

The Ultimate Jazz Archive CD19 - Jabbo Smith's Rhythm Aces [1929-1938] [2005]



01.Jazz Battle 02.Little Willie Blues 03.Sleepy Time Blues 04.Take Your Time 05.Sweet and Low Blues 06.Take Me to the River 07.Ace of Rhythm 08.Let's Get Together 09.Sa-Sha Stomp 10.Michigander Blues 11.Decatur Street Tutti 12.Till Times Get Better 13.Lina Blues 14.Weird and Blue 15.Croonin' the Blues 16.I Got the Stinger 17.Boston Skuffle 18.Tanguay Blues 19.Band Box Stomp 20.Moanful Blues 21.Rhythm in Spain 22.Absolutely 23.More Rain, More Rest 24.How Can Cupid Be So Stupid

During the 1920s, Jabbo Smith was a promising young cornetist whose versatility and chutzpah invited comparison with Duke Ellington's first-chair soloist Bubber Miley. Both men suffered from the disease of alcoholism, and Bubber, who also contracted tuberculosis, perished when he was only 29 years old. Although Jabbo survived and would live past the age of 80, he was inactive for most of his life and never came anywhere near matching the triumphs of his youth, many of which are documented on Pearl's *Ace of Rhythm*, a 25-track sampler of recordings made between November 1927 and February 1938. Unlike Smith's entry in the *Classics Chronological Series*, *Ace of Rhythm* contains numerous examples that were not issued under his name. This allows for a pleasantly varied overview as Jabbo is heard filling in for Bubber with Duke Ellington's Orchestra and participating in an unusual chamber jazz session with the Louisiana Sugar Babes (a quartet that included pianist James P. Johnson, pipe organist Fats Waller, and multi-reedman Garvin Bushell) and with a scruffy little outfit operating under the nominal leadership of Banjo Ikey Robinson; during the lusty opus bearing the title "Got Butter on It," Smith delivers a handsome scat vocal in the manner of Louis Armstrong.

All of this serves as a prelude to 16 marvelous performances by Jabbo Smith's *Rhythm Aces* (also known as *Four Aces* and the *Jokers*), a sturdy little group whose variable personnel included Robinson, clarinetist and tenor saxophonist Omer Simeon, tubists Hayes Alvis and Lawson Buford, and pianists Cassino Simpson and Earl Frazier. The interplay between Smith and Simeon is particularly exciting, and "Jazz Battle" is probably the best record that this group or its leader ever made. "Rub Me Some More" was recorded in 1930 by Lloyd Smith & His

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Gut-Bucketeers. (Discographical evidence indicates that the cornetist on this tune is not Smith at all but Clarence "Count" Rich.) Finally, the producers of this collection were wise enough to include only the instrumental number from Jabbo's Decca session of February 1, 1938, by which time he had switched to using the trumpet. There are numerous options available to those who are curious about Jabbo Smith's early recorded works. EPM Jazz Archives beat them all with a double-disc set packed with 48 tracks representing pretty much every recording made between 1928 and 1938 involving Jabbo Smith. Dipping back to 1927 to include the Ellington sides and carefully choosing some real gems from the cornetist's heyday, Pearl's Ace of Rhythm is an excellent compromise between the exactitude of the Classics compilation and the thoroughness of EPM's ultra-complete edition. --- arwulf arwulf, Rovi

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