

CHARLIE PARKER ON DIAL VOLUME 6

The seventh and final Charlie Parker recording session for Ross Russell's Dial label was held as usual at WOR studios, Broadway at 38th street N.Y. Russell, unaccustomed to the cold New York winter had gone down with 'flu and was therefore unable to attend the session. Detailed information has consequently been difficult to obtain but Russell recalls that the session ran smoothly and basically did not differ in any way to the earlier quintet dates. All Bird's New York recording sessions for Dial were held at night, unlike the California dates which were all held during the afternoon and each session ran for about three hours, the March 28, 1946 session was the exception as it ran for something like 5 hours. The inclusion of J.J. Johnson on this particular date was Ross Russell's idea, approved by Bird and enthusiastically supported by J.J. himself.

The first tune recorded that night was a blues known variously on different Dial issues as AIR CONDITIONING, GIANT SWING and DRIFTING ON A REED. The last of these is the one officially assigned as a temporary title by Dial. It has no connection with the tune recorded by Coleman Hawkins and Thelonious Monk in 1944 and was later referred to both by Bird himself and mc's on 'live' shows as BIG FOOT (no connection with the tune recorded by Illinois Jacquet for Victor during 1949). For this date Bird had a brand new French Selmer saxophone and his tone is particularly rich and opulent. No new takes have come to light from this session and so the three previously available takes of DRIFTING ON A REED are heard here. However it is the first appearance of takes B and D since their original issue on Dial.

If Bird intended the next title cut to be a dedication to the famous hunchback, will probably never be known. The spelling chosen on label and sleeve is that used on all Dial log sheets made at the time of recording and as the tune does not seem to have been recorded again the correct spelling will probably remain a mystery. Based on EMBRACEABLE YOU, this version in contrast to the earlier quintet recording of that tune is taken at what Bird would have referred to as "medium bounce". Only two takes were necessary for Bird to finally approve the B master, it was always Parker's choice for approval of the final take for general issue.

WHEN I GROW TOO OLD TO DREAM is the sub-structure for the next title cut, CHARLIE'S WIG. Five takes were necessary for this relaxed, swinging number and as is the case with DRIFTING ON A REED it is takes A and C that remain missing. Another Parker created blues BONGO BEEP was then recorded, the A take is still missing whilst take B enjoys its first exposure here since its original issue on Dial LP904. This tune has rarely appeared under its correct title and due to an early mistake on Dial has been issued almost exclusively as BIRD FEATHERS (it appeared on Dial LP904 as DEXTERITY).

CRAZEOLGY turns out to be the Benny Harris original LITTLE BENNY. This tune has been recorded by various artists as BUD'S BUBBLE and IDEOLOGY as well as the two already mentioned. Although four takes are available the first two are incomplete. These originate from Dial 1034 and appeared on the label as, CRAZEOLGY II - three ways of playing a chorus, and appeared on the 78 as three separate tracks. The first consisted of Bird's chorus from the A cut complete with the unison in chorus, track two was Bird's chorus only from cut B whilst the last

remaining track was Bird's solo from the C take and continued with the rest of the music that took place. The C take was issued in its entirety later on Dial LP905. Complete versions of the first two takes were obviously recorded but cannot be located.

The flip side of this 78 (Dial 1034) was the final D take of CRAZEOLGY but a superimposed version. The story of how this occurred is best explained in Ross Russell's own words, "The A side of Dial 1034 was titled CRAZEOLGY and the master inscribed was D-1155-DDD. When the engineer was cutting masters he fed the D take of CRAZEOLGY into the master twice -- there was a little time lag and the result was -- well you might call it some kind of musical chromatic aberration. It seemed amusing at the time and we put the record out as a rather poor idea". For obvious reasons this version is not included on the enclosed record.

The final tune recorded that night was HOW DEEP IS THE OCEAN and although not quite up to the high standard of the ballads played on the quintet dates remains imperial Parker. The high surface noise on the final and very rare B take is unfortunately unavoidable. It originates from the only source Dial LP211 (78 masters were cut for this take but it never appeared on 78 rpm). The majority of Dial LP's were made from pure vinyl but some of the later 10" LP's were made from breakless, semi-vinyl material, of quality much below pure vinyl with the resultant high background noise.

All Dial sessions were cut on 16" acetate lacquers with a second set for protection (tape came in one year after Dial stopped recording Jazz). Masters were later cut from the 16" acetates. This process involved feeding into a cutting lathe in the studio and re-cutting an acetate master which was sent for processing to negative, positive and finally stamper (it was during this process that the chaotic recording of CRAZEOLGY occurred). On occasions small 12" acetates were used on which tunes were cut directly at the time of performance -- these were sent to the electroplater for processing into 78 stampers.

Dial records were the first record company to make use of the 33 1/3 LP for use of Jazz material. During 1948 the first Dial LP's (LP901 "Bird blows the blues" and Dial LP902 "Garner by gaslight") were issued. Ironically the trade were very much against 12" LP's as they were hard to handle and especially for Jazz dealers (who dealt only with 10" discs) difficult to store. As a result the first Dial 12" LP's bombed and consequently some 12-18 months later Dial went over to 10" LP's.

Regrettably Bird recorded no more for Ross Russell's Dial label. This was brought about firstly by the recording ban that prevailed throughout 1948 and subsequently to the signing over of Charlie Parker to Norman Granz's Mercury label. Granz had recorded Parker very much earlier in December 1947 and during a telephone conversation with Russell on December 30, 1947 Granz stated that he had recorded Bird earlier that month in New York with a rhythm section including Hank Jones. He had previously asked permission to make the side but had been refused. He recorded anyway and offered to sell Dial a Lester Young side to balance matters -- the Young track never materialised.

It seems regrettable that it has taken nearly a quarter of a century for what are, in the opinion of this writer the most important studio recordings by

Charlie Parker, to appear on wax in some sensible well presented manner. What is perhaps more distressing is the fact that the various masters and 16" lacquers have been treated with complete disregard for the musical legacy contained within their grooves. One can only hope that the remaining 20 sides (from a total of 98) that remain unissued or incomplete will one day be unearthed and reissued for the first time ever -- who knows?

Notes -- Tony Williams
(March 12, 1970).

PERSONNEL

CHARLIE PARKER SEXTET

Miles Davis tpt; J.J. Johnson tbn; Charlie Parker alt; Duke Jordan p; Tommy Potter bs; Max Roach d.
WOR Studios, Broadway at 38th Street, New York City -- Wednesday, December 17, 1947.

SIDE ONE

Drifting on a reed	(2:57)	D1151-B
Drifting on a reed	(2:52)	D1151-D
Drifting on a reed	(2:55)	D1151-E
Quasimado	(2:54)	D1152-A
Quasimado	(2:52)	D1152-B
Charlie's wig	(2:46)	D1153-B
Charlie's wig	(2:50)	D1153-D
Charlie's wig	(2:40)	D1153-E

SIDE TWO

Bongo beep	(2:52)	D1154-B
Bongo beep	(3:01)	D1154-C
Crazeology (excerpt)	(1:00)	D1155-A
Crazeology (excerpt)	(0:32)	D1155-B
Crazeology	(2:57)	D1155-C
Crazeology	(3:00)	D1155-D
How deep is the ocean	(3:24)	D1156-A
How deep is the ocean	(3:04)	D1156-B

SPOTLITE 106