HOT JAZZ

FIONEL HAMPTON

VICTOR HOT JAZZ SERIES
VOL. III
CHINA STOMP—Fox Trot
(Chinatown, My Chinatown)
(William Jerome—Jean Schwartz)
Recorded April 26, 1937
Lionel Hampton and his Orchestra
(Lionel Hampton and Jess Stacy, Pianos; Johnny Hodges, Sax; Buster Bailey, Clarinet; Allen Reuss, Guitar; Cozy Cole, Drums; John Kirby, Bass)
STOMPOLOGY—Fox Trot
(Lionel Hampton)
Recorded April 14, 1937
Lionel Hampton and his Orchestra
(Lionel Hampton, Vibraphone; Cootie Williams, Trumpet; Lawrence Brown, Trombone; “Mezz” Mezzrow, Clarinet; Johnny Hodges, Sax; Allen Reuss, Guitar; John Kirby, Bass; Cozy Cole, Drums; Jess Stacy, Piano)
RING DEM BELLS—Fox Trot
(Duke Ellington—Irving Mills)
Recorded January 18, 1938
Lionel Hampton and his Orchestra
(Lionel Hampton, Vibraphone & Vocal; Edgar Sampson, Tenor Sax; Johnny Hodges, Alto Sax; Cootie Williams, Trumpet; Jess Stacy, Piano;
Bill Taylor, Bass; Allen Reuss, Guitar; Sonny Greer, Drums)
RHYTHM, RHYTHM—Fox Trot
(I Got Rhythm)
(Ira and George Gershwin)
Recorded April 26, 1937
Lionel Hampton and his Orchestra
(Lionel Hampton, Vibraphone; Johnny Hodges, Sax; Buster Bailey, Clarinet; Allen Reuss, Guitar; Jess Stacy, Piano; Cozy Cole, Drums; John Kirby, Bass)
DON'T BE THAT WAY—Fox Trot
(Edgar Sampson—Benny Goodman)
Recorded January 18, 1938
Lionel Hampton and his Orchestra
(Lionel Hampton, Vibraphones; Edgar Sampson,
Tenor Sax; Johnny Hodges, Alto Sax; Cootie
Williams, Trumpet; Jess Stacy, Piano; Bill
Taylor, Bass; Allen Reuss, Guitar;
Sonny Greer, Drums)
HOT JAZZ CLASSIC

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SID E 6

H J-3

40-0112-B

ON THE SUNNY SIDE OF THE STREET-Fox Trot
(Dorothy Fields-Jimmy McHugh)
Recorded April 26, 1937
Lionel Hampton and his Orchestra
(Lionel Hampton, Vibraphone & Vocal; Johnny
Hodges, Sax; Buster Bailey, Clarinet;
Allen Reuss, Guitar; Jess Stacy,
Piano; Cozy Cole, Drums;
John' Kirby, Bass)
SHOE SHINERS DRAG—Fox Trot
(Ferd Jelly-Roll Morton)
Recorded July 21, 1938
Lionel Hampton and his Orchestra
(Lionel Hampton, Vibraphone; Harry James, Trumpet; Benny Carter, Dave Matthews, Hershal Evans, Babe Rusin, Saxes; Billy Kyle, Piano; John Kirby, Bass; Joe Jones, Drums)
BUZZIN' ROUND WITH THE BEE—Fox Trot
(J. Hancock)
Recorded April 14, 1937
Lionel Hampton and his Orchestra
(Lionel Hampton, Vibraphone; Cootie Williams, Trumpet;
Lawrence Brown, Trombone; "Mezz" Mezzrow,
Clarinet; Johnny Hodges, Sax; Allen Reuss,
Guitar; John Kirby, Bass; Cozy Cole,
Drums; Jess Stacy, Piano)
VICTOR HOT JAZZ

by

LIONEL HAMPTON

VICTOR ALBUM HJ. 3
(VOLUME III)

A biographical sketch of Lionel Hampton and an authoritative analysis of his works. Written by Charles Edward Smith, author and critic of this form of vigorous native American music.
The HOT JAZZ of LIONEL HAMPTON

By CHARLES EDWARD SMITH

Lionel Hampton's approach to jazz is essentially modern. A Chicago critic, writing in a very journalistic style, said, "Lionel Hampton, whose cradle was a drum crate and whose heart beats in timpani time, came out of the musically golden West Wednesday night astride a platinum vibraphone, to give Chicago a taste of the music California said was sensational . . . which is breezy and metaphorically extravagant, but still suggests Lionel's place in JAZZ.

Commenting on the fact that Benny Goodman had encouraged him to organize his own band, Hampton remarked, "He says to get a band going, but I still like to drum . . ." This remark is the key to Lionel's musical personality. His feeling for rhythm and his ability to project it through his own talent, and that of groups with which he works, are the clues to his place in the world of modern jazz.

In the present album Lionel works with various small-band groups of his own choice. The records were made before he organized his own band, the men drawn from various bands, according to when and where the sessions took place. In this sense, they are less representative of a trend than of the spirit of modern jazz. In the 1920's, comparatively small bands often were organized units. A decade later this was less often the case. Many first-rate jazzmen had steady employment with name bands in which they found remunerative work but seldom the opportunity to improvise. Yet this talent was still essential, commercially so, because even in big bands one could be featured in solos; artistically so, because in freedom of improvisation there was the choice to create.

On certain sides in this album no less than four different bands contribute to the personnel. Lionel's favorites came from diverse orchestral groups but had, perhaps, one thing in common: Most of the men would usually be typed as "modern," either because they belonged to a younger group in jazz or because their styles had changed to such a degree that some such category was necessary to describe them.

All fine instrumentalists, Lionel grouped them intelligently, giving exceptional scope to the solo talent at his disposal. As might be expected, every number is remarkable for the drive of its rhythm. And they have a certain uniformity of aliveness, sophistication and wit—qualities, in short, that belong to Lionel's personality.

Breaking theatre records in almost every metropolitan center, Lionel Hampton's success in jazz is now an established fact. He's won many polls in music magazines and his talent on vibraphone has twice won him awards in the annual Esquire poll.
Lionel’s Early Years

Lionel Hampton was born in Louisville, Kentucky, April 12, 1914. However, his family soon moved to Birmingham and then to Chicago. Lionel’s childhood, for the most part, was spent in the latter city. He attended Douglass Grammar school and went on from there to St. Elizabeth's High School where he first took an active interest in music, studying it in school and playing bass drum in the Chicago Defender Band under the leadership of Major N. Clark Smith.

In those days Chicago was concluding one of the bright decades of jazz — the 1920’s. Lionel had the opportunity to hear some of the best drummers, both in town and those who came in with bands on tour. He heard Louis Armstrong and other jazzmen who had helped to shape this style and bring it to maturity. By the time he went to California, at the age of sixteen, he was well on the way to being a jazzman himself.

In California, Hampton took a job as night school janitor so that he could attend daytime classes in music at the University of Southern California. Still in his teens, he joined Paul Howard's Quality Serenaders (with whom he recorded for Victor on discs now out of print). In the Serenaders he played drums and sang an occasional vocal.

His second important band job was with Lee Hite’s Orchestra, which got considerable movie picture work. While not exceptional in its personnel, the orchestra included several men — such as trombonist Lawrence Brown — who have since become well known. In 1932, however, Louis Armstrong came out to the Coast. He'd just returned from England, had no band of his own, and through a special arrangement he "fronted" the Hite group. The lolling read Louis Armstrong and His Sebastian New Cotton Club Orchestra.

Lute, in fact, set the pace for the band and Lionel Hampton, at eighteen, became drummer for the man whose work in jazz he had admired for so many years. That was an important period for Lionel because the Cotton Club patrons wanted both music for dancing and music for listening. In either instance the rhythm had to give Louis the steady tempo he needed for his swinging style. It was invaluable experience for Lionel. Drum passages were not as often featured in those days but his were, for in such choruses he proved himself not merely a showman but a musician who could use the drums as a solo instrument, playing around the beat in his inventive fashion while the band emphasized the steady pulse. In the Bing Crosby picture, “Pennywise From Heaven,” he was featured for a memorable episode, and of course he was also featured in the band’s network shots.

Introduction to the Vibraphone

At a studio one day, Lionel toyed with a vibraphone, and Louis suggested he begin to "work the vibes." Already accomplished as drummer and vocalist, Lionel set out to master the new instrument. As we know, he has made it his own just as Red Norvo has practically covered the jazz bass on the vibraphone.

The instruments, by the way, are somewhat different although at jazz sessions I’d see Lionel alternate with the informality characteristic of such affairs. The vibraphone consists of wooden bars, with tubes underneath to amplify the sound. The vibraphone - or eddibar, as the term is interchangeably employed meta bars, with
tubes at the top of which little brass, mechanically operated, gives the instrument its "vibrating" quality. There have been few talented jazzmen on either instrument, possibly because neither is standard orchestral equipment. Certain instruments, in any case, seem to belong outside the jazz family until a talented person comes along to prove their relationship. Lionel Hampton helped to establish such a place for vibraphone.

When Louis Armstrong returned East, Lionel stayed on, doing Cafe jobs in Los Angeles. It was while working at the Paradise in 1936 that he got together in an after-hours session with Benny Goodman, a series that led to the formation of the Benny Goodman quartet. In that same year Down Beat, the musician’s magazine, voted Lionel the most exciting new artist of the year.

About This Album

It was while with Goodman that Lionel made the records in this album. The urge to experiment with unusual combinations, to play the piano in his own special style acquired from working the vibes, and to achieve a rhythm that is often the only factor on the album that is a star — not withstanding the fact that his personal contributions are, indeed, the ones that make it so exciting. It’s a good album, and it’s one that I’d recommend to anyone who wants to hear something new and exciting in the world of jazz.
CHINA STOMP—Victor Record 40.0110-A. Recorded April 30, 1937.
Personnel: Lionel Hampton and his Orchestra (Lionel Hampton and Jess Stacy), Piano; Johnny Hodges, Sax; Benny Bailey, Clarinet; Allen Reno, Guitar; Casey Cole, Drums; John Kirby, Bass.

Here is one of the most unusual numbers in this album, and not merely because Lionel does not play the vibraphone. Expressed in brilliantly fast and smooth tempo, it finds Hampton, taking up most of the record, sharing the piano with Jess Stacy. The latter, along with the other rhythm instruments, give him excellent support. Stacy's steady driver and Cory's thrusts on the drums fill out one of the most extraordinary piano styles in jazz. For Lionel is not playing tricks in his so-called two-finger style of execution; he's merely using his fingers as he would the mallets on the vibraphone, striking the keys with incredible speed and with a much more penetrating effect than any gesture in the usual keyboard style. The ensemble is in to support him at the climax, which is highlighted by a humorous flash of trouble.

STOMPOLOGY—Victor Record 40.0110-B. Recorded April 14, 1937.
Personnel: Lionel Hampton and His Orchestra (Lionel Hampton, Vibraphone; Cookie Williams, Trombone; Lawrence Brown, Trombone; "Moe" Nazonov, Clarinet; Johnny Hodges, Alto Sax; Allen Reno, Guitar; John Kirby, Bass; Casey Cole, Drums; Jess Stacy, Piano).

This number, written by Hampton, is not so important as a melodic composition as it is an example of his particular treatment of a thematic idea. The vibraphone lends itself to repetitions of phrases, quickly executed passages—runs so abruptly superimposed, that the performance becomes a music of figurations. It is blended with the superior style of Johnnie Hodges on alto sax and the smoothly-paced trombone solo of Lawrence Brown. Hampton's concluding solo maintains the fast pace of the record and the number concludes with ensemble riffs cutting through his solo passages.

In person, STOMPOLOGY—a roll of the tunes in this album, is a reflection of Lionel's present and past associations. Lawrence Brown, his colleague in Lee Hite days, was by that time with Ellington. Also from the Ellington band are Hodges and trumpeter Cookie Williams. Cory Cole (drums) was from the Coast and Kirby had a little combination of his own—one that made him widely known. Reno, the excellent rhythm guitarist, was with Benny as was Stacy and Hampton himself. Moe Nazonov was (if memory serves us correctly) playing with IBM band dates at the time. This, and other dates, is typical of after-hours sessions when musicians play for their own enjoyment. While out to prove a point, if you wish, they prefer to do it in such a relaxed atmosphere.

Personnel: Lionel Hampton and His Orchestra (Lionel Hampton, Vibraphone and Vocal; Edgar Sampson, Baritone Sax; Johnny Hodges, Alto Sax; Cookie Williams, Trumpet; Jess Stacy, Piano; Billy Taylor, Base; Allen Reno, Guitar; Sonny Greer, Drums).

At the vibraphone, the establishment of the joyful mood of this Ellington tune in the opening phrases. It is played in moderate tempo and there is an enthusiastic rapport between solos and ensemble (it is quite probable Edgar Sampson did some spot arrangements of that tune). Hodges has a brief but eloquent passage, executed with his beautiful tone and his ever-present sense of proportion—slow and last phrases of notes played in a style that always flows. When he isn't scat-singing (which is a sort of instrumental-style use of voice without words) Lionel invents some new and appropriate lines to the Duke's melody. He is an exclusive player, as most jazz fans are aware, Coctie, famous for his grand work, comes into his own with a typical "attack" and is followed by an amusing passage on baritone sax by a gifted and still-underrated saxophonist, Edgar Sampson. As Hampton builds up the final section on vibraphone he is supported climactically in ensemble, first, by a harmonic, somewhat organ-like background, then by sharply-emphasized chords and finally, by riff phrases that increase in intensity. (Riff phrases will sound redundant but just that any phrase in the book.)

RHYTHM, RHYTHM.—Victor Record 40.0111-B. Recorded April 26, 1937.
Personnel: Lionel Hampton and His Orchestra (Lionel Hampton, Vibraphone; Johnny Hodges, Sax; Buster Bailey, Clarinet; Allen Reno, Guitar; Jess Stacy, Piano; Casey Cole, Drums; John Kirby, Bass).

Recorded in 1937, this record has the "jump" rhythm that was coming into popularity at that time, and Hodges' opening chorus establishes the mood effectively. It seems appropriate that on a Gershwin tune, with such a title, the rhythm instruments should receive particular attention. Jess Stacy has a brightly played solo, using his left hand to advantage, and Allen Reno—famous for his rhythm guitar, is in his own element here. Bailey's clarinet chorus, with its repetition of phrases and fast runs, sets the mood for the intricate solo by Hampton that follows. This solo is worthy of study, or just listening if you prefer, for its subtle and subtle handling of melody and rhythm.

DON'T BE THAT WAY—Victor Record 40.0112-A. Recorded January 18, 1938.
Personnel: Lionel Hampton and His Orchestra (Lionel Hampton, Vibraphone; Edgar Sampson, Baritone Sax; Johnny Hodges, Alto Sax; Cookie Williams, Trumpet; Jess Stacy, Piano; Billy Taylor, Base; Allen Reno, Guitar; Sonny Greer, Drums).

Although written by Benny Goodman and Edgar Sampson, one suspects the latter suggested the skeletal, but effectively arranged idea. The film of melody is quieter, more nostalgic than previous sides, and Hampton's passages alternates with ensemble phrases that have a cumulative effect. These are repeated again at the climax of the number. Sampson has his baritone saxophone with him as on RING DEM BELLS (made the same day) and in this instance uses it even more effectively, especially in the ensemble passages. Hodges takes over one of those full, legato solos for which he is famous, interspersed with more of Coctie's work with grand scale. Then we hear again from Hampton and the ensemble.

ON THE SUNNY SIDE OF THE STREET—Victor Record 40.0112-B. Recorded April 25, 1937.
Personnel: Lionel Hampton and His Orchestra (Lionel Hampton, Vibraphone and Vocal; Johnny Hodges, Sax; Buster Bailey, Clarinet; Allen Reno, Guitar; Jess Stacy, Piano; Casey Cole, Drums; John Kirby, Bass).

This famous Fields-McHugh tune, is notable both for Hodges' fine chart on alto and for Lionel's vocal. Phrasing occasionally in double tempo, Hodges carries his legato style, always with a fine sense of invention within the harmonic and melodic framework of the melody. (Contrary to the pop song, much of the very best
hot jazz makes no attempt to "bury the tune" but attempts, instead, to play variations on the melody, a tradition common to western European concert as well as to folk music). Hampton is given admirable support as he takes his vocal chorus, Hodges and Stacy inserting appropriate phrases as Lionel takes off in a vocal style as melodically and rhythmically right as his work on vibraphone.

**SHOE SHINERS DRAG—** Victor Record 40-0113-A. Recorded July 21, 1938.

*Personnel: Lionel Hampton and His Orchestra (Lionel Hampton, Vibraphone; Harry James, Trumpet; Benny Carter, Bass, Lennie Tristano, tenor sax, Billy Kyle, Piano; John Kirby, Bass; Joe Jones, Drums)*

Here is perhaps the best modern version of this old Jelly Roll Morton favorite; (The composer recorded it for Victor in the Twenties.) Keeping to his own style, and that of the men with him — essentially modern, as we have said above — Lionel, with Benny Carter's help in the arranging department, pays utmost tribute to Jelly in an opening that keeps faithfully to the composer's own idea, even to the Morton-like use of breaks by solo instruments. The order of solos, all of which are well played, is: Carter, alto; James, trumpet; Evans, tenor; Carter, clarinet, and of course, Lionel on vibraphone. Carter and Evans support each nicely on reed, both have clean, economically-phrased ideas. Presence of Badeen is again proof of Lionel's catholicity of taste in choosing men for these sides.

**BUZZIN' ROUND WITH THE BEE—** Victor Record 40-0113. Recorded April 14, 1937.

*Personnel: Lionel Hampton and His Orchestra (Lionel Hampton, Vibraphone; Connie Williams, Trumpet; Lawrence Brown, Trombone; "Men" Marquis, Clarinet; Johnny Hodges, Sax; Allee Brown, Guitar; John Kirby, Bass, Cozy Cole, Drums; Jim Stacy, Piano)*

In many of these sides, the tonal variety is a joy to listen in. That's certainly true of BUZZIN' ROUND WITH THE BEE, taken at a fast clip. Stacy's use of bass behind solos is very representative of his work. After Cootie sets the mood, soloists work it out — Hodges, Brown, and finally Lionel Hampton's vibes, as bright and percussive as they were on the first side in the album. As to the descriptive implications of the title, they are less important (though present) than the music as such.

References: Hupart Panamco Discourse, 14 Hot Jazz Books and Victor Records; Esquire's Jazz Book; 1932; The Jazz Record Book.

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