

Bob Inman's Swing Adventures in New York City, June 1937

By Ken Vail



graphs from the Bob Inman Collection, here are some excerpts from the book, first-hand accounts by Bob Inman of his swing adventures in and around New York City during the month of June, 1937:

Saturday 12 June 1937

I got two tickets mailed to me for this Swing Session. This is a special hour and a half program celebrating one year of Swing Sessions sponsored by the Columbia Broadcasting System. It starts at midnight. Mrs Pastoriza drove Hughie, Jim Poe, and myself at 10:45pm. We got there at 11:50 and all the seats were taken except the box seats. So we entered them, which were the best seats. Don Mortimer, who just got home from school, gave me his camera to take pictures. I took 16 pictures but only a few came out. Duke Ellington's Jam Ensemble kept rehearsing Frolic Sam before the broadcast. It sure was great. It was just recorded on Variety. Announcer Melvin Allen came out before the broadcast and introduced Paul Douglas. The regular CBS Band, under the direction of Leith Stevens, was larger: 5 trumpeters Jimmy Rosselli, Dave Wade, Lloyd Williams, Nat Natoli; 3 trombones Wilbur Schwichtenburg; Russ Genner, Joe Vargas; pianist Raymond Scott; drummer Johnny Williams; bassist Lou Shoobe; guitarist Frankie Worrell; and 4 saxes.

There must have been at least 1500 people at this broadcast in CBS Playhouse Number 1, just off Broadway at 8th Street. Although it was an hour and a half long it was marvelous and the whole audience was kept very well entertained. The broadcast of the Quintette from Paris, France, didn't come over

very well. It was 6 o'clock in the morning there. Of course, the parts of the broadcast that we could see were the best. Therefore, Duke Ellington's Ensemble, the Thompson Rhythm Singers (which included Al Rinker who used to be one of the Whiteman Rhythm Boys), Kress & McDonough, and the two last jam session numbers really 'sent me' the most. We must have looked quite important, taking notes and pictures up in a box, because the CBS cameraman on the stage below took a picture of us. There were many photographers in the front row, probably from swing magazines. After the

On Christmas Day 1935 15-year-old Bob Inman was given a radio set by his mother. Bob had been introduced to jazz by his older brother, John, and was already a devoted swing fan. Now, with his own radio, he was able to tune in nightly to listen to his favourite swing bands which were broadcasting via remotes from various hotels, theatres and clubs around the country. He began to log everything he heard into a scrapbook, adding photographs, autographs, advertisements, fliers and newspaper cuttings. He lived in Bronxville, a subway ride from New York City. He began to visit the city at weekends, seeing top bands at the Hotel Pennsylvania and the Hotel Commodore and at the theatres on Times Square. He went to Harlem to the Apollo Theatre and the Savoy Ballroom; and to 52nd Street where he visited the Hickory House, the Onyx Club and the Famous Door. In all, he amassed seven scrapbooks between the beginning of 1936 and the middle of 1938. They contain many descriptions of his adventures, written in the college-kid slang of the day, and they form a social history of life during one of Manhattan's most vibrant periods. I met Bob Inman in November 1991 on a jazz cruise in the Caribbean. We became friends and, eventually, in 2002, he persuaded me to buy these scrapbooks from him.

Bob was keen that the scrapbooks should be published and they eventually became the basis of my book, *Swing Era Scrapbook*, published by Scarecrow Press as No 49 in their Studies in Jazz Series. Accompanied by photo-



broadcast we got the autographs of trombonist Wilbur Schwichtenberg [later to change his name to Will Bradley], guest guitarist Dick McDonough, guest pianist Claude Thornhill, and guest vocalist Kay Thompson. Mrs Pastoriza then drove us home, arriving at 3:00am.

12.00 midnight WABC SATURDAY NIGHT SWING SESSION No49, CBS Playhouse No1, 48th Street, NYC
Mel Allen and Paul Douglas announced.

Panamania (Mannie Klein's trumpet; Schwichtenberg's trombone; Leith Stevens directing)

Frolie Sam (DUKE ELLINGTON; Harry Carney; Cootie Williams; Juan Tizol; Barney Bigard; Hayes Alvis)

Ain't Misbehavin' (CASPER REARDON on harp)

Swing, Swing Mother-In-Law (CBS Band: Klein; Genner)

Rebound (ADRIAN ROLLINI Trio: Rollini's vibes; Frank Victor's guitar; Haig Stephens' bass)

It Had To Be You (KAY THOMPSON, guest vocalist)

Am I Blue? (Bunny Berigan Orchestra from the Hotel Pennsylvania)

Powerhouse (Raymond Scott Quintet: Harris' tenor; Williams' drums, etc)

I Got Rhythm (GLEN GRAY Band from the Palomar Ballroom in Los Angeles)

The Devil is Afraid Of Music (GLEN GRAY from the Palomar Ballroom with vocal by Pee Wee Hunt)

Crazy Rhythm (LES LIEBER, guest, on hot fife)

Nobody's Sweetheart (LES LIEBER, guest, on hot fife)

Djangology (QUINTET of the HOT CLUB of FRANCE from Paris)

Limehouse Blues (QUINTET of the HOT CLUB of FRANCE from Paris)

Breakup (QUINTET of the HOT CLUB of FRANCE from Paris)



The Swing Session's Called To Order (CBS Band)
Classics In Jazz
(CLAUDE THORNHILL on piano)

Flight Of The Bumble Bee
(CLAUDE THORNHILL on piano)

There's A Lull In My Life
(BENNY GOODMAN TRIO from Pittsburgh, Pa)

Nagasaki
(BENNY GOODMAN Quartet from Pittsburgh, Pa)

Whoa, Babe!
(KAY THOMPSON Rhythm Singers: 8 girls, 2 boys and Al Rinker)

Caravan (CBS Band: Wade; Klein arranged by Paul Starrett)

Chicken A La Swing
(Dick McDonough & Carl Kress doing a swell guitar duet with CBS band)

I Know That You Know
(Dick McDonough & Carl Kress encore)

Twilight In Turkey (Raymond Scott Quintet)

Three Little Words (impromptu jam session one of the best things I ever heard with Johnny Williams; Hank Ross; Dave Wade; Lou Shoobe; Pete Pumiglio; Carl Kress and Claude Thornhill)

Blues In E-Flat (a second jam session and last number: Johnny Williams' drums; Lou Shoobe's bass; Art Manners' clarinet; Mannie Klein directing and playing magnificent trumpet; Dick McDonough's guitar and Claude Thornhill on piano)

Chicken And Waffles (closing theme)

Monday 21 June 1937

My brother John and myself drove down in our Chevrolet car to see Duke

Ellington and his Orchestra which started a week's engagement at the Apollo Theater last Friday. Each week the Apollo gets some well-known colored band. Erskine Hawkins is coming next week; then Jimmie Lunceford, and later, Chick Webb. There was only one movie which we only saw a little of, but the stage show was very long with Ellington's band, the dancers and comedians. We paid 30 cents for orchestra seats. The Duke & his Band and Ivie Anderson were simply super-colossal. What a marvelous band!! Outstanding were: Rex Stewart, Cootie Williams, Juan Tizol, Harry Carney, Barney Bigard, Duke



Ellington's rippling piano, and the solid rhythm section featuring two basses together and counter rhythm.

Unusual was the fact that there was a 7-man brass section instead of the usual 6. Freddy Jenkins, whom Rex Stewart succeeded in early 1935 made the 4th trumpet (left to right: Stewart, Jenkins, Williams, Whetsel). Bassist Billy Taylor was added to the band in early 1935 at the same time that handsome Hayes Alvis succeeded Wellman Braud. The following numbers were played strictly by the band alone (the band also accompanied dancers, etc beforehand): East St. Louis Toodle-Oo (theme written by Ellington in 1924 and recorded at least three different times); Trumpet In Spades (featuring Rex Stewart's marvelous rubber wa-wa muted trumpet); Caravan (recent composition with great solos by Juan Tizol and his smooth valve-trombone, Bigard's colossal clarinet, Cootie Williams' steel muted trumpet, Harry Carney's baritone sax); There's A Lull In My Life (just released this month on Master; Ivie Anderson doing marvelous vocal; Harry Carney's soft baritone; Cootie Williams' trumpet); All God's Chillun Got Rhythm (Ivie Anderson singing with a chorus of the whole band, just as she sang it in the very recent picture 'A Day At The Races.' Nuttsy); Get What You Can While You Can (Ivie Anderson singing a long vocal with little musical aid by the band but with comic sayings from the mouths of Sonny Greer, Otto Hardwick, etc.);

I've Got To Be A Rugcutter (Recorded on Master 101).

Funny clowning and dancing by Freddy Jenkins, Ivie Anderson truckin' and singing with trio of Hayes Alvis, Harry Carney and Rex Stewart, Bigard's clarinet, Carney's baritone, Hodges' alto, Williams' and Stewart's trumpets); and finally the closing number with some great jamming by Freddy Jenkins, Williams and Carney.

We got home at 4:45pm.

Monday evening

Don Mortimer and myself borrowed bicycles and left Bronxville at 7:45pm in a terrible rain storm which, except for about 30 minutes, continued all night. We got thoroughly wet through to the skin but it was fun just the same. We got to the Lido Casino on the Boston Post Road in Larchmont at about 8:35 where we waited outside for Lunceford and his boys to arrive in cars. We got their autographs (except 4: Willie Smith, Moses Allen, Paul

Webster and Earl Carruthers) on a picture of the band, and Lunceford's autograph on a picture of himself. Don Mortimer took about 5 pictures of different guys, some standing with me, all posed.

We didn't have quite enough money so we watched from outside from 9:30 to 10:15. An awning kept us from getting any wetter than we were. We got the autographs of Lunceford, Joe Thomas (ballsy guy and a great tenor sax player), Dan Grissom (sax & vocalist), Eddie Tompkins (trumpet, vocal), Sy Oliver (trombone, vocal), Elmer Crumbley (trombone), Ed Durham (trombone), Russell Bowles

(trombone), Edwin Wilcox (piano), James Crawford (drums) and Al Norris (guitar). Some of the numbers that the band played were:

I'm Nuts About Screw Music (vocal by Willie Smith), Dream Boy (vocal by Dan Grissom)

Remember When (vocal by Dan Grissom)

So Rare (ballsy new song with vocal by Grissom & Oliver)

Because You're You (vocal by Dan Grissom) etc.

We then cycled over to the Hickory Lodge in Larchmont and stood at the doorway and heard Charlie Barnet's nuttsy band playing in the Hickory Club which just opened for the first time last week.

Barnet and his Band have a 6-week contract there and are thinking of going to the French Casino in August. Last summer Barnet had one of the best bands in the country at Glen Island Casino, New Rochelle, N.Y. This winter he got a new band, having a small piece combination playing at the Motor Boat Show and last month having his present band playing at the Kinmare Hotel in Albany, a weekend at the Raymor Ballroom in Boston, and now at the Hickory Lodge for at least six weeks.

We didn't get to see but a few of the guys: pianist John Nicolini, trombonist John Sarnelli, vocalist/ trombonist Bob Fishel who said he sang with Red Norvo last summer at the Commodore Hotel, drummer Buddy Schutz, etc. I think saxist Joe Estren got the autographs of the rest of the band for us. Mortimer got some of the guys to pose for pictures and also got special permission to go in and take several pictures while the band broadcasted at 11:30.

Barnet sure has got a swell band, especially smooth, although it isn't as good as last summer. For some reason he doesn't seem to sing any more, but his great tenor sax playing



and clarineting is still the feature of the band. After the broadcast we left at about 12:20. It was still raining and we were stopped by a policeman who wanted to know why we were riding around so late. He let us go and we arrived home at 1:10am. This was also the night when 23-year-old Joe Louis became World Heavyweight Boxing Champion by stopping James J. Braddock in the 8th round at Comiskey Park in Chicago.

Wednesday 23 June 1937

At 2:15pm Mrs Pastoriza drove Hughie, Jim Poe and myself to the subway at 241st Street in Mount Vernon from where we went to the city. We sure did have a lot of fun on the subway with some girl. After getting off, Poe went to some pool to swim while we went to see William Shine at the Conn Instrument Store. He told us that he didn't have any pictures as yet, but to come around next week. We then walked up to the Squibb Building on Fifth Avenue to the Music Corporation of America, where we got 2 pictures of Edythe Wright and Peg LaCentra. We then walked down to Rockefeller Center where we met Vincent Prior at Rockwell-O'Keefe. He certainly is a swell guy. We had about 15 minutes with him. He warned me about the hold-ups at the Savoy when I told him that I was going there. When I asked why Rockwell-O'Keefe had dropped managing Bunny Berigan's new band, he told us that the band was always 'getting drunk' so they let MCA take over the band.

With such fine new men as clarinetist Joe Dixon, trombonist Sonny Lee, and trumpeter Irving Goodman, the band is steadily improving and should go places. Prior gave us pictures of: Woody Herman's Band, Sonny Dunham (2), Glenn Miller, and 5 of Glen Gray's Band.

After that, at about 5:30, we went over to 799 7th Avenue, to Mills Artists, where we met Poe. Hughie left us at this point to keep a dinner engagement. We first went in and met one of the secretaries who gave me two foreign swing magazines: Hot Jazz (French) and De Jazz Wereld (Dutch). She left at 6:00 but we stayed and waited for Al Brackman (the man directly under Irving Mills) to come back and give us some pictures of the Raymond Scott Quintet. During that time we got hold of many of the Master and Variety steel pressed recordings yet to be released. We played many of them. Some of them were Johnny Williams' (Scott Quintet) Band playing Little Old Lady and 52nd Street Stomp;

Barney Bigard's Jazzopators playing Get It Southern Style and If You're Ever In My Arms Again; and Ellington's records of All God's Chillun Got Rhythm, one with Ivie Anderson the other a jam combination.



'37 Perfection - The Jimmie Lunceford Orchestra Riding High

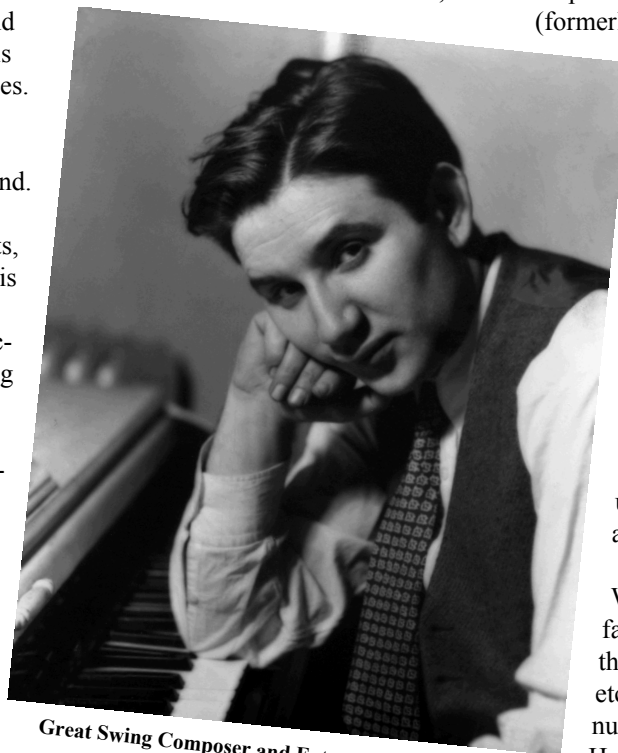
I then went into another room and, from a special file, took out pictures of: Frankie Newton (trumpet), Earl Hines (piano), Caspar Reardon (harp), Raymond Scott (piano), Dolly Dawn (vocals), Lucky Millinder's band, Cab Calloway, part of Calloway's Band, Duke Ellington (6), and 5 of Ellington's Band. At about 6:30 some guy came in for an audition. He, 2 other guys, Poe and myself were in this little room. He was a copy of Fats Waller except that he can't play the piano well. Poe had his drumsticks along and accompanied him. The guy said that they

would put him on the Saturday Night Swing Session this coming Saturday. Finally, at about 7:30, Al Brackman came but he didn't give us any pictures so we left. We took the subway up to the Savoy Ballroom, 140th Street at Lenox Avenue, where we paid 50 cents to go in at 9:30. Billy Hicks' Sizzlin' Six and Count Basie were the two bands there tonight. Basie has been there for about two weeks and plans to stay 3 more - then going up to the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Boston. Hicks always plays off and on at the Savoy.

We got the autographs of all the guys in his band which included trombonist Fernando Arbello (formerly with Fletcher Henderson, Claude Hopkins and Chick Webb), Edmond Hall (formerly with Claude Hopkins in 1935), etc.

They were pretty good. We got all the autographs of the guys in Count Basie's Band. He has one of the best bands in the country it's so relaxed. John Hammond says it's the best. Outstanding are tenor saxmen Lester Young & Herschel Evans; trumpeters Buck Clayton & Bobby Moore; pianist Count Basie; bassist Walter Page; drummer Jo Jones; and vocalist Billie Holiday, sensational blues singer, the greatest since Bessie Smith. Mortimer, who had joined us at the Savoy, and I had to leave at 12:20.

We didn't do any dancing but were fascinated by watching the dancers do the Lindy hop, truckin', peckin', shag, etc. Basie's Band played the following numbers, and more: Sometimes I'm Happy (Evans' tenor), I Surrender Dear (Jimmy Rushing vocal), House Hop,



Great Swing Composer and Future Electronic Music Pioneer, Raymond Scott

Georgie Auld (tenor sax), Sid Perlmutter (lead alto sax), Joe Dixon (clarinet), Clyde Rounds (sax); Irving Goodman, Steve Lipkins (trumpets); Sonny Lee, Morey Samuels (trombones); Joe Lippman (piano, arranger); Tom Morgan (guitar); Arnold Fishkind (bass); George Wettling (drums).

Was with Irving Goodman for quite a while. He says Ellington has one of the best bands; his brother Freddy is playing trumpet in Long Island; Peg LaCentra just left his brother's band, but he didn't know the new vocalist.

Asked me if I was the guy who had a picture of him and Ziggy. I told him I was and he asked me if I could get him one. Wettling remembered me and asked for the picture that we took of him in May but I haven't got one as yet. He still drinks plenty.

Talked to Sonny Lee about picture I had of him with Benny Goodman's recording band taken in '34 at the Columbia Studios in NYC when they made 8 records including Emaline. Joe Dixon and Clyde Rounds, both of whom used to be with Tommy Dorsey, said that Dorsey was a swell guy but hard to work for so they quit the band.

Vocalist Ruth Bradley, who succeeded Sue Mitchell told us that she used to sing with Ruby Newman at the Rainbow Room and before that she played sax and clarinet with Ina Ray Hutton's All-Girl Orchestra.

Trombonist Les Jenkins, who plays with Tommy Dorsey, came in at about 11:35 and talked with all the boys. He is very popular and a great trombone player. We were with Joe Dixon's brother from Boston who is about our age and plays trombone. We left at 12:45.

A few numbers played were:

Where Or When (Ruth Bradley); The You And I That Used To Be (Ruth Bradley); Peckin'; Swanee River; A Sailboat In The Moonlight; So Rare (Ruth Bradley); I Can't Get Started (Bunny

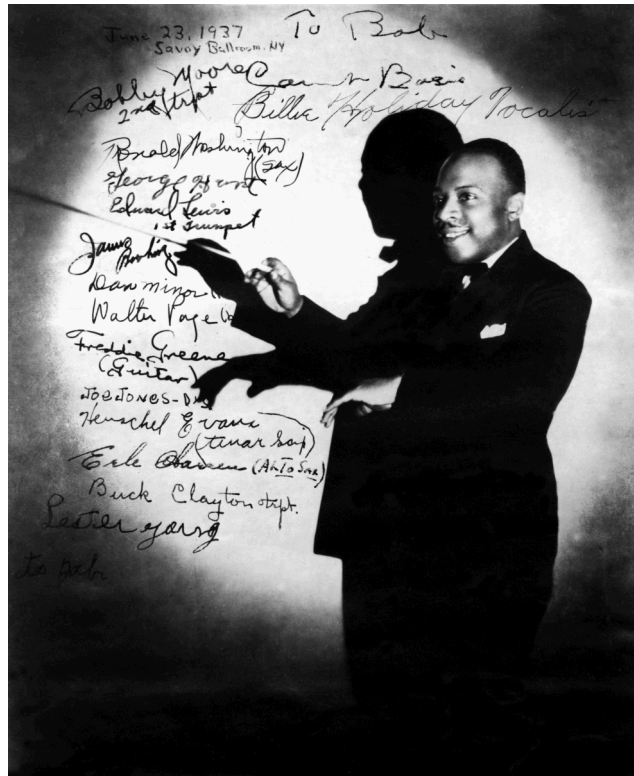
Berigan); Rockin' Chair Swing; Lady From Fifth Avenue (Ruth Bradley); Mr. Ghost Goes To Town; Stardust; Love Is A Merry-Go-Round (Ruth Bradley); Frankie And Johnny (best number played by Berigan); Last Night. On their broadcast over WABC at 11:00, announced by Bert Parks, they played: You're Gonna Wake Up Some Day (Ruth Bradley); A Message From The Man In The Moon (Ruth Bradley); Kiss Me Again; Poor Robinson Crusoe (Sonny Lee's trombone, George Auld's tenor); They All

Laughed (Ruth Bradley); Louise (Auld's tenor, Dixon's clarinet, Lee's trombone, Berigan's trumpet); You Can't Run Away From Love (Ruth Bradley); Swanee River (Berigan's trumpet, Auld's tenor). In the next two weeks, Bunny and the Band are going to be replaced by Tommy Dorsey's Band when Berigan's Band goes to play at the Pavillion Royale in Long Island for the summer.

Wow!

Can you imagine seeing the bands of Duke Ellington, Adrian Rollini, Jimmie Lunceford, Charlie Barnet, Count Basie with Billie Holiday, Bunny Berigan, Lucky Millinder and Erskine Hawkins in the space of just one month? Well, Bob Inman and his pals did much more than that and more of his exploits can be found in the 400 pages of **Swing Era Scrapbook: The Teen-**

age Diaries & Radio Logs of Bob Inman, 1936-1938 compiled by Ken Vail and published by Scarecrow Press, (00)1-717-794-3800 or toll free from North America (800)-462-6420, or online via Amazon for \$65.00 (£36.99).



The Count Basie Band of 1937 was obviously pleased to have young Bob Inman as a fan



The KEK Society

After the death of Karl Emil Knudsen in Copenhagen (16 June 1929 - 5 September 2003) a number of friends and both former and present employees of Storyville Records formed The KEK Society in order to document Karl's many doings in the world of jazz, with a web page: www.karl-emil-knudsen.dk

There you'll find a wealth of information about Karl as a record producer, book publisher and more. Also it is possible to have a link added to the page for other record companies, libraries, institutions, organizations, jazz magazines, book publishers, etc., so if you're interested please contact our web-master, Chris Olesen at paradis@comxnet.dk IAJRC readers are invited to submit their reminiscences of Karl.

--- Allan Stephensen.