

The
TENORSAX
and
ALTOSAX / BARITONESAX
of
JOHN VIVIAN McVEA
“JACK”

Solographer: Jan Evensmo
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Born: Los Angeles, California, Nov. 5, 1914
Died: Dec. 27, 2000

Introduction:

Jack McVea was a fine tenorsax swinger, and his appearance with Illinois Jacquet on JATP brought him to our attention. Later he made many nice recording sessions with his own groups. Unfortunately he moved towards rhythm and blues, although he might have been a prominent participator in the mainstream movement.

History:

His father, Isaac "Satchel" McVea (died: 1960), was a banjoist who led his own band for many years. Jack began on banjo and by the age of 11 was playing regularly in his father's band - began doubling on sax in 1927. After leaving Jefferson High School in 1932, he played professionally with Walter "Dootsie" Williams' Harlem Dukes. In 1933 and 1934 was in band led by trumpeter Charlie Echols, worked briefly under Lorenzo Flennoy's leadership, then with Charlie Echols again (1935). With Claude Kennedy, Edyth Turnham and Cee Pee Johnson before joining Eddie Barefield's Big Band (1936). During the late 1930s played for many West Coast leaders and occasionally led own band. With Lionel Hampton (on baritone sax) from 1940 until January 1943. Returned to California and joined Snub Mosley's Band (April 1943). From 1944 led own band, but also appeared on several of Norman Granz' Jazz At The Philharmonic concerts and broadcasts with Count Basie. In 1946 his own band scored with a commercial hit single 'Open The Door Richard', he enjoyed great popularity from 1946 to 1948. He continued to lead through the 1950s, including residencies in Honolulu in 1951 and 1954. Worked briefly on MGM studio staff and played on many free-lance recording dates. Led in Las Vegas in 1955, then briefly with Benny Carter until re-forming own band, with organist Perry Lee Blackwells tri (1959). During the 1960s continued to lead own small groups in California and Oregon, combining this with various recording commitments. Led own trio (on clarinet) at 'Disneyland' (ref. John Chilton).

JACK McVEA SOLOGRAPHY

JMV may appear in the 1938 black cast film “The Duke Is Tops”, as a member of a small combo that backs “Rubberneck” Holmes and, to the best of my memory, Lena Home for a number of two. He appears on the screen in “Everyday’s A Holiday” (1938), although almost certainly not on the soundtrack (information from Mark Cantor, July 2014).

JMV also appears in the 1940 black cast film “Mystery Of Swing” (information from Mark Cantor), as member of Cee Pee Johnson’s orchestra, but he does not solo.

LIONEL HAMPTON & HIS ORCHESTRA **Chi. Feb./April 1941**
Bigband personnel similar to below, including Jack McVea (bar), Illinois Jacquet (ts) (not Dexter Gordon (ts)).

WBBM broadcasts from the Grand Terrace, recorded by Jerry Newman. The following baritone sax soli by JMV have been found:

Feb. 19, 1941

Flying Home Solo 16+4 bars. (FM)

Feb. 21, 1941

Flying Home Solo 16+4 bars. (M)

Feb. 23, 1941

Flying Home Solo 16+4 bars. (FM)

possibly Feb. 1941

Flying Home Solo 16+4 bars. (FM)

April 8, 1941

Flying Home Solo 16+4 bars. (M)

JMV solos 16 bars on “... Home” followed by 4 bars straight, and he is highly competent and innovative on his instrument.

LIONEL HAMPTON & HIS ORCHESTRA **Chi. Feb./April 1941**
Same. Roy Eldridge collection. One title (acetate says Grand Terrace):

184 Accidentally On Purpose Solo 8 bars. (M)

same?

Same? Roy Eldridge collection. One title (no info on acetate, and it is not known if this one is identical to one of the other “... Home”s above):

199 Flying Home Solo 8 bars. (FM)

LIONEL HAMPTON & HIS ORCHESTRA **Chi. Sept. 12, 1941**
Personnel similar to below.
Broadcast from the “Panther Room”, Hotel Sherman, recorded by Jerry Newman:

Unknown Title Solo 8 bars. (M)

Chi. Sept. 26, 1941

Same.

Train Time Solo 16 bars. (FM)

More fine baritone sax soloing, and on “Train ...” we also have Dexter Gordon’s first preserved solo.

LIONEL HAMPTON & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Dec. 24, 1941**
Karl George, Ernie Royal, Joe Newman (tp), Fred Beckett, Sonny Craven, Harry Sloan (tb), Marshal Royal (cl, as) Ray Perry (as, vln), Dexter Gordon, Illinois Jacquet (ts), Jack McVea (bar), Lionel Hampton (vib, vo-70101), Milt Buckner (p), Irving Ashby (g), Vernon Alley (b), George Jenkins (dm), Rubel Blakey (vo)
Four titles were recorded for Decca, one has JMV:

70101-A Southern Echoes Solo 16 bars. (M)

JMV's first visit to a recording studio and takes a solo immediately following Hampton's vocal. The result is rather ordinary.

LIONEL HAMPTON SEPTET

NYC. March 2, 1942

Marshall Royal (cl, as), Jack McVea (bar), Ray Perry (vln), Milton Buckner (p), Irving Ashby (g), Vernon Alley (b), George Jenkins (dm), Lionel Hampton (vib, vo).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, no JMV on 70419 "Exactly Like You" but:

70416-A	Royal Family	Solo 8 bars. (M)
70417-A	I Can't Believe That YILWM	With ens 16+8 bars, (g) on bridge. Solo 8 bars to 8 bars with ens. (M)
70418-A	Blues In The News	Solo 12 bars. (M)

JMV seems more relaxed in a smallband context, as evident on his soloing on all items here, highly swinging and most enjoyable! Too bad we don't have more of this, and shortly after, the tenor saxophone is JMV's main instrument.

LIONEL HAMPTON & HIS ORCHESTRA

NYC. May 26, 1942

Personnel similar to Dec. 24, 1941.

Four titles were recorded for Decca, but no baritone sax soli.

JACK McVEA BAND

Hollywood, March 8 or April 17, 1944

Possibly Cappy Oliver (tp), Jack McVea (ts), possibly Ram Ramirez (p), possibly Frank Clarke (b), Rabon Tarrant (dm). Guests: Barney Kessel (g-"Tea For Two"), Helen Humes (vo-"St. Louis Blues"), Roy Eldridge (tp-"I Surrender Dear").

AFRS Jubilee No. 75/144.

Swing Crazy	Soli 4, 20 and 8 bars. (F)
Tea For Two	Soli 36 and 4 bars. (FM)
Miss Thing	Solo 32 bars to duet with (tp) 32 bars. Solo 8 bars. (F)
St. Louis Blues	Some ensemble obbligato only. (M)
I Surrender Dear	Acc. (tp) 16 bars to solo 16 bars (S) to 24 bars acc. (tp) (F) to acc. (tp) 8 bars. (S)

The most unexpected things happen on the West Coast! The "Swing Crazy" is just what it says, and the trumpeter makes "Little Jazz" seem kind of timid and withdrawn (almost!). The pianist is stompin'!! And we meet a new, interesting tenorsax personality in JMV. He is a technically well equipped swinger with obvious roots in the thirties, and it is just a shame he did not record then. The performances are in general somewhat unstructured, but still JMV proves he is one of the most interesting "new" tenorsax players. Listen to his beautiful slow 16 bars on "I Surrender Dear"!

JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC

LA. July 2, 1944

Shorty Sherock (tp-1,2), J.J. Johnson (tb-3-7), Illinois Jacquet, Jack McVea (ts), Nat King Cole (p), Les Paul (g), Johnny Miller (b), Red Callender (b-7), Lee Young (dm). AFRS ONS No. 315 and 319, recorded at the Philharmonic Auditorium.

1	Rosetta	Solo 64 bars. (FM)
2	I've Found A New Baby	Solo 64 bars. (F)
3	Blues	Solo 60 bars. (FM)
4	Lester Leaps In	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (F)
5	Body And Soul	Solo 32 bars. (S)
6	Tea For Two	Straight with (tb) 32 bars to solo 96 bars. (FM)
7	Bugle Call Rag	Solo 24 bars. (F)

Additionally JMV is heard prominently in the closing ensembles on all items, particularly "Tea For Two".

This JATP concert is well known and probably the main reason for JMV being quite well known among jazz buffs. On this happy occasion, it is ample blowing space for everybody, and JMV enters the jazz scene with conviction. Note that he is not at all a youngster, going on 30, and he plays maturely and with experience. He is a natural swinger, influenced by Prez but with a more Hawk-oriented tone in his horn. He does not dig very deep, but his soli are quite noteworthy and he challenges the younger

Illinois Jacquet without fear. All items have fine JMV to be played and enjoyed, but maybe the "Blues" is something special.

JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC

LA. July 2, 1944

This famous first performance contains a previously unissued item, except on AFRS ONS No. 315/319, with Illinois Jacquet, Jack McVea (ts), Carolyn Richards (vo).

The Man I Love

Weak obbligato parts. (S)

Tenorsax backing is clearly heard, but details are hazy, probably both IJ and JMV are involved but of academic interest only.

JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC

LA. July 30, 1944

Collective personnel: Russell Jacquet, Cappy Oliver (tp), Corky Corcoran, Illinois Jacquet, Jack McVea (ts), Nat King Cole (p), Barney Kessel (g), Johnny Miller (b), Sid Catlett or Rabon Tarrant (dm).

Postscript of Oct. 2023: Most of this concert has now become available, though not yet issued. Two titles, "Bugle Call Rag" has tenorsax soli by Jacquet and Corcoran, while the following has Jacquet and Jack McVea:

Rosetta

Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (M)

Long time since we had a new JMV discovery, but here it is; a nice and well conceived tenorsax solo, having none of the usual jatp tenorsax excesses!

JMV played occasionally with Count Basie on the West Coast in the autumn of 1944, but no recordings are known, with one possible exception, ref. Illinois Jacquet.

From 1944 through the fifties led own band. Numerous recording sessions.

JACK McVEA

LA. Spring 1945

Cappy Oliver (tp), Buster Bailey (cl), Jack McVea (as, ts), Ram Ramirez (p), Frank Clarke (b), Robert "Rabon" Tarrant (dm), Betty Roche (vo).

Two titles were recorded for Rhythm:

RM 502 Rainy Day Blues

Solo 12 bars. (S)

RM 509 New Worried Life Blues

Altosax intro 4 bars to solo 12 bars.
Obbligato 12 bars. In ens. (SM)

same/similar

Cappy Oliver (tp), Jack McVea (ts), Bob Mosely (p), Frank Clarke (b), Rabon Tarrant (dm), vocal trio.

One title, "I'll Be True", on Rhythm, but no tenorsax.

A very beautiful "Rainy Day ...", positioning JMV as one of the major tenorsax artists. And his altosax playing is very promising here!

JACK McVEA

LA. Aug. 7, 1945

Cappy Oliver (tp), Jack McVea (as, ts), Bob Mosely (p), Frank Clarke (b), Rabon Tarrant (dm, vo).

Four titles were recorded for Melodisc:

KM 1299 Silver Symphony

Soli 24 and 12 bars. (S)
Duet with (tp) 12 bars. (M)

KM 1300 New Deal

Solo 32 bars. With ens. (F)

KM 1301 Scrub, Sweep And Mop

Solo 32 bars. (FM)

KM 1302 Fighting Man Blues

Altosax soli 24 and 12 bars. (SM)

From the very start it is evident that JMV tries to combine his jazz qualities with popular music of broad appeal. This is not an easy task, and the results are not completely successful. A good example is "Scrub ...", a quite uninteresting piece but suddenly a very good tenorsax solo. This trend will only be worse in the years to come. "Silver ..." is a nice, emotional piece with good playing but mostly to create the right mood. "New Deal" is a little too fast.

WYNONIE HARRIS ACCOMPANIED BY

JACK McVEA AND HIS ALL STARS

LA. Aug. 1945

Personnel as next session, Jack McVea also (as-1108).

Six titles were recorded for Apollo:

S1106 Straighten Him Out

Obbligato parts. (SM)

S1107	Young Man's Blues	Obbligato parts. Solo 12 bars. (SM)
S1108	Baby Look At You	Altosax solo 12 bars and obbligato parts. (SM)
S1109	Gone With The Wind	Obbligato parts. Solo 12 bars. (SM)
S1110	Somebody Changed The Lock On My Door	Obbligato parts. (SM)
S1111	That's The Stuff You Gotta Watch	Obbligato parts. Solo 12 bars. (SM)

Wynonie Harris is one of my favorite vocalists, but in this early session he still has not refined his music to the heights we learn to know later. Bad recording quality combined with a monotonous slow medium tempo make the session somewhat boring. JMV takes some good blues choruses and obbligato parts, but the session is soon forgotten.

RABON TARRANT/

JACK McVEA's ALL STARS

LA. Sept. 10, 1945

Ted Buckner (tp), Jack McVea (ts), Bob Mosely (p), Gene Phillips or possibly Irving Ashby (g), Frank Clarke (b), Rabon Tarrant (dm, vo).

Ten titles recorded for Apollo (some missing matrix numbers), I guess S1112 belongs to the Wynonie Harris session.

S1112	Tarrant Blues	Solo 12 bars. (S)
S1117	We're Together Again	Solo 16 bars. Obbligato 8 bars. (S)
S1118	It Never Should Have Been This Way	Intro 8 bars. Obbligato 32 bars. Solo/Obbligato 8 bars to coda. (S)
S1119	O-Kay For Baby	Soli 8 and 32 bars. (FM)
S1119	O-Kay For Baby (alt.)	As above. (FM)
S1120	I Live True To You	Soli 8 and 8 bars. Obbligato parts. (S)
S1121	Blues All Night	Solo 24 bars. (S)
S1122	Naggin' Women Blues	Obbligato 12 and 8 bars. (S)
S1123	Then I've Got To Go	Obbligato 24 bars and coda. (S)
S1124	Listen Baby Blues	Solo 24 bars. (S)
S1125	Don't Blame Me	Solo 32 bars. Solo 12 bars to very long coda. (S)
S1125	Don't Blame Me (alt.)	Intro 8 bars to solo 32 bars. Solo 12 bars to very long coda. (S)

The Apollo session is possibly JMV's best one. He plays with great inspiration on all items, in slow tempo mainly. Whether the blues like "Tarrant ..." and "Listen Baby ..." and good old "... Blame Me", the music is moving and enough to establish JMV as one of the most important tenorsax performers of this period! Postscript: To quote myself: "The Apollo session is possibly JMV's best one". These new discoveries are received with gratitude, first and foremost an alternate of "... Blame Me", lovely!! Note that a long tenorsax intro makes it too long for a 78 rpm. issue, probably therefore it was replaced by a briefer piano intro. Also a fine new version of "... Baby". "... Night" has some nice slow blues, but maybe you should dig the sweet "... True ..." first!

JACK McVEA

LA. Oct. 1945

Personnel uncertain, possibly as Aug. 7, although numerous alternatives have been suggested, such as Jimmy Perdue, Sammy Yates, Joe Kelly (tp), Jimmy Shackelford, Tommy Kahn (p), Marshall Royal (cl, as).

Four titles were recorded for Black & White:

BW 114	Ooh Mop	Solo 32 bars. (M)
BW 115	Bartender Boogie	Solo 24 bars. (FM)
BW 116	Wine-O	Solo 16 bars. (M)
BW 117	Frisco Blues	Solo 24 bars. (S)

Also a very fine session, with better tempo variations than the Apollo one. The slow blues, like "Frisco ...", has a special attraction for me, but one should also note the minor "Wine-O", full of emotion. And as an introduction to JMV's trademarks, note the opening of "Ooh Mop", you can't miss him! Finally, two good blues choruses on "... Boogie".

SLIM GAILLARD

AND HIS MELLOREENERS

Hollywood, ca. Nov. 1945

Suggested personnel: Karl George (tp), Vic Dickenson (tb), Jack McVea (as), Fletcher Smith (p), Bam Brown (b, vo), Slim Gaillard (g, vo), Leo Watson (dm). Another suggestion is Lem Davis (as), Jack McVea (ts). However, no tenorsax can be heard.

AFRS Jubilee No. 155. One title:

McVooty (Voutoreene)	Altosax obbligato parts and solo 32 bars. (M)
Leo's Opera (Operatic Aria)	Altosax obbligato parts. (SM)

It seems that JMV plays this quite good Tab Smith-inspired solo.

**AL HIBBLER ACCOMPANIED BY
HARRY CARNEY'S ALL STARS**

L.A. 1945

Taft Jordan, Harold Baker (tp), Russel Procope (as), Jack McVea (ts), Harry Carey (bar), Lady Will Carr (p), Ralph Hamilton (g), Red Callender (b), Doc West (dm). Six titles were recorded for Aladdin, two have JMV:

s'Posin'	Solo with ens 16 bars. (M)
Fat and Forty	Solo 16 bars. (M)

These are very attractive vocal/swing items to be recommended for listening! JMV is however not much featured; on "Fat ..." he opens like "Slim's Jam" below in great inspiration but seems to lose concentration, and "s'Posin'" is rather ordinary.

DUKE HENDERSON / RABON TARRANT

ACC. BY JACK McVEA'S ALL STARS

L.A. Dec. 5, 1945

Probably Jesse Perdue (tp), Marshall Royal (cl, as), Jack McVea (ts, bar), Bob Mosely (p), Gene Phillips (g), Frank Clarke (b), Rabon Tarrant (dm, vo - 1167,68), Duke Henderson (vo - 1163,64,65,66).

Seven titles were recorded for Apollo:

S1163	Oo Wee Baby, Oo Wee	Obbligato 12 bars. Coda. (S)
S1164	Get Your Kicks	No solo.
S1165	Lottery Blues	Obbligato 12 bars. Coda. (S)
S1166	Wiggle Wiggle Boogie	Baritonesax solo 20 bars. (M)
S1166	Wiggle Wiggle Boogie (alt.)	As above. (M)
S1167	Blues In The Morning	No solo.
S1168	Opus Boogie	Solo 12 bars. (M)
S1168?	Love Will Get You Down	Obbligato 12 bars. (S)

This is the least interesting of the Duke Henderson sessions, and "reedly" speaking there are only two soli of interest, the fine baritonesax on "Wiggle ...", and a swinging blues tenorsax on "Opus ...", otherwise JMV stays well in the background. Note however the Dec. 4 session, I suspect JMV to be present there, see Wild Bill Moore!

SLIM GAILLARD

Hollywood, prob. Dec. 29, 1945

Dizzy Gillespie (tp), Charlie Parker (as), Jack McVea (ts), Dodo Marmarosa (p), Slim Gaillard (g, p, vo), Tiny Bam Brown (b), Zutty Singleton (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Bel-Tone:

38-1?	Dizzy Boogie	Solo 12 bars. (M)
38-2	Dizzy Boogie	As above. (M)
39-1	Flat Foot Floogie	Solo 8 bars. (M)
39-2	Flat Foot Floogie	As above. (M)
40-2	Poppity Pop	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
41	Slim's Jam	Solo 8 bars. (SM)

It is a safe bet that this session represents the main encounter with JMV for most collectors. Famous for the hilarious combination of Mr. McVoutee with Bird and Diz, the session nevertheless has some impressive tenorsax contributions. JMV plays with confidence and inspiration, inferior to no one, and particularly the best known version of "... Boogie" and "... Jam" have lovely soli.

JIMMY MUNDY AND HIS ALLSTARS **Hollywood, ca. Dec. 1945**

Mannie Klein, possibly Raven Mandell, Red Mack, Teddy Buckner (tp), George Washington, possibly Carl Loeffler, Juan Tizol (tb), Willie Smith, Les Robinson (as), Corky Corcoran, Jack McVea (ts), Floyd Turnham (bar), Milt Raskin (p), Allen Reuss (g), possibly Van Clark (b), Ray Hagan (dm), Jimmy Mundy (ldr, arr).
AFRS Jubilee No. 162.

MUN-1	Hello, Goodbye, Forget It	No solo.
MUN-2	One O'Clock Boogie	No solo.
MUN-3	One O'Clock Jump (Theme)	No solo.
MUN-4	Those Wonderful Words (Jimmy's Idea)	No solo.

Hollywood, ca. late Jan. 1946

Same, except Irving Ashby (g) replaces Reuss.
AFRS Jubilee No. 171 and 172.

MUN-5	Everything But You	No solo.
MUN-6	One O'Clock Jump (Theme)	No solo.
MUN-7	One O'Clock Rhythm	No solo.
MUN-8	Queer Street	No solo.
MUN-9	Those Wonderful Words	No solo.

Note: The tenorsax soli on MUN 1, 2, 4, 7 and 9 do not seem to be played by JMV.

JACK McVEA's ALL STARS **L.A. ca. Jan. 1946**

Jesse Perdue (tp), Marshal Royal (cl), Jack McVea (ts), John Shackelford (p), Frank Clarke (b), Rabon Tarrant (dm, vo), Estelle Edson (vo).
Four titles were recorded for Black & White:

167	Play It Over	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
168	House Party Boogie	No solo.
169-1	My Business C.O.D.	Solo 2 bars. Weak obligato. (SM)
170-2	Baby Make Up Your Mind	Weak obligato. (S)

Here we see a waste of talent, one solo on four items, the rest more or less interesting vocals with some background of value if you care to concentrate. And "House Party ..." is a piano solo all the way through! Blah!

JACK McVEA's ALL STARS **L.A. ca. Feb. 1946**

Jesse Perdue, Russell Jacquet (tp), Jack McVea, Wild Bill Moore (ts), Call Cobbs (p), Frank Clarke (b), Rabon Tarrant (dm).
Four titles were recorded for Black & White:

195-3	Jack's Boogie	No solo.
196-3	F Minor Boogie	Solo 24 bars. (FM)
197	Jam Boogie	Solo 24 bars. (M)
198	Frantic Boogie	Solo 12 bars. (M)

A session of medium blues only, but some interesting contributions from JMV, particularly "F Minor ..." is attractive.

JUNIOR JAZZ AT THE AUDITORIUM **Hollywood, ca. Aug. 1946**

Howard McGhee (tp), Les Robinson (as-"Allen's Alley"), Jack McVea, Lucky Thompson (ts), Jimmy Bunn (p), Irving Ashby (g), Red Callender (b), Jackie Mills (dm-"Allen's Alley").

Recorded live at The Auditorium: For additional titles see Lucky Thompson.

Hot House (Boppin' Bop)	Solo 64 bars (2 nd (ts)-solo). (M)
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Allen's Alley

Solo 4 choruses of 32 bars
(2nd (ts)-solo). (F)

An excellent solo on "Hot House" in a more quiet and relaxed mood than usual. He plays more roughly on "... Alley", and here has to accept being second to the great Lucky T.

JACK McVEA'S ALL STARS**LA. Sept. 1946**

John 'Red' Kelly (tp), Jack McVea (as, ts), Tommy 'Crow' Kahn (p), Irving Ashby (g-337), Frank Clarke (b), Rabon Tarrant (dm, vo).

Six titles were recorded for Black & White:

BW 330	Bulgin' Eyes	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
BW 331	Don't Let The Sun Catch You Crying	Altosax solo 16 bars. (SM)
BW 332	Hey, Hey Baby	Soli 12 and 36 bars with ensemble. (FM)
BW 334-1	Open The Door Richard	No solo.
BW 335	The Crow's Boogie	Altosax solo 24 bars. (M)
BW 337-1	Lonesome Blues	Altosax obbligato. (SM)

That "Open The Door ..." ever was a hit is just incredible and sad. Sad because it tells us a lot about a crazy world, where success often is the inverse of culture. It is an absolutely worthless piece of music. The rest of the session is also quite commercial with one exception, a good tenorsax solo on "... Eyes". Also there are a few examples of competent altosax playing.

**T-BONE WALKER ACCOMPANIED BY
JACK McVEA'S ALL STARS****Hollywood, Sept. 30, 1946**

Joe 'Red' Kelly (tp), Jack McVea (ts), Tommy 'Crow' Kahn (p), Frank Clarke (b), Rabon Tarrant (dm), T-Bone Walker (g, vo).

Four titles were recorded for Black & White:

BW 410-1	No Worry Blues	Obbligato 12 bars. (S)
BW 410-2	No Worry Blues	As above. (S)
BW 411-1	Don't Leave Me Baby	Weak obbligato 24 bars. (FM)
BW 411-2	Don't Leave Me Baby	As above. (FM)
BW 412-1	Bobby Sox Baby	Weak obbligato 36 bars. (S)
BW 412-2	Bobby Sox Baby	As above. (S)
BW 413-4	I'm Gonna Find My Baby	Weak obbligato 24 bars. (M)

T-BW is a very important artist, and the Mosaic album with numerous alternates is a treasure of blues. However, he seems to be a quite egocentric person, very little else than T-BW to be found. JMV can be heard in the background but only fill-ins, no active co-playing. Best is "No Worry ...".

JACK McVEA AND HIS DOOR OPENERS**LA. Oct. 1946**

Joe 'Red' Kelly (tp), Melba Liston (tb), Marshall Royal (as), Jack McVea (ts), Tommy Kahn (p), Gene Phillips (g), Frank Clarke (b), Rabon Tarrant (dm). Note that JMV in an interview suggests Sammy Yates, Jesse Perdue (tp) and John Shackelford as another (p).

Eight titles were recorded for Black & White, 435 "Blackout Boogie" and 438 "Reetie Vootie Boogie" have no tenorsax but:

BW 433-2	Basses Boogie	Solo 12 bars. (M)
BW 434-3	Boilermaker's Boogie	Solo 24 bars. (M)
BW 436	Hangover	Solo 36 bars. (F)
BW 437	Baby It's Fun	Solo 16+8 bars, (g) on bridge. (M)
BW 439	Groovin' Boogie	Solo with ens 24 bars. (M)
BW 440	Barrelhouse Boogie	Solo with ens 24 bars. (M)

This session seems to be concerned with the boogie woogie blues. "Groovin'" and particularly "Barrelhouse ..." have each two juicy, groovy blues choruses. Postscript of Feb. 2015: "Hangover" and "Baby ...", which have been available recently, have good JMV.

T-BONE WALKER**Hollywood, Dec. 1946**

Al Killian (tp), Jack McVea (ts), Lloyd Glenn (p), Frank Clarke (b), Rabon Tarrant (dm), T-Bone Walker (g, vo).

Four titles were recorded for Black & White:

504-2	I'm In An Awful Mood	Obbligato 12 bars. (S)
505-4	It's A Low Down Dirty Deal	Solo 12 bars. (M)
506-1	Don't Give Me The Runaround	Solo 16 bars. Weak obbligato. (SM)
507-1	Hard Pain Blues	Obbligato 12 bars. (S)

A more interesting T-BW session from the tenorsax point of view, here we have JMV soloing! Particularly "... Runaround" has an interesting solo, and the slow blues is always interesting.

RABON TARRANT /**JACK McVEA AND HIS DOOR OPENERS****LA. Jan. 1947**

Sammy Yates (tp), Jack McVea (as, ts), Tommy Kahn (p), Gene Phillips (g), Frank Clarke (b), Rabon Tarrant (dm, vo).

Six titles were recorded for Black & White:

587	The Key's In The Mailbox	Soli 4 and 4 bars. (M)
588	Richard Gets Hitched	Solo 10 bars. (M)
589	Slowly Going Crazy	Faint in ensemble. (S)
590	Blues With A Feeling	Altosax solo 24 bars. (SM)
596-2	What's Happening	Soli 16 and 6 bars. (M)
597-3	Crow's Being Evicted	No solo.

A session of very little interest, except for a magnificent break on "... Mailbox". Also, try JMV on altosax for once with "... A Feeling".

JACK McVEA**LA. Feb. 1947**

Sammy Yates (tp), Jack McVea (ts), Tommy "Crow" Kahn (p), Gene Phillips (g), Frank Clarke (b), Rabon Tarrant (dm, vo).

Four titles were recorded for Black & White:

608-1	It's Just Like A Dream	Intro 4 bars to obbligato parts. Solo 8 bars to obbligato parts and coda. (S)
609-6	Butch	Intro 4 bars. Solo 16 bars. (S)
610	Groove Juice	Breaks. Solo 16 bars. (M)
611-3	Two Timin' Baby Boogie	Solo 24 bars. (FM)

Very fine soloing here, "Butch" presents a good, emotional solo in slow tempo, not too many of these, while particularly "... Baby Boogie" belongs to my JMV favorites!

JACK McVEA**LA. between Feb. 27 – mid March, 1947**

Personnel as Feb. 1947 above.

Film "Sarge Goes To College" (Monogram Pictures, 1947). The performance is very perfunctory and unexciting, being a shortened version of "Open The Door, Richard". Brief and without any soli. (info from Mark Cantor, July 2014).

JACK McVEA BAND**Pasadena, Ca. (Dec. 46) or March 1947**

Sammy Yates or John 'Red' Kelly (tp), Jack McVea (ts), Thomas 'Crow' Kahn (p), Frank Clarke (b), Rabon Tarrant (dm, vo).

AFRS Jubille No. 225/226, recorded at McCormack General Hospital. Guests: Joey Preston (dm-"Mop Mop"), Judy Potter (vo-"I May Be Wrong"), Jack Teagarden (tb, vo-TEA-1,2,3,4).

MCV-6	Hey Hey Babe	Solo 24 bars. In ensemble. (FM)
MCV-7	Miss Thing	Solo with ens 32 bars. Solo 8 bars. (FM)
PRE-3	Mop Mop	Soli 8 and 14 bars. (F)
MCV-9	Open The Door Richard	Solo 20 bars. (M)
POR-1	I May Be Wrong	With ensemble 16 bars. (M)

MCV-4	Body And Soul (NC)	Solo 32 bars (S) to 96 bars (M) to long conclusion. (S)
MCV-5	Flying Home (NC)	Solo 8 bars. Solo 4 choruses of 32 bars, last half of third and first half of fourth destroyed by announcer. (F)
MCV-8	One O'Clock Jump (Theme)	No solo.
TEA-1	Basin Street Blues	Obbligato 32 bars. (S)
TEA-2	Honeysuckle Rose	Solo with ens 32 bars. (FM)
TEA-3	I Gotta Right TST Blues (Theme)	No solo.
TEA-4	Stars Fell On Alabama	Weak obbligato 32 bars. Duet with (tb) 16 bars to obbligato 16 bars. (S)

Generally this is quite disappointing. The promising feature number "Body ..." is especially so, awkward with the rhythm section far off somewhere. The only item of some interest is "... Alabama".

JACK McVEA

LA. Nov. 1947

Sammy Yates (tp, vo), Jack McVea (as, ts), Tommy Kahn (p), Gene Phillips (g), Frank Clarke (b), Rabon Tarrant (dm, vo), Arthur Duncan (vo-1166).

Four titles were recorded for Exclusive:

1163	Swing Man	Break. Weak obbligato. Solo 16 bars. (M)
1164	Two Timin' Baby	Altosax soli 4 and 24 bars. (M)
1165	No, No, You Can't Do It	Solo 32 bars. (M)
1166-3	Butch	Intro 4 bars to obbligato 16 bars. Solo 16 bars. (S)

Several interesting JMV soli in the middle of all that popular music. Particularly the slow "Butch", a fine challenge to the Black & White version earlier the same year, has some excellent, emotional tenorsax, and also "Swing Man" should be brought to attention.

JOE TURNER

SF. Nov. 6, 1947

Sammy Yates (tp), Jack McVea (ts), Pete Johnson (p), Pee Wee Crayton (g), Frank Clarke (b), Rabon Tarrant (dm).

Five titles were recorded for Aladdin, no tenorsax on 1004 "Empty Pocket Blues" but:

1000-2	Morning Glory	Intro 8 bars. Solo 16 bars. (M)
1001-1	Nobody In Mind	Solo 8 bars. Obbligato parts. (S)
1002-2	Low Down Dog	Solo 8 bars. Obbligato parts. Solo 24 bars. (M)
1003-1	Back Breaking Blues	Solo 12 bars. (M)

A fine swinging session with JMV playing on the top of his abilities, particularly on "... Glory".

JACK McVEA

LA. Dec. 1947

Personnel as previous session.

Ten titles recorded for Exclusive, probably in several sessions:

1204-3	Inflation Blues	Altosax soli 8 and 8 bars. (M)
1205-3	Carlos	No solo.
1227	Fish For Supper	Altosax solo 16+8 bars, (tp) on bridge. Altosax solo 8 bars. (FM)
1228	Jack Frost	Soli 96 and 8 bars. (FM)
1229	Fighting Mama Blues	Altosax intro 4 bars and solo 12 bars. (FM)
1230-2	Tatoe Pie	Soli 8 and 16 bars. (M)
1242	Walkin' And Talkin' Boogie	Solo 24 bars. (M)

1243	The Walls Come Tumbling Down	Obbligato parts. (S)
1244-3	Evenin'	Soli 8 and 4 bars. (S)
1245	Mumblin' Blues	Solo 12 bars. (S)

A mixture of everything, from the hilarious "Carlos" (a parody I hope) to a real jazz record, "Jack Frost", in fact the item containing the longest of all JMV soli on a 78 rpm.! He must have had a tendency towards self-oblivion, or the victim of a non-musical producer, but on this item he is allowed to stretch out. He has played better, but still this is an interesting item to be noted. And there are other highlights, like the first solo on "... Pie" with fine rhythm accompaniment, or a lovely "Mumblin' ..." blues. Again one must consider with regret the way a major tenorsax star ends up in commercial productions. The number of Black & White and Exclusive items are quite high and much higher than the possibilities for instance Lester Young got in the same period. But what are the results? While most items have some benefit in a brief solo, the total is, if not a disaster, much below the potential. One should be happy about what there is, but sometimes I cannot help but regret what there is not.

Postscript of Feb. 2015: A swinging "... Boogie" and some good background on "The Walls ..." have been available.

GENE PHILLIPS

LA. late 1948

Probably personnel: Sammy Yates (tp), Marshal Royal (as), Jack McVea (ts), Tommy Kahn (p), Gene Phillips (g, vo), unknown (b), Rabon Tarrant (dm). Four titles were recorded for Modern, no JMV on "To Each His Own, Brother" and "Women, Women, Women" but:

MM 1277	I Wonder What The Poor Folks Are Doin'	Solo 12 bars. (M)
MM 1279	You Can Go Back Home	Solo 16+8 bars, (g) on bridge. (M)

"... Home" seems to be unconcentrated and not very inspired, and I am not surprised. Best is the opening statement on "I Wonder ...".

JMV records on (as) with CLARENCE "GATEMOUTH" BROWN in Houston, Jan. 1949, six titles for Peacock. Then he records on (as) with MAXWELL DAVIS in LA. 1949, four titles for Modern.

JMV records on (bar) with HELEN HUMES, LA. May 9, 1950, four titles for Discovery.

RAY CHARLES BAND

LA. May 9, 1950

Teddy Buckner (tp), Marshall Royal (as), Jack McVea (ts), Charlie Waller (bar), Ray Charles (p, vo), Louis Speiginer (g), Bill Hadnott (b), Clifton "Rudy" Pitts (dm). Four titles were recorded for Swingtime, one has JMV:

I'll Do Anything But Work	Solo 8 bars. (M)
I'll Do Anything But Work (alt.)	As above. (M)

I didn't expect it, but there really is a brief JMV solo on this early Ray Charles session, this is typical his way of doing it!

GENE PHILLIPS WITH

JACK McVEA AND HIS ORCHESTRA

LA. early 1950

Unknown (tp), (as), Jack McVea (ts), unknown (p), (b), (dm), Gene Phillips (g, vo). Four titles (or more) were recorded for Modern, mx-numbers 1277-1280, but this session and two titles have already been listed as late 1948; no tenorsax on "Slippin' And Slidin'" and "See See Rider".

LA. Summer 1950

Same/similar. Three titles (or more), 1322 "To Each His Own Brother", 1325 "My Baby's Mistreatin' Me" and 1325 "Women, Women, Women" have no tenorsax but:

1323-2	My Mama Told Me	Solo with ens 32 bars. (M)
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"... Told Me" has almost three blues choruses of tenorsax, good quality, and they sound very much like the JMV we know.

PERCY MAYFIELD VOCAL ACC. BY

LA. Oct. 23, 1950

Maxwell Davis, Jack McVea (ts), Charles Waller (bar), Lee Wesley Jones (p), Gene Phillips (g), Red Callender (b), Lee Young (dm). Four titles were recorded for Specialty but no JMV.

Two interesting tenorsax items here, the second chorus on "Wino" indicates that JMV, and "... Ride" still can play his tenorsax to satisfaction. Otherwise the two baritone sax items should be noted.

JACK McVEA**LA. 1955**

Jake Porter (tp), Jack McVea (ts, bar), William Woodman jr. (ts), Jimmie O'Brien (p), Reginald Jones (b), Clifton Pitts (dm), Louise Beatty (vo).

Eight titles were recorded for Combo, no JMV on "Chop Chop Boom" and "You Brought Me Headaches", "Ko Ko Mo" on Combo 64 has not been available but:

Combo 76	Fiddlesticks	Baritone sax solo 8 bars. Possibly solo 16 bars. (SM)
Combo 76	Trying To Tell Ya	Solo with (vo-ens) 24 bars. (M)
Reh.	Trying To Tell Ta	As above. (M)
Combo 90	Nobody In Mind	Solo 12 bars. (S)
-3	Nobody In Mind	No solo. (S)
Combo 96	The Surch	Obbligato parts. (SM)
Combo 96	Yaka Boo	Solo 12 bars. (M)

LA. 1955

Same except Christine Chatman (p, vo) replaces O'Brien. Two titles:

-3	Hoo Doo You Baby	Solo with ens 24 bars. (SM)
-4	Hoo Doo You Baby	As above. (SM)
	Oh, How The Geese Did Fly?	Solo 4 bars. (M)

I am not very impressed by JMV's group as it develops over time. There is much more interesting r&b and blues around, and the leader does rarely expose himself much, not to say play real jazz improvisations. Note also that the best solo here, "Fiddlesticks", gives me some association to WW, a tenorsax player at least as good as JMV in this period.

JACK McVEA**LA. ca. 1956**

Jack McVea (as, ts), William Woodman ? (ts), Jimmie O'Brien (p), Gene Phillips (g), Reginald Jones (b), Clifton Pitts (dm), unknown (vib).

Two titles were recorded for Combo:

Combo 112	Goucho Hop	Straight. (M)
Combo 112	Oh How I Miss You Tonight	As below. (SM)
Reh.	Oh How I Miss You Tonight	Altosax soli 64 and 8 bars. (SM)
-1	Oh How I Miss You Tonight	As above. (SM)
-4	Oh How I Miss You Tonight	As above. (SM)
-?	Oh How I Miss You Tonight	As above. (SM)

LA. ca. 1956

Similar. Two titles:

Combo 132	On The Sunny Side Of The Street	Altosax feature. (SM)
Combo 132	I'll Get Along Somehow	Solo 40 bars to coda. (S)
-2	I'll Get Along Somehow	Soli 36 and 16 bars to coda. (S)

On "... Tonight" JMV is playing altosax and is clearly inspired (commercially ...) by Earl Bostic's echo recordings with vibraphone, and the item is quite nice. However, it is "... Somehow" which proves that JMV still is very much alive, and how terribly he wastes his talents with his current band. He plays a moving ballad in a very personal, 'fat' way, quite close to the way Chu Berry approached such material; possibly too bombastic and not to everybody's jazz taste, but it grabs me!! Postscript: Are we quite sure that this is JMV and not William Woodman who had this Chu-feeling? Note also that the version on Ace CH147 LP (the 78 version?) does not have a piano solo, in contrast to the one on Ace CDCHD 1246. They are otherwise quite similar with regard to tenorsax, not much improvisation.

LLOYD GLENN**LA. Oct. 4, 1956**

Jack McVea (ts), Lloyd Glenn (p), Billy Hadnott (b), Bob Harvey (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Aladdin:

2746	Old Time Shuffle	Acc. (p) 6 choruses of 12 bars. (SM)
2747	Chick-A-Boo	Acc. (p) 8 choruses of 12 bars. (M)
2748	After Hours Pt 1	Acc. (p) 7 choruses of 12 bars. (SM)
2749	After Hours Pt 2	Acc. (p) 6 choruses of 12 bars. (SM)

Quite uninteresting, JMV is only doing more or less straight background accompaniment to the piano.

JACK McVEA

LA. 1958

Jack McVea (ts), Jimmie O'Brien (p), Reginald Jones (b), Rudy Pitts (dm), Clay Hamilton (vo).

Two titles were recorded for Tag, not available.

JACK McVEA QUINTET

Hollywood, Autumn 1962

Jack McVea (as, ts), Dudley Brooks (p), Ulysses Livingston (g), Warren McOwens (b), Eddie Davis (dm).

Six titles were recorded for '77':

Sent For You Yesterday	Soli 3 and 2 choruses of 12 bars. (M)
Dinah	Solo 32 bars to long coda. (S)
Nothin' But Jazz	Solo 64 bars. (F)
Swampland	Altosax solo 24 bars. (SM)
Soft Winds	Solo 3 choruses of 16 bars. (M)
Night Flight	Solo 64 bars. (F)

This great tenorsax player is still active in the early 60s, but from this loosely arranged session it is difficult to form any opinion of his current qualities. He obviously still can swing his horn, although not as exciting as before, best of this kind is "... Winds". Most interesting and exciting is "Dinah", played in an extremely slow and unusual tempo, and although a bit schmalzig, JMV shows he still has got qualities. Too bad he could not be featured with a more exciting group.

No further recording sessions.

... 000 ...