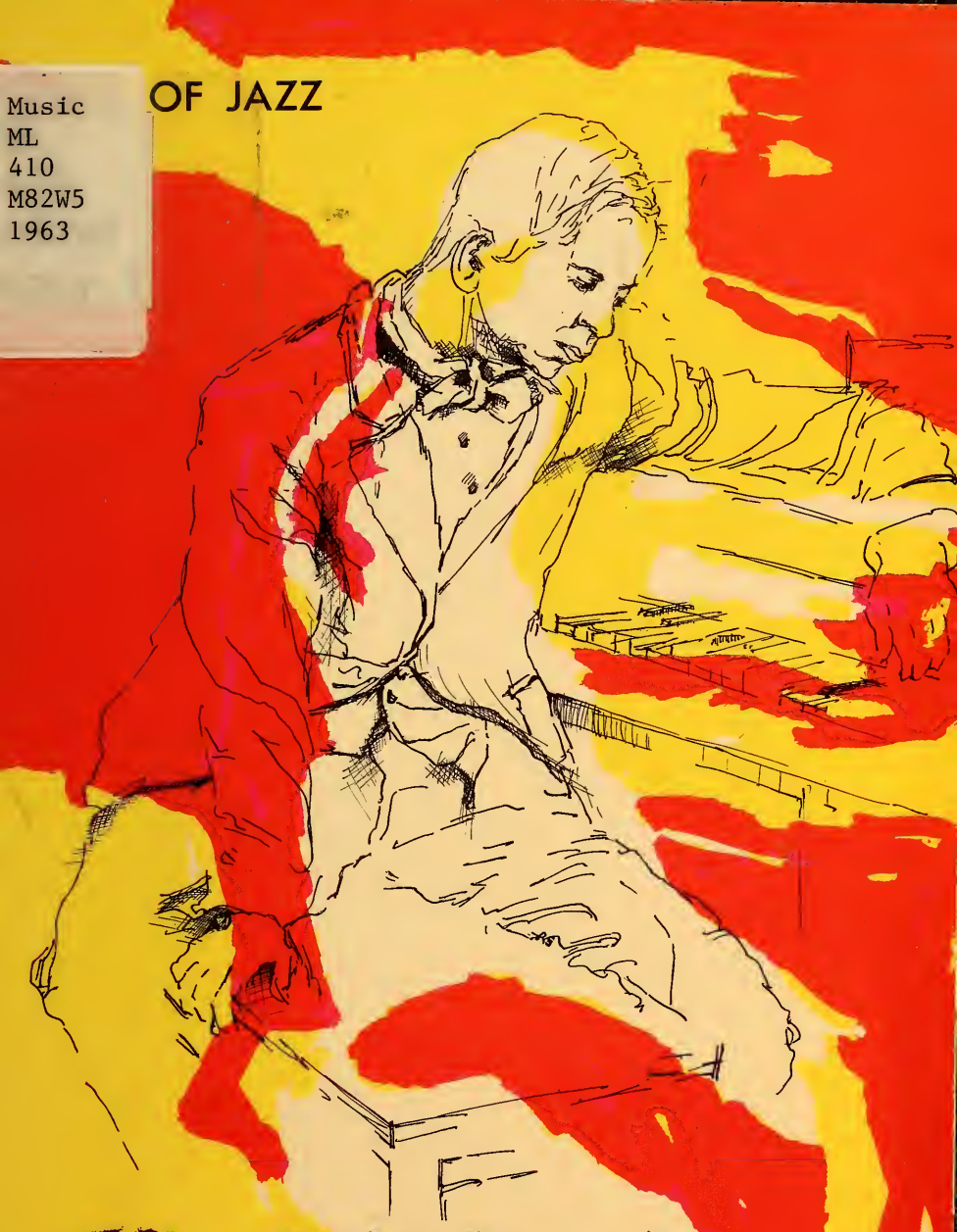
OF JAZZ



Jelly Roll Morton

by Martin Williams

JELLY ROLL MORTON

KINGS OF JAZZ

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BY MARTIN WILLIAMS

A Perpetua Book

A. S. BARNES AND COMPANY, INC.
NEW YORK

First published 1962
Perpetua Edition 1963

Printed in the United States of America

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My own introduction to Jelly Roll Morton's music comes chiefly from Morton himself, from Eugene Williams in his *Jazz Information* magazine and his note to the Brunswick reissue album of Morton solos, from an essay Hugues Panassié wrote for Williams's magazine in about 1940, from the essay by William Russell which is quoted herein, and from Alan Lomax's book, *Mr. Jelly Roll.*

In parts of this book I have used (with some paraphrasing) sections of the notes which I was privileged to write for the Riverside records issue of the Morton Library of Congress recordings (Riverside 9001–9012). I have also made use of an essay on Morton which I originally wrote for the *Evergreen Review*, No. 12. I wish to thank Riverside Records and the Grove Press, respectively, for allowing me to draw on this material here.

M.W.

INTRODUCTION

To begin with, a series of quotations from not-so-imaginary interviews:

'He was a very good piano man when he came through New York around 1911. Everybody thought so and they listened to him. But by the time he started making those records, he had lost his touch and was out of date.'

'He didn't hit his stride until the 'twenties, when he made those band records called the Red Hot Peppers. Then he really made some music. There are things on those records that everybody has picked up since. And *some* things nobody has been able to get with yet.'

'He had a talent for bragging and that's about all. I've heard amateurs play better piano.'

'That man lived music. Nothing else *really* mattered to him.'

'He was a pool shark, using his music to cover up for what he really did.'

'What? *Musician*? Well, I know he played some piano, but as far as I am concerned he was a pimp, pool shark, and general hustler after easy money.'

'He was a genius, if jazz has ever had a genius. He was the first great composer in jazz.'

'Composer? Piano player? Well, I don't know about that. When I knew him on the riverboats he said he was a singer.'

'He was a fine band pianist, a great composer, and an excellent leader. If he'd had any business sense at all he would have been a wealthy man, too, because his music was also popular.'

'No, I don't think he ever played professionally in New Orleans. Used to hang around some of the piano players, because he had a girl who he was—you know—sort of loaning out. But he never played nothing. I understood he played a little guitar and I've heard he tried the trombone for a while. But no piano.'

'Sure. He played very good piano back in New Orleans. Wrote some fine pieces, too. Remember the blues they called *New Orleans Joys* on the record? That was his, and it goes 'way back.'

'Brag? He sure did brag, but he could back up everything he said. Pimp? Well, he sold fake patent

medicines, phoney hair straighteners, shot pool, did comedy on stage, too. But he was a musician really. He couldn't get away from it. He always talked like he wanted to be rich and was going to be. But most of all he wanted to be a musician. And he was.'

His life would be difficult for us to trace in detail, especially from the time he left New Orleans until he began to succeed in the Middle West in the mid-'twenties. His music—the part of his life that matters to most of us? Well, we don't know what James P. Johnson heard in New York in 1911. All we know is what was published beginning in 1915, and what was recorded, beginning in 1923 and ending in 1940. That is all of it that exists, and all we have to judge him by.

Jelly Roll Morton was obviously an exasperating and enchanting man—and some of that personal side of him exists, too, on the recording he made for the Library of Congress through the intervention of Alan Lomax. There he is on these recordings, one moment sounding like an inflated 'has-been' of fairly small-time show business, the next emerging as an intellectual, a perceptive theorist about jazz

the like of which has not come from the ranks of its players before or since. And braggart and liar—often just the kind of hyperbolic liar who does not really expect to be believed.

Of all the things that make us know that jazz is something we should call 'art' and not just acknowledge as a remarkably expressive folk culture, is the fact that its best works survive the moment. In doing that they defy all, for not only are they *intended* for the moment (as is all folk culture), but being jazz they are often made up, improvised, for the spur of the moment. But a lot of jazz does survive as 'work', with larger emotional meaning and artistic form.

To hear if it does, of course, we must be willing to forget what is merely stylish and what is merely nostalgic. Probably no man in jazz was ever more the victim of both stylishness and nostalgia, than Jelly Roll Morton. Because of the innovations of Armstrong, he was already going out of style before his major work was recorded; and because of an infatuated possessiveness with which some have written about jazz, he had begun to seem a colourful old character before many people had tried to

appraise his music seriously or to write down his biography.

A kind of bumbling nostalgia still hovers around his reputation. The series of recordings he did for the Library of Congress is available, but in the editing of that material, a piece he begins in the first volume is finished ten L.P.s later! Another current American L.P. casts this composer and orchestral disciplinarian in the role of narrator of the glorious old days of the Storyville whorehouse entertainer—a role he filled superbly during the recital. Another draws on his first great recordings, a series of compositional piano solos which in 1923–24 announced his talents; it includes several poor pieces and omits major pieces like *London Blues* (*Shoe Shiner's Drag*), *The Pearls* and *Frog-i-more Rag*. And a fourth collection, available in both the U.S. and Britain, drawn from the brilliant series of orchestral recordings on which his reputation really depends, presents his masterpiece *Dead Man Blues* in a composite tape including parts of a rejected run-through version on which some of the musicians made mistakes.

I have implied that some commentators have made him a character. The temptations were strong,

perhaps irresistible. For surely this puzzlingly complex man, this diamond-toothed dandy, this braggart, this audacious liar, this direct speaker of the truth, this ostentatious egotist, this great musician and theorist, could be his own enemy.

BIOGRAPHY

I

NEW ORLEANS

The city of New Orleans seemed almost to have a part in everything Ferdinand 'Jelly Roll' Morton talked about and played during his life. Actually, he was born in Gulfport, which happens to be just across the border in Mississippi, but he belonged to New Orleans. And sometimes, to hear him tell it, it seemed almost as if it belonged to him, for a while anyway.

Morton told Alan Lomax of his parentage this way, '. . . As I can understand, my folks were in the city of New Orleans long before the Louisiana Purchase, and all my folks came directly from the shores of France, that is across the world in the

other world, and they landed in the new world years ago. . . .

'My grandmother bore sons named Henri, Gus, Neville and Nelusco—all French names; and she bore the daughters Louise, Viola, and Margaret—that was the three daughters. Louise, the oldest daughter, so fair she could always pass, married F. P. La Menthe, also an early settler and considered one of the outstanding contractors and demolishers in the entire South. Louise happened to be my mother, Ferd (Jelly Roll) Morton.

'Of course, I guess you wonder how the name Morton came in, by it being an English name. Well, I'll tell you. I changed it for business reasons when I started travelling. I didn't want to be called Frenchy.'[1]

However, Lomax's own research yielded a rather different story. Morton was the name of a man who did portering and who married young Ferdinand's mother after the apparently irresponsible Mr. La Menthe had left.

When Lomax later asked Morton to sing an old song about a man named Robert Charles, Morton refused. Most men from New Orleans, coloured,

[1] From *Mister Jelly Roll* by Alan Lomax.

Creole, Negro, even white, would have refused. The berserk homicidal behaviour of Robert Charles set off a series of riots in New Orleans, riots that Jelly Roll Morton remembered. Those riots are usually said to have signalled the final step in the gradual installation of formal segregation in New Orleans. The history of cast, class, and colour line in that city is complex. As Dr. Edmond Souchon has described the situation that existed in his youth, a time when Morton was still in the city, (in the *Record Changer*, for February 1953), 'Jelly Roll's attitude was in no small measure due to his complete rebellion against the strict Jim Crow laws of the South, but he also presented a very interesting subject for investigation by a psychoanalyst. Jelly Roll was the victim of his particular "cult" or "social group", if you will; for in New Orleans the self-imposed colour line between the light and the dark Negro is much more marked than is the Jim Crow line between white and coloured.'

There were three classes in New Orleans, then. And, as 'the prejudice' came, these Creoles of Colour, proud families, often landowners, small businessmen, often educated abroad, were hit hard. Marshall Stearns gives the background: 'The

Black Code of 1724 made provision for the manumission, or freeing, of slaves. Children shared the status of their mother. When a white aristocrat died . . . his will frequently provided that his part-African mistress and slave should be freed. His children by the same woman were automatically free. A class known as Creoles of Colour grew up with French and Spanish as well as African blood in their veins.'[1]

There is no doubt that in his own attitudes, Morton was often a victim of the snobbery of this class. His attitudes were defensively complicated by the fact that his family was not a particularly prosperous one in the Creole community and the fact that he perhaps was not really sure (so it seems) of his own parentage.

One gets the impression that Morton's grandmother had the strongest influence on him as a child. And one also gets the impression that at a rather young age Ferdinand was running off and rather freely associating with men on the fringes of the Storyville district—and not only musicians, but also the gamblers, pool sharks and pimps, and he was hearing all the talk that went inevitably with their way of life about 'big money'.

[1] From *The Story of Jazz* by Marshall Stearns.

He began to study guitar at seven and piano at ten. He sang and he listened.

Whether he admitted it to himself or not, he had in effect rejected the *bourgeois* Creole world (no matter how often it clung to the face he showed), before that world rejected him. Morton gave his account of it in *Mister Jelly Roll*. 'My grandmother gave me that Frenchman look and said to me in French, "Your mother is gone and can't help her little girls now. She left Amede and Mimi to their old grandmother to raise as good girls. A musician is nothing but a bum and a scalawag. I don't want you around your sisters. I reckon you better move."

'My grandmother said all this and she walked up the path to the white columns of the front porch, went inside, and shut the door.' That way of life rejected him, and he it, but some of its attitudes and its pride remained a part of him—perhaps because of the very nature of that rejection—to be reflected often enough in the proud face he turned towards the world.

Morton led us to believe it was his music that led his grandmother to turn him out. Was it? Or was it other activities in Storyville in which he may have

also been involved? Both and all, probably. What did Morton think—that he was about to enter into the life of a musician, or a musician with certain sidelines, or a man with certain musical sidelines? Perhaps it doesn't matter, really. Before his grandmother had shut the door on him, Morton had cast his lot with a music that had captured him. And he was true to it even as he wandered, gambled, pimped, pursued the diamonds and the Cadillacs. Whatever else he pursued, the music always seemed to triumph and lead him on. Hearing that music, we so often feel that it says much more about the man and his real feelings than his public masks, his pride, and his bragging can ever tell us.

Jelly Roll Morton said he found work and a high income playing piano in the 'houses' in Storyville. But is that where jazz was born: in the houses of the 'district'? In an interview with Countess Willie Piazza, 'The First Lady of Storyville' (in the *Record Changer*, for February 1951), Kay C. Thompson quoted, 'Where jazz came from I can't rightly say, but . . . I was the first one in New Orleans to employ a jazz pianist in the red-light district. . . . In those days jazz was associated principally with dance-halls and cabarets. . . . Jazz didn't start in sporting

houses . . . it was what most of our customers wanted to hear.'

Jazz was, first of all, the music of the Negro community. And in New Orleans it was achieving a unique instrumental development. The pianists followed that development. They apparently did not originate it, but because of the musical knowledge they were likely to have, and because of the nature of their instruments, they made important contributions.

And there was music everywhere for them to absorb.

'One of my pleasantest memories as a kid growing up in New Orleans was how a bunch of us kids, playing, would suddenly hear sounds. It was like a phenomenon, like the Aurora Borealis—maybe. The sounds of men playing would be so clear, but we wouldn't be sure where they were coming from. So we'd start trotting, start running—"It's this way!" "It's this way!"—And, sometimes, after running for a while, you'd find you'd be nowhere near that music. But that music could come on you any time like that. The city was full of the sounds of music. . . .'[1]

[1] Danny Barker in *Hear Me Talkin' To Ya*, edited by Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff.

When Morton says he had played drums and trombones in parades, no one who has heard his left hand will be much surprised.

No matter how often one hears about it, one is repeatedly struck by accounts of the remarkable cross-section of life which operated so freely in the Storyville district. People from every class, every race, every economic group and from all over the world came there. Did Morton work there as a pianist and have the kind of celebrity that Tony Jackson, Albert Carrol, Albert Wilson, 'the game kid', and the rest? It has lately been contended that he didn't have their success, and even that he didn't work as a pianist in New Orleans at all—that he was exaggerating about all that as he exaggerated about many things. He surely worked *out of* New Orleans into nearby towns and cities, taking its music with him. And I think in a larger context, whether or not Morton was, as he implied, a piano king in more expensive Storyville houses, becomes, in one context, almost a matter of detail.

I have said that I think that when one hears his music, his pride, snobbery, and delusions will fall away. They do even in music that is not really his. On the recordings for the Library of Congress,

Morton re-created a scene he called the 'Georgia Skin Game', a card game with a bunch of sharp characters Morton admired for their skill and for the quasi-romantic life they led, but a life which his grandmother, and the Coloured Creole *in him*, would surely have disapproved of. As he told the story, the card gave climaxes in a song sung to the cards by one of the players. Here Morton's artistic talent and memories came forth, and almost made Jelly Roll into a different being.

The song is like a work song, the slap of the cards is the stroke of the labourer's hammer. Its melody also suggests the spiritual, *Motherless Child*. The loving passion with which Morton sings its beautifully haunting 'blue' notes shows how deeply he felt about this music, about this kind of simpler 'folk' music, however he might act or whatever he might say on another day and to a certain man. And the dramatic vividness with which he re-creates that scene is not only evidence of a talent but of a passionate apprehension and wondering admiration of the human beings involved. If his art can help us to see thus, as his deeper self could see them, he will have served all men well.

2

GULF COAST, WEST COAST, THE RIVER, LAKE MICHIGAN

There is a passage in *Life on the Mississippi* in which Mark Twain remarks on the number of Negroes who travelled: it was as if they had decided to make up for all the years when they and their forebears could not travel.

Morton travelled. He travelled the way we think of an itinerant blues singer as travelling. In *Mister Jelly Roll*, Alan Lomax writes: 'After 1904 he was constantly on the prod, using New Orleans only as a base of operations and nurturing ambitions mortal strange. . . .'

And soon, his base of operations was no longer New Orleans, but apparently wherever he happened to be. 'I went to Memphis about 1908. At that time I was very shy about playing the piano any place.'

Then, James P. Johnson remembers Ferdinand, by now 'Jelly Roll' Morton, in New York in 1911. Lomax quoted Johnson, 'First time I saw Jelly was in 1911. He came through New York playing that *Jelly Roll Blues* of his. He was, well, he was what you might call pimping at the time, had that diamond in his tooth and a couple of dogs [prostitutes] along. That diamond helped him in his business, you know—it made some of these gals think he was a big shot. Of course, Jelly Roll wasn't a piano player like some of us down here. We bordered more on the classical theory of music.' Reb Spikes knew him in Tulsa in 1912 and said Morton wanted to be a comedian. In the same year he also worked in St. Louis. During 1913 to 1915 he was in and out of Chicago, where Will Rossiter published his original *Jelly Roll Blues*. In 1917, Morton left Chicago for Los Angeles (his second trip) and for five years it was his base. William Russell has written of these years, 'During his second California visit (1917–22), he was associated with the Spikes Bros. Publishing Co. in Los Angeles. . . . He had as always a variety of interests. He worked at first in various Central Avenue resorts—the Cadillac Café, the Newport Bar, and the upstairs

Penny Dance Hall at 9th Street. There was also the band with Buddy Petit and Frankie Dusen down at Baron Long's in Watts, and later a six-piece band at Leek's Lake and Wayside Park (where he entertained King Oliver as guest star one night in April 1922). The period was one of Jelly's happiest and most prosperous. He could have his big car, his diamonds, and could keep his music just as a sideline for special kicks while he made his real money from the Pacific Coast "Line". As one friend put it, "You don't think Jelly got all those diamonds he wore on his garters with the $35 a week he made in music." But whether Jelly was really "one of the higher ups", as he claimed, or just a procurer is immaterial, for Jelly's real interest undeniably was always music. On the Gulf Coast they'd called him a pool shark and gambler, with music as a "decoy". But the important point is that to his dying day Jelly loved music. . . .

'So up and down the Coast from Vancouver, Canada, to Tampico, Mexico, Jelly went, always carrying with him, among the other commodities of "good time", the *new music* of New Orleans. In San Diego, at the U.S. Grant Hotel . . . someone told Jelly the hotel paid their white musicians $75 a

week, he pulled his band out without notice. In San Francisco Jelly even participated in the final days of the notorious Barbary Coast and played for a while at the Jupiter on Columbus Avenue at Pacific.'

A musician who worked with him then remembered a white hotel owner who requested a waltz. Morton replied loudly, '*Waltz*? Man, these people want to *dance*? And you talking about waltz. This is the *Roll* you're talking to. I know what these people want!' Again, it was Morton's identity, of course. Was he Negro—Coloured Creole? Not white, exactly, but . . . He was *the Roll*! He had nothing against waltzes, really, and he even had some jazz waltzes he used.

For every story of the pianist or the band leader in these years, there is a story of the hustler, the card shark, the pool shark, singer or comedian, patent medicine pedlar, and the rest. But I suspect that music more and more impressed itself on him as his undeniable calling during the California years, and the composing there seems to have been prolific.

He is reported in Kentucky and in St. Louis (working in Fate Marable's riverboat group) in

1923, but that year he had shifted his sights back to Chicago and (as anyone with a nodding acquaintance with the history of jazz will know) with good reason, for the music was in demand there.

3

SUCCESS AND FAME

'Morton,' wrote Whitney Balliet, 'gave the American dream an awful pummelling before it finally cut him down.'

The period when he seemed to be winning, and only with his music, began in 1923 when he was working in and out of Chicago—'out of' chiefly because he did not often function as a musician, or anything else, in Chicago because, it is said, he would not cater to the hoods who ran most of the places where he could find work in that city in the 'twenties. The 'out of' included St. Louis, which in the length of time he spent there, was important. But the really important events of the early 'twenties for Morton did take place in Chicago. He formed an alliance with the Melrose Brothers music company, out of Walter Melrose and Marty Bloom's music

shop. They published his pieces, published 'stock' arrangements, and helped get him recording dates—at first as a soloist, then with the New Orleans Rhythm Kings and with groups of his own. Finally, beginning in September 1926, with the Victor company, as leader of the 'Red Hot Peppers' for a series of recordings that carried him to a kind of national fame, and many of which have been available to record buyers almost ever since.

They were beautifully recorded. They were beautifully conceived, led, orchestrated, rehearsed, and played. They are still among the great artistic successes in jazz recording. And they sold very well.

Johnny St. Cyr, who played banjo on all but four of the Chicago titles described Morton's approach, 'Jelly was a very, very agreeable man to cut a record with,' largely because he would let his men take breaks and choruses as and where they felt they best could: '. . . he'd leave it to your own judgement . . . and he was always open for suggestions.'

In 1945, Omer Simeon, clarinettist on most of Morton's most successful recordings, told in more detail about the sessions in Art Hodes's *Jazz Record*

magazine. 'We used to go to his home for rehearsals and the first time I was there, he handed me a piece called *Mamamita*, which had a pretty hard clarinet part. I guess he was testing me out. . . .

'Walter Melrose brought all the music down from his music store. Morton was working for Melrose then and the pieces we played were mostly stock arrangements Jelly had made up and published by Melrose. Jelly marked out parts we liked and he always had his manuscripts there and his pencils and he was always writing and changing little parts. . . . Jelly left our solos up to us but the backgrounds, harmony and licks were all in his arrangements. He was easy to work for and he always explained everything he wanted. . . .

'We would have a couple of rehearsals at Jelly's house before the date and Melrose would pay us $5.00 a man. That's the only time I ever got paid for a rehearsal. . . . Technicians set the stage for the date—Jelly had to take orders there for a change. . . .

'Melrose spared no expense for a record date—anything Jelly Roll wanted he got. Melrose worshipped him like a king. Jelly was great for effects, as on *Sidewalk Blues* and *Steamboat Stomp* and later

on like the opening on *Kansas City Stomp*. . . . For the second date he got Darnell Howard and Barney Bigard in for the trio effect he wanted on two of the sides. I played all the clarinet part and Howard and Bigard just sat there and held their clarinets except for the few strains Jelly wanted them to play. . . .

'He was fussy on introductions and endings and he always wanted the ensemble his way but he never interfered with the solo work. He'd tell us where he wanted the solo or break but the rest was up to us. . . . I remember on *Dr. Jazz*, the long note I played wasn't in the stock arrangement. Jelly liked it and had Melrose put it in the orchestration. . . .'

Baby Dodds, drummer on three of the Chicago sessions has spoken of the way Morton worked, 'John and I also made records with Jelly Roll Morton's Red Hot Peppers. On all the jobs with Jelly Roll it was he who picked the men for the session. He went around himself and got the men he wanted to record with him. We weren't a regular band. . . . But when Jelly Roll gave us a ring we met for rehearsal and we all knew what was expected of us. Of course we all knew each other from New Orleans but those record sessions were the only times we all got together to play music. But there was

a fine spirit in that group and I enjoyed working with Jelly Roll immensely. . . .

'At rehearsal Jelly Roll Morton used to work on each and every number until it satisfied him. Everybody had to do just what Jelly wanted him to do. During rehearsal he would say, "Now that's just the way I want it on the recording," and he meant just that. We used his original numbers and he always explained what it was all about and played a synopsis of it on the piano. . . . You did what Jelly Roll wanted you to do, no more and no less. And his own playing was remarkable and kept us in good spirits. He wasn't fussy, but he was positive. He knew what he wanted and he would get the men he knew could produce it. But Jelly wasn't a man to get angry. I never saw him upset and he didn't raise his voice at any time. . . .

'Although Jelly used to work out all the different parts himself, he often gave us something extra to do, some little novelty or something. When we made the *Jungle Blues* he wanted a gong effect and I think I used a large cymbal and a mallet to produce the effect he wanted. . . . And the records we made with Jelly were made under the best of recording conditions. They were recorded in the Chicago

Victor studio on Oak Street near Michigan Avenue, and the acoustics there were very good. It was one of the best studios I ever worked in.'[1]

Chicago in the early 'twenties—there were King Oliver, Jimmy Noone, the Dodds Brothers, the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, a young Louis Armstrong. But, as I say, not much Morton, outside of the Melrose shop and the Victor studios. He toured the Middle West to considerable success, however.

In 1928, Morton decided to go where so many jazzmen were going, to the place that was becoming the centre of jazz and has more or less remained so since: New York. Armstrong, Oliver, the young 'Chicagoans' (Eddie Condon & Co.) went or had gone.

Artistic success continued, on records at least. But not personal or monetary success. Guitarist Danny Barker wrote in the *Jazz Review*, 'Jelly Roll spent most of the afternoons and evenings at the Rhythm Club and everytime I saw him he was lecturing to the musicians about organizing. Most of the name and star musicians paid him no attention because he was always preaching, in loud terms,

[1] From *The Baby Dodds Story*, as told to Larry Gara.

Duncan P. Schiedt

Jelly Roll Morton at the keyboard in the 1920s

One of the late recording sessions

Duncan P. Schiedt

that none of the famous New York bands had a beat. He would continuously warn me: "Don't be simple and ignorant like these fools in the big country towns." I would always listen seriously because most of the things he said made plenty of sense to me.

'Jelly was constantly preaching that if he could get a band to rehearse his music and listen to him he could keep a band working. He would get one-nighters out of town and would have to beg musicians to work with him.'

Wilbur de Paris told Orin Keepnews, 'He was nothing special: Henderson and McKinney were *the* bands, and Jelly was just another leader making gigs.'[1]

Still, Morton had the diamonds in his tooth and his garters, the two big cars, Lincolns, Cadillacs, etc., and could flash the bank roll and the thousand-dollar bill.

Omer Simeon described his continuing pride and bearing in New York, '. . . He could back up anything he said. Every one liked to hear him talk and argue . . . in New York, when swing was becoming popular, Chick Webb used to kid him—told him he

[1] From *Jelly Roll Morton* by Orin Keepnews in *The Jazz Makers*, edited Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff.

didn't know anything about jazz and asked him about New Orleans. That would start him off about being the pioneer of jazz. He was always talking about New Orleans; about Buddy Bolden, Frankie Dusen, Buddy Petit, Tony Jackson—he could take off their mannerisms on a job and he was always a comedian. It was hard to keep up with him—he could talk twenty-four hours in a row.'

As I say, the good records continued at first. The most successful were the earliest and still used the older conception of three horns, piano and rhythm. They were made with a band he had at the Rose Danceland in the spring of 1928: with Ward Pinkett's trumpet, 'Geechy' Fields on trombone, Lee Blair on banjo, and the Benford brothers, Bill and Tom, on tuba and drums. It was one of the few times Morton recorded with his regular band; only Omer Simeon was brought in from another group, the Louis Russell band at The Nest.

Two years later, the Victor contract was up. And the great Depression was on. Morton was sure that his failures were due to a conspiracy of booking agents, music publishers, tune and idea thieves, a conspiring A.S.C.A.P. (which never elected this composer of at least three enduring national 'hit' pieces

to membership!), and a West Indian who put a voodoo spell on him.[1]

He still had music and he wanted to play, one feels sure. Despite a kazoo here, a bit of vaudeville banter there, or the artistic error of a schmaltzy *Someday Sweetheart* (with violins, and apparently not even intended to be a jazz performance), I think that, during the whole course of his recording career, Morton's musical integrity is constant and admirable. One suspects a gradual realization that he was a part of a movement that was terribly important, that had spread widely, and whatever else he was in it for, he was in it to contribute (though he may not have put it that way), to keep things on the track, to try out things that might work within it, to show what would work. In his arguments with Chick Webb and his musicians, whatever we hear of conceit and perhaps of jealousy, we hear also a devotion to the principles of jazz that he stood for and a rejection of tendencies he did not believe in. His

[1] Vodun, Hoodoo, Voodoo—it has echoes in several directions. The original slaves brought to New Orleans were Dahomeans, and Vodun was their worship. According to Marshall Stearns's book, *The Story of Jazz*, West African influences survived for years in *laissez-faire* New Orleans and gradually blended with European music in 'private vodun ceremonies and public performances in Congo Square'. Vodun is a powerful and continuing fact and New Orleans is its centre in the United States. Morton himself was a Catholic. However, he described his aunt as a hoodoo witch who, during his childhood, had used Vodun to cure him of an illness. In New York at this time, Morton burned his clothing and 'spent thousands of dollars trying to get this spell taken off of me'.

theories of jazz (often misunderstood, I think) are not a mere effort to portray himself as important, but also an attempt to explain practice and to defend the integrity of a music against public misunderstanding, against exploitation, and against tendencies within it which to him were wrong ones.

Morton knew, or came to know, that jazz was a music with an identity and heritage that was unknown or badly misunderstood. At the same time, he did not want it to be esoteric or cultish. At times one feels he believed he could communicate his music to *anyone*. Perhaps he was right at that, but the point is that the communication was to be made in his terms, not theirs, and the music was to say what it said, not what they wanted to hear. Whatever his delusions about wealth or boasts about his position, there is an integrity to his craft and art which came back to him in his most adverse moments. Even at those times in his wanderings and in his myriad of enterprises when Morton seemed almost to be fighting his destiny the music would take hold.

4

A 'FAILURE' FOR POSTERITY

By 1937, Morton was in Washington, D.C., not in very good health, running a small club for its owner (a woman) which was known by a different name almost from month to month; The Blue Moon Inn, The Music Box, The Jungle Inn. Business was very poor. But a kind of adulation began to develop. Record collectors, jazz scholars, real Morton fans (like Roy J. Carew, from New Orleans, who subsequently published all of Morton's later pieces and still keeps them in print) began to come by to see him and talk about jazz. Finally, through their kind of persuasion, folklorist Alan Lomax recorded Morton on an inexpensive portable disc recorder and a fine Steinway, for the archives of the Library of Congress.

Such events, and his appearance on a Ripley

'Believe It or Not' radio programme (refuting Ripley's claim that W. C. Handy was 'the originator of jazz and blues') encouraged him to try New York again. There were a few jobs, some 'all star' records for Victor (the music and conception were more slanted towards a vague re-creation of New Orleans for the public than towards Jelly Roll Morton, jazz orchestrator); other recordings—some of them of rather commercially intended Morton songs (*We Are Elks*, *Good Old New York*); and there was the very charming and musically successful 'New Orleans Memories' album of Morton playing and singing. But they say that the sign of the times was that he was more often at the pool table than the piano. One occasion when he did take over at the piano (a possibly true story goes) was when he jumped up out of the audience as a big swing band was playing Fletcher Henderson's version of Morton's *King Porter Stomp*, read the leader off, sat down at the piano and demonstrated how it *should* be played.

In 1940, he went to southern California. His godmother was dying and his godfather was blind, but perhaps that was just an excuse. He chained his two big cars together and went. He was soon rehearsing

a big band—but only two days of a week. The other five, he might have to spend in bed with 'heart trouble and asthma'. 'Will write soon. Still sick,' he sent his Mabel in New York in April 1941, hurriedly written across an application for a postal money order.

On 10 July 1941, Jelly Roll Morton died in Los Angeles. His pallbearers were Kid Ory and the members of Ory's band.

THE MUSIC

I

AN INTRODUCTION

Morton said that a good jazz pianist should try to imitate a band—and almost all of them have tried to imitate bands or horns. Therefore almost everything in his orchestral style comes from his piano. But, as we shall see, he did some decidedly pianistic things as a soloist that he knew had to be changed when he orchestrated his pieces. The left hand is his trombone and rhythm section, the right his trumpets and reeds—true enough. But the roots of his style include other things. The first of these is ragtime, and its European analogues and sources—marches, polkas, etc. The second is the blues.

Ragtime was a separate movement in American

music. It is not a kind of crude, pre-jazz, although it made important contributions to jazz. In several respects, it is more polished and formal than jazz has ever intended to be. It may derive some of its themes and a few of its devices from Negro folk songs, spirituals, etc., but it has a close relationship to the Western tradition. It is primarily melodic: its rhythms are fairly bright and constant and one kind of syncopation frequently dominates it.

Ragtime compositions (and the pieces *are* compositions in the strictest sense) were made of several equally important, related themes. The simplest structure was (to give each separate theme-melody a letter), A B C D; very frequent was A B A C D (as in the most famous, Scott Joplin's *Maple Leaf Rag*); cyclical and rondo forms were also used. Although ragtime performances may have involved some improvisation (undoubtedly there was much embellishment) and there are some published rags with written variations, it does not seem essential to this music.

At the turn of the century, ragtime had become *the* dominant popular music in America. Of course, it was simplified, commercialized, and even exploited. In more authentic circles, it gradually became

a kind of showman's piano for rather meaningless displays of technique. It soon attracted inferior composers and performers, and with some important exceptions, had largely spent itself *as a movement* by about 1910.

Morton once claimed to have 'invented' jazz. Whether he did or not, his music shows a crucial transition. Most of his important pieces are built like rags of several themes, usually on three, plus a chorus or two of written variation on the third (thereby most important) theme. He used more than one kind of syncopation and more rhythmic freedom and variety, polyrhythms, more variety in harmony, 'blue dissonances', polyphony between the hands, but, more important, a Morton piece *depends* on that pre-set (or pre-sketched) variation in the score and, as he played it, on improvisation in performance as well.

Morton's music combined the formal and melodic approach of ragtime—and the dances and songs (music of European origin) that he heard around him—with the rhythms, melodic devices, polyphonies in Negro blues, work songs, spirituals, etc., and produced something new. Like all folk music, these blues and spirituals used improvisation. But

Morton made variation a crucial part of his music, and his sensibility in making variations was outstanding enough to carry such a burden.

Morton was, in several ways, a modernist in his day. That is why he might ridicule ragtime players. He was a part of a movement which saved this 'Afro-American' music from a degeneration at the hands of pseudo and second-rate rag men and continued its development. He obviously respected the *best* ragtime men, however. And that is also why he frequently scorned blues pianists, 'one-tune piano players'. His work was more sophisticated, formal, knowledgeable, resourceful, varied—more *musical* than theirs.

It is interesting to speculate on what banal 'rhythm-making' jazz might have become if it did not have the formal, melodic conception of ragtime in its background. At the same time, one shudders to think what might have happened if the deep passion, the freedom, the poetry and rhythmic variety of Negro folk music and blues had not replenished it, as it were, 'from below'.

When Morton was asked by Alan Lomax for his theory of jazz, he gave, of course, not a theory but some basic things about it which were important to

him. Some were obviously directed at your old Aunt Sallie who thinks jazz has to be loud, fast and disorganized.

Morton said that he worked out his style at medium tempos—almost all jazz styles have originally been worked out that way. (Hear the recordings made at Minton's in the early 'forties, hear Armstrong's 'ballads' in the 'thirties.) His first point was the famous 'always keep the melody going some way'. He acknowledged that melodic variation is his way, but this remark is really a part of his insistence on continuous, proper, and interesting harmonization.

His next remarks were on riffs. Much has been made of his insistence that they are for background, but Morton himself did not always use them that way: several of his tunes have riff melodies, and the very one he used in the bass here is the last strain of his band recording of *Georgia Swing*. At any rate, one could hardly question the effectiveness of riffs behind a soloist.

His third point, that a pianist should imitate an orchestra, at least has historical confirmation; almost every piano style in jazz (from Hines through Garner, Morton through Powell) has been derived from the imitation of a band or a horn style.

As Morton put it, 'breaks' are 'one of the most effective things you can do in jazz'. In a sense they are the culmination of the syncopation and the rhythmic resources in jazz (unless 'stop time' carries things a step further). Charlie Parker's famous break in *A Night In Tunisia* became a fable immediately after his record of it was released, but today breaks are often poorly made and usually at the beginning of choruses, where they are possibly least effective. Certainly Morton's subtle sense of time and suspense in making them is the bane of his 'revivalist' followers.

Complete with pretentious arpeggios made on the Library of Congress piano, came the just assertion that jazz can be soft, sweet, and slow. To this day, many a jazz band wisely tests its ability to swing by trying to do so at a pianissimo whisper. And the problem of swinging at slow tempos is one which has plagued many jazzmen in all periods.

Morton's remark that ragtime players would keep increasing their tempos because a perfect tempo hadn't been picked for that style has puzzled many and will continue to. Jazz players can increase their tempos, too (Morton may himself), and a blues pianist like Will Ezell does it in a way that makes

it seem quite intentional. The device is standard in many musics, including West African, of course. As we have seen, Morton said that he hit on his own style because he couldn't make fast tempos at first, and then discovered that he could incorporate rhythmic variety, embellishments, and variations of many kinds at such speeds. Certainly if a player uses a simple ragtime, 'octive' bass, he may well tend to speed up, and if he is building in his performance by rhythmic-melodic variation, he will not need the 'false' climax of merely increasing his speed.

What Jelly Roll Morton called 'the Spanish tinge' in jazz—or in his jazz—and the influence of what is called 'Latin' music on his music and on New Orleans jazz, is both more general and more deep than the fact he wrote many jazz-tango pieces will account for.

'New Orleans was inhabited with maybe every race on the face of the globe. And, of course, we had Spanish people, plenty of them. . . .' Morton said. Spanish music was a part of the city's musical heritage and life. The tango and what was sometimes called the 'Mexican serenade' was also a continuing part of the popular music of the day. Unfor-

tunately many of the discussions of the constant flirting of jazz and Latin rhythms quickly become a matter of listing tunes: several of Morton's; *St. Louis Blues*; Armstrong's *Peanut Vendor*; *Monteca*; *Barbados*; *Un Poco Loco*; *Señor Blues*, etc., etc. (They might also mention the 'samba' qualities in some ragtime, Scott Joplin's tango rag *Solace*, and some others.)

According to recent opinions of musicologists, the habañera was of Hispanic origin, not African as once thought. It came from Cuba as such. In the poorer sections of Buenos Aires about 1900, the habañera was combined with the milonga to make the tango, became a popular dance, and spread. It is not supposed to have been syncopated there before 1905, but I have the feeling that it was syncopated in New Orleans before that.

But what is the relationship of early jazz to the tango? Is it only a matter of a man like Morton having written tangos of a special kind? Is it a matter of using tango themes as a part of certain compositions? Is it a matter of occasional rhythmic effects? There are several records by King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band whereon Lil Armstrong will spontaneously break into tango rhythm behind the

polyphony of the horns. She may be quickly joined by Bill Johnson and Honoré Dutrey, or she may continue alone, playing against everyone else's beat. The effect of this is exciting and the possibilities for rhythmic variety are obvious. Morton will frequently do much the same: often in his band records we hear him suddenly inject tango rhythms against the prevailing beat, with a kind of sublime intuition about just when to do it and how long to keep it up. We also hear this sort of thing in his solo piano, of course. One can sometimes hear it, too, in Baby Dodds's drum solos and accompaniments. Some 'modern' drummers (and other instrumentalists) similarly found a source of rhythmic variety in Latin patterns. (One might even say that modern drummers *re*-discovered their polyrhythmic and melodic role, one which swing drummers largely neglected.)

Thus we can perform jazz tangos, we can use tango themes and interludes, we can use tango rhythms for, as Morton put it, a 'seasoning'. But it goes further than that, I think. Just as Dizzy Gillespie's trumpet phrasing frequently shows his keen ear for trumpeters in rumba bands, certain of Bunk Johnson's or Louis Armstrong's phrases come

Duncan P. Schiedt

A publicity still for the Red Hot Peppers

Duncan P. Schiedt

Jelly Roll Morton with the Red Hot Peppers, the band which he founded in 1922

from the melodic-rhythmic manner of the tango. It may even be that both of the latter were encouraged to play so markedly behind the beat not only by their apprenticeships as second trumpeters but also by the delayed pulse of tango phrasing. The same kind of thing shows up constantly in Morton's playing and composing. For example, the 'trio' strain of one of his most successful pieces, *The Wolverine Blues*. The placement of the notes there corresponds to the placement of the heavy beats in a tango. The result automatically plays one rhythm against another.

In his demonstration on *La Paloma* on the Library of Congress records, Morton went at the problem the other way around. He did not show tango effects in a jazz piece, or play a jazz tango, but remade a well-known tango into jazz. One of the chief musical points he talked about is his use of 'blue' harmonies in the piece and the effect of the juxtaposition of the two rhythms.

Morton made two other piano versions of *Mama 'Nita* (sometimes called *Mamamita*), but the improvisation on the Library of Congress version can make the others sound rather pallid. The piece has three themes; actually the second is a rather dull

interlude which becomes interesting when he alters it, and the third is almost a variant of the first. Morton performed on them in cyclical form. One point that immediately strikes one is the wonderful alliance he made between the tango bass and his characteristic use of trombone-like polyphonic bass lines; these two elements usually become one in his work.

Morton's *New Orleans Blues* (or *New Orleans Joys*) is a piece quite celebrated in certain quarters for the masterful way he drops behind the beat. It is a twelve-bar blues-tango and, the way he has organized it, two themes emerge. In performance he would play them: A, A, B (introduced by the bass figure); B, B, B (the bass figure has risen to treble; this is the 'behind the beat' chorus, by the way); A, A (the last two choruses drop the tango effect and, as Morton put it, 'stomp').

But as you see, I have already begun to discuss Morton's piano style in specific performances. I would like to do more of it, and again I will put some emphasis on the Library of Congress recordings.

2

THE PIANO SOLOS, EARLY AND LATE

In several respects *Hyena Stomp* (although not a major piece as a composition) gives one a good idea of the kind of music Morton created, particularly as he recorded the piece as a piano solo in 1938. *Hyena Stomp* is uncharacteristic of Morton in that it has only one theme and that is a very simple one—but the simplicity is a help. Morton recorded it twice: there is also an orchestral version from 1927, and a comparison of the two gives a further insight into Morton's conception.

The theme, as I say, is simple—the basic strain is stated in the first two measures. That statement is harmonically modulated through a chorus of sixteen bars which serves as an introduction. There follows the second sixteen-bar chorus in which the melody is again stated in bare form. In these first two state-

ments the harmony (full for its time and beautifully appropriate) is necessarily made clear, and there are occasional hints of the kind of rhythmic variation that is to come. There follows a series of six melodic variations and embellishments. Each is based on a musical idea which he works out, each is related to what precedes and what follows, either as contrast or complement, and each is a part of the total pattern of the whole performance.

There is one aspect of Morton's approach which the band recording of *Hyena Stomp* brings out, the variations are instrumentally and orchestrally conceived; as we have seen, Morton believed that the basis of jazz piano style was in its imitation of an orchestra.

The first variation (the third chorus in performance) is primarily rhythmic—an appropriate contrast to the careful harmonic emphasis of the dual theme statements. He simplifies the melody and harmony drastically, preparing to rebuild it. It is a kind of 'barrelhouse' variation in which a swinging rhythmic momentum is first introduced. It is another passage for the whole band, with the work of the rhythm section, the trombone, and the accents of the horns above them. The next chorus is an

elaborate lyric transformation of the theme, lightly dancing after the heavier motion of what preceded it. Obviously Morton had the clarinet's lower register in mind. This chorus is melodically the most complex. From this point on, as we gradually return to and build on the rhythmic momentum set up in the first variation, we hear an increasing melodic simplification and dynamic building. The third variation is an excellent stroke. It still refers to the melody, of course, but also transforms (by simplification) the previous variation. It is the clarinet in the upper register. It thus forms a kind of two-chorus unit with the preceding variation. The next chorus is a contrast, but one which has been subtly prepared for. It is a variation made in the bass; Morton's left hand imitates the polyphonic line of a trombone (a rather complicated one for the time) under his treble. And in the preceding chorus there had been much activity in his left hand, readying our ears for this one. In the fifth variation, we are reminded of trumpet figures, and these gradually build into an ensemble variation in the sixth. Morton leads into and makes his climax, the dynamics and the sonority continue to build excitement, the rhythm swings freely and simply. This chorus shows

that special quality of excitement completely articulated, never frenzied, of which Morton was a master, and the performance justly ends with a restored calm.

There is a lot of music made from that simple theme, made in ways so widespread in all kinds of music that one is tempted to believe that Morton is in touch with something implicit in the nature of music itself. But if you hear this apparently simple piece again, I think that you will see Morton even more deeply involved with possibilities in the material he chose and in his form than we have seen already.

The chorus unit is sixteen measures (the structure of the march and of ragtime). But, as we have seen, Morton has used variations which have a close continuity across two choruses, in variations 2 and 3 (the two 'clarinet' choruses) and in variations 6 and 8 (the 'brass' choruses). At the same time, each chorus by its nature may readily fall into two eight-bar units. These in turn may fall into units of four bars each. Then there is the fact that we began with: that the basic melodic content can be stated in two bars. Morton takes some interesting advantages of these things during the piece. For example, the final

chorus (variation 6) consists of a continuous eight-bar line, followed by two four-bar units. And there is the contrast in the two 'clarinet' variations. The first of these is based on a parallel repetition of two-bar units, the second begins with an improvisation which makes contrasting two-bar units. Thus Morton makes a strikingly effective use of what some might see as, necessarily, a melodic limitation inherent in a two-bar phrase, and makes it one of the basic structural conceptions and chief virtues of his playing. He builds variations in a continuity within sixteen-bar choruses, he combines some of these into double choruses, and within this, he works out smaller structures of two, four, and eight bars which contribute by contrast, parallel, and echo to the total development and form.

Morton's command of the materials and devices which he used was that of an artist. Still, jazz was for him a performer's music and he could improvise and could project emotion spontaneously and immediately. However, I believe that once one grasps the fact that ordered and frequently subtle melodic variation is essential to his music, its excitement and its beauty and its uniqueness will possess him even more strongly and lastingly.

For *Kansas City Stomps*, a brief account of the form of the solo on the 1938 version will suffice for the point at hand. It is a unique performance of that piece—or any similar multithematic Morton composition—since it completes the implicit rondo and does it in unique improvisational form. As published, *Kansas City Stomps* consists of an introduction (a 'tune up' motif) and three themes, thus: A (E flat), A (an exact repeat), C (A flat), C′ (a melodic variation). Both A and B are sixteen-bar themes (out of ragtime and marches) and C is an unusual twelve-bar melody with stop-time at bars one and two, seven and eight—making two six-bar units possible. The performance at hand goes this way: Introduction, A, A′ (a variation), B, B′ (a variation), A″ (another variation), C, C′ (a variation), introduction (as a modulation), A‴ (a third variation). Thus a rondo, with each return to each theme a variation on that theme. I have the strong feeling that if anyone even attempted such an 'extended form' today, phrases like 'daring experimenter' and 'searching innovator' would be thick in the air.

Jungle Blues is a deliberately archaic, harmonically 'primitive' blues. Morton played it for Lomax as a part of his criticism of Duke Ellington, 'some-

thing about Ellington playing 'jungle music' and his having made that kind of music before him. (Morton's criticism of Ellington seems to miss the point as much as Ellington's often quoted attack on Morton.) It may sound like a kind of improvisation on blues chords, but it is not; the basic sequence and development were compositionally pre-set. I think one of its nicest effects is the way Morton will keep one kind of rhythm going to the brink of monotony and then shift his treble to a counter-rhythm—the kind of relieving contrast wherein Morton's instincts seldom failed him. We will say more of the piece when discussing Morton's Red Hot Pepper recordings.

Between 17 July 1923 and 20 April 1926, Morton recorded piano solo versions of over twenty compositions, all but one or two of them his own. Inevitably, several of them are inferior, but the records include *King Porter Stomp*, *New Orleans Joys* (*Blues*), *Grandpa's Spells*, *Kansas City Stomps*, *Wolverine Blues*, *The Pearls*, *London Blues* (later called *Shoe Shiner's Drag*), *Mamamita*, *Froggie Moore* (or *Frog-i-More Rag*), *Shreveport Stomp*, (*Original*) *Jelly Roll Blues*, *Big Foot Ham*, *Stratford Hunch* (later called *Chicago Breakdown*), and

an unissued *Milenberg Joys*. Jazzmen have been proclaimed 'major figures' on the basis of far less achievement than these solos represent.

In 1944 William Russell wrote an analytical review, for the magazine the *Needle*, of Morton's rediscovered *Frog-i-More Rag* solo. It is an excellent introduction to Morton's style. 'Jelly Roll had a more formal musical training and background than many New Orleans musicians. . . . At times the close-knit design [of his compositions] is marked by an economy of means that amounts to understatement. . . . Jelly took great pride in his "improvisations" [on a theme]. . . .

'Jelly's performance is a revelation of rhythmic variety by means of such devices as shifted accents, slight delays, and anticipations. Of course, to some . . . this is only a bad performance by a pianist unable to keep correct time, of a piece any third-grade conservatory pupil could play right off at sight. Curiously, as raggy as Jelly's performance . . . is, it is nevertheless in perfect *time*; the regular pulse can be felt throughout with no loss at all in momentum. . . . The melodic invention of this finale is as notable as its immense rhythmic vitality. . . . Jelly's rhythmic impetus and melodic embellish-

ment give the effect of a fantastic and frenzied variation. Actually each bar is directly related to its counterpart in the first simple statement and all of Jelly's most characteristic and fanciful "figurations" are fused with the basic idea as though they belonged there originally. . . . With Jelly Roll, no matter how exuberant rhythmically or varied melodically . . . there is never any doubt of their musical logic and that every note grows out of the original motive.'

In some respects these early solos of 1923–6 may impress us differently than the later recordings I have used as a basis for some of this discussion of Morton's piano and style. There is a rhythmic vigour and optimism in Morton's 1923 work that the later versions do not have. And in several of them there is a decided rhythmic affinity to ragtime which Morton's music was otherwise breaking away from.

Comparisons among various versions of the same piece are always instructive and herewith invited. And even during the 'twenties Morton recorded several of the pieces several times, either in alternate 'takes' or at later sessions. With these remarks as an introduction, I shall now leave the pleasures of further comparisons largely to the reader. But I

will append remarks on two more of the pieces. *Mamamita* (or *Mama 'Nita*, or 'Mama Anita') is seldom mentioned among Morton's best pieces, but it is a very good composition. In the version done for Paramount it is played with some ingenious polyrhythms in its tango section and one really striking chorus of melodic variation. (Originally issued on the other side of *Mamamita*, however, was the pseudo-blues *35th Street*, a dull song whose rhythmic monotony is relieved only by a couple of Morton's bass cliches.)

Then there is the structural sophistication of *London Blues* (later *Shoe Shiner's Drag*) which was still intriguing jazzmen in the later 'thirties, and remains an implicit challenge to jazz composition even now. It is a twelve-bar blues in form (and in spirit) but it is ingeniously harmonized in part. The fourth section (as given by Louis Gottlieb in *Jazz: A Quarterly of American Music*, $1) has this chord sequence:

B♭ | F7 C♯dim | B♭ | B♭7 | E♭ E♭min6 |
B♭ Fmin6 | G7 | C7 | F7 | B♭ E♭ B♭

3

PROLOGUE TO THE RED HOT PEPPERS

If Jelly Roll Morton had never made the Red Hot Pepper records for Victor records, his reputation would probably have to rest on the early published scores and the early piano solos made for Gennet, Paramount, Rialto, etc. Before he made the Victor series, Morton did make some orchestral records and some of them are so bad that they must have seemed to show that his talent had already spent itself on that handful of compositional piano solos. But in retrospect we can notice that in them he attempted everything that he later brought off so brilliantly, even the 'big band' effects of the later Victors. We also hear that most of the virtues of unity, cohesion, and individual skill of the players of the Victor sessions are not to be heard in these earlier recording groups.

There are, however, two successes and they are apparently Morton's first recordings: *Muddy Waters Blues* and *Big Fat Ham.*[1] The group that played them had a rare unity and swing and performed with confidence and verve. The firm, Keppard-like trumpet leads with authority (could it *really* be Natty Dominique? I doubt it), and Jasper Taylor's fine (if over-recorded) drumming shows both a splendid comprehension of Morton's rhythmic conception and very infectious good spirits. *Big Fat Ham* (later *Big Foot Ham* and *Ham and Eggs*) is a very good composition, and Morton's swinging orchestration outlines his later work. He uses unison, harmony and polyphony in a constantly shifting yet finally unified texture surpassed only by some of the Victors. And the clarinet and particularly the trumpet solos on *Water* might instruct even the dullest head about the blues. Finally there is—besides the trumpet (or cornet), Roy Palmer's trombone, Wilson Townes's clarinet, Morton's piano, and Taylor's woodblocks (no bass or guitar apparently)—an alto saxophone, possibly Arville Harris. I do not want to get into a discussion of the appro-

[1] For details of these sessions, the reader is recommended, herewith and subsequently, to the Jelly Roll Morton discography compiled by Jorgen Grumet Jepsen, published by Deput Records, Bande, Denmark.

priateness of the saxophone to the New Orleans style, particularly since the earliest photographs and accounts and recordings of the musicians frequently include them (and include guitars and string basses too). Suffice it to say that saxophones do seem to tangle with the collective improvisational balance on several records. This one does not, and perhaps the reason is not a matter of group style, but because the player here has good timing and swings well. At any rate, using a four-man front line is a problem Morton will take up again, and with some success.

The other important side among the early band recordings is the Gennet version of *Mr. Jelly Lord* (1926). There is some good piano (as there is on nearly every recorded version of this piece) but most important there is a large brass section and a three-man reed section that plays with respectable discipline and swing—and if you know histories of jazz, you know it isn't supposed to have happened quite that early.

Morton is clearly musical director of the four (possibly five) pieces he recorded in 1923 with the New Orleans Rhythm Kings; some of the pieces are and almost all of the ideas of orchestration and

effect are his. He helped that group, otherwise sometimes a stiff one, to easy tempos that encouraged them to swing better. And on that NORK version of *London Blues*, Morton ably alternated passages in harmony, counterpoint, solo, and breaks, all along the lines he was later to perfect. The Okeh version of *London Blues* (and *Someday Sweetheart*), from the same year, is done almost entirely in polyphony and solo, however. It would have been a successful record if it were not for the stiff, unswinging clarinet of Horace Eubanks.

The four pieces recorded for the Autograph label in 1924 are interesting chiefly for *Fish Tail Blues* as an early sketch for *Sidewalk Blues*. It was a poor band; here a schmaltzy alto trips over the polyphony and often forces the clarinet into a purely harmonic part, and the playing has constant rhythmic and melodic disunity.

To deal with any more of these early orchestral recordings would be to repeat the same story, or a similar one. And yet, as I say, on them Morton tried everything that he later brought off. And some essentials of his approach to jazz can be heard in them, at least in retrospect and with the benefit of having heard his later and better recordings.

One of the cliches about Morton's orchestral style is that its essence is 'New Orleans polyphony'.[1] But, as we have seen, Morton's earliest orchestral records include unison and harmonized passages, and solos. Morton's earliest Victors use polyphony but, in a sense, use it sparingly. They use unison, harmony, and solo frequently and pronouncedly. At the same time they have a melodic, harmonic, and tonal sophistication which by comparison can make King Oliver's fine early records seem no more than the work of a highly skilful blues band—and that impression endures despite the fact that sooner or later Oliver's band used all the same devices that Morton did, but with far less orchestral skill and point.

If Morton's boast, 'Listen, man, whatever you blow on that horn, you're blowing Jelly Roll,' is taken to mean 'I *originated* everything in jazz and everybody got it from me,' it is obviously not a little absurd (and the ghosts of Scott Joplin, James Scott, and the rest might throw the words back in his face). But one can say that Morton raised or reflected many possibilities for jazz (obviously borrowing some, undoubtedly arriving at others for

[1] I have used and am using the term 'polyphony' throughout this account in the way that it is usually used in jazz writing when the New Orleans style is discussed. Actually 'heterophony' might be a better term to borrow from the terminology of Western music for the style.

himself) and solved many of them well. One might say that in several respects, he cuts across years of development in jazz.

I think that this is the best point at which to append a note on two subjects which will plague anyone trying to deal with Morton's music, the questions of plagiarism and of collaboration. The first thing to remember, I think, is that these questions may be raised about the work of *any* major jazzman and about anyone who deals with folk material. It seems undeniable that Morton once did, in 1929, deliberately and overtly plagiarize three pieces to retaliate against former business associates. But, for example, in contrast, when he recomposed Santo Pecora's *She's Crying For Me* excellently into *Georgia Swing*, he left Pecora's name on the piece, and Charles Luke is fully credited with *Smokehouse Blues*.

On the question of collaboration: it has sometimes been hinted that Morton could hardly read and write music and that he got a collaborator to do all the work of harmonization and orchestration once Morton had presented him with a 'lead sheet' of the melody lines of his pieces. It is quite true that the names of Tiny Parham, Elmer Schoebel and others

appear on the Melrose 'stock' orchestrations of his pieces. Some of these orchestrations date from a time after the pieces were recorded for Victor, and are labelled transcriptions of the recordings; others date from before the Victors. However, the real point is that both in the piano style and in the orchestrations—done in Chicago and later in New York—there is one developing musical sensibility to be heard. Morton may have needed technical help; he admitted freely that he did on some matters at some points in his career. But the musical conception, and its careful refinement and evolution, was his own.

4

DUETS, TRIOS, QUARTETS

It used to be said that Morton 'invented' the jazz trio of clarinet, piano, and drums, and that others 'exploited' his idea (the 'others' chiefly being Benny Goodman, of course). Unless one hung out at Pete Lala's place or Dago Tony's in Storyville, or in many other such places in many other cities where such trios might have played, such a claim is on shaky historical grounds. But he did apparently record such units first.

There are only two really successful trio sessions, I think, the *Wolverine Blues* one with Johnny and Baby Dodds, and *Shreveport Stomp* with Omer Simeon and Tommy Benford. The four 1929 trios with Barney Bigard use inferior material and I would say that Bigard's virtues as a clarinettist were ones Ellington helped him develop later.

The 1924 Paramount small group performance of *Mr. Jelly Lord* exists in two 'takes', with quite different piano work. Piano, sax, and a kazoo make a pretty dreadful record on the face of it, but Morton himself was really playing that day and did some ingenious and effective things.

The Autograph duet of *Wolverine Blues* from 1925 with Volly de Faut might be called merely an early effort in the direction of the Victor clarinet trios if it were not for de Faut. One might want him to swing more or question his intonation, but he did some good improvising on a comparatively difficult part. On *My Gal*, the duet becomes a trio when a kazoo enters. Oliver's having Louis Armstrong play slide whistle seems bad enough to us today, but such raucousness in Morton's careful music is harder to take.

The two recorded duets with King Oliver are largely Morton's. On *King Porter Stomp* Oliver plays it almost straight, but despite a brief faltering of cornet and breath techniques here and there, it comes down to a *tour de force* of very expressively played lines, played with fine momentum and swing —and with some splendid and unique ideas about brass-and-mute interpretations of that piece. The

other duet from that date, *Tom Cat Blues* (a splicing of themes better known as *Whining Boy* and *Nobody Knows the Way I Feel This Morning*) has some improvising by Oliver with a very good break and variation at the end—in a style, by the way, which, through Armstrong's use of it, told everybody which direction to take for at least twenty years.

The 1927 trio on *Wolverine Blues* with the Dodds brothers seems even better now that we have two 'takes' of it for comparison. It begins as a Morton piano solo, settles into a good swing as Johnny and Baby Dodds enter on the trio section. The clarinet does not play the theme but an arpeggio variation on the chords, and the drummer is almost exemplary in his varied textures. Johnny Dodds's variation on the recently released alternate 'take' is quite different and perhaps even better.

On *Shreveport Stomp*, Omer Simeon plays melody fairly straight but with fine flow and a sense of its singing yet military quality, and with the kind of emotional control that made him so good at Morton's music. Notice that in one of its interludes there is a long, continuous melody, unbroken by bar lines —a problem few dared to take up again until Lester

Young and Charlie Parker. (Writer Dick Hadlock once found the 'introduction' theme to *Shreveport* in Rudy Weidoff's *Saxophobia*, by the way. Morton probably got it from there, perhaps even consciously so.)

Perhaps the real masterpiece of the small group recordings, however, is *Mournful Serenade* (1928), Morton's re-working of King Oliver's *Chimes Blues* for a quartet: Omer Simeon's clarinet; Geechy Fields's trombone; his own piano; and Tommy Benford's drums. The themes have a very different character at Morton's slow tempo and in the passionate interpretation of the horns, sometimes over Morton's almost jocular counterstatements on piano. The handling of the instruments makes *Mournful Serenade* almost a Red Hot Peppers score; it is at least a fine introduction to Morton's scoring—and to the interpretations he could coax from his players, individually and collectively.

5

THE RED HOT PEPPERS

Jelly Roll Morton's audacity was musical enough and his musicianship comprehensive enough to produce an orchestral record like *Black Bottom Stomp* for three horns and rhythm on which, in less than three minutes' playing time, three themes, variations on some of them, a variety of rhythmic and orchestral effect including variations between a 2/4 and a 4/4 rhythm, stop-time harmony, polyphony, call-and-response riff patterns, solo against rhythm —all these things and others happen. Furthermore, in that record Morton had the brilliance to try something that is still against everyone's thinking: he makes his strongest climaxes not by increasing volume or instrumental mass but by holding back Johnny Lindsay's string bass and Baby Dodds's bass drums until key emotional moments and rhythmic-melodic peaks.

In the course of *Black Bottom Stomp*, to be a bit more detailed, we hear an introduction (we later realize it was borrowed from the second theme) stated in a 'call and response pattern'. The first theme (actually almost a series of chords) is given in harmony, then in solo 'call' by the trumpet and in variational 'response' by the clarinet and trombone, then back to harmony. The second, B, theme then comes in polyphonically with pronounced swing, Lindsay in strong, and includes breaks as well. The clarinet delivers a variation, in effect almost a new theme. Then the piano. Then trumpet against intermittent 'Charleston' rhythms, banjo against string bass (but with a break). Trumpet, clarinet, trumpet with very light rhythm. Then a heavy 'stomp' chorus, with audible bass, bass drum, and with trombone breaks.

It all sounds impossibly cluttered and perhaps pretentious, of course, but it is neither. *Black Bottom Stomp* flows from beginning to end, inevitably and apparently simply, like fate. As I have said, commentators have usually lumped Morton orchestrations of this kind, with the ruggedly integrated improvising of King Oliver's band and the easy blues playing of Johnny Dodds's little pick-up

groups, all together as something called 'New Orleans style'.

Morton's best records, however, are among the few that we have that prove that jazz can go beyond the excellence of the improviser, even than the improviser in the ideal setting, for they integrate collective improvisation, pre-arranged sketch, solo, and group textures into a total form and effect greater than the sum of its parts. Besides his records, a few others show how far jazz can go in fulfilling such larger tasks—from recent years, *Israel* and *Boplicity*, some of the Modern Jazz Quartet's performances, some of Thelonious Monk's; from earlier years, many of Ellington's recordings. And that is about all.

The smallness of that formal heritage alone would make Morton's work important; the uniqueness of his work makes it invaluable.

One of the things that holds a *Black Bottom Stomp* together, for all its array of effects, is an ingenious and developing relationship in both quality and kind among its three melodies. Another is the patterns of musical and rhythmic echo Morton used in the orchestration: polyphony, fragmented and split melodic lines, and stop time, will all fade and

recur at key moments in ways that give a sense of order to the liveliness of the whole.

Above I have referred to a masterpiece, *Dead Man Blues.*[1] It would be one if only because it managed to juxtapose a sober seriousness and a glinting sprightliness with complete and deceptive success. It is a beautifully planned orchestration. After a snatch of the Chopin funeral march, the first theme is stated in a lightly dancing polyphonic chorus. That chorus will be beautifully echoed at the end of the recording by the fact that the third appearance of the third theme is also played polyphonically. In themselves, these two choruses would make an exceptional performance: they sing and dance with a beauty of individual lines, an integration of those lines, and a lightness of rhythms and touch (quite unlike most 'dixieland') that I believe brings that early jazz style to the highest development it had.

The second 'theme' is actually a series of blues variations. First Omer Simeon's lovely clarinet chorus after which Morton's trumpeter George

[1] I will again give warning that the version of *Dead Man Blues* current on twelve-inch L.P. is a strange composite editing of several 'takes' including parts of an inferior one that had technical errors, was originally rejected, and should probably have remained so.

Mitchell shapes two exceptional blues choruses. Not only does each one of Mitchell's phrases develop beautifully out of its predecessor but his second chorus is both a beautiful foil to his first and an ingenious rhythmic and melodic preparation for what follows it, in the third part. This trio section following begins with the simplest moment of the record, a kind of interlude and fresh thematic start from which to rebuild in reverse the kind of thing that has preceded. Morton first has a trio of clarinets playing the straightforward riff-like melody for one chorus. Then, as they repeat it, Kid Ory's trombone enters to sing a blues counter-melody beneath them. Then, as if encouraged by Ory's quiet hint, the polyphonic horns of Mitchell and Simeon re-enter for the three-part chorus that concludes *Dead Man Blues* on an echo of its beginning.

Mitchell and Simeon were excellent musicians for Morton to have chosen. Simeon's forte was an exceptional capacity to make splendid, responsive counter-lines in ensemble. Mitchell's secret sense of swinging time perfectly carried out the transition Morton was making between the clipped 2/4 of an earlier day and the impending 4/4 of the swing style. He also responded excellently to Morton's expressed or

implied syncopated tango rhythms that were so intimately a part of that transition. But most important, Mitchell's style probably carried complexity as far as it could then go and still allow for an integrated ensemble lead voice from the trumpet in polyphonic improvising. A little more of the virtuoso soloist and the ensemble collapses, as Armstrong's work of those years was making increasingly evident.

Another of the best of this series, *Grandpa's Spells*, clarifies how crucially orchestral and instrumental these pieces were. Most of them are, of course, re-workings of the earlier piano solos, and the piano solos are in conception to begin with often pianistic: the pieces are not 'songs' or 'tunes' harmonized and played on a piano; although, as we have seen, the piano's point of departure is clearly the imitation of an orchestra, they are also transmuted in terms of its resources. In re-composing them for orchestra, Morton did not simply try to score this pianistic conception back to its orchestral source. If we compare the piano version of *Grandpa's Spells* to the orchestral record, we see that in the latter Morton used one of the themes only in variation. He did it, obviously, because the original

version was formed too closely in terms of the piano keyboard.

Grandpa's Spells is probably the masterpiece of all Morton's fast stomps. It is a shade better conceived than its rivals, *Kansas City Stomps* and *Black Bottom Stomp*, if not quite so well executed, and its melodies are better on the whole. Again, the plan is ingenious but to break it down would tell only part of the story. There is the variety of polyphony, harmony, solo, rhythms, stop-time breaks, ingenious use of rhythm instruments—including a conversation between the group and string bass, something not supposed to have been brought off until Ellington's *KoKo*. And, still again, the point is that all the richness is never merely complicated, is indeed so apparently simple and easy.

However, for all the problems it raises in a sense, it may be easier to sustain a piece for three minutes if one is using several themes, especially if variation-on-theme is mandatory. If he runs out of ideas for one melody, he can just turn to the next, it would seem. Would it not be more difficult, in some ways, if one worked with only one theme and had to sustain it for the length of a record? Swing and bop musicians did that, of course, but they did not

invent it. Morton's *Jungle Blues* even makes the task more difficult by its deliberately archaic quality. In it he took a very primitive blues bass line (two notes for a full twelve bars to begin with) and an almost naïve riff for a theme. These are shaped into three variant melodies, a variety of rhythmic effects, and pushed to the brink of monotony before Morton ends the whole at just the moment-too-soon. Similarly, *Doctor Jazz* is a jazzman's version of a one-theme pop tune, performed, by the way, with fine swing and movement. The orchestral version of *Hyena Stomp* might have been a memorably developed set of instrumental variations on riff-theme but Morton chose to introduce the hyena of the title in person throughout the piece. (Perhaps it represents a realistic approach to one's audience, and it *is* funny, but it is only apt to annoy us today.)

Morton had the audacity to put so much into one piece and the comprehensive brilliance to make such a conception work, but, of course, he was not creating in a vacuum. For there was, before 1920, a firm and quite sophisticated tradition in jazz which he had absorbed and was extending. An *Original Jelly Roll Blues* does not come about with only a

few 'country blues' shouters and jug bands in its heritage. For all we can say about the importance of French and Spanish folk song, Baptist hymn, spiritual, and even John Philip Sousa to New Orleans jazz, it is clear that the crucial contributors to Morton's music were, as I have said, ragtime and the blues.

But no such account will explain how he could break the slow and passionate movement of *Smokehouse Blues* for double-timing, then for quadruple timing, and not destroy its beauty but rather enhance it. To deal with that, I think we need a word like *artist.*

Having stated such an orchestral conception on some twenty-odd recorded sides by June 1928—having experimented with the clarinet trios, with quartets, and with adding an extra voice to the polyphony (the alto sax that all but works on *The Pearls* and *Beale Street Blues*)—Morton did not merely rest and repeat himself. He met the challenges that both the north-east and south-west were laying down: larger bands with more harmonized section writing, and smaller bands where the emphasis was on solo variations with opening and closing theme-statements. The later Morton records

are always said to be not so good as the earlier Victors, but I think that, for example, a *New Orleans Bump* succeeds in being just the kind of big band piece Duke Ellington and Don Redman were working on. And *Burning the Iceberg* rather successfully expands the older conceptions of harmony, polyphony, and solo—now assigning it to a larger group of three brass, four reeds, and rhythm. And *Blue Blood Blues* depends for its success largely on its soloists and players—Ward Pinkett's trumpet, Albert Nicholas's clarinet, Geechy Fields's trombone, and Morton's piano—in a way that few other small group records do until the late 'thirties.

One can find a lot of reasons for calling this man with the clown's nickname still important in the jazzman's heritage. In him jazz produced one of its best composers, best leaders, best masters of form, one of its few theorists. More important, in Morton jazz produced one of its first real artists.

SELECTED RECORDS

There are considerable gaps in the items by Jelly Roll Morton that are currently in the catalogue, particularly as far as the late Victor period of 1928-30 is concerned. I have included one British LP (English RCA RD27184) to cover some of these, but this still only gives a partial coverage. All records listed are twelve-inch 33-1/3 rpm long playing items and with the exception of the release mentioned above are currently available in the United States.

Key to Instrumental Abbreviations

alt=alto saxophone	p=piano
bj=banjo	sop=soprano saxophone
bs=string bass	tbn=trombone
clt=clarinet	ten=tenor saxophone
cnt=cornet	tpt=trumpet
d=drums	tu=tuba
g=guitar	vcl=vocalist

Key to Record Label Abbreviations

Br Brunswick	RCA(E) English RCA
Cmd Commodore	Riv Riverside
RCA RCA Victor	

JELLY ROLL MORTON'S STOMP KINGS:
unknown (cnt); Roy Palmer (tbn); Wilson Townes

(clt); probably Arville Harris (alt); Jelly Roll Morton (p); Jasper Taylor (woodblocks).

Chicago, June 1923

1434	*Big Fat Ham*	Riv RLP12-128
1435-2	*Muddy Water Blues*	Riv RLP12-128

JELLY ROLL MORTON (p)

Richmond, Indiana, July 17, 1923

11537a	*King Porter Stomp*	Riv RLP12-111
11538a	*New Orleans Joys*	Riv RLP12-111

Richmond, Indiana, July 18, 1923

11544	*Grandpa's Spells*	Riv RLP12-111
11545a	*Kansas City Stomps*	Riv RLP12-111
11546	*Wolverine Blues*	Riv RLP12-111

JELLY ROLL MORTON'S STEAMBOAT FOUR: unknown (alt); unknown (kazoo); Jelly Roll Morton (p); possibly unknown (bj)

Chicago, April 1924

8065-2	*Mr. Jelly Roll*	Riv RLP12-128

JELLY ROLL MORTON (p)

Chicago, April 1924

8071	*Mamamita*	Riv RLP12-128
8072	*35th Street Blues*	Riv RLP12-128

Richmond, Indiana, June 9, 1924

11908	*Shreveport Stomp*	Riv RLP12-111
11911	*Jelly Roll Blues*	Riv RLP12-111
11912	*Big Foot Ham*	Riv RLP12-111
11913	*Bucktown Blues*	Riv RLP12-111

11914	*Tom Cat Blues*	Riv RLP12-111
11915	*Stratford Hunch*	Riv RLP12-111
11917	*Perfect Rag*	Riv RLP12-111

JELLY ROLL MORTON'S KINGS OF JAZZ:
Lee Collins (cnt); Roy Palmer (tbn); "Balls" Ball (clt); Alex Poole (alt); Jelly Roll Morton (p)

Chicago, September 1924

635	*Fish Tail Blues*	Riv RLP12-128
636	*High Society*	Riv RLP12-128
637	*Weary Blues*	Riv RLP12-128
638	*Tiger Rag*	Riv RLP12-128

Note: Some reviewers have claimed that there is a second trumpet present on the above titles, suggesting it is Natty Dominique.

KING OLIVER (cnt) acc Jelly Roll Morton (p)

Chicago, November 1924

685	*King Porter*	Riv RLP12-130
687	*Tom Cat Blues*	Riv RLP12-130

Note: The two titles above appear on an LP devoted to King Oliver and none of the other tracks feature Morton.

JELLY ROLL MORTON'S JAZZ TRIO:
Volly De Faut (clt); Jelly Roll Morton (p); unknown kazoo-1

Chicago, May 1925

791	*My Gal*-1	Riv RLP12-128
792	*Wolverine Blues*	Riv RLP12-128

JELLY ROLL MORTON'S INCOMPARABLES:
Ray Bowling, S. Jones, possibly Punch Miller (tpt); unknown (tbn); unknown (clt); unknown (alt); unknown (ten); Jelly Roll Morton (p); unknown (bj); unknown (tu); Clay Jefferson (d)

Richmond, Indiana, February 16, 1926

12467 *Mr. Jelly Lord* Riv RLP12-128

JELLY ROLL MORTON (p)

Chicago, April 20, 1926

E2863 *The Pearls* Br BL54015
E2866 *Sweetheart O'Mine* Br BL54015
E2867 *Fat Meat And Greens* Br BL54015
E2869 *King Porter Stomp* Br BL54015

JELLY ROLL MORTON'S RED HOT PEPPERS:
George Mitchell (cnt); Edward "Kid" Ory (tbn); Omer Simeon (clt); Jelly Roll Morton (p); Johnny St. Cyr (bj); John Lindsay (bs); Andrew Hilarie (d)

Chicago, September 15, 1926

BVE36239-2 *Black Bottom Stomp* RCA LPM1649
BVE36240-2 *Smoke House Blues* RCA LPM1649
BVE36241-3 *The Chant* RCA LPM1649

Darnell Howard, Barney Bigard (clt); Marty Bloom (claxton) added

Chicago, September 21, 1926

BVE36283-3 *Sidewalk Blues*-1 RCA LPM1649

BVE36284-3 *Dead Man Blues*-1 RCA LPM1649
BVE36285-1 *Steamboat Stomp*-1, 2
RCA LPM1649

-1 Spoken introduction on this title by Morton and St. Cyr; -2 Howard and Bloom not present on this title

George Mitchell (cnt); Edward "Kid" Ory (tbn); Omer Simeon (clt); Jelly Roll Morton (p); Johnny St. Cyr (bj); John Lindsay (bs); Andrew Hilaire (d)

Chicago, December 16, 1926

BVE37254-3 *Someday Sweetheart*-1
RCA(E) RD27184
BVE37255-1 *Grandpa's Spells* RCA LPM1649
BVE37256-2 *Original Jelly Roll Blues*
RCA LPM1649
BVE37257-3 *Doctor Jazz*-2 RCA LPM1649
BVE37258-2 *Cannon Ball Blues* RCA LPM1649

-1 Two unknown violins — one probably Darnell Howard—added on this title; -2 vocal on this title by Jelly Roll Morton

George Mitchell (cnt); George Bryant or Gerald Reeves (tbn); Johnny Dodds (clt); Stump Evans (alt); Jelly Roll Morton (p); Bud Scott (bj); Quinn Wilson (tu); Warren "Baby" Dodds (d); Lew Le Mar (vcl-1)

Chicago, June 4, 1927

BVE38627-2 *Hyena Stomp*-1 RCA(E) RD27184
BVE38628-2 *Billy Goat Stomp*-1
RCA(E) RD27184

BVE38630-3 *Jungle Blues* RCA LPM1649

Possibly Norman Mason (alt); Johnny St. Cyr (bj) replace Evans and Scott; Bryant is definite on trombone.

Chicago, June 10, 1927

BVE38661-1 *Beale Street Blues* RCA LPM1649
BVE38662-2 *The Pearls* RCA LPM1649

JELLY ROLL MORTON'S TRIO:
Johnny Dodds (clt); Jelly Roll Morton (p); Warren "Baby" Dodds (d)

Chicago, June 10, 1927

BVE38663-1 *Wolverine Blues* RCA(E) RD27184
BVE38664-1 *Mr. Jelly Lord* RCA(E) RD27184

JELLY ROLL MORTON'S RED HOT PEPPERS:
Ward Pinkett (tpt); Geechy Fields (tbn); Omer Simeon (clt); Jelly Roll Morton (p); Lee Blair (bj); Bill Benford (tu); Tommy Benford (d)

New York City, June 11, 1928

BVE45619-2 *Georgia Swing* RCA LPM1649
BVE45620-3 *Kansas City Stomps* RCA LPM1649
BVE45621-2 *Shoe Shiner's Drag* RCA LPM1649
BVE45622-2 *Boogaboo* RCA(E) RD27184

JELLY ROLL MORTON'S TRIO:
Omer Simeon (clt); Jelly Roll Morton (p); Tommy Benford (d)

New York City, June 11, 1928

BVE45623-1 *Shreveport Stomp*
RCA(E) RD27184

JELLY ROLL MORTON'S QUARTET:
As last with Geechy Fields (tbn) added
New York City, June 11, 1928
BVE45624-1 *Mournful Serenade*
RCA(E) RD27184

JELLY ROLL MORTON'S RED HOT PEPPERS:
Edwin Swayzee, Eddie Anderson (tpt); Bill Cato (tbn); Russell Procope (alt, clt); Joe Garland (ten); Paul Barnes (sop); Jelly Roll Morton (p); Lee Blair (bj); Bass Moore (bs); Manzie Johnson (d)
New York City, December 6, 1928
BVE48434-1 *Red Hot Pepper Stomp*
RCA(E) RD27184
BVE48435-3 *Deep Creek* RCA(E) RD27184

JELLY ROLL MORTON (p)
Camden, New Jersey, July 8, 1929
BVE49448-2 *Pep* RCA(E) RD27184
BVE49449-2 *Seattle Hunch* RCA(E) RD27184
BVE49450-1 *Fat Frances* RCA(E) RD27184

JELLY ROLL MORTON'S RED HOT PEPPERS:
Ward Pinkett, Bubber Miley (tpt); Wilbur De Paris (tbn); Russell Procope (alt, clt); Jelly Roll Morton (p); unknown (bj); Bernard Addison (g); Billy Taylor (tu); Tommy Benford (d)

New York City, March 20, 1930

BVE59644 *Ponchatrain Blues* RCA(E) RD27184

JELLY ROLL MORTON (p)

Washington, D.C., May-June 1938

King Porter Stomp	Riv RLP12-132
New Orleans Blues	Riv RLP12-132
The Pearls	Riv RLP12-132
Fickle Fay Creep	Riv RLP12-132
Hyena Stomp	Riv RLP12-132
Pep	Riv RLP12-132
Jungle Blues	Riv RLP12-132
The Crave	Riv RLP12-132
Kansas City Stomps	Riv RLP12-132
Mama Nita	Riv RLP12-132
Creepy Feeling	Riv RLP12-132
Spanish Swat	Riv RLP12-132

Note: The above is a selection from the Library of Congress Recordings mentioned in the text. A full set, from which these items have been selected, is available on Riverside RLP9001-RLP9012 respectively (twelve LPs in all).

JELLY ROLL MORTON (p, vcl-1)

New York City, December 14, 1939

R2561 *Original Rags*	Cmd FL30,000
R2562 *The Crave*	Cmd FL30,000
R2564 *Mister Joe*	Cmd FL30,000

R2565 *King Porter Stomp* Cmd FL30,000
R2566 *Winin' Boy Blues*-1 Cmd FL30,000

New York City, December 16, 1939

R2570 *Buddy Bolden's Blues*-1 Cmd FL30,000
R2571 *The Naked Dance* Cmd FL30,000
R2572 *Don't You Leave Me Here*-1 Cmd FL30,000
R2573 *Mamie's Blues*-1 Cmd FL30,000

New York City, December 18, 1939

R2579 *Michigan Water Blues*-1 Cmd FL30,000

KINGS OF JAZZ

Jelly Roll Morton

by Martin Williams

This new PERPETUA series, *Kings of Jazz*, provides authoritative introductions to the individual masters of traditional and modern jazz who have become legends in the field. The series has been designed for the jazz lover, and each volume has been written by an expert on his subject. These books include notes on the musician's life, early career, and influence, as well as a selected discography and a number of photographs. Bob Dawborn wrote in *The Melody Maker:* "This admirable new series fills a great need in the ever-increasing library of jazz literature. At last we are to have intelligent and authoritative jazz books at a price within the reach of every student of the music." Other titles in the *Kings of Jazz series* include: *Duke Ellington, Bessie Smith, Dizzy Gillespie, Bix Beiderbecke, Louis Armstrong, Fats Waller, Charlie Parker, King Oliver, Miles Davis,* and *Johnny Dodds.*

Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton, the subject of this volume, launched his musical career in the early 1900's and managed, during the course of a lifetime of piano playing and jazz orchestration that ended in 1941, to encompass the musical worlds of ragtime and jazz. A puzzlingly complex man, a diamond-toothed dandy, an audacious braggart, Morton pursued a variety of careers and identities, but in spite of himself, there was an integrity to his craft and art which came back to him in his most adverse moments. In him jazz produced one of its best composers, one of its best leaders, one of its best masters of form, and one of its few theorists. More important, in Jelly Roll Morton, jazz produced one of its first real artists.

A Perpetua Book

Published by
A. S. Barnes and Company, Inc.
New York 16

P-4083

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

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