LATER RECORDINGS BY 'BLACK BOB' HUDSON

The study of pianists taking part in the blues and hokum recordings made in Chicago in the later '30s (on which I have been engaged for several years) focusses above all on the enigmatic pianist known during that time as 'Black Bob'.

There is now no doubt about his identity. A number of years ago I identified him aurally as the Bob Hudson who was pianist on the Memphis Night Hawks session in 1932. A test pressing of The Trombone Slide, recorded by Bob and Roy (Bob Hudson and Roy Palmer) during those sessions, and copies of some private recordings made by them with Chick Bullock at the same time, reinforced that impression. When Memphis Slim visited England recently I took the opportunity to ask him - not whether he had known 'Black Bob', but whether he had known a pianist named Bob Hudson. His answer was immediate: 'Yeah. We called him "Black Bob" [emphasis on the first word]. He and I and Blind John Davis did most of the recordings in Chicago in those days.'

'Black Bob' Hudson took part in more recordings in 1934-38 than he is given credit for in Blues & Gospel Records. But the interesting finding from my collation, in chronological sequence, of nearly all the Chicago sessions from March 1934 onwards is that he continued to record for a good deal longer than B&GR makes it appear.

The last session credited to 'Black Bob' is that by Washboard Sam on June 16, 1938. Here is a list of the later sessions on which I have so far found him:

1938 June 16. Bob is pianist on the last three titled by Red Mike Bailey; Blind John Davis is pianist on the first three. June 23. Bob accompanies Memphis Minnie. November 2. Bob accompanies Mattie Hardy, One Arm Slim and Joe Williams (I have copies of test pressings of unissued titles). December 16. Bob accompanies Washboard Sam on the first 5 or 6 of his recordings. Josh Altheimer then takes over the piano.

1939 January 24. Bob is pianist on the item remade by One Arm Slim (some doubt about this date, since no other recordings were made that day; take 4 may be an engineer's remake of take 2). September 14. Bob is pianist on the Harlem Hamfats' last session.

1940. No recordings by Bob Hudson yet found.

1941 June 30. Bob reappears as a member of the Three Shadows, accompanying Ruth Ladson.

The works of reference that I have been able to consult are silent on both Ruth Ladson and the Three Shadows, but the names may provide some clue to where 'Black Bob' Hudson disappeared to. I have not yet heard OK 06667, but the unissued first title of Ruth Ladson's session appeared on a Stash LP. Bob is unmistakable throughout, and finishes with his distinctive coda.

With the aid of collectors and fellow-researchers in many countries, I have been able to assemble transcriptions of nearly all the Chicago recordings of this period, including many unissued titles and alternate takes. However, in case they may throw new light, there are still some others which I would like to hear, as follows. (Matrix numbers, with take number added where a particular take is needed.)


There are also a number of test pressings of unissued titles or alternate takes by the following artists which I understand exist and would like to hear: Big Bill, Hattie Bolten, George Curry, James Hall, Amos Easton, Lil Johnson, Merline Johnson, Lillie Mae Kirkman, Louisiana Johnnie, Monkey Joe, One Arm Slim, Victoria Spivey.

I am prepared to undertake not to transcribe any material provided for this study. Apart from a few items in respect of which I have already given such an undertaking, I can provide copies of any other Chicago recordings of the period with piano accompaniment to anyone interested in this field of study.

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