

DISCOGRAPHY

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| Track 1:
Hadda Brooks (Piano)
1946 | Nellie Lutcher (Vocals
& Piano) with The Irving
Ashby Trio
1947 | Track 17:
Dorothy Donegan
(Piano)
1946 |
| Track 2:
Viola Watkins (Piano) &
The Birmingham
Boogie Boys
1952 | Track 10:
Cleo Brown (Vocals &
Piano) with Nappy
Lamere's Trio
1949 | Track 18:
Wini Beaty (Vocal &
Piano) with The Slim
Gaillard Trio
1946 |
| Track 3:
Gladys Bentley (Vocals)
& Quintette
1946 | Track 11:
Helen Humes (Vocals)
with The Snooky Young
Orchestra
1945 | Track 19:
Georgia White (Piano &
Vocal)
1941 |
| Track 4:
Madonna Martin (Vocal
& Piano)
1949 | Track 12:
Betty Jean Washington
(Vocals & Piano) with
The Maxwell Davis
Orchestra
1951 | Track 20:
Merline Johnson (Vocal)
1939 |
| Track 5:
Lil Armstrong (Piano) &
Her Chicago Boys
1950 | Track 13:
Martha Davis (Vocals &
Piano) with The Art
Blakey Trio
1951 | Track 21:
Thelma Gracie (Vocals)
with The Freddie Slack
Orchestra
1956 |
| Track 6:
Bertice Reading (Vocals)
with Leroy Kirkland's
Orchestra
1954 | Track 14:
Big Mama Thornton
(Vocals) with The Joe
Scott Orchestra
1950 | Track 22:
Mary Lou Williams
(Piano) & Her Trio
1946 |
| Track 7:
Gladys Palmer (Vocals)
with Sonny Thompson
& The
Sharps & Flats
1948 | Track 15:
Winifred Atwell (Piano)
1951 | Track 23:
Hadda Brooks (Piano)
1952 |
| Track 8:
Sarah (Fat Woman)
Dean (Vocals) with The
Freddie Mitchell
Orchestra
1950 | Track 16:
Annisteen Allen (Vocals)
with The Lucky
Millinder Orchestra
1951 | Track 24:
Honey Lee (Organ &
Piano) with The Red
Callender Trio
1955 |
| Track 9: | | Track 25:
Edna McRaney (Vocals)
1953 |

The word boogie dates to the 14th century English word 'bugge' - a phantom or ghost. In its meaning as a form of dance, the related word 'booger' was applied by 17th century Virginian colonists to a frightening Cherokee dance. But in its connection to the African American culture the word 'booger' probably came from West Africa. To the Mandingo, the word 'bug' was associated with a fast drumbeat used in voodoo music performances. African Americans conflated 'bug' or 'bugge' to booger, a fierce blues which evolved into a form of piano rag then into boogie-woogie a sound created by a rolling right hand and a rocking improvisation of the left (hence 'rock & roll'). Somehow 'roll' became a euphemism for sex - as in the expression 'jelly roll'.

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Cover pics: Mary Lou Williams (l). Big Mama Thornton (r)

COMPILED and ANNOTATED by OPAL LOUIS NATIONS

BOOGIE WOOGIE GALS



CD: A

DISCOGRAPHY

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| Track 1:
Mildred Anderson
(Vocals) with The Albert
Ammons Combo
1946 | with The Googie Rene
Combo
1957 | Her Caldonia Boys
1948 |
| Track 2:
Vivian Greene (Vocal &
Piano) with The Nick
Esposito Trio
1948 | Track 10:
Cathy Cooper (Vocal)
with Devonia Williams
(Piano) with The
Johnny Otis Orchestra
1947 | Track 18:
Violet Hall (Vocal)
1950 |
| Track 3:
Hazel Scott (Piano)
1946 | Track 11:
Ella Mae Morse (Vocal)
with Don Raye & the
Freddie Slack Rhythm
section
1942 | Track 19:
Cleo Brown (Vocal &
Piano)
1950 |
| Track 4:
Marylin Scott (Vocal &
Guitar) with The Johnny
Otis Orchestra
1950 | Track 12:
Paula Watson (Vocal &
Piano)
1948 | Track 20:
Ginger Smock (Violin)
with The Jackson
Brothers
1953 |
| Track 5:
Betty Hall Jones (Vocal
& Piano) with Her
Rhythm
1947 | Track 13:
Unknown Artist (Vocal
& Piano)
1948-49 | Track 21:
Nora Lee King (Vocal)
1944 |
| Track 6:
Camille Howard (Vocal
& Piano) with The Roy
Milton Duo
Rec. 1947 | Track 14:
'Frantic' Faye Thomas
(Piano & Vocal)
1949 | Track 22:
Mary DePina (Vocal).
Martha Potts (Piano)
with Monte Easter's
Band
1946 |
| Track 7:
Tina Dixon (Vocal) with
The Gene Nero Sextet
1948 | Track 15:
'Frantic' Faye Thomas
(Piano & Vocal)
1949 | Track 23:
Eunice Davis (Vocal)
with The Freddie
Mitchell Orchestra
1950 |
| Track 8:
Mata Ray (Piano) & The
Sepia Tones
1944 | Track 16:
Anna Mae Winburn &
The All Girl International
Sweethearts of Rhythm
1945 | Track 24:
Dee (Devonia) Williams
(Piano) with The
California Playboys
1949 |
| Track 9:
Jeanette Baker (Vocal) | Track 17:
Lil Palmore (Piano) with | Track 25:
Mary Lou Williams
(Piano) with Andy Kirk
& His Clouds of Joy
1942 |

'Boogie-woogie' music was now performed as a form of barrelhouse piano and a vocal expression of sexual prowess. The instrumental form was carried over to the guitar and other string instruments.

The first recorded piano boogie-woogie was performed by Clarence 'Pine Top' Smith in Chicago on December 29, 1928. Boogie-woogie spread from the southern states to strongholds in Kansas City, Chicago and St. Louis. Some say Jimmy Yancey was the first truly great boogie-woogie pianist, the aforementioned Clarence Smith another. Then along came Meade Lux Lewis, Jabbo Williams and Pete Johnson, all considered leading exponents. The boogie was clearly the blues in double tempo. It rose out of the rent party or the Harlem Shake meetings during the Great Depression.

Sleeve Art: aitekendesign@mac.com

Cover pics: Hazel Scott (l), Ella Mae Morse (r)

COMPILED and ANNOTATED by OPAL LOUIS NATIONS

BOOGIE WOOGIE GALS



CD:B

The Boogie Pianists/Singers

Meridian MS, born Cleo Brown, was among the first recorded female boogie-woogie pianist/singers. She studied boogie with her brother Everett, a disciple of 'Pine Top' Smith. Her *Cleo's Boogie* is included.

Atlanta-born Mary Elfrieda Scruggs, a.k.a. Mary Lou Williams was the leading female jazz artist of the 1930s. She joined Andy Kirk's band, as performer and arranger, and with him cut *Boogie Woogie Cocktail* (included here), one of the finest boogies ever recorded. She also wrote for Hines, Ellington and others.

Few female boogie-woogie artists had more success than 'The Queen of Boogie,' Hadda Brooks. Born in LA's Boyle Heights, she began recording boogies like *Swingin' The Boogie* and *Blues 'N Boogie* in 1945 and had R&B chart entries in 1947 and 1948. She played in the movie 'Out of the Blue' in 1947 and with Bogart in 'In a Lonely Place' in 1950. Few, Hazel Scott excepted, could boogie the classics as well as Brooks. She also had a flair for soulful ballads. She was inducted into the R&B Hall of Fame in 1993.

Hazel Scott was born in Port of Spain, Trinidad. A child prodigy, Scott attended Juilliard and played at the White House for FDR. She could hammer out intense boogie-woogie interpretations of the classics, standing between two pianos, playing both at once. She starred in movies and had her own TV show.

Many of these female boogie stylists fought for a fully liberated way of life and could play as well, if not better, than their male counterparts. One of these was Wichita-born Martha Davis who was taught to play by Fats Waller and married bass player Cal Ponder. In 1946 she formed the Torrid Trio. Between 1946 and 1951 she waxed a few boogie-woogies, including the frantic *Player Piano Boogie*, supported by The Art Blakey Trio. One of her tricks was to play in cross-hands mode which meant that she started on the right side of the keyboard, cross-handing her way up the keys to her left.

This novelty was picked up by Trinidadian Winifred Atwell who played boogies and rags on her 'other piano,' an old-timey instrument. On her 'first' piano she displayed her classical skills. She came to England in 1946 and played in variety, featuring barrel organ take-offs and popular waltzes. She played for the Queen in 1952.

Memphis-born Lil Armstrong Hardin, pianist, composer and soloist, was in the same league as Hazel Scott. Also a childhood prodigy, Armstrong started as a piano demonstrator. Inspired by a meeting with Jelly Roll Morton, she joined King Oliver and cut her first sides with him in 1923. She was Mrs. Louis Armstrong for seven years, then led two all-girl groups. After other combo gigs during the 1940s she signed with Gotham where she cut her signature tune, *Brown Gal* and *Joogie Boogie* (the side featured here.)

All-girl combos and duos sprang up on both coasts during World War II. Small, mainly rhythm-based groups, they included The Three V's, The Four V's, Beryl Booker Trio and The Sepia Tones who worked all down Central Avenue in Los Angeles during the war. They signed to the fledgling Juke Box label in 1944 and recorded the enormously successful *Boogie #1*. Nina Russell (organ) and Mata Ray (piano) played on the recording, but the trio's violinist, Ginger Smock, was substituted by Paul Howard, who played clarinet and tenor sax. Ginger Smock is represented on this collection with a violin jumper called *Ginger's Boogie*, possibly the finest example of female violin boogie-woogie ever laid to wax.

From small, female boogie combos were built the all female orchestras which filled the shoes of the male big band musicians drafted in World War II. Perhaps the best remembered of the female orchestras was Anna Mac Woodburn & the All Girl International Sweethearts of Rhythm who played at home and for the troops at the front. The International Sweethearts were diverse ethnically - they included members of races with which the West was at war. They had to fight not only Fascism abroad but racism at home.

After 1945, returning male musicians expected to get their jobs back. LaVerne Wollerman wrote, 'we were never taken seriously then. During the Post-war years female big-band drummers, brass players and saxophonists were treated as novelties, sexualized as glamour girls and desexualized as deviants.' However, big bands became economically unviable after 1949. Most scaled down to four or five players.

Lake Charles-born Nellie Lutcher rarely headed combos except when on tour, preferring to work solo or with bands like Dootsie Williams & His Chocolate Drops. Thirty-two before she entered a recording studio, her early recordings - *Hurry On Down* (1947), *He's A Real Gone Guy* (1947) and *Fine Brown Frame* (1948) - sold well. A longer recording career might have brought greater fame. In 1951 she was featured on TV's 'This Is Your Life' and Nellie Lutcher Day was celebrated at Lake Charles in 1983. Many of her recordings were risqué and were banned from radio. She played boogie, jazz and pop with equal proficiency.

Helen Humes worked with Big Al Sears at the Cotton Club in Cincinnati. She replaced Billie Holiday in the Basie Band and worked with Teddy Wilson at Café Society. She cut her signature opus, *Be-Baba-Leba* with Bill Doggett in 1944. She appeared in two short movies and the feature, 'Jivin' in Bebop' with Dizzy Gillespie in 1947. In 1950 she was recorded live singing *Million Dollar Secret* on Gene Norman's Blues-Jubilee Concert at the Shrine in Los Angeles. It shot up the charts in October 1950, reaching number six. *Central Avenue Boogie*, on which Arnold Ross played piano, is one of her few boogie outings.

Georgia White's discography dates back to May 1930 when she recorded in Chicago with Jimmie Noone's Apex Club Orchestra. On her Decca sessions of 1935 and early 1936, she accompanied herself on piano. In fact, she played strongly on some dates and not others later on, as did blues guitarist/accompanist Lonnie Johnson. White hailed from Sandersville, Georgia. Paul Oliver describes her as a woman with a considerable vocal range, consisting of a tough quality. Her lyrics are often risqué or about lesbians and prostitutes or similar themes. *Territory Blues* is one her final pre-War recordings for Decca.

Vivian Greene, a.k.a. Willie Viviane Hoyt, was born in Nacogdoches, TX. She began piano lessons aged four and later married singer Allen 'Al' Greene. She first performed at Hollywood's Lucky Spot where she met and became influenced by Hadda Brooks - her *Unfinished Boogie* is a nod to Brooks. Greene moved to Mercury in 1948 where she enjoyed wider acceptance, playing and singing jazz, boogie and blues.

Chicago's Dorothy Donegan could do it all. Classically trained, she played bop, swing, jazz, boogie-woogie, the classics and 'lounge music' - for a long while, critics refused to accept her as a fully fledged jazz performer. After becoming a protégé of Art Tatum she made her recording debut in 1942. She appeared in Andrew L. Stone's 1945 movie, 'Sensations,' (1945) with Cab Calloway. The same year she formed a trio. She recorded the suggestive *Ridin' Boogie* with The Red Saunders Orchestra for Columbia in 1950.

Marilyn Scott, a.k.a. Marilyn Scott, a.k.a. Mary DeLoatch of Charlotte, NC was a mystery. Her singing was strong and powerful and her guitar playing inspired by Sister Rosetta Tharpe. As Marilyn Scott she recorded a handful of boogies, using a rag-like method. As Mary DeLoatch, she sang gospel in the period 1945-1951.

Devonia Williams also supported Cathy Cooper on *Alimony Boogie* in 1947. All we know about Cooper is that she was a band singer during the Johnny Otis barrelhouse period. In February 1949, as Dee Williams, Los Angeles-raised Devonia also recorded leading a male sextet, The California Playboys. Out of this came the blues-inflected *Dee's Boogie*. Williams, a diabetic, was a great natural talent who lost her sight in the early 1960s. Worsening health led to her early retirement from music.

Little is known about Madonna Martin except she was billed as 'The Sepia Sophie Tucker.' She appeared at Chicago's Silver Frolics Club for a while which indicates perhaps that she may have put on a colorful lounge act. She also recorded Georgia White's celebrated *Rattlesnakin' Daddy* in 1949.

Betty Jean Washington was little known. She was probably a local Los Angeles talent during the early 1950s. She may have met Mabel Scott who lived in LA with Charles Brown during the late 1940s. *Elevator Boogie* was one of singer Mabel Scott's 1947 compositions on which Charles Brown played the keyboard in a not so familiar boogie-woogie style which is why it is excluded from this collection.

Wini Beaty is best remembered for her work with Slim Gaillard (1946) and Barney Bigard (1944-1945). A February 1948 review of her *Put Your Brakes On, Papa* for Coast describes her as white and singing far too 'blue.' She plays on all twelve Slim Gaillard 1946 Majestic sides and sings on one, *Mean Man Blues*.

Singer and pianist Paula Watson was a Philadelphian. Her first 1948 recording session produced *A Little Bird Told Me*. Although reviewed by Billboard as being too pop to be a 'race' hit, it did well - so well that she headlined at the Paramount Theater. Later she recorded with Louis Jordan. In February 1950 came her jivvy jump *I Want A Short, Squat Big Fat Papa*. Only weeks passed before she was signed with Joe Davis' Beacon and Jay Dee imprints. A lawsuit over the rights to *A Little Bird Told Me* put Supreme Records out of business. It seems that Evelyn Knight cut a cover version for Decca. Decca claimed a different arrangement and a Judge Yankwich decided for Decca. Many thought it was because Decca could afford to hire the smartest lawyers.

Our unknown artist selection could well be Paula Watson.

Frantic Faye Thomas probably came from California. She could easily be labeled a singer, pianist and disciple of the Rose Murphy school of boogie-woogie. Her vocals are excellent and her playing first rate, yet she quit the scene a year after making her initial recordings and was never heard from again. Her four sides on Exclusive are exemplary. Only two were issued.

Little is known of Lil Palmore who first recorded for Ebony. She is probably Carl Palmer, or Cal 'Caldonia' Palmer who also recorded for Ebony and Verro in 1956 and 1959. Interestingly Ollie Crawford and Willie Dixon played in support of *Lil's Caldonia Boogie* (included here.) Her supposed later Ebony recordings find her in Little Brother Montgomery's Jazz Band along with Robert Lockwood and Bro. John Sellers.

Mary De Pina was trumpeter Monte Easteris glamorously beautiful songstress in 1946 when his band was recording for Aladdin. Monte Easter always tried to hire a female pianist to add glamour to his line-up, hence the presence of Martha Potts who was replaced by Clara Lewis, then Rosetta Andrews and Alice Young. His other female vocalists included Judy Canova (not the yodeling comedienne) and Mary Wallace. Mary De Pina cut only two records for Aladdin in 1946.

Viola Watkins first recorded outing was with her studio combo, The Birmingham Boogie Boys: Jimmy Shirley, guitar, Walter Washington, bass, and Conrad Kirnon, drums. The reverse of Irene Higginbotham's song, *Boogie Woogie On A Saturday Night* was the equally rewarding *Boogie Express*.

Viola Watkins' sides were probably cut by Mayo Williams at Ebony Records in 1946 and leased to MGM. According to Dave Penny she was New York-based. By 1952 she had quit playing piano on her recordings.

Little is known about Honey Lee, except she played piano and organ supported by session musicians Red Callender on bass, Irving Ashby, guitar, and Bill Douglas on drums. Her arrangement of *Piney's Boogie Woogie* is ascribed to Callender, John Dolphin of Cash Records and to herself.

Singer/pianist Betty Hall Jones, a.k.a. Betty Hall Bigby, was born in Topeka, KS. Her father was cornetist. She moved to California in the mid-1920s and married a banjo player. Back in Kansas and divorced, she was hired by Buster Moten. Back in California in 1942, she joined Roy Milton, then in 1946 recorded *Jump The Boogie* and *Shufflin' Boogie* with the Luke Jones Trio. *Same Old Boogie* and *Learn To Boogie* under her own ame followed in 1947. During the 1950s she had a seven-year gig at The Hotel Sorrento in Seattle and recorded sporadically. In the 1970s she toured with USO throughout the world. She was still recording in the 1990s. Although she made many fine boogie-woogie recordings, she is all but forgotten today.

Camille Howard's excellent recordings with and without Roy Milton or her own band have been made readily available, so her artistry has grabbed a new generation of fans. She was born in Galveston, Texas and by the end of World War II was in California. She joined James Clifford's Jazz All Stars where she sang and played piano on *Widow Jenkins Blues* for Pan American. In 1947 she became pianist in Roy Milton's new band. They cut short film soundies. She also acquired her own recording contract at the fledgling Specialty. With her trio composed of Dallas Bartley on bass and Roy Milton on drums she recorded the impressive *X-Temperate Boogie* on New Year's Eve 1947. This was followed over the next 4 years with twenty-five fabulous boogie-woogies for Specialty. In 1949 her duo expanded to a trio and by May 1952 Milton had gone and was replaced by a number of in and out drummers and additional musicians.

Black popular music had changed by 1952. Boogie-woogie had been overshadowed by rhythm & blues. Camille Howard made two last boogies on her final 1952 Specialty session before being picked up by Federal Records in March 1953. They were called *Belmont* and *Goldberg Boogie*. These were not released until they showed up on a CD in the mid-1990s. She had remained loyal to Roy Milton for five years.

Ella Mae Morse with pianist Freddie Slack, did as much as anyone to popularize boogie-woogie. She blended almost all streams of popular music and helped prepare the way for what would become rock & roll. She was born in Mansfield, Texas and was appearing on radio by the age of twelve. When Jimmy Dorsey came through Dallas, the fourteen-year-old Ella auditioned for him. To get the job she lied and said she was nineteen but a letter from the school board got her fired. In 1942 she joined Freddie Slack who had been with Dorsey when Ella had auditioned. She recorded *Cow Cow Boogie* with Slack on piano and it speedily charted, peaking at number six. Ella's appearance in the movie 'Reveille with Beverly' in 1943 helped the record, but it was Ella's strong 'swingin' vocal and Slack's wildness that set the music business aflame. As the boogie-woogie smoldered she cut our featured *House Of Blue Light*, written by Don Raye and Slack. She continued to make great rockin' and jumpin' records and starred in movies into the early 1950s.

We have by no means included every important female boogie-woogie stylist. Mabel Scott recorded a handful of boogie-woogie titles, but even though she was a pianist, she did not play on any of these and her style of singing didn't reflect any clearly defined boogie-woogie elements. Then there's Kansas City's Julia Lee whose range embraced rags, ballads, novelties, blues and boogies. Also absent is novelty pianist singer/comedienne 'Chi chi girl' Rose Murphy from Xenia, Ohio who recorded with Sy Oliver and Slam Stewart. She charted three songs in 1948. But it's impossible to cover everyone of vintage on a double CD.

Boogie-woogie has infiltrated all forms of popular music both in the U.S. and across the world. It would take years of research to uncover it all, but we have made a start.

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