprising LP era. A slow "Who ..." is mainly a piano vehicle with straight altosax upon, "... You" is ok, and so are the two blues items, but the general impression is rather bleak.

WILLIE SMITH**LA. Aug. 16, 1965**

Willie Smith (as), Bill Perkins (ts), Jimmy Rowles (p), Max Bennett (b), Stan Levey (dm).

Three titles were recorded for GNPCrescendo, issued as "Alto Saxophonist Supreme!":

Uptown Blues	Solo 24 bars. (S)
I'm Old Fashioned	Solo/straight 36 bars. (M)
Idaho	Solo 64 bars. (FM)

This session is even less exciting than the previous one, and again the pianist has the most important role. WS manages to play "Idaho" in fast medium tempo, but the result is quite ordinary. Best is the opening of "Uptown ..." where he is on familiar ground. Time has run out for Willie Smith.

NANCY WILSON**LA. July 13-15, 1966**

Bigband personnel including Willie Smith (as), Nancy Wilson (vo), Billy May (arr, cond).

Twelve titles were recorded for Capitol, but no WS.

CHARLIE BARNET & HIS ORCHESTRA**Hollywood, Oct./Nov. 1966**

Clark Terry (tp, vo), Snooky Young, Clyde Reasinger, George Triffon, Randy Brecker (tp), Jimmy Cleveland, Herb Wise, Billy Tole (tb), Jackie Jeffers (btb), Charlie Barnet (sax, ldr), Willie Smith, Dick Meldonian (as), Richie Kamuca, Stan Edson (ts), Danny Bank (bar), Nat Pierce (p, arr), Eddie Jones (b), Steve Little (dm), Billy Byers, Maxwell Davis, Bill Holman (arr).

Ten titles were recorded for Vault/Creative World, three have WS:

Oct. 29	Rabble Rouser	Solo with orch 16 bars. (F)
Nov. 2	Upper Manhattan Medical Group	Solo with orch 32 bars. (FM)
Nov. 12	Bali Bali Buck Dance	Soli with orch 24, 16 and 16 bars to coda. (F)

In this uptempo, WS tone gets penetrating and not at all pleasant to digest.

NYC. Dec. 24/25, 1966 & Jan. 1, 1967

Same. Broadcasts from Basin Street East, three have WS:

Jeep's Blues	Solo with orch 5 choruses of 12 bars to very long and funny coda with (tp). (S)
Unidentified Title	Solo 14 bars. (F)
Things Ain't What They Used To Be	Solo 12 bars. (S)

Postscript of June 2021: I was a bit overconfident when I wrote that WS soli were unlikely in a band led by such a strong sax player as Charlie Barnet. However I was reminded quite strongly that the latter played mostly soprano sax in those days, and that there were in fact several altosax soli by WS on the broadcasts! Particularly "Jeep's Blues" is a nice way to say goodbye after a long artist life!

No further recording sessions.

APPENDIX

HARRY JAMES

L.A. unidentified date

Harry James, Nick Bueno (tp), Juan Tizol (vtb), Herb Lorden (cl, as), Willie Smith (as), Herbie Steward (ts), Larry Minnamon (p), Floyd Blanton (b), Buddy Rich (dm).

Broadcasts from Hollywood Palladium.

Note: Date is not given, and it seems that there are two alternatives: Dec. 1953 – Jan. 1954 and May 1956 – June 1956. The forty items are therefore, for the time being, placed here, until further information appears.

Forty titles, the following eleven (in alphabetical order) have WS:

Back Beat Boogie	Solo 24 bars. (FM)
Blues For Lovers Only	Solo 24 bars. (S)
Caxton Hall Swing	Solo 8 bars. (F)
Honeysuckle Rose	Solo 20 bars. (M)
Moonglow	Solo 6 bars. (M)
Moonlight Fiesta	Solo 8 bars. (M)
Perdido	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
Strictly Instrumental	Soli 8 and 8 bars. (M)
The Great Lie	Soli 24, 16 and 32 bars. (F)
What Am I Here For?	Solo with orch 14 bars. (S)
Who's Sorry Now?	Break. Solo 24 bars to coda. (M)

Perhaps nothing very new here, but WS is playing very nicely on the slow "Blues ..." and "... Here For?".

... ooo ...