

Jazz 101 Summer/Fall 2020

Matthew FC Rivera

8/25/20 **Entertainment.** Early Soloists.

How did Jazz travel from New Orleans? When did solos come about?

Stories

Home Entertainment is music. Dancing.

The Record Industry???

Travel: Boats, cars, trains.

How Jazz Moved from New Orleans: Vaudeville, Excursion Boats, Circuses, The War, The Great Migration.

The Creole Band: Bill Johnson, Freddie Keppard etc. Victor Records.

The First Blues?

The Original Dixieland Jazz Band. Reisenweber's. Earl Fuller's Novelty Band. Rector's.

The Music

- The first jazz records have no solos, yet we recognize instruments and individuals.
- The solo becomes increasingly important.
- Three great jazz soloists: Armstrong. Bechet. Bix.
- A hierarchy of music and importance.
- Improvisation. Iconic repertoire: Roppolo's solo on Tin Roof Blues. Armstrong's solo on Potato Head Blues. Improvisation is feeling. Interpretation as much as invention.
- What is a solo? One musician plays while the other musicians stop playing or play non disruptive patterns behind the musician playing.
- What is collective ensemble playing? Listen for the melody, then go from there.

“Tin Roof Blues” by The New Orleans Rhythm Kings

The recordings of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings may be categorized as New Orleans Jazz, but the music they present is so much more complicated than one location or category. Their sound would be best described as early 1920s New Orleans Jazz played in Chicago with solos. Because of their innovative solos, many of which would become classics of jazz, the band epitomizes the “Chicago sound” of the early ‘20s as much as the New Orleans sound.

The New Orleans rhythm kings were comprised of musicians from New Orleans and Chicago, many of whom would be firmly associated with the style of jazz played in Chicago in the early 1920s. The NORK takes the spirit and ensemble playing approach of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band and mellows it out with a more laid back sense of swing and timing, and room for solos. And what soloists they were in this band! The tragically short lived Leon Roppolo has become legendary for his vibrato and deeply soulful performances, but trombonist George Brunies and cornetist Paul Mares are also sensitive and strong players. The band’s drummer, Ben Pollack, would go on to lead an orchestra in the 1920s with some hugely talented figures who become famous during the swing era including Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller, Jack Teagarden, and Jimmy McPartland.

Tin Roof Blues, recorded for Gennett Records in Richmond, IN, just a few weeks before King Oliver would make his recording debut in the very same studio, is one of the most iconic of the NORK recordings. Indeed King Oliver would later record Tin Roof Blues with significant references to the original NORK recording. The Leon Roppolo solo is standard repertoire for jazz clarinetists, and the many recordings of Tin Roof Blues being made to this day are a tribute to the successful deep blues playing of this initial recording.

Leader: Paul Mares **Personnel:** Paul Mares (cnt) George Brunies (tb) Leon Roppolo (cl) Mel Stitzel (p) Ben Pollack (d)

Location and Date: Richmond, IN, March 13, 1923

Matrix: 11359 **Take:** A **Title:** Tin Roof Blues **Label and Catalogue:** Gennett 5105

Song Form: 12 bar blues

4 bar piano introduction.

Introduction: 12 bar blues with cornet playing the melody.

Chorus: Two 12 bar blues choruses with cornet and trombone playing the melody. Clarinet weaves around them.

12 bar blues chorus. Trombone solo.

12 bar blues chorus. Clarinet solo.

12 bar blues chorus. All in. Everyone playing their hearts out.

2 bar coda led by cornet

“Potato Head Blues” by Louis Armstrong and his Hot Seven

The first series of recordings by Louis Armstrong and his Hot Five, which began in 1925, produced a huge string of masterpieces and solidified Louis Armstrong as a soloist of unbelievable powers. While singly mapping out the shape of swing to come, these recordings have remained incredibly moving and entertaining.

Of all the masterpieces and strings of masterpieces from this series of recordings, the climax of them all very well may be the Hot Seven sessions of May, 1927. This marathon of record dates included the regular instrumentation of the Hot Five: cornet, clarinet, trombone, piano and banjo, and added two tuba and drums to the rhythm section. There are solos galore on these recordings, and their main power and beauty is the room that they give Armstrong to shine with inspired, creative, impressionistic, and ever-swinging moments of isolated playing.

“Potato Head Blues” is actually not a 12 bar blues song form, nor is it 32 bar AABA. The recording is most famous for the 32 bar stop time solo that Louis Armstrong takes near the end of the recording. With one phrase flowing into the next, Armstrong rides a wave at once emotional and virtuosic. It’s a jaw dropping and uplifting moment that gave Armstrong his reputation and legacy. Of course the rest of the record is fantastic as well, with that New Orleans feeling and a modern 1920s Chicago use of solos and musicianship. Following the form of the NORK hybrid, with everybody playing in at least the first and last chorus and a few featured solos throughout, Armstrong opens up the possibilities for freedom and individuality within that sturdy structure.

Leader: Louis Armstrong **Personnel:** Louis Armstrong (tp,vcl) John Thomas (tb) Johnny Dodds (cl) Lil Armstrong (p,vcl) Johnny St. Cyr (bj) Pete Briggs (tu) Baby Dodds (d)

Location and Date: Chicago, May 10, 1927

Matrix: 80855 **Take:** C **Title:** Potato Head Blues **Label and Catalogue:** OKeh 8503

Song Form: Neither

32 bars: of full on improvised beauty with Armstrong stating the melody on trumpet.

16 bar verse: Armstrong trumpet solo.

32 bar: clarinet solo (don’t ignore this beauty in the midst of all the other beauty!)

4 bar transition: 3 bars Banjo. Louis plays last bar on trumpet building into his solo.

32 bar verse: Armstrong stop time trumpet solo including a reference to King Oliver’s “Tears”.

16 bars: “Ride out” chorus. Everyone all in hell for leather and billy be damned.