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# On the Instrumental Origins of Jazz

*There is something in it of divinity more than the ear discovers: it is an hieroglyphical and shadowed lesson of the whole world . . .*

THEY began to appear in the streets of Southern cities, especially New Orleans, even before the Civil War: ragged Negroes making strange music on an equally strange variety of "instruments"—washboards, washtubs, jugs, tin whistles, and occasionally a four-string banjo. Often the instruments were even more primitive than these: for example, "a drygoods box beaten with sticks or bones and a drum made by stretching a skin over a flour barrel."[1] "Other performers rang triangles, and others twanged from jew's-harps an astonishing amount of sound!"[2]

The instruments of these early American musicians, it will be noted, were mainly percussive. There were large drums made of wood, and smaller ones of bamboo (called, from this circumstance, *bamboula*[3]); the jawbones of team-animals were also popular, with a stick or similar implement being scraped or rubbed against the loosened teeth to give a rattling sound.—And, to the music of these eccentric ensembles, other Negroes danced with an abandon that white observers, schooled in the predominantly Anglo-Saxon proprieties of the nineteenth-century United States, could only describe as "lascivious" or "barbaric."

[1]Lafcadio Hearn, quoted by Robert Goffin in *Jazz* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1946), p. 23. Hereafter Goffin.

[2]George W. Cable, in the *Century Magazine* for 1885, also quoted by Goffin, p. 26.

[3]Also the name of a Negro dance that was popular in New Orleans.

For this was a music neither by nor for the white man. It was the music of a race that he had long oppressed—a music born in captivity and nurtured by an unlettered people—that now made its way to the urban centers via Negroes whose masters had freed them. The ex-slaves' early haven was New Orleans, a city that attracted them perhaps because of the confusion of races there: it was a city of quadroons and octoroons who had long been freed, and who, in many cases, had risen to positions of affluence;[4] it was thus a liberal city, and emancipation and defeat of the Confederacy increased the flow of rural Negroes into the uptown section. But this was happening all along the Gulf Coast and as far north as St. Louis—"blues singers . . . from the plantations, and journeyman piano-players found a kind of roving, city work which they held for years."[5] The more primitive musicians followed on their heels, playing their homemade instruments at the doings in such places as New Orleans' *Place des Nègres*, later known as Congo Square. It was these who midwifed into existence what we know as *jazz;* but the manner in which they did this has never been described.

It is a matter of record now that the vocal *blues* and piano *ragtime* preceded instrumental jazz. The blues is probably the older of these forms, deriving from the field shouts and hollers sung long before the Civil War. Ragtime, or at least the music recognizable as such, grew up in Sedalia and St. Louis, Missouri, during the 1890's. That leaves jazz, which we have long been told was born in New Orleans, c. 1900; but here our history is a little vague, and we are usually content to take the 1890's band of the famous Buddy Bolden as our point of departure. Not everybody is, however, and certain scholars in recent years have been concerned with the musical influences operative on Bolden. Still, with all this, we do not yet know very much about the musical hiatus separating Bolden from such a musician as "Stalebread Charley" Lacomb.

The mere mention of Stalebread serves as a red flag for many jazz critics, for Stalebread and his Spasm Band are largely the creatures of Herbert Asbury in his book *The French Quarter* (1938). Here is his description of them:

> . . . a company of boys, from twelve to fifteen years old, who called themselves the Spasm band. They were the real creators of jazz, and

[4]For example, the New Orleans clarinetist, Alphonse Picou, tells how his "Creole Negro grandfather owned slaves and sent his children to Paris to be educated"—in *The Jazz Record Book* by Charles Edward Smith, Frederic Ramsey, Jr., Charles Payne Rogers, and William Russell (New York: Smith & Durrell, 1942), p. 117.

[5]*Ibid.*, p. 3.

the Spasm Band was the original jazz band. . . . The musicians were Emile Lacomb, otherwise Stalebread Charley, who played a fiddle made out of a cigar-box; Willie Bussey, better known as Cajun, who performed entrancingly upon the harmonica; Charley Stein, who manipulated an old kettle, a cowbell, a gourd filled with pebbles, and other traps and in later life became a famous drummer; Chinee, who smote the bull fiddle, at first half a barrel and later a coffin-shaped contraption built by the boys; Warm Gravy; Emile Benrod, called Whiskey, and Frank Bussey, known as Monk. The three last-named played whistles and various horns, most of them home-made, and each had at least three instruments, upon which he alternated. Cajun Bussey and Stalebread Charley could play tunes upon the harmonica and fiddle, and the others contributed whatever sounds chanced to come from their instruments. . . .

The Spasm Band first appeared in New Orleans about 1895, and for several years the boys picked up many an honest penny playing in front of the theaters and saloons and in the brothels. . . . Thus [jazz] began. And now look!

The second and the last two sentences quoted have made this passage particularly irritating to the student of jazz, for nothing *began* with the Spasm Band; there were many such bands in existence before 1895. What we have here, in brief, is an account of one such band; and—as far as it goes, and excepting the extravagance of the claims we have noted—it is a nicely detailed and useful account of a musical phenomenon on which jazz was to build.

There are numerous examples of the "spasm" or "skiffle"[6] band in the race records made for the Negro phonograph trade, especially during the period 1900-1930. Moses Asch lists[7] some of the companies who produced only for this trade, among them Diva, Swan, Savoy, Four Star, Seco, and Banner. Much of the music is available now in reissued records, as well as in the contemporary ethnic recordings of Asch's own Folkways Corporation.[8] Thus, we are able to hear, in a random sampling, the Mississippi Jook, Memphis Jug, Dallas String, and Jim Jam Bands. And this is not all: there are, in addition, the many jug and washboard bands with whom such later jazz notables as King Oliver, Louis Armstrong, and Johnny Dodds recorded at the

[6]The term "skiffle," of Chicago Negro origin apparently, was first used to describe what was also called the "rent party," a "South Side institution . . . run by the landlady to pay the rent by the proceeds from the sale of home-cooked food and nefarious, bootleg liquor . . ." (Rudi Blesh, *Shining Trumpets* [New York: Knopf, 1946], p. 303). Hereafter: Blesh. The music for these affairs was furnished by itinerant blues pianists, who developed a "good time" style of playing which has come to be known as rent party or skiffle piano. More recently, the meaning of skiffle has been extended to include the kind of music we hear in jug bands, a type of the aboriginal spasm band. It is in this wider sense that I am using the word here.

[7]In his foreword to the notes for the recorded *Jazz*, Vol. I, "The South" (Folkways Album FOLL 53).

[8]Cf. *Negro Folk Music of Alabama*, 2v. (Albums 1417 and 1418).

beginning of their careers. The music is not negligible—it reveals the manner in which Negro musicians playing legitimate instruments emerged from a background of tambourines and kazoos. It also reveals, on a broader scale, how many of the instrumental conventions of jazz evolved; how this essentially rural and nameless music, carried to the cities by skiffle bands, was urbanized—which, in this sense, also means formalized—by the re-instrumentation which it underwent.

This is the true beginning of jazz; all other developments and innovations are secondary. Between the original music of the American Negro's dances, rhythmized on drums and tonalized by the human voice—between this music and instrumental jazz is the music of the skiffle band. The blues and ragtime, the marching bands of New Orleans, influenced this latter music, to be sure; but it is the skiffle band itself, the principles of its instrumentation, that determined the shape and extent of that influence, as we shall see.

II

There were many subvarieties of the skiffle band in pre-jazz days, but the instruments that soon became standard were the jug, bones, washboard, washtub, banjo, harmonica or mouth harp, kazoo, and violin. The derivations of some of these are interesting in themselves—the washtub, for example. This, as has been pointed out by Harold Courlander, "is not, as some have supposed, simply a demonstration of the Negro's facility at making anything into a musical instrument." I quote his description of the tub in full:

It is an Americanized model of an old African instrument, the earth bow. The African prototype is made by placing a membrane of bark or stiff leather over a hole in the ground to provide a sound chamber. To this membrane a cord is attached. The other end of the cord is connected to the tip of a bowed sapling set firmly in the ground at an angle. The string is played by plucking or tapping, and tone is varied by pressing upward or downward on the bow. The tub which is used in the United States is a variant of this originally African device. It is constructed in the following way: A washtub is inverted and a cord attached to its bottom, which acts as a sounding board. A stiff stick, usually a broom stick about four feet long, is braced against the lip at the outer diameter of the tub, and the string is attached to its upper end. The tub is played in precisely the same manner as the earth bow. The string is usually plucked with the thumb and forefinger, or sometimes tapped with a stick. On occasion another musician will beat sticks on the inverted drum as well. This also conforms to the practice in Haiti and Africa. It is interesting to observe in regard to the tub how its tradition carried over into urban music. In certain styles of jazz performance the double bass fiddle is played almost precisely as though it were a tub rather than an instrument for bowing. The

over-all tonal effects of the double bass fiddle in a jazz orchestra are those of the washtub in the street band.[9]

In the case of the washboard, it seems that we are confronted with a modification of the jawbone described by G. W. Cable; for sticks or thimbled fingers drawn across the corrugations of the washboard produce a sound corresponding to that effected by scraping a stick along the teeth of the skeletal jaw.

Another instrument, the bones, seems to have had a similar origin. The manufactured bones I have seen are about an inch wide and five or six inches long, slightly curved from end to end, and held in pairs between the first and second and second and third fingers of either hand. They are played by shaking the wrists, which causes the ends of the loosely held bones to click together, an effect which can also be achieved with a pair of spoons. The point I want to make, however, is that the manufactured bones, both in size and configuration, resemble the ribs of a pig, which is undoubtedly what they were in their original form. It is also worth remarking that the bones and washboard, probably because of their similarity in sound, are seldom heard together in the same skiffle band.

Now these are rhythm instruments—the bones, washboard, and tub; and so is the banjo. We are able to trace the Negro propensity for this instrument—and its cousins, later adopted, the mandolin and guitar—to Africa, most notably to the *kora*, a twenty-one-stringed harp-guitar, and to the rudimentary calabash banjo. These are standard in the instrumentation of West African music,[10] as are of course the drums. Significantly, drums, as such, very rarely appear in skiffle music. This may be because, with the exception of Congo Square, native-type drumming was frowned upon by the Negroes' white masters;[11] also because skiffle is lighter in melodic texture than either the many-stringed and extremely polymetric music of Africa, or that of the massed voices in Congo Square. What is wanted in skiffle from the rhythm instruments is rhythm first of all—even at the expense of tone. This tone, so omnipresent in the big drum, or *ka*, described by Lafcadio Hearn,[12] and its companion, the smaller *bamboula*, is not, however, lost in skiffle music but transferred to the tub and/or jug. These serve almost the same tonal and rhythmic functions, which accounts for the fact that, like the bones and washboard, they are

[9]In his notes for "Salty Dog," in *Negro Folk Music of Alabama*, Vol. I. Hereafter: NFMA.

[10]A treasure-house of such music, complete with analyses and notations, is the recorded three-album *Tribal, Folk, and Café Music of West Africa* (Field Recordings, N. Y.).

[11]Blesh, p. 35.

[12]In *Two Years in the French West Indies*, quoted in Goffin, pp. 10-11.

seldom included in the same band.

The jug, unlike the instruments discussed thus far, would seem to be, so far as we can tell, of American origin. It is a wind instrument of the primitive whistle type: the player blows into the open neck, adjusting the angle to vary the tone. It is often heard in white hillbilly ensembles; and there is more than a possibility that the white man adapted it to this musical usage first. However that may be, it is an instrument that serves to tonalize rhythm. Along with the tub, it is a *bass* instrument; and as the tub is the progenitor in jazz instrumentation of the double-bass fiddle, or string bass, so the jug is the ancestor of the tuba. But these are matters which I shall take up in more detail later on, for we are next brought to a consideration of the skiffle band's melody instruments.

These are, as I have already mentioned, usually the harmonica, kazoo, and violin. The first of these, as Courlander tells us,[13] has always been "an extremely popular instrument in the South. Its inexpensiveness, its portability, and its adaptability to Negro folk themes have given it a secure place in the musical scene." And then, too, it has the "capacity to produce harmonic effects and difficult passages beyond the limitation or tradition of the voice . . . ." The harmonica is of American invention, and first appeared in the 1820's.[14] The Negro immediately took to it, perhaps because he already possessed a home-made instrument, a kind of pandean pipes, closely resembling the harmonica in playing-principle—the movement in front of the mouth. These pipes are also described by Cable in his historic *Century Magazine* article, as follows: "To all this [drums, jawbones, marimbas, banjos, and rattles] there was sometimes added a Pan's pipe of but three reeds, made from single joints of the common brake cane and called by English-speaking Negroes 'the quills'. . . ."[15] Now this—the fact that the quills was almost the sole purveyor of melody in the orchestra of 1885 which Cable describes—could very well account for the similar melodic responsibility of the harmonica in much early skiffle music. The harmonica is, however, a more complex instrument—an "organ," in fact—and this may have played a part in the developing conception of the instrumental ensemble as *multi-voiced.* It was not to be so on a single instrument but, finally, three;[16] and this whole development would also largely depend on the Negro's pre-American conventions of antiphonal part singing[17]—that is to say, it would depend on the

[13]In his notes for "Mama Don't Tear My Clothes," *NFMA*, Vol. I.
[14]See *Harvard Dictionary of Music* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1950), "Harmonica (2)."
[15]Quoted by Goffin, p. 27.
[16]I.e., clarinet, cornet, and trombone.
[17]For a discussion of these, see Blesh, pp. 33ff.

extension of these voice parts into instrumental parts, while at the same time the *feeling* of human voicing was preserved. Thus, in the choral and solo voice conventions which persisted in the South among Negroes well after the birth of jazz, we find human voices apparently attempting to become nonhuman, to become instruments; looking back from our present vantage point, we discover that one of the jazz musician's esthetic problems is to make his instrument into a voice.

It is here, in this transition stage, that the kazoo is important. This instrument, "in the form of a pipe closed at one end by a membrane, and with a side-hole into which one sings in one's natural voice, the tone issuing in a nasal and caricatural timbre," is technically called a *mirliton*, and was known in the seventeenth century as the *flûte-eunuque*.[18] Ordinarily considered a toy, it has been, when employed by Negro skiffle musicians, a formidable voice. Its great advantage in this kind of music, which leads ultimately to jazz, is that through it the human voice is only partially transmuted, only partially "instrumentalized"; and that, or its converse, is precisely the effect desired in jazz. Also its tonality is caricatural, another desired effect: this same effect is to be found in much of the plunger-style trumpet playing in jazz. Thus, what we have with the introduction of the kazoo is a first, and primitive, attempt to instrumentalize the voice, without the voice losing its human attributes. In this, it would hardly be correct to say that the Negro was conscious of what he was doing; it is not that he felt any conscious concern to preserve a human voicing in his newly instrumentalized music; it is merely that he could not do anything else, given his particular social and musical background.

But this was just a beginning. Other instruments began to appear.

The violin was one of the first legitimate instruments taken up by the Negro; it is difficult to say just when. Better known as the fiddle, it had long provided the main accompaniment at white rural dances, and it is probably in the rural areas that the Negro first became acquainted with it. But in New Orleans too, this instrument was important, in the French and downtown Creole string ensembles, which furnished the music for Negro social dancing prior to 1890. Infrequently heard in skiffle groups, and very rarely in jazz, the violin has persisted, however, as an alternate lead melody instrument in skiffle instrumentation up to the present time. Its great drawback is its slender tonal force, and what is almost the impossibility of using upon it a driving attack.

The piano fared better in this respect. When the skiffle band performed in the streets, it was of course physically impossible to include

[18] *Harvard Dictionary of Music*, "Mirliton."

the piano. Later, however, when the band moved into the lower class dance halls, and, later still, into the recording studios, the piano made its appearance. But this was long after the advent of jazz, after the ragtime "professors" had come on the scene; and it was these professors, more than anyone else, who brought the piano into jazz.

When we arrive at this point, we are beyond the period in which skiffle, its instrumentation and music, had any direct influence upon the formation of jazz, but one further matter needs comment.

This is the process by which we see a melody superstructure being built upon the original skiffle rhythm. As we have noted, Negro music at its beginnings in the United States was, for the most part, a loose grouping of rhythm *instruments* and *human* voices. The melodic burden at first was laid very heavily on the voices. Then, little by little, we discover that the voices are becoming instrumentalized. This means that certain of the rhythm instruments—especially those of the plucked lute family: banjo, mandolin, and guitar—which had seemed on the verge of coming into the dominant melodic position which they, or their instrumental cousins, had held in the music of Africa, are now forced back, with the exception of a few incidental solo functions, into the rhythm, or accompanying, category for good. They are replaced by the instrumental *voices*—first, of the harmonica, then of the kazoo; and, finally, in jazz, by the melodic and vocal triad of clarinet, cornet or trumpet, and trombone. It is here that we find one of the white, or European, influences upon American Negro music; it is the central one, I think, and the one which has the most to do with the birth of jazz. We may call it—as I have called it heretofore—the instrumentalizing of the human voice. Such instrumentalizing of voices in the mass subsequently leads to their conscious individuation. It is out of this kind of situation that jazz evolved.

III

The major part of the process seems to have taken place in New Orleans, owing to the fact that the city was a great center for brass bands, the music and instrumentation of which could not fail to impress the developing Negro musician. What he needed were instruments which he could vocalize, and which had enough range and inherent force to express his musical feelings, which were nothing if not emphatic and even strident. He found these instruments in the cornets, trombones, and clarinets of the brass band; he also discovered in the bass and snare drums of the band a more efficient and portable pair of percussion instruments than he had been in the habit of employing in Congo Square. He began to form his own brass bands; this

was facilitated by a cheap and plentiful supply of instruments from the Confederate Army bands which had demobilized in New Orleans just after the Civil War.[19] The first Negro bands appeared in the 1880's, the decade which saw a reluctant closing-out of the activities in Congo Square.[20] By now, the historians of jazz have made us familiar with the social employment of these bands, which usually represented Negro labor and fraternal organizations: they played mostly for street parades and funerals, and at the great carnival of the Mardi Gras.[21] It was not until about the time of the appearance of Buddy Bolden in the early '90's that these bands also began to play as *dance* bands, to take their music indoors, replacing the traditional string ensembles. In a very short time, the remaining string ensembles had the character of archaic survivals of a time, never to return, which had seen the famous Quadroon Balls and the faithful perpetuation in New Orleans music of the French quadrilles, waltzes, light classical and operatic pieces which had graced them. The music of the rural, or "black," Negro had conquered, through the instrumentation of the brass band, the music of his urban brother.

This "black" music, so-called, was nothing more or less than the continuation of the African tradition, fragmented and modified though it had become, in America; it was the music carried to the cities by the skiffle bands. But we must not forget that this music alone did not make jazz; it had to be exposed to European—and, what is more, *Europeanizing*—influences. It met them in New Orleans, and the most powerful of them turned out to be European-style instrumentation. The Negro, of course, transformed in his own interests the ultimate aims of this instrumentation; but it, in turn, modified the continuing development of his music.

I have already indicated one of these crucial modifications: the aborting of the tendency toward a neo-African music once again based on percussion and strings. This halting of a development which was probably more a result of habit than anything else was largely effected by the Negro's discovery of the musical wherewithal to convert his vocal propensities into instrumental ones. Thus, the vocal-percussive music which he had developed as a slave in America escaped a retrogression into a post-slavery imitation of its West African prototype, and evolved into an original and completely instrumental music.

This would not have been possible without the operation of white

[19]Blesh, p. 155.

[20]The Square was eventually divided into lots; see Goffin, p. 17.

[21]See Blesh, pp. 153-54, *The Jazz Record Book*, pp. 9-10. The funeral and marching aspects of the band are best experienced musically on Jelly Roll Morton's record, *Oh Didn't He Ramble*, "a three-minute music drama" (Bluebird 10429).

influences—or the rudimentary experiments in the skiffle units, which would seem to have been directed toward the expansion of the Negro's existing percussive instrumentation into a standard ensemble encompassing a wider range of expressive possibilities. As we have seen, the skiffle band had already determined the composition of the rhythm section, excepting the piano, and through the kazoo was anticipating the instrumentalizing of the choral voices by the time of Bolden. It was thus the brass band—really, a wedding of the brass band's wind instruments with the archetypal rhythm organization in the skiffle band—that completed the last step in this instrumentalizing process, and supplied us with the first formulation (classically found in Bolden's band) of what we now know as the "standard" jazz ensemble.[22]

But this did not happen overnight; and even as late as the 1920's we find the process still going on. There are, for example, among the many jazz records made in the twenties, a considerable number in which instrumental survivals of the skiffle band may be heard. (There are, of course, many full-fledged skiffle bands also recording in this same period, but I am speaking of records apart from theirs.) Take the washboard bands of such famed jazz musicians as Louis Armstrong and Johnny Dodds: here we find the two masters of the trumpet and clarinet, respectively, playing with a single-minded concentration on the over-all ensemble effect, a quality which is lacking to some extent (this is certainly true of Armstrong) on their later records made with more orthodox instrumental groups. *The Blues Stampede, Easy Come, Easy Go* (reissued by Hot Clubs of America, HC 38) is a good example. Dodds and Armstrong appear together on this record, along with Jimmy Blythe, piano, and Jimmy Bertrand, washboard. The washboard of Bertrand—the loose but driving beat which he achieves on it—seems to qualify the playing of the two horns, to bring them more closely together in tightly constructed melodic patterns, and to cause them to play more rhythmically than is usual even for two such traditional jazz musicians. The sides are very subtle in this ensemble cohesion: the tunes, the melodic variations and figures, the rhythmic devices, the technical displays of all concerned, are simplicity itself. Yet the effect is far from simple; and the more closely the record is studied, the more fantastically intertwined the playing of these four musicians is found to be. What we are hearing is not so much jazz of the classic twenties period as a mutation of that simple but tightly knit rural music of the "black" Negro that antedated jazz: what we have called

[22]In Bolden's band, "One, sometimes two, cornets; a trombone; a B-flat clarinet and often a C clarinet as well. Guitar; string bass; traps consisting of snare and bass drum."—*The Jazz Record Book*, p. 26.

skiffle. The instrumentation is not standard here, so we cannot have the standard voice-divisions of the traditional New Orleans polyphony; we get something, instead, leading up to that polyphony. It is music in the tradition; but of that moment in the tradition when skiffle is discovered in the act of *becoming* jazz.

That Bertrand and Blythe appear on this record is interesting in itself, for they are, in general, at the center of this transition from skiffle to jazz, especially Bertrand. He is something of a "subsurface" figure in the evolution of classic jazz; he seems to stand precisely at that point where the more primitive "black" music shades into the finished elegance of the recorded performances of such bands as that of Jelly Roll Morton. Bertrand, in fact, was one of the mainstays of a little-known Chicago band which perfectly illustrates this transition phase: labeled variously on its records the "State Street Ramblers," the "Night Hawks," and the "Sizzling Six," this band had as its more or less permanent personnel, Roy Palmer, trombone; Alfred Bell, cornet; Darnell Howard, clarinet and sax; Bertrand and Blythe—or, sometimes, Frank Melrose, piano; and, on certain records, a banjo, which has not yet been identified. The nominal leaders were Palmer and Howard—Palmer who had played with the Noone-Pettit band of 1915-16; and Howard who had been with Jelly Roll Morton and Oliver's later band. As for the others, they all seem to have been somehow in the "second-line" of jazz musicians playing in Chicago in the twenties. But they are not inferior musicians, as their records testify—nor as the stature of the musicians with whom they performed would seem to imply: Bertrand and Blythe, for example, were with Johnny Dodds' Washboard Band; Melrose, a white man, was the friend and disciple of Morton. It is only Alfred Bell about whom we seem to know nothing. He is, however, one of the most fascinating instrumentalists on the Palmer-Howard records. He furnishes us with illustrative material for the thesis that we have been pursuing; for he is not to be heard merely as a cornetist—he also plays kazoo and violin.

On one of the earliest Palmer-Howard records—*Barrel House Stomp, Kentucky Blues* by the State Street Ramblers (recently reissued by Jazz Classics, 515)—Bell plays kazoo on both sides. He plays it, moreover, like a cornet (and with almost the volume of a muted cornet); and we have the traditional three-voiced melody section of New Orleans, with no one on the record apparently feeling that there is anything amiss in this introduction of a kazoo into the lineup as "lead." On a second, and later, record, then, Bell plays violin. This is the Hot Clubs of America reissue of *Biscuit Roller* by the Night Hawks, HC 74; and once again Bell's instrument, despite its unorthodoxy in jazz, takes

the lead. It is the best jazz violin that I have ever heard. It is not, however, and can hardly be, played like a cornet or trumpet; and yet it does not show as badly in this respect as it might have, for the record is a blues and largely solos. In the driving ensemble required for a stomp, the violin cannot cut through; it is not even as good in this respect as the kazoo. Perhaps this is the reason Bell does not play violin again on any of the records by this group that I have heard; on the other side of *Biscuit Roller*, in *Come On In Baby*, he plays cornet, as he does on the British Rhythm Society reissue of *Georgia Grind*, *Stomp that Thing*. This last record is more finished in performance than either of the other two, which may indicate that it is of a later date. In any event, on it Bell has achieved a mature and traditional cornet style, often reminiscent of the famous "Mutt" Carey. Whether, in what I take to be his earlier performances on kazoo and violin, he was trying to find his proper instrument, the cornet, or merely experimenting, the fact remains that in these records we are able to hear for ourselves how the kazoo could have served as a bridge from the human voice to the instrumentalized voice; and how the violin, despite its other excellences, was too weak an instrument for the developing organization of the ensemble in jazz.