

Eubie Blake was born James Hubert Blake in Baltimore, Maryland, on February 7, 1883. He played the organ at six years old. Noble Sissle was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, on July 10, 1889. His early interest in music came from his father, a minister and organist. Sissle and Blake became songwriting partners in 1915 after they met as members of Joe Porters Serenaders.

Sissle and Blake met the men with whom they were to make history at an National Association for the Advancement of Colored People benefit in 1920. Flournoy E. Miller and Aubrey Lyles were veterans in black show business. One night after Sissle and Blake's performance, Miller and Lyles approached the pair to ask if they would be interested in teaming together for such a production. Sissle and Blake agreed, so the four men put together their resources and set about to write, direct, manage and star in their own musical comedy. Shuffle Along was the first all-black musical to become a box office hit, when it opened in New York on May 23, 1921.

In 1925, Sissle and Blake toured Europe, but began to have disagreements about the direction of their work: Blake wanted to return to America, and Sissle wanted to stay in Europe. Although they returned to the States, Sissle decided to go back to Europe soon afterwards, and the team broke up. Later in life, Sissle became involved in the Negro Actor's Guild which he helped found, serving as its first president. In 1968, he and Blake recorded together on an album entitled "86 Years of Eubie Blake". Noble Sissle died on December 17, 1975, but Blake lived on to be 100, playing piano and entertaining until the very end. Eubie Blake died February 12, 1983.

THE SIZZLERS

The Sizzlers is actually a pseudonym for Fred Hall and His Sugar Babies. In the late twenties they made a number of records for Okeh and the multitude of the various dime store labels using a varying array of pseudonyms. Fred Hall usually sang the vocals on the records but also employed Arthur Fields from time to time. Perhaps of interest to collectors is that Fred Halls Orchestra made a number of other records for Edison using the rather bizarre names of Arthur Fields and His Assassimators, and The Sizzlers. Although Arthur Fields sings the vocals on most these, it is actually Fred Hall who sang the scat vocals on this recording.

WILBUR SWEATMAN

Wilbur Sweatman's musical career reads like the history of African- Americans in popular music. He got his professional start in a circus band, then moved on to minstrel shows and vaudeville. He led a successful "syncopated" Orchestra based in Chicago early on in the century before moving to New York in 1913, and becoming one of the first African-Americans to join ASCAP in 1917. After the success of Original Dixieland Jass Band, Sweatman jumped on the jazz bandwagon and released dozens of records in the teens and 1920s, including this 1924 side heard here.

Sweatman, by no doubt was the first African-American to record Jazz, but for some, he is remembered less as a jazz musician and more as a great showman famous for playing at first two then three clarinets at once. Duke Ellington, Sonny Greer, and Coleman Hawkins all played in his orchestra early in their careers. In the 1930s Sweatman was active in music publishing and was the executor of Scott Joplin's estate. In the 1940s he led a trio at Paddells Club in New York and continued to play live into the 1950s. Unfortunately after Sweatman's death in 1961, Joplin's estate fell into disarray and many unpublished and original manuscripts, both by Joplin and Sweatman were lost.

EVA TAYLOR (nee Irene Gibbons)

A talented entertainer and Blues singer and one of the first African American singers to be heard on radio. She was born January 22, 1895 in St. Louis Missouri. She started out as a child actor in a travelling revue that toured the world, visiting Europe, Australia, and New Zealand.

In 1920 she moved to New York City, where she became a popular singer in the night clubs of Harlem. The following year she married pianist, bandleader, composer/publisher, Clarence Williams. In 1922 Taylor recorded her first record for the African-American owned, Black Swan label, who billed her as "The Dixie Nightingale".

She would continue to record dozens of Blues, Jazz, and popular sides for Okeh, Columbia, and Edison through-out the 1920's as well as having her own radio show on NBC in New York. She was also the lead singer on several of her husbands classic Blue Five recording dates, including the famous sessions that brought Louis Armstrong and Sidney Bechet together in 1924. She retired from show business in the early 1940's, but continued to entertain in local hospitals, charity events, and made occasional concert and night club appearances.

In the mid-1970's (at the age of 80!) Eva Taylor revived her career and appeared several times in Sweden, where she recorded with local bands. Sadly, in about 1976 she developed Cancer, but performed one last time at one of the "Edison Reunions" in March 1977. She died October 31, 1977 in Nassau County Hospital.

Unfortunately, the test pressing of the selection heard here was found in less than ideal condition (the disc was badly warped), however, it was decided to be included for its musical significance in the genre of Jazz and Blues.