

BUNK INFORMATION

Number 5

The Swedish Bunk Johnson Society

Spring 1995



Still in the aftermath of the annual meeting and the pleasure of meeting so many members, we are pleased to send you this newsletter, again with some nice material. We just wish we had the technical abilities and equipment to send out this as a CD-ROM so that you all could enjoy the good music played by members of Kroon's Jazzband and Sven Lange's New Orleans Kids and some of the nice pictures taken during the evening, not to mention Mike's speech based on Bunk's letters. More of that later on.

In this number we start a new series in which we present prominent members of the society. First one out is Floyd Levin.

We will have to withdraw our ambition to publish Bunk Information more than twice a year. Our current resources will not permit more frequent publication.

Per-Olof Karlström has replaced Nils-Gunnar Anderby on the Executive Committee. Nils-Gunnar will continue to contribute to Bunk Information. He is presently working on an article about Evan Thomas.

In the autumn issue we will enclose a complete list of members. (HH)

PRES' RELEASE



Words from our president:

THE ANNUAL MEETING held on January 14 in Stockholm was a huge success. We were delighted to welcome some distinguished guests (and members as well) from abroad, *Mike Hazeldine and Ruth Phillips* from London and *Brian Wood* from Walmer, Kent. Mike gave an absolutely marvelous lecture on "**BUNK JOHNSON 1938-1943**", apparently without breathing for 90 minutes. I certainly had no idea that Mike mastered the method of "circular breathing" the way he obviously did. In some other place in this issue you will find a short summary of his great lecture.

The annual meeting accepted the membership fee of SEK100.- (for Swedish members only). Here follows a message for those members:

Detta innebär i klartext att de svenska medlemmar som inte inkommit med sagda medlemsavgift (100:-) till postgiro 433 42 24-5 (Håkan Håkansson) senast den 1 Maj 1995 kommer att strykas ur medlemsmatrikeln. Vi tolkar detta helt enkelt så att man på detta sätt markerar att man inte längre vill vara med. För er är detta nummer av BUNKINFO det sista som skickas ut.. (Är du tveksam om du betalt, kontakta EK)

At the Annual Meeting we also decided, with acclamation, to make two donations of US\$200 each. One to **The Historic New Orleans Collection** on Royal Street and the other one to **Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University**. You will find the responses from those institutions as supplements in this issue.

Among the supplements you will also find a very interesting article by our knowledgeable member **Ross Russell**, perhaps best known as the founder of Dial Records and for his legendary book on Charlie Parker, "Bird Lives". Ross, now considered the world's oldest living record collector, worked in the San Francisco area at the time Bunk stayed there and they met and Ross wrote some articles about him. This is one of them from the magazine "The JAZZ RECORD", May 15, 1943, not a full year after Bunk's first recordings in New Orleans in June 1942.

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Another supplement in this issue is a transcription from the tapes of Weeks Hall. Weeks was the legendary proprietor of the famous Plantation Home in New Iberia - "The Shadows-on-the-Teche" - where Bunk worked every now and then. Not too often though, according to our latest research. Weeks and Bunk were great buddies and you will have to look upon Weeks as a great sponsor of Bunk. In this transcription Weeks talks about some memories from the days in New Iberia when Bunk lived there. We find this very interesting, indeed.

We are extremely proud to publish another excellent transcription of Bunk's recordings in this issue. Our member and clever transcriber **Tom Pauli** really has done a great job. This time it is one of those famous so called "Statiras recordings" from New Orleans, February 1945, - Tiger Rag. We have also reminded Gus Statiras, a distinguished member, that it is time to release those recordings on CD. (A question still remains: Was there a fifth tune recorded during that session??)

Since the latest Bunk Information we have had the honor to welcome some new members and I am very pleased to include *Marilyn Bell Hinchliffe* and *Charles DeVore* in our society.

Finally, I just want to tell you that when Mike Hazeldine came to Sweden he brought a big suitcase full of his and Barry Martyn's **NEW ORLEANS STYLE** book. (Based on

Bill Russell's interviews). It became a total sell out at the Annual Meeting. This is a book *I cannot recommend highly enough!!!* Most of us have at one time or another delayed buying something until it was too late and regretted ever since. **DON'T DO IT AGAIN**

If you want to buy **NEW ORLEANS STYLE** direct from Mike Hazeldine, he has changed his address to

52 Jackson's Lane

Highgate

London N6 5SX, England

(CR)

MIKE HAZELDINE

Only a genius could make a summary that would be fair to Mike's speech. Here we will just give you some quotes, that if you were there will make you remember and if you weren't there, will make you come next year we hope! But Mike managed to show both sides of Bunk's complex character and how frustrating he could be to those who were near him and trying to help him. The fact that they could forgive and overlook his faults only serves to underline that he was a hell of a musician.

"Some people say that the Bunk Johnson comeback story began when Bill Russell wrote to Bunk 'C/o the New Iberia postmaster' in February 1939. I believe it really started six months earlier - in September 1938, when Louis Armstrong and his Orchestra played a one-night stand at the New Iberia

Training School as part of its tour of the South. During an intermission, Bunk introduced himself to Louis, who probably hadn't seen him in over 30 years. Pops Foster (who was also in the band) saw the two men talking and laughing together, didn't recognise Bunk, and when Louis returned to the stand, asked "who was that old man?" Later that evening Louis invited Bunk up onto the stand and Bunk sang and scatted a number. After the dance, Bunk invited Louis and Luis Russell and possibly the other New Orleans men, like Foster and Paul Barbarin over to his house for a drink or a meal. Bunk gave Louis and the guys some pecans from the tree in his garden, and Louis gave Bunk an signed photo of himself: "To my Boy Bunk. He's been my inspiration all my life. Yeah man!" This photo with the touching inscription, remained one of Bunk's proudest possessions and was framed and remained on view for the rest of his life - no doubt to impress his visitors. On the top of the picture Bunk wrote: "A treat from my Boy Louis." There was also a second photo given to him from the other New Orleans men in the rhythm section, this was signed by Paul Barbarin and Pops Foster.

During the evening at Bunk's house Louis, who, like all trumpet players, never let his trumpet-case out of his sight, showed Bunk his gold-plated Selmer trumpet. You can imagine Bunk's reaction when handling this instrument (the most expensive

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and very best that Selmer could produce). It was probably the best instrument old Bunk had ever seen in his life. Louis probably told Bunk about the advertising deal he had with Selmer and how they sent him a new trumpet every year. I would imagine Louis had already laid some money on Bunk (as he did with most old-time musicians down on their luck) and perhaps in a rash moment, Louis mentioned that he had a couple of other old Selmers at home. I can just see Bunk - as quick as a flash, he asked Louis to let him have one of his old trumpets . . . if he didn't need it anymore, and Louis not wanting to appear unfriendly, agreed. This, to an old-time hustler like Bunk, was fatal and he never let Louis forget this casual promise."

Mike related how Louis was probably upset by a 1939 Downbeat article, which may have been the reason that Louis never did send Bunk a trumpet. Mike then discussed how Bunk began to concentrate his efforts on Bill Russell and others as a means of achieving his goal. After showing some of Bunk's early letters in which he wrote of his desire for a trumpet and a new set of teeth, Mike continued: "What Bunk didn't know was that Bill, Fred Ramsey and Charles Edward Smith had already decided to help Bunk get his teeth. In early April, Bill had mentioned the matter to Sidney Bechet, who immediately recommended his brother Leonard. They wrote to Leonard who replied, 'the work could be done,

if it were a practical case, in a week's time." Fred Ramsey then wrote to Bunk informing him of their plans, and Bunk then wrote to Dr Bechet on the 23rd of April.

A few days later Dr Bechet wrote to Ramsey acknowledging Bunk's letter and then wrote to Bunk suggesting that he came to New Orleans the following week, on Wednesday May 10. Ramsey then sent Bunk the train fare to New Orleans and the day before Bunk was due to see Dr Bechet, Ramsey wired Dr Bechet a money order for \$60 to cover the cost of Bunk's set of teeth."

Mike related how after further prompting from Bunk, they finally obtained a trumpet for and how it was financed. Mike passed around some photographs and newsletters of Bunk's San Francisco period and discussed some of Bunk's activities on the West Coast.

After 90 minutes time was up, as the meal was ready, but Mike has kindly supplied me with his notes for the final few minutes which he was unable to deliver. I quote: "When I met Jerry Blumberg in 1993, I asked him if asked if there were any records which show just how Bunk sounded. He said 'no, but the closest thing is if you take one of the San Francisco records, say Ace in a Hole or Nobody's Fault but Mine, and turn up the volume real loud and increase the treble; that captures something of the edge and bite that Bunk had in his tone.' Jerry said Bunk was really

powerful; when he stood outside (or even across the street) of the Styuvesant, he could hear Bunk (and Baby Dodds) quite clearly, although he couldn't hear the clarinet and trombone. Jerry told a story of how Bunk never used mutes on the stand and how he would bounce his tone off the different surfaces to vary the sound. 'Sometime he would point his horn towards the large glass windows at the Styuvesant and other times the wooden floor, or something metal. If he aimed the bell directly at you, even from forty or fifty feet, you could feel the note hit you. It was solid.' Jerry told the story when Bunk and Mutt Carey used to play alternate sets at the Caravan Ballroom in 1947. 'One night Bunk was on particularly good form, and during his set, Mutt, who was a good dancer, was dancing with a lady, and Bunk (probably wanting to impress Mutt) pointed his horn directly at him and as Mutt moved around the dance floor, the sound followed Mutt like a searchlight.' After almost 50 years Jerry had lost none of his enthusiasm for Bunk and still feels he is the greatest trumpet player he ever heard."

DILL PICKLES

Ever since hearing about the terrible earthquake in the Kobe - Osaka area we have worried about our Japanese friends the **New Orleans Rascals**. Finally we have received a report that only Junichi Kawai (bjo) has suffered minor injuries and the rest of the band has escaped

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physical injuries. We understand that there have been a lot of problems in their business lives, though. We send them our best wishes.

Lennart Fält (*Blood & Tears Productions*) has asked us to inform the SBJS members that he has some NO Rascals CDs for sale (SEK160.- P&P extra): NORCD002 w T Sharpsteen NORCD004 w. Geoff Bull NORCD007 at Ascona NORCD008 30th Anniversary Contact Lennart at +46-40-86437 for more information.

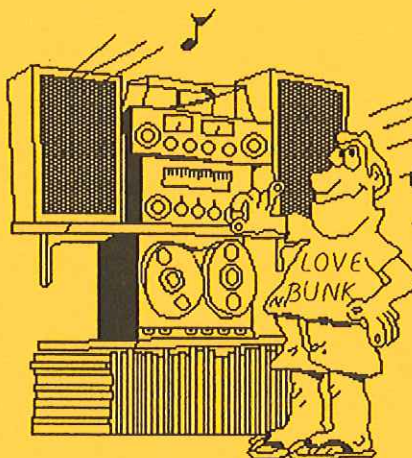
Åke Sahlberg, much appreciated leader of the Bunk quiz at the annual meetings, has married *Shen You Qin* of Shanghai. Our warmest congratulations.

We regret to inform you that member **Ole Smith** has passed away. Ole, who contributed to Bunk Information # 3 was a well known jazz writer besides being Professor of Greek at the University of Gothenburg.

Christer Fellers, excellent trumpeter and esteemed member of the Executive Committee has been appointed wood researcher of the year. He received his medal (or whatever) at a ceremony in the Marriott Hotel, New Orleans. No doubt he will from now on be known as Wooden Chris.

The Swedish jazz magazine *Orkesterjournalen* featured in no 2/1995 a three-pages long article about member **Rolf Wahl** (tpt) who led the Original Optimus Orchestra in the 60's and made two, now very rare, EPs on the Eureka label.

NEW BUNK RECORDS



AMCD-17 Baby Dodds has been released. It contains the following Bunk tracks:

MX827 Swanee River

MX899 Just A Little While

MX901 Nearer My God

MX893 Saints

MX849 Listen To Me

MX511 Maryland

MX852 High Society

MX214 New Iberia Blues

MX212 Tiger Rag

All of these have been issued before on Dan Records. But don't think that you can get rid of your Dans! Björn Bärnholm has made a listing (enclosed) of all previously issued Bunk-recordings for American Music that (as far as we know now) will not come out on CD so you will know exactly which records to keep. Should you need more details, see "Bill Russell's American Music".

In our listing of Bunk on CD in the last number we omitted Blue Note 7893852 (S Bechet Jazz Classics - Vol. 2)

TIGER RAG AND THE STATIRAS RECORDINGS

The following text is Tom Pauli's comments on his transcription of Tiger Rag:

This version of Tiger Rag is one of the numbers recorded by Gus Statiras in New Orleans 1945-02-09 (Metronome B530). The other numbers from this session are Weary Blues, Make Me A Pallet On The Floor and Careless Love. In my opinion all these numbers have always been underrated, even by Bunk freaks. I hope that this transcription of Tiger Rag will give some contribution to change this situation.

It is very interesting to compare this version of Tiger Rag with the more well-known one recorded by Bill Russell on AM 1944-07-31(MX213). The personnel is the same on both occasions with the exception that Baby Dodds is replaced by Abby "Kid Collins" Williams on Statiras' 1945 version. Yet they are very different, both in character and performance. On MX213 Bunk and Jim Robinson seem to be a little tired and uninspired and they play much on routine. But on Metronome B530 every note they play is inspired. Jim Robinson's solo (chorus E2, bars 88 - 119) is one of the best he has ever recorded. That is one reason I have transcribed that too. (On MX213 Jim has no solo). The other reason is to show that Bunk quotes one of Jim's phrases in his own improvisations. In his solo Jim plays two phrases consisting of the tones f - e flat - c - a

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flat (concert key A flat major) in the bars 107 - 108 and 109 - 110 respectively. He also plays such phrases in chorus E4. Then Bunk himself plays such a phrase (g - f - d - b flat, transposed key B flat major) in the bars 185 - 186 at the very beginning of chorus E5, quoting Jim. Immediately after that, in the bars 189 - 190, Bunk quotes the beginning of Louis Armstrong's tune Strutting With Some Barbecue.

When Big Jim has finished the first half of his solo with the break in the bars 103 - 104, he begins the second half with his favourite phrase (bars 105 - 106), a phrase that he always plays in every fast number, whether solo or ensemble. Then he closes his second half of his solo with exactly the same phrase (bar 120) as he did in the first half (bar 104), but one octave lower. The concluding phrase (bars 119 - 120) is a very common march cliché, but here it is used in a rather ingenious way, referring back to the break sixteen bars earlier.

The sign "+" over the notes in the bars 96 and 97 in Jim's solo indicates that the pitch is somewhat higher than the noted one, in this case somewhere between g flat and g.

As for Bunk, he seemingly keeps rather close to ordinary standards when presenting the different themes of the number in the first eighty-eight bars. But he uses a lot of subtle and ingenious variations. Note for example that in the phrase occurring in the bars 4, 12 and 28 his legato phrasing is different

the second and third times from what it is the first time.

In the choruses D and E1 (bars 41 - 88) the sign "x" written over a note indicates that Bunk plays that note with a peculiar "howling" sound. (I don't know how he produces that sound. Is there any reader who knows?)

After Jim Robinson's wonderful solo Bunk leads the ensemble choruses E3 (bars 120 - 152) and E5 (bars 184 - 216) with marvelous improvisations. Note the dissonant tones e in the bars 120 and 122 and f sharp in the bar 121.

In E4 Bunk drops out while the rest of the band continues as if nothing had happened. Bunk often used this way of dropping out in a deliberate way (and it used to annoy Sidney Bechet very much).

It is a sign of mastership to be able to conclude a number in a convincing and tasteful way. It is always fascinating and instructive to study the phrases Bunk uses when concluding a number (the two or four last bars of a number). Look at the bars 212 - 216 of this transcription! Ingenious but still simple, and above all effective!!

To avoid misunderstandings I want to say that I do not simply declare, that the "Gus Statiras version" of Tiger Rag is a better one than the AM-version. The situation is of course more complicated than a simple "better - worse"-relation. The amateur Abby "Kid Collins" Williams is

of course not a substitute on par with the genius Baby Dodds. But we know about the personal relations between Bunk and Baby Dodds. Furthermore Statiras' recordings were made under rather peculiar circumstances that are described in Christopher Hillman: Bunk Johnson - his life and times, p 73 f. Maybe these circumstances forced Bunk and his fellows to make the best out of a bizarre situation. Anyhow, I do contend that Bunk's (and Big Jim's and George Lewis') playing is not only much more inspired but also much more stringent and concentrated on this version of Tiger Rag than on AM.

Tom Pauli (copyright, all rights reserved)

RECORDS WANTED

P-O Karlström, Storsvetsvägen 105, S-163 60 SPÅNGA, Sweden, is still looking for the following records. Write him if you can help!

Paul Barbarin	Nobility 707
"	Roulette R.52089
Sh. Bonano	Southland 205 12"
Frog Joseph	Nobility 704
Merle Koch	Southland 236
	Carnival 102
	GHB 136
George Lewis	Verve MGM 1024
Matty Matlock	Warner Bros 1217
"	Warner Bros 1374
Kid Ory	Verve MGM 1026
Emanuel Sayles	Nobility 701/ Dan VC-2015
6&7/8 String Band	Folkways FA 2671
Kid Thomas	San Jacinto 4

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RECORDS FOR SALE

Blood & Tears Productions has the following new and sealed records for sale: Contact Lennart Fält

P.A. Hanssons väg 66A

215 67 MALMÖ, Sweden

SAMCD001
w. Thais Clark (1992)
SAMCD002
Live in Switzerland (1987)
SAMCD003
plays clt of George Lewis (1989)
Herman HJCD 1001
N.O. Quartet (1977)
Upbeat URCD113
Ken Colyer (1972)
Music Mecca CD1021-2
One Swiss Night (1991)
Jazz Crusade JCCD3005
A Jazz Gumbo Vol 2 (1993)
Progressive PCD-7088
More exciting sax (1994)
GHB BCD-16
Ken Colyer (1965)
GHB BCD-41 & 42
Capt John Handy-two vols (1965)
GHB BCD-288
Everybody's talking about (1965)

Meet the Prolific Jazz Writer Floyd Levin

STUDIO CITY, CA. - Floyd Levin, one of the West Coast Rag's most read and most knowledgeable columnists and reviewers, has been associated with jazz longer than many musicians have been playing it. And he's also been instrumental in helping to provide the stage on which it's played.

He founded the Southern California Hot Jazz Society in 1949 (the second oldest jazz club in the US), and his articles about jazz have been published throughout the world for more than 40 years. He has written many liner notes for various record albums and has composed lyrics for several tunes recorded by internationally known jazz artists. His record reviews and articles regularly appear in jazz publications in four countries.

In 1969, he founded The Association of Southern California Jazz Clubs and spearheaded the drive that resulted in the creation of the statue of Louis Armstrong which now stands in Armstrong Park on Rampart Street in New Orleans. (The ASCJC was the precursor of the United Jazz Clubs of Southern California.)

He has been involved in organizing many important jazz events for the past 30 years. He produced and emceed several international concert tours that featured Barney Bigard, Trummy Young, Benny Carter, Ralph Sutton, Art Hodes, Joe Venuti and many other jazz greats.

In 1985, Floyd and his wife, Lucille, were honored as the Grand Emperor and Empress of the Sacramento Dixieland Jubilee.

He currently is a member of the Board of Directors of The American Federation of Jazz Societies, an active participant in The International Association of Jazz Record Collectors, and a charter member of The Jazz Journalists Association.

Bunk Information is the internal newsletter for members of the Swedish Bunk Johnson Society.

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TIGER RAG
as played by
BUNK JOHNSON
February 17, 1945

Transcribed by
Tom Pauli

A₁

A₂

B with cl breaks

A₃ Ens.

C

cl break

D Ens^x

cl break

cl break

x

x

cl break

TIGER RAG (cont.)

2.

Ens.

Handwritten musical score for Tiger Rag (cont.). The score consists of ten staves of music, primarily in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings. Key annotations include:

- Staff 1: Two 'x' marks above the first and fourth measures. A circled '50' is below the fourth measure.
- Staff 2: A circled '55' is below the fourth measure. An 'E1' marking is above the eighth measure.
- Staff 3: Two 'x' marks above the third and seventh measures. A circled '60' is below the seventh measure.
- Staff 4: A circled '65' is below the fourth measure.
- Staff 5: A 'cl break' annotation is above the eighth measure. A circled '70' is below the eighth measure.
- Staff 6: Three 'x' marks above the third, seventh, and tenth measures. A circled '75' is below the seventh measure.
- Staff 7: An 'x' mark above the eighth measure. A circled '80' is below the eighth measure.
- Staff 8: An 'x' mark above the third measure. A circled '85' is below the third measure.

E2 Jim Robinson solo (see below!)

Handwritten musical score for Jim Robinson solo. The score consists of two staves of music, primarily in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings. Key annotations include:

- Staff 9: A circled '89' is below the first measure. A circled '119' is below the second measure. A circled '120' is below the third measure. An 'E3' marking is above the third measure.
- Staff 10: A circled '125' is below the fourth measure.

TIGER RAG (cont.)

Handwritten musical score for "TIGER RAG (cont.)". The score is written on ten staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. It includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and rests. Measure numbers are circled in the left margin: 130, 135, 140, 145, 150, 153, 183, 185, 190, 195, 200, and 205. Performance instructions are written below the staves: "Bunk break" (measures 130-135), "Ens." (measures 135-140), "E4 Ensemble without Bunk" (measures 153-183), "E5" (measures 185-190), "Bunk break, duet with George Lewis" (measures 195-200), and "Ens." (measures 200-205). A "3" with a slur is above measures 128-130, and an "x" is above measure 203.

Handwritten musical score for "JIM ROBINSON's solo" in E2. The score is written on a single staff in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). The tempo is marked as 120. The score includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests, along with measure numbers in parentheses: (210), (215), (90), (95), (100), (105), (110), (115), and (120). The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Don't throw your Dan LPs away!

Bunk Johnson

	Buddy Bolden Style	AM LP 643, Dan VC-4020, VC-7022, Purist LP (no number)
1	Tony Jackson at the Big 25	AM LP 643, Dan VC-4020, VC-7022, Purist LP (no number)
3	Pete Lala's & Dago Tony's	AM LP 643, Dan VC-4020, VC-7022, Purist LP (no number)
4	Funeral Parades	AM LP 643, Dan VC-4009, VC-7011, Purist LP (no number), Storyville SLP 202

Bunk Johnson & Bertha Gonsoulin

5a	Baby, I'd Love To Steal You	AM LP 643, Dan VC-4020, VC-7022
7	Plenty To Do	Dan VC-4020, VC-7022
11 (3)	Pallet On The Floor (1)	AM LP 643, Dan VC-4020, VC-7022
12 (3a)	Pallet On The Floor (2)	Dan VC-4020, VC-7022
13 (3b)	Pallet On The Floor (3)	Dan VC-4020, VC-7022
16½ a	Basin Street Blues	Dan VC-4020, VC-7022
21	St. Louis Blues	Dan VC-4020, VC-7022

Bunk Johnson's Band

202	Sister Kate	Dan VC-4016, VC-7018
397	Careless Love	Dan VC-4017, VC-7024
403	Ballin' The Jack	Dan VC-4016, VC-7018
412	Panama	Dan VC-4016, VC-7018
508	Royal Garden Blues	Dan VC-4016, VC-7018
605½	Sugar Foot Stomp (1½ min test)	Dan VC-4017, VC-7024
824	(a) Sister Kate (test)	Dan VC-4018, VC-7020, Jazz Con JJC 78
828	Swanee River	AM 512
830	All The Whores Like The Way I Ride	Dan VC-4018, VC-7020, Jazz Con JJC 78
867	Lonesome Road	Dan VC-4018, VC-7020
869	Milneberg Joys (Golden Leaf Strut)	Dan VB-1004, VC-4018, VC-7020, Jazz Con JJC 78
872	My Old Kentucky Home	Dan VC-4018, VC-7020, Jazz Con JJC 78

Bunk's Brass Band

895	Just A Closer Walk With Thee	Dan VC-4019, VC-7023
897	Didn't He Ramble	Dan VB-1004, VC-4019, VC-7023
905	St. Louis Blues	Dan VC-4019, VC-7023

Bunk's Trio

935	Where The River Shannon Flows	AM LP 644, Dan VC-4021, VC-7025
938	Poor Butterfly	Dan VC-4021, VC-7025

BUNK JOHNSON COMES BACK

By ROSS RUSSELL

Sunday afternoon, April 12, an overflow crowd of 700 persons waited in the San Francisco Museum of Art for one of the important recent events of American jazz music—the resumption of his playing career by the last-remaining survivor of the New Orleans school of trumpet players—Willie Bunk Johnson.

Importing Bunk to the West Coast was the final step in a long campaign to get Johnson out of the New Iberia, La., rice fields and back where he belongs, on the bandstand. Several years before dozens of jazz fans, among them readers of this publication, had kicked in dollar bills to buy Bunk a set of store teeth. After the teeth came a trumpet, and after the horn a recording junket (Gene Williams, Bill Russell, Dave Stuart, etc.) to New Orleans to put Bunk on wax for the first time. The climactic move in the campaign was made possible by a popular subscription of San Francisco jazz lovers who have rallied around the monthly music and lecture sessions given by Rudi Blesh at the Museum of Art. The previous meeting had seen enough money raised to enable Bunk to quit his job and leave New Iberia. As can be believed Bunk's appearance was awaited with tremendous expectation.

The 63-year old man who stepped off the California Limited and went at once to the Museum proved himself no ghost. After a brief introduction by lecturer Blesh, the platform was turned over to Bunk and for nearly two hours this erstwhile mythical character talked and played—and the painstaking ground work laid by Mr. Blesh came to life in a very flesh and blood sort of way.

"Yes, I played with Buddy Bolden in 1894 and 1895 and 1896 and until the King went crazy we killed all the other best bands in New Orleans," related Bunk Johnson. "Buddy could not read a note but he surely played a good stiff lead and would have you in maybe six sharps before you finished but I could always go anywhere the King went: We played parades and advertising wagons and, excuse me for the expression, honky tonks, and together we made many famous blues."

It was the language of folk music itself. It was jazz history right off the griddle, straight from the source. For forty minutes Bunk talked about the days when jazz was born. Then he unlimbered the trumpet and with the assistance of Bertha Gonzolon, who played piano with King Oliver way back when, he launched his one-man concert with five choruses of Maple Leaf Rag. History turned back 40 years and jazz was heard

played as it was in the beginning, when the creative spirit of the Negro people began spontaneously to overflow and a new music was born.

Bunk's lower register is full and lusty, equal in power to any of the killer horns playing today. In the upper register his tone is thinner, but marvelous clear. It is a more sensitive tone than the veiled and husky vibrato of Armstrong, a more thoughtful music. A rich and happy music that has no lack of depth or feeling.

But the accent is the rare thing. Bunk plays behind the beat, relaxed and perfectly sure, unlike the frenetic modern disciples of glittering technique, and that accent is something that must be heard, or rather felt. It gets down inside of you and before Bunk has played a dozen bars you know it is the real thing.

On High Society Bunk started out in the upper register, soft, almost thin, and you thought you heard, at a great distance, the old Bolden band marching into Rampart street. Then the tone dropped down and there was jazz the way it used to be, before it was jazz, before it was swing or jive or jump music—ragtime, right out of the tonk.

Bunk played Maple Leaf and High Society, Ain't Gonna Study War No More, Tiger Rag, seven choruses of Blues, and, for the finale, Oh Lord, I Am Crippled, I Am Crippled and I Cannot Walk.

Miss Gonzolon's piano was, I am afraid, a weak substitute for the proper accompaniment and at times Bunk's lip failed him. But these are picayune-ish criticisms. The April concert was only another step on the rehabilitation of Bunk Johnson as a playing musician.

Bunk is remaining in San Francisco and his new career is under the energetic management of Bill Colburn who realizes fully the pork chop aspects of any musical comeback. By the time this issue reaches the press San Franciscans will have been treated to a concert done in authentic New Orleans style with a five or six piece band built around Johnson. Among those being contacted to appear are Papa Mutt Carey, now a Southern Pacific porter; Buddy Scott and Kid Ory, gigging around Los Angeles, and Wade Whalley, that neglected New Orleans clarinetist whom the West Coast cats have been digging the last several years. Already Bunk has sat in with local groups, notably the remnants of the Lu Watters band, and his lip is now fully capable and his music better than ever. Colburn wants to launch Bunk professionally with a real non-commercial New Orleans combo.

The twenty-odd years eclipse of Bunk, the

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postponement until 1943 of his reappearance on the jazz firmament is of course a shocking commentary on our culture—which has created the most unique native music in the world, and yet permitted so many of the creating spirits to eke out shabby ends as economic cripples. The list is long and dismal—Johnny Dodds, Jelly Roll Morton, Tommy Ladnier, Bessie Smith, King Oliver, a gang of others ad infinitum (and ad nauseam). Bunk's own case is more monstrous even than the Jim Crow murder of Bessie Smith and the sordid end of King Oliver, cleaning spittoons in a Savannah pool hall. It differs in this respect—that the future does hold some hope (if militant jazz lovers succeed, a rather bright hope) for a 63-year old rice field worker with a gift trumpet and a set of store teeth—and a head full of the music of what made jazz.

CHICAGO DOINGS

Bud Freeman, playing his best of all time, has a piano, bass and guitar backing at The Drum, a new spot on Dearborn, just off Randolph. It's a soldier-sailor joint with the kind of prices you like to pay, and shapely belles doing neat turns, which in toto makes the program a two-ring circus—one for eyes, one for ears. The Bud quartet goes on at 10 or 11 and quits at 3 or 3:30. Earlier in the evening a tasty jazz dish is supplied by Marty Marsala, Jack Gardner, Joe Schneider and Jim Barnes. In the single month The Drum has run, it has developed the earmarks of such traditional hot grandeur as the old Deuces or Liberty Inn. If only the dozen visiting jazzmen sitting around at every session could sit in, heavenly things might develop. The Drum is plain wonderful.

The young colored piano girl, Dorothy Donegan (Chicago's Hazel Scott) pounds and mugs at the Garrick Downbeat Room next door to the Garrick Theater on Randolph. Lips Page blows lustily enough to overcome the kids' racket while Donegan is out. Although Page's group is a notch below classic, it's still completely refreshing.

Boyce Brown, Pat Pattison and a piano go great at La Playa Tap up near Edgewater Beach. Cleo Brown is said to be at a bar across the street from the Bismarck.—JOHN STEINER.

Mezzrow at Kelly's Stable

Mezz Mezzrow, clarinetist, has formed a small band and moved into Kelly's Stable this week, replacing Coleman Hawkins, who has gone to Toronto for a week's engagement.

Mezz has Jack Butler, trumpet; Sandy Williams, trombone; Ernest Meyer, bass, and Arthur Herbert, drums. The piano man is still not permanently set.

IT HAPPENED IN BRIDGEPORT

By ROCKY CLARK

Where has Jack Butler been all these years?

That's what the crowd of Bridgeport jazz lovers wanted to know after they were introduced to his fine brand of cornet work during the Bridgeport Swing Club's first jam session April 29th at the Ritz Ballroom.

At any rate, Butler made a decided hit, along with Mezz Mezzrow, George Brunis, Art Hodes and Eddie Dougherty. The entire group was in rare form and left the customers clamoring for more when the hour of midnight arrived and the house lights had to be turned off. Rules are rules, of course.

Huddy (Leadbelly) Ledbetter was on hand, to strum his 12-string guitar and sing his inimitable blues during intermissions while the men in the band caught their breath. For the grand finale, Leadbelly remained on the platform singing and playing with the band, and exchanging some righteous jive talk with Brunis.

Whoever wrote in "The Jazz Record" that Brunis can be a one-man floor show when he's in the mood, certainly hit the nail on the head. George was in the mood at Bridgeport and gave the customers what they craved—even "Ugly Child."

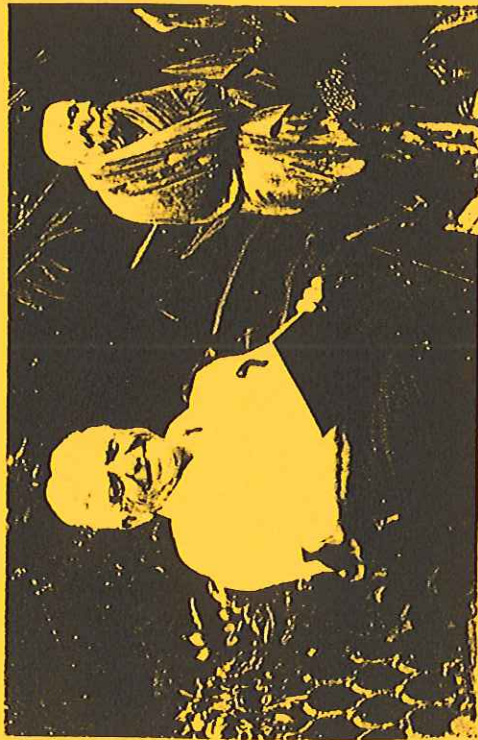
Mezz played beautifully, too. Hodes was in his usual good form, and Dougherty handled the drum sticks in fine fashion.

Rows of seats were placed before the bandstand in the large ballroom, and a couple of hundred people just sat there all evening—from 8:30 until midnight—as the musicians sent them out of this world.

The rest of the customers were the usual ballroom crowd, and they welcomed the hot jazz music as ideal for their lindy-hopping and shagging.

Nobody became any wealthier as a result of the session. It being the first ever held in Bridgeport, however, it was considered an artistic success. There's no doubt that a second session would draw a much bigger crowd. Everyone who attended the first would be back—they were so enthusiastic—and they'd bring along an army of friends.

Jazz is staging quite a comeback in Bridgeport anyway. Local musicians are getting together every Sunday afternoon at the Hollywood Restaurant, a night club, to get in their kicks. Each week the crowd is growing larger and more enthusiastic. Visiting musicians from "name bands" appearing at Bridgeport theaters are sneaking into the Hollywood between shows to get in a few kicks with the local boys, making up for the stuff they can't do on the theater stage. Most recent group to do so was a group from Joe Marsala's band.



MORRIS RAPHAEL

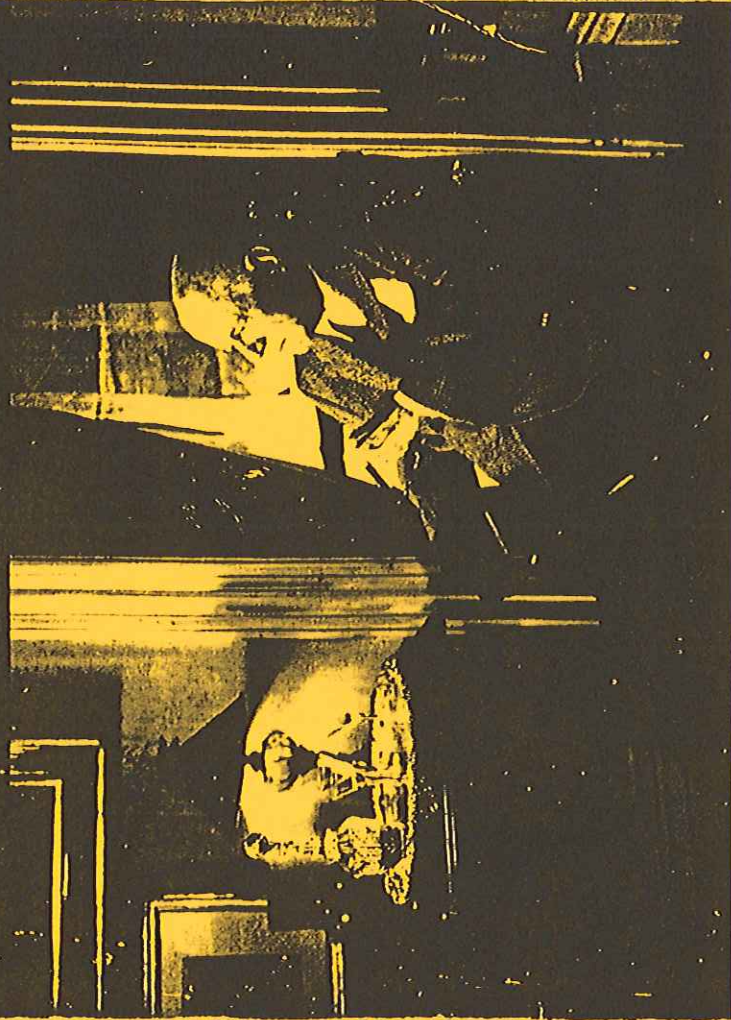
In the garden of the Shadows-on-the-Teche

Morris Raphael is an engineer by vocation and a writer by avocation. Although a native of Natchez, Mississippi, he has lived practically all of his adult life in Acadiana, including the communities of Franklin, Morgan City, Lafayette, Centerville and the place where he now lives, New Iberia, Louisiana.

Raphael is employed by Universal Fabricators at the Port of Iberia as a project engineer. He is a past president of the Attakapas Historical Association, the Iberia Cultural Resources Association, the New Iberia Kiwanis Club, and is presently on the board of the St. Mary Chapter of Louisiana Landmarks Society.

He has been published in many magazines and newspapers and has been the recipient of several awards. He was at one time City Editor of the Franklin Banner Tribune. In 1976 he was the author and publisher of a hardbound book entitled *The Battle in the Bayou Country*, which is well into its second printing, and in 1981 authored another popular book entitled *Weeks Hall—The Master of the Shadows*. In 1979 he received the Jefferson Davis award from the United Daughters of the Confederacy in recognition of his historical works.

The Weeks Hall Tapes



compiled and annotated by

Morris Raphael

The Weeks Hall Tapes

Raphael

Raphael Books

He died, I think, about seven or eight years ago. In a cemetery here, he lies buried under a concrete slab. Such is the tempo of our times, that there is no name, no date, nothing. Such is the tempo of our times, that he rests here in anonymity and silence, I am sure, awaiting the first note of the last trumpet.

I never knew him in his early great days. He came to me in his early 30s, as a yardman. His own terms. I had, in those days, a beautiful, highly-bred, English setter. They became devoted to each other and Bunk suggested that she was too much of a lady to be fed canned dog food. Therefore, he started to cook her meals for her. He said that he was sure that she liked seasonings just as we did. I had no cook, and I let him go ahead. Be it as it may, there finally evolved an excellent hash, perfectly seasoned, and added to it were yellow grits. Right from the beginning, Spot shared these delightful breakfast briskets. She was as much addicted to black coffee as was Bunk. The whole thing turned out very satisfactorily all around.

Shortly after all this, Bunk had to leave. He was given a position to teach music at some of the schools here. When he worked for me, he came only occasionally when I needed him or when I could find him. In absences from this place, he evidently resorted to the cup to relieve the drabness and the monotony of life in a small town. These moments of fantasy must have reached such heights that the authorities would hold him for his own safekeeping. This must have been so, because now and then, I would have letters from the dungeons from him. These were not written in blood, but in the only materials available to him—in pencil, on toilet paper, with a period after every word so that he would not miss the end of a sentence. He wanted little—Picayune cigarettes or Bull Durham.

When he was on the place here, he would talk interminably of old times and Louis Armstrong and his association with those who are now the immortals in his field. There were no tape recorders then. At this time he had

TAPE 45

A TAPE TO EDMOND SOUCHON⁵² (September, 1954)

Dear Edmond,

The tape which you just sent me stimulated me, as your father's pictures always did. It has led me into a train of thought, and into memories of Bunk Johnson,⁵³ here, in the last ten years of his life in New Iberia. Every now and then, someone passes through here and asks me about him, and asks where he is buried.

Many years ago, the Russian ballet under Diaghilev⁵⁴ produced for a time a short ballet which they had titled, "Le Tambeau de Couperin." It was a simple tribute to that musician of the late French Renaissance. This kind of thing is reminiscent of the needlework memorial pictures which were done a century or so ago. They were always symbolic and always contained a weeping willow tree and a mourner. These sparse recollections of Bunk and his last days are likewise meant to be a small tribute.

⁵²Dr. Edmond Souchon, II (1897-1968). He was a New Orleans surgeon, musician, author and jazz authority.

⁵³William Geary "Bunk" Johnson (1879-1949). World famous black jazz musician.

⁵⁴Sergei Pavlovich Diaghilev (1872-1929). Famous Russian ballet, art and music impresario.

no trumpet. Nor could he have played one—he had no teeth. He would continually say that Louis Armstrong had promised him a set. During the sugarcane grinding season, he drove a cane truck, and once he caught me when I was standing at my front gate. He ran over to me and pulled something out of his pocket, wrapped in toilet paper.

He said that Louis had sent him his teeth, and that Louis was going to send him a trumpet. I asked him why he didn't wear these teeth. He said that in the truck they joggled around in his mouth, and that he couldn't eat with them because they hurt him. He was waiting for his trumpet so that he could punctuate his notes with them.

I lost track of him for a long time—he seemed to be out of town. And then it came to me that he had been rediscovered by some authority on jazz, and that he had got a trumpet from somewhere and was somewhere recording his early style, which he had not used for many years. On account of old associations, I was, of course, tremendously excited. A phoenix arisen from the embers. I felt that his long years of silence would be a blessing, perhaps. He was preserved from the diluting and sweetening of his original period. All this would prove to be latent. He would come back primitive, archaic and strong as he was at first. It proved to be so.

Well, I hadn't seen Bunk in a long, long time. One week, the current issue of *Time* came in, and going through the pictures at first, in the division on Music, there was Bunk's picture. There followed an account of his having given a concert at the Palace of the Legion of Honor, in San Francisco, and of his rediscovery and of his triumph there. It amused me to tell people here for a day or so that this town had at last made the columns of *Time* magazine. I was asked where and how. I told them that they would have to find it for themselves. I do not remember if anyone ever did. He was totally unknown at that time in his own home town.

As I have said, I hadn't heard from Bunk in a long time. In the next day or two, an enormous roll of papers containing an issue of *Time* magazine came from San Francisco to me

by special delivery. These were all from Bunk, and with them was a letter from him. Bless him, he had remembered me first of all. The letter from him was typewritten and was in his usual style—a period after every word. Every sentence began with a capital. He said that he was well, and he hoped that I was, and that he was sending me a lot of papers with articles about himself. He said that he was writing on a typewriter which he had got secondhand and he said that he had on one side of him a very strong cup of black coffee and that this, together with the bell of the typewriter at the end of the line, kept him awake. Here he was, midway between 60 and 70, and he had left an auditorium filled with wild acclaim and applause. He said that he was unaccustomed to the folks out there and felt uneasy and could I find some way to get him, out there in San Francisco, a job lawn-mowing.

This recital, of course, brought him into the national public eye. He had his own name band afterwards—the band which would draw no audience unless he himself were there. He commenced to make a good deal of money. He was totally indifferent to all this. He would appear or he wouldn't appear. He had the assurance of genius. In this, his attitude during his latter years reminded me of the latter years of John Barrymore. When he might have been making hundreds of dollars a week, sometimes he was back of the house here fishing in the Bayou Teche.

I remember on one rainy Saturday night, the telephone rang about ten o'clock. It was a woman representative of *Life* magazine, who wanted him to come to New Orleans so that they could have a double-page spread on Bunk. I told her that *Life* was very sophisticated, but not enough so to know that at ten o'clock on Saturday night it would be very hard to find Bunk and those of his ilk. She asked me if he had a telephone at his house. I said that that would be the last place, even if he had had a telephone, that she would find him on Saturday night. I advised her to telephone the Harlem Grill and the Social Club and that she would find him there, probably incoherent. He was there, and he was

incoherent, but I had wanted her to find this out for herself. I didn't want to mix things up. The next day, he telephoned back from my house to this journalist, and arrangements were made, and I gave him money to go down for photographs in *Life*. I understand that he got off all right, but nobody ever saw him after that, so the photographs never appeared.

I went to his house the night that he was dying. The darkness, the dark figures in the shadows, and the silence of it all was not like Bunk at all. When he died, I wired *Time* and *Life*. The funeral was held up until a group of jazz connoisseurs could come down for it. I couldn't get to the funeral, but I sent flowers and loaned my driver and my automobile for the family, as an extra car. They all came around the next day and thanked me very, very nicely.

I never heard Bunk play with a band, but one night someone brought him here with his trumpet, a very valuable instrument, and he played for me alone. His only accompaniment was a pint of "Four Roses." As he warmed up, he told me that he had already banked a hundred thousand dollars. When he left, he borrowed five dollars. A pittance, indeed, for a private recital. The privilege was all mine.

He was a small man, with courtly manners, and white hair, and a skin like old aged walnut, and the kindest, gentlest eyes I have ever seen in a human face. May he rest in peace.

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THE HISTORIC NEW ORLEANS COLLECTION
KEMPER AND LEILA WILLIAMS FOUNDATION

February 1, 1994

JON KUKLA
Director

Mr. Claes Ringqvist, President
The Swedish Bunk Johnson Society
Baldersvägen 14B
s-852 34 Sundersvall
SWEDEN


Dear Mr. Ringqvist:

Thank you for the Swedish Bunk Johnson Society's generous gift of \$200 to the Historic New Orleans Collection. Our mission is to collect and preserve historical materials about New Orleans and promote the study and appreciation of the area's unique history and culture. We are pleased that you value these goals enough to share in their accomplishment -- and we shall dedicate your gift toward the care of Bunk Johnson material within the late William Russell's great jazz collection, which came here several weeks after his death.

The Historic New Orleans Collection treasures its reputation for exemplary care of the many cultural artifacts that donors and friends have entrusted to us. We are especially grateful for donations such as yours that enhance the service that our museum and research programs offer New Orleans, the region, and the nation. In addition to conveying our gratitude, we also hope that this letter will provide you with formal documentation of your charitable donation.

We look forward to your own visit in March and April.

Very truly yours,



Jon Kukla
Director

cc: Dr. Alfred E. Lemmon, Curator of Manuscripts



THE SWEDISH BUNK JOHNSON SOCIETY
Claes Ringqvist, President
Baldersvagen 14B
S-852 34 Sundsvall
SWEDEN

The Tulane Jazz Archive

Howard-Tilton Memorial Library

Acknowledges with Thanks and Appreciation

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February 7, 1995


Dr. Bruce Boyd Raeburn, *Curator*

