

Extended booklet notes for:  
JAZZ & BLUES ON EDISON VOLUME 2 - DOCD-1107

For those of you who believe that there is little jazz or blues on the Edison label will be pleasantly surprised by this CD. Thomas Edison's dislike of Jazz and Dance Music was well known, he was once quoted as saying: "I always play Jazz records backwards, they sound better that way." Despite his personal views, Jazz Bands and Dance Orchestras were issued on his label, many recording for no other company. Due to alarming financial losses, the Edison company ceased production of records in 1929, and packed up its vast and varied catalogue in boxes and stored it in an old warehouse until 1976, when Merrill Malvern began the process of transferring everything to archival tape. Most of this material has not been heard or released in any form since originally recorded and Document Records along with American Sound Archives, has undertaken the task of issuing it all on CD. Many thanks to Joe Moore and Professor Raymond Wile for their help in providing information on some of the more obscure Edison recording artists.

#### FLORENCE BRADY

One of the many female artists with the Edison Company in the 1920s who had enjoyed modest success recording 'light' & 'popular' pieces of the era. In 1924, she was chosen by the Edison A&R people to record the title heard here. The exact reasons for this choice are unknown, however it is quite probable that it was due to her voice trial where Edison himself noted that she had a good, clear voice and diction (Edison wanted to hear and understand every word sung or spoken). Whatever the reasons were, it was a wise choice, as she does turn in a nice performance of the song. It is also her first and only known venture into what could be considered 'Jazz'.

#### ELLEN COLEMAN

Very little is known about this singer. The Red Hot Jazz Archive (<http://www.redhotjazz.com/>) website only had this one small paragraph about her: "Ellen Coleman was a pseudonym for Blues singer Helen Baxter. Lem Fowler was a hot Blues piano player who recorded for Columbia in the mid-1920s under the name of Fowler's Washboard Wonders and Fowler's Favorites. The Columbia sides were issued under the name of Helen Baxter accompanied by Lemuel Fowler. The Edison recordings were also released as Ellen Coleman accompanied by Lem Fowler's Orchestra. Recordings made for Banner and Okeh, were released simply as Helen Baxter. On the Oriole label she was known as Mamie Spencer."

#### THE FIVE HARMONIACS

Also known as the Five Harmaniacs, this group were a jug band that were responsible for the tune "Coney Island Washboard" which was recorded by dozens of bands and sung by hundreds of barbershop quartets. Curiously, their Edison recordings have more of a jazz feel to them, more so than what normally would be associated with a jug band. The Five Harmoniaks recordings didn't regularly use a vocalist. Clyde Shugart, however was a singer and usually played the kazoo on recordings, but fellow band member Walter Howard also did vocals on occasion. The other band members were: Jerry Adams (real name: Harold Whitacre), Wayne Durand and Ned Nestor, although it is uncertain which of the instruments the other musicians played.

#### FRISCO JASS BAND

Tim Gracyk's Book, "Popular American Recording Pioneers 1895 -1925", had this to say about the group: In 1917 this band cut nine titles for Edison, all issued on Blue Amberol as well as Diamond Disc. It was among the first to make records marketed as 'jass'. The Jaudas Society Orchestra was the only Edison group to make an earlier recording characterized as 'jass'.

The Frisco 'Jass' Band was formed in early 1917 by Rudy Wiedoeft soon after he arrived in New York City. According to the July 1917 issue of Edison Amberola Monthly, the band "...is now playing engagements at Montmartre, New York's famous midnight cafe, the Winter Garden and the leading summer resorts near New York..." Presumably the word Frisco was chosen to reflect that the musicians were from California. The band had no connection with Edison xylophone artist and vaudevillian Lou "Chiha" Frisco.

At its first session on May 10, 1917; The Frisco "Jass" Band cut "Canary Cottage" and "Johnson's Jass Blues". In 1916-17, Wiedoeft had played in the pit for Oliver Morosco's production of Canary Cottage. The song, "Canary Cottage" was a medley of the show's popular songs, written by Earl Carroll. "Johnson's Jass Blues" was named after the song's composer, Arnold Johnson, who was also the band's pianist. In 1920 lyrics were added to Johnson's melody, and the song was transformed into the popular "0", recorded by Billy Murray, Ted Lewis and others. Promotional literature from the Edison Company states: "...'Jass' Bands are all the rage now. This one is typical. The piece it plays is a very successful popular song, given here in Fox-Trot rhythm." Other Edison promotional literature added, "No players ever before played like this; hear them once and the Frisco 'Jass' Band will have you fascinated for life!" In late 1917 the company dropped quote marks from the band name and, like other record manufacturers, switched from "Jass" to "Jazz". The band's final recordings, "Yah-De-Dah" was recorded on July 26, 1917, but wasn't issued on Diamond Disc until December 1922. The reverse side featuring "All I Need Is Just A Girl Like You" was recorded by the band on August 2, 1917.