

# BIX AND BENNY

By Albert Haim



Bix in 1924, courtesy of the Bixology website. Benny in the 1930s, courtesy of Kenyon College



**B**ix started playing cornet professionally in the summer of 1922, after he was dismissed from Lake Forest Academy, without a high school diploma, for unauthorized night escapades to Chicago. Benny joined the Musicians' Union in 1923 and started playing regularly with professional bands. For a while, he attended the Lewis Institute, a private school for young professionals. By the fall of 1923, he was very busy with steady engagements and dropped out. Thus, neither Bix nor Benny were high school graduates.

Bix's career was short, it lasted but nine years. Bix was a member of the Wolverine Orchestra in 1924, of the Jean Goldkette's Victor Recording Orchestra, probably the hottest 1920s dance band, in 1926-1927, and reached the pinnacle of the popular music world in the 1920s by joining the Paul Whiteman Orchestra in 1927. By the end of 1929, Bix's alcohol addiction caught up with him, and he had to leave Whiteman. In the last two years of his life, Bix spent a lot of time at home in Davenport, IA, trying to recuperate, and in New York playing in the Camel Pleasure Hour broadcasts, making a few recordings, and appearing in college gigs. Bix died alone, in obscurity, in 1931, in a small apartment in Queens, New York, of pneumonia, aggravated by years of excessive alcohol consumption. Bix was 28.

Benny's career was long and illustrious. He was a member of the Ben Pollack band, on and off, from 1925 to 1929. In the early 1930s, Benny freelanced for radio and recording studios. In 1934, he organized his first big band group, and, in the summer of 1935, went on tour with his band. The tour culminated in the historic Palomar Ballroom performance in Los Angeles on August 21, 1935. In the second half of the 1930s, Benny witnessed his greatest successes: radio broadcasts, films, the legendary concert at Carnegie Hall on January 16, 1938. Benny Goodman was indeed the "King of Swing." His success continued from the 1940s into the 1960s, at home and abroad, Europe, Asia, South America. In honor of his lifetime of achievements and contributions to American culture, Benny Goodman was presented with the Kennedy Center Honors Award in 1982. Benny died aged 77 of a heart attack in 1986, in his apartment in the luxurious Manhattan House, New York City.

Although the careers of Bix and Benny differed considerably—Bix's life was short, coming to an abrupt end in poverty and obscurity; he became a legend after his death; Benny's life was long, admired at home and abroad, recognized throughout the world as the King of Swing during his lifetime—Bix and Benny knew each other, their professional careers having overlapped in Chicago between 1923 and 1927 and in New York City between 1928 and 1930. Bix and Benny recorded several sides together and played in the same bands on several occasions.

In the present article, I summarize and analyze the circumstances associated with the direct, musical interactions of Bix Beiderbecke and Benny Goodman.

## The First Meeting of Bix and Benny, Summer and Fall 1923

Bix and Benny met on the Michigan City Steamer on August 8, 1923. Benny was a replacement for Jimmy Hartwell (later a member of the Wolverine Orchestra) in the Bill Grimm band. When Benny first went to play with the band, he was just fourteen. Benny's recollection of meeting Bix for the first time is given in his autobiography. [1]

*It was just about this time that Bill Grimm had the band on an excursion boat that ran from Chicago over to Michigan City, starting in the morning and coming back at night. His regular clarinet could not make the job one day, and he called me up to come over the next day. Well, I got down to the job in plenty of time, before anybody else, and was setting up on the stand when a voice barked: "Get off that stand and stop messin' round with those instruments."*

*I took a look to see who had told me off, and there was a young fellow with a horn under his arm. I tried to convince him I was on the date, but he wouldn't believe me until some of the other fellows came along and said it was O.K. Then he looked me up and down (in my short pants) and said: "What the hell's that kid goin' to do." By now it was time for introductions all around, and I found out he was Bix Beiderbecke. Well, he was a swell horn player even then, though nobody knew much about him except the musicians he worked with.*

Bix and Benny continued playing for Bill Grimm on the Michigan City for the rest of the summer. Benny had been recommended to Bill Grimm by Harry Gale, the drummer in the band. Benny had met Harry Gale (and Bill Grimm, as well as some of the Chicagoans) in 1922 in Harrison High School. Bix had played with Harry Gale in 1922 in Jimmie Caldwell's band. Bix was quite impressed by Harry Gale's skills as a drummer.

Years later, when he was in Chicago with Whiteman, Bix had Harry Gale on drums in two of his recording sessions, July 5, 1928 with the Frank Trumbauer orchestra, and July 7, 1928 with His Gang. Harry Gale told Philip Evans [2] that Bix often stayed in his house, "and I remember well his developing *In a Mist* on our old grand piano."

For the rest of 1923, Bix hung around mostly in Chicago doing odd gigs. He spent some time in Davenport, where he was able to secure a union card with local #67 of the American Federation of Musicians. He was in St. Louis in early November with drummer Charles Cotterell's band for two weeks. Bix returned to Chicago in mid-November and was offered a job with the Stockton Club band in Hamilton, Ohio. Bix accepted and by the end of the year the band was renamed the Wolverine Orchestra.

Benny, on the other hand, had stable jobs for the rest of 1923 at Guyon's Paradise with Jules Herbiveaux and at the Green Mills Gardens with Arnold Johnson's band.

### Meetings in 1926 and 1927, Lake Hudson and Detroit

The next documented encounter of Bix and Benny took place in the summer of 1926. Benny Goodman was back in Chicago with the Ben Pollack orchestra who had spent six months in California in the second half of 1925. When Pollack could not find gigs for his band, Benny would play with other bands. Bix was with a Goldkette outfit led by Frank Trumbauer in Hudson Lake, Indiana.

Trumbauer's band at Hudson Lake played every night, except Mondays. Sundays were particularly busy, the band playing afternoon and evening to the crowds coming from Chicago for the day, out of the choking heat of the city. The Chicagoans, Jimmy McPartland, Frank Teschemacher, Dave Tough,

Mezz Mezzrow, would take the train from Chicago on Saturdays and stayed in Hudson Lake for the weekend. According to Sudhalter and Evans, [3] Benny Goodman was among the visitors. Bix and several musicians from the Hudson Lake band, Dan Gaebe, Pee Wee Russell, and Irving Riskin, would reciprocate the visit and drive from Hudson Lake to Chicago on Sunday nights. They would meet some of the Chicagoans in the city and

would go listen to Louis Armstrong and Jimmy Noone in the South Side.

The spring of 1927 found Bix playing with the Jean Goldkette Orchestra at the Graystone Ballroom in Detroit (at left, courtesy the Bixography website), while Benny was in Chicago with Ben Pollack's band at the Venetian Room of the Southmoor Hotel (below, courtesy Chicago Postcards website).

According to Sudhalter and Evans [3], "On days off it was easy to talk Tram into driving Bix, Challis, Murray and others over to Chicago to catch Ben Pollack's new band at the Southmoor Hotel

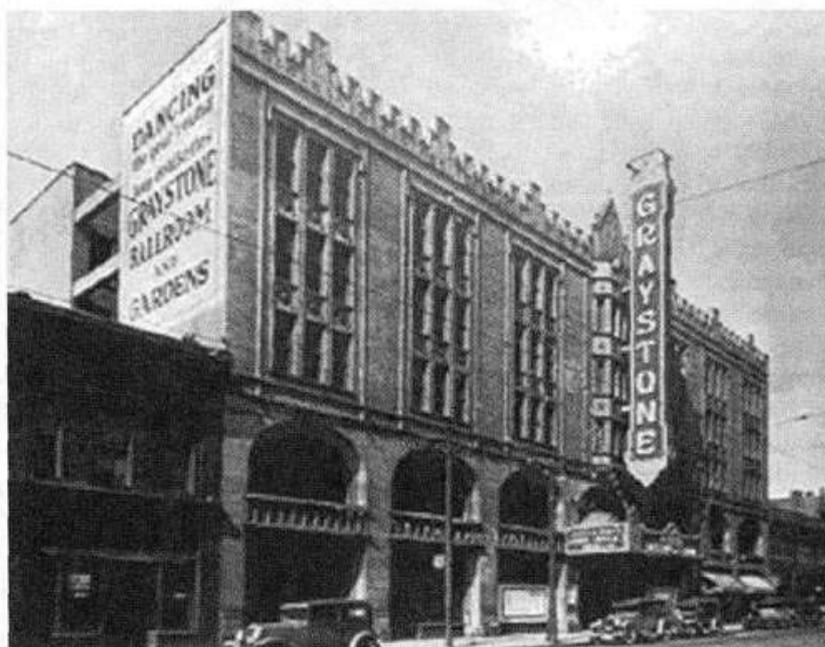
and hear the ever-improving Benny Goodman, now 17 years old, on clarinet, Joseph 'Fud' Livingston on tenor and Glenn Miller on trombone." Benny gives this account of meeting Bix in Chicago and Detroit. [1]

*Speaking of Bix brings back one of those incidents that seem to happen only to musicians. It was while we were still at the Southmoor in the spring of 1927, and Bix was in Detroit with Goldkette, before he joined Whiteman. He ran up to Chicago one Sunday night with two fellows from Jan Garber's orchestra, which was also playing Detroit at the time. They were Walter Livingston, Fud's brother, and Harold Peppie a friend of Gil's [Gil Rodin, alto saxist and arranger for Ben Pollack]. They came around to the place, and after work we went over to the Sunset to hear Louis and Earl Hines, who was in a class by himself on piano. From there we went to the Nest to hear Jimmy Noone, and we made a night of it.*

*By dawn, a mellow mood had descended on all of us, and it was the general opinion that if Bix had been decent enough to come all the way from Detroit to visit us, the least we could do*

*would be to go back to Detroit with him. We arranged for substitutes on our job, and got the 8:30 train for Detroit.*

*Although it was early afternoon when we hit Detroit, nobody thought of going to sleep. Instead we went to Bix's room, listened to records, had some more drinks and otherwise kill a few hours. Finally it was time for him to go to work, and we started out for the Greystone*



[sic] Ballroom. By this time, we were all pretty high, and they wouldn't let us into the place. So we had to go around to the back door and make ourselves known. Well we finally heard the band and it was plenty good, with fellows in it like Venuti [4], Don Murray, Irv Riskin, Frank Trumbauer, Steve Brown and Chauncey Morehouse. We got back to Chicago the next day, and several of the fellows swore they never did get to hear Bix play – that's how stiff they were. Finally we figured out that with the night in Chicago, train fares, the liquor in Detroit and the money we lost by not playing our job, it cost us about \$100 a man to hear Bix and the Goldkette band.

### Bix and Benny in New York, 1928-1929

At the end of October 1927, Bix Beiderbecke and Frank Trumbauer joined the Paul Whiteman orchestra in Indianapolis, Indiana. The Whiteman band was on its fall tour with concerts in the mid-west and in the east before returning to New York early in 1928. Bix spent the rest of 1928 in New York and on tour with the Whiteman band. In 1929, Bix was in and out of New York for the first nine months of 1929, and, after suffering a breakdown in September 1929, spent the rest of the year recuperating at home in Davenport.

Benny was with Ben Pollack's orchestra for most of 1927 in Chicago and California. At the end of 1927, he left the Pollack band and played for a couple of months with Isham Jones at the Million Dollar Rainbow Gardens in Chicago. In March 1928, Benny rejoined Ben Pollack and moved to New York. Notable engagements of the Pollack band were at the Little Club and at the Park Central Hotel. Benny remained with Pollack until September 1929. Benny Goodman and Jack Teagarden were the top jazzmen in Pollack's band during this period.

There is no documentation about Bix and Benny playing together in New York in 1928-1929. However, it is likely that they, at least, saw each other. Bix and Benny were frequenting the same circle of prominent white musicians in New York, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Jack Teagarden, Eddie Lang, Joe Venuti, Miff Mole, Red Nichols, Glenn Miller, and the Chicagoans, Jimmy McPartland, Bud Freeman, Joe Sullivan, Ray Bauduc, Gene Krupa. In Benny's own words, [1]

*The result of all this was that musicians who played hot were pretty much of a clique by themselves. They hung around in the same places, made the same spots after work, drank together and worked together whenever they had the chance. In New York they even had one place which was pretty much their own—a dive called Plunkett's on West 53rd St., where the liquor was cheap and credit pretty liberal.*

Bix, of course, was good friends with the Dorseys, Red and Miff, and Eddie Lang. The Chicagoans were great admirers of Bix's from the early days in Chicago.

Jimmy McPartland replaced Bix when he left the Wolverines to join the Jean Goldkette orchestra at the end of 1924. In view of these multiple connections, it is very likely that Bix and Benny saw each other in New York, and perhaps played together, but there is no documentation.

### Bix and Benny Recordings, 1930

The first recording session where Bix and Benny appeared together was organized by Hoagy Carmichael, an old friend of Bix's from the spring of 1924, when the Wolverines spent quite a bit of time in Indiana University. Two numbers were waxed on May 21, 1930, Hoagy Carmichael's *Rockin' Chair* and *Barnacle Bill, the Sailor*, Frank Luther's 1929 hit based on a 19th century folk song. The musicians in Hoagy's band were freelancers such as Bix, Tommy Dorsey, Eddie Lang, Joe Venuti, as well as some of the members of the Ben Pollack's orchestra, Benny, his brother Harry, Gene

Krupa. The exception was growl trumpeter James 'Bubber' Miley, who had been dismissed from Duke Ellington's orchestra a year earlier. Hoagy Carmichael explained to Phil Evans [2] the circumstances associated with the presence of 'Bubber' Miley in Hoagy's band, "I approached L.L. Watson about the recording date. Watson listened to my ideas and then informed me 'Bubber' Miley had to be part of the deal. He felt 'Bubber' was the hottest thing in jazz and wanted to promote him. No 'Bubber,' no deal. I accepted and that is why he is in the recording date. I picked the rest of the musicians." Loren L. Watson was recording director for Victor at the time, and a few days earlier, May 16, 1930, had supervised the first recording session of Bubber Miley and His Mileage Makers for Victor. Benny has no solo part in *Rockin' Chair* while Bix has an 8-bar improvisation, somewhat tentative; it was Bix's first recording session in almost a year. *Barnacle Bill, the Sailor* is played as a novelty

number, with two explosive solos by Benny and by Bix. Sudhalter and Evans comment on the session, "Though Beiderbecke's contribution to *Rockin' Chair* is brief and relatively ill at ease, he turns on the old fire for a 20-bar, up-tempo outburst on *Barnacle Bill*." Some deterioration is obvious: the open tone is coarser, a reminder of Bix's increased use of the derby in his latter weeks with Whiteman, and the notes no longer tumble out so effortlessly. Where Goodman is already riding Gene Krupa's heavy four-to-the-bar with a comfort, presaging their long and successful association, Bix seems stiff with it, as though hankering after the looser style of earlier years. At one point in the solo he and Krupa almost part company altogether. But for all of

that the solo glows with optimism. The musicians remembered the *Barnacle Bill* session as one of high spirits, a momentary recapturing of carefree times." [3]

The second recording session of Bix and Benny is filled



with controversy regarding the presence of Bix. On June 6, 1930, Irving Mills gathered a group of outstanding jazz musicians –Ray Ludwig , Bix’s roommate at the time, Jack Teagarden, Benny Goodman, Joe Venuti, Frank Signorelli, Gene Krupa and others– in the Brunswick recording studios in New York City. The band waxed three sides, *Loved One*, [4] *Deep Harlem*, and *Strut Miss Lizzie*, [5] all with clarinet solos by Benny Goodman. There is no question about the presence of Benny here. The late guitarist and cornetist Jeff Healey commented on these solos, “In my opinion, Goodman is at his best here. His solo in *Deep Harlem* is so good it’s chilling.” [6]



Controversy has raged regarding the identity of the cornetist in these sides. They were played for some of the musicians present at the recording session, as well as for people who knew intimately Bix’s style. Here are the results, quoted by Phil Evans. [2]

Benny Goodman:

- not Bix; either Sterling Bose or Jimmy McPartland  
Gene Krupa: at first hesitant, then sided with Goodman  
Jack Teagarden: first denied having been at the session, then claimed Bix

Joe Venuti: Bix

Frank Signorelli: Bix

Jimmy McPartland: Bix

Red Nichols: first he said it was Jimmy McPartland, then Bix

Andy Secrest: Bix

Leo McConville: Bix

I must note, however, that Russell Connor gives a different account of Jimmy McPartland’s response. In a detailed discussion of the Hotsy Totsy Gang session, Connor writes, [7]

*The recordings under discussion were played for Mr. Goodman on four different occasions over time, and he remains adamant that Bix was not on the date. He believes that either Sterling Bose or Jimmy McPartland was the cornet soloist. In 1986, a New York radio station played the sides, telephoned Benny to ask if they included Bix. He replied that he thought they did. The author challenged him about his apparent changed opinion. His reply “Hell, what’s the difference now.”*

*On July 7, 1973, the author played the recordings in question for Jimmy McPartland, Bill Challis and Joe Tarto at a jazz seminar at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, before an audience of*

*Jazz record collectors. Their reaction was immediate and unanimous: not Bix. (Jimmy added that he was not the cornetist, he believed it might be Bose or even Mannie Klein, “who could play anybody’s style.”)*

*The author feels that no one then alive was more knowledgeable about Bix as person and performer than McPartland, Challis and Tarto. In sum, no one can state with certainty the identity of the cornetist on this session.*

This opinion is not shared by several knowledgeable contemporary musicians and historians.

Jeff Healey, [6] “For many years, there was a controversy as to the identity of the cornetist in the June 6, 1930 session. It seems hard to believe that Bix’s obvious presence was ever questioned. From his heart-wrenching struggles through both takes of *Loved One* (this is a Trumbauer and Hayton tune recorded a year earlier by Bix and Tram under the title *I Like That*) to his tear-jerking delivery of the melody which he seems to feel from the bottom of his heart on *Deep Harlem*, to his child-like bursts of energy on *Strut, Miss Lizzie*, this is truly the full Bix as he was to be heard in the last two years of life.”

The late Richard Sudhalter, the world’s foremost Bix expert, [8] said, “I clearly remember the evening, many years ago, when I first heard *Loved One* at the home of the Ohio collector Bill Love. Two bars into it I knew beyond doubt that I was listening to a Bix solo, as sure as hearing a voice I recognized saying ‘hello’ on the telephone. This, regardless of how well or not well he was playing.”

According to Alan Roberts, creator of the Bix Restored series, “The four remaining tracks on Side B [two takes of *Loved One*, *Deep Harlem*, and *Strut, Miss Lizzie*] have been the subject of some controversy for years. Benny is definitely on them and takes nice solos, but who is the cornetist on these sides? Is it the fabled Bix Beiderbecke? I, among others, believe it is. Others have claimed it’s Red Nichols or Sterling Bose, but Red never came closer to sounding like Bix than he did on his own recording of *Indiana*. Bose does not have the drive... Bix was going downhill and was to last only another 14 months before succumbing to pneumonia, hence the style and tone is off somewhat compared to that produced by him the year before.” [9]

I strongly favor the presence of Bix in these sides; his unique tone, attack, and phrasing are all there. Moreover, a comparison, either in sequence or by superimposition, [10] of the non-improvised 8-bar cornet solos in *I Like That*, recorded by Bix and Tram on April 30, 1929, and in *Loved One* clearly demonstrates that we are dealing with the same cornetist.

The third and last recording session of Bix and Benny took place on Sep 30, 1930. This was the last recording session of Bix under his own name. The following tunes were waxed: *Deep Down South* (two takes 1 and 2, issued), *I Don’t Mind Walking in the Rain* (take 1 issued), and *I’ll Be a Friend with Pleasure* (takes 2 and 3 issued).

There were three clarinetists in this session. Benny remembers the circumstances surrounding this session, [1]

*I was on another record date with Bix that year, and as far as I can remember it was the last one I had with him. It came along sometime in September, when we made three sides down at Victor place -I’ll Be A Friend With Pleasure, I Don’t Mind Walking in the Rain, and Deep Down South. The funny part of this is that when I came into the studio I discovered that Bix had no less than three clarinet players on the date-Jimmy Dorsey, Pee-Wee Russell and myself, because all three of us were around town, and he didn’t want to hurt anybody’s feelings by leaving him out of it. We took turns*

*playing on different masters of the various tunes, and as a matter of fact turned out a couple of good sides.*

The clarinetists took turns at playing the solos in these records. It is generally agreed among collectors, musicians, and historians that Benny plays the solos in *Deep Down South*, Pee Wee Russell takes the break and plays 16+6 bars with Joe Venuti in *I Don't Mind Walking in the Rain*, and Jimmy Dorsey plays the 16-bar solo in both takes of *I'll Be a Friend with Pleasure*. However, it is noteworthy that Russell Connor points out, "Some collectors believe BG solo's [sic] on BE 63632-2 [take 2 of *I'll Be a Friend with Pleasure*]; the author does not." [7] Different soloists in different takes of the same tune would be consistent with Benny's statement that "*We took turns playing on different masters of the various tunes.*"

### **Bix and Benny in College Gigs, 1930-1931**

Philip Evans's 50-year research on Bix Beiderbecke provided a chronology of Bix's activities on an almost daily basis. Evans and Evans [2] describe two occasions where Bix and Benny participated in gigs at colleges in the northeast.

On May 1, 1931, Benny Goodman fronted a band that played at the Cottage Club in Princeton University. Bix was present. The next day, the band played at the Charter Club, but Benny was replaced by Jimmy Dorsey. Benny Goodman was booked for two days at Williams College. On June 10, 1931 the band played at the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity, and on June 11, 1931 the band played for the Sophomore Prom.

In addition, Evans reports that Bix and Tommy Dorsey played at a private house party at Williams College on May 16, 1930 and at the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity on May 17, 1930, but makes no mention of Benny Goodman. [2] Benny provides an amusing anecdote about what he remembers as the engagement at Williams College of June 1931. [1]

*The closing of the show left me free to pick up some college dates during the prom season. One was up at Williams, and as Bix and Tommy Dorsey were around town, I enlisted them for the job, and also lined up Irv Brodsky for piano and Babe Rusin [sic] on sax. We also had a guitar along whose name I forget. He was on the date because he had a car. Most of us started in the morning, but Tommy had a record date and said he'd be along later. When Bix heard about this, he arranged to come along with Tommy, whenever that might be.*

*As Tommy tells the story, he figured that Williams was somewhere around New Haven [Connecticut], and that he could get a train anytime in the afternoon and still make the date in plenty of time. He met Bix at about three, and they started to inquire about trains. Well, they discovered that the only train that way wouldn't get them in until nearly midnight, which was out. Driving was also out of the question, so they finally decided to fly up. They sent us a wire about the situation, and chartered a plane out on Long Island and started out. Everything went fine (except that Bix, whose health was then pretty low, got sick) until they reached North Adams and started to look for a place to land. They couldn't find an airport there, and continued on to Williamstown. The plane came roaring over the campus, and we all ran out to watch them, and waved and shouted, but it was no go. There was no place to land there, either. Finally they went over to the direction of Pittsfield, and put the plane down there. Then they hired a car and drove the twenty miles to Williams.*

The June 1931 date claimed by Goodman for the Bix and Benny joint appearance at Williams College is disputed by Frederick Reed Dickerson, a distinguished attorney [12] who graduated from Williams College in 1931. In an article entitled "A Few Corrections Concerning Bix Beiderbecke - The one

undisputed fact at Williams College: Bix was great." [13], Dickerson asserts that the Bix-Benny appearance at Williams College took place in May 1930, not June 1931.

Since the analysis that follows is rather complicated, it is important, in order to avoid confusion, to state at the outset that Bix and Benny appeared together in Williams College twice, first on May 16-17, 1930 and again on June 10-11, 1931. Dickerson makes two corrections to Benny Goodman's account. In Dickerson's own words,

*Although the story about the airplane may well be true, the rest of the account was badly garbled. This is hardly surprising. A man who played in pickup bands as often as Goodman did can be forgiven for scrambling the details of specific engagements.*

*His first inaccuracy was in assigning the engagement to the year 1931, shortly before Bix's tragic death on August 7, 1931, [N. B. really, August 6], a mistake that makes it plausible to assume that Bix played badly that evening. He may have been sick (except for being very quiet, he did not show it). He most certainly was not drunk (I was with him throughout the evening, during which he said no to all liquor). And he most certainly did not play badly. Actually the event took place one year earlier, at a time when Bix was trying valiantly to stay on the wagon and regain his health. The place was Williamstown, Massachusetts, and the date was May 17, 1930. I know because, as house-party chairman that year, I helped assemble the band.*

*Goodman's second inaccuracy related to personnel and it resulted from confusing the occasion with a similar one two Saturdays earlier when he played with another pick-up group at the Phi Delta Theta house (I was there, too). This explains the alleged presence of Babe Russin.*

*When Goodman said he "enlisted them for the job," he probably meant the earlier group. I vividly recall my own long-distance call to Artie Michaud [N.B. who also booked the Dorsey Bros Orchestra with Bix at Amherst College on March 14, 1931], then a New York booker and later famed as manager of Tommy Dorsey's orchestra. I said we wanted a seven-piece outfit and I ticked off the people we hoped to include. I remember Michaud saying that Adrian Rollini, the famous bass saxophonist was not available and that Bix, though available, was so unreliable that he would not promise to deliver him. He promised only to do his best. (If Goodman helped in the recruiting, I never knew it.) We crossed our fingers and waited for the great day. The price, incidentally, was \$1000.*

*The great day finally arrived and no one who attended the tea dance or the dance that followed that evening, will ever forget it. This was the line-up: Bix Beiderbecke, cornet; Benny Goodman, clarinet; Tommy Dorsey, trombone; Irving Brodsky, piano; Dave Tough, drums; and two others.*

As anticipated above, there were, in fact, two dates where Bix and Benny played at Williams College, the first on May 16-17, 1930 and the other on June 10-11, 1931.

According to Benny's account, related in several books [2, 14], Tommy Dorsey and Bix hired a plane to be on time for the engagement in Williams College on June 10, 1931. Tommy Dorsey could not go to Williamstown earlier in the day with the rest of the band ostensibly because he had a recording date. An examination of Tommy Dorsey's discography [15] reveals that Tommy Dorsey had relevant recording sessions with the Ben Selvin band on May 16, 1930 and on June 5 and 15, 1931. Clearly, the May 16, 1930 session (when the band accompanied Ruth Etting and waxed *I Remember You From Somewhere* and the classic *Dancing With Tears In My Eyes*) matches the engagement at Williams College on May 16, 1930, as asserted by Dickerson. In contrast, on June 10, 1931 Tommy Dorsey had no recording date that would have interfered with his ability to drive up to Williamstown with the rest of the band.

Linda Hall, Archives Assistant at Williams College, provided the following relevant information from the Williams Record, the Williams College student newspaper. [16] Benny Goodman was in Williams College on May 3, 1930 with his own band (without Bix, according to Dickerson, a corroborated fact: on May 3, 1930, Bix played house parties at Princeton University). The Beiderbecke-Dorsey band was in Williams College on May 17, 1930 (with Benny Goodman according to Dickerson). There is no mention of the Bix-Benny appearance at Williams College, on June 10-11, 1931, but by then the student newspaper was not published as the summer recess had started.

On the basis of the available documentation (Evans and Dickerson), it seems pretty safe to conclude that the first Benny-Bix joint appearance at Williams College took place on May 16 and 17, 1930 with the Beiderbecke-Dorsey band, and that Bix and Dorsey flew to Williamstown on May 16, 1930, after Tommy Dorsey had completed his recording date with Ben Selvin. As stated by Evans and corroborated by the Williams Record, this was a Beiderbecke-Dorsey date. Dickerson's account is consistent with this as Artie Michaud, the booking agent that Dickerson had contacted to get a band in Williamstown for the party at the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity on May 17, 1930, is known to have hired Bix and Tommy Dorsey for the Senior Hop at Amherst College a year later and eventually became Tommy Dorsey's manager. Moreover, Dickerson's account that Bix was on the wagon and playing well is consistent with what we know. From October 1929 to April 1930, Bix was at home in Davenport and had spent about five weeks at the Keeley Institute (an establishment for treating people suffering of alcohol addiction).

The second appearance of Bix and Benny at Williams College was on June 10, 11, 1931, as asserted by Benny in his autobiography and by Evans and Evans in their chronological account of Bix's life and activities, on June 10, 1931 at the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity, and on June 11, 1931 at the Sophomore Prom. The June 11, 1931 Sophomore Prom was cited in the local newspaper, the North Adams Transcript. The newspaper report adds that Red Nichols and his orchestra played at the Prom. However, on this date, Red Nichols was in New York cutting three records ("Slow But Sure," "Little Girl," and "How Time Can Fly") at the Brunswick studios as Red Nichols and His Five Pennies. The answer to this dilemma is found in a detailed account provided by Sudhalter and Evans. [3] "He'd [Red Nichols] hired Bix for an all-star group doing June 10-11 [1931] up at Williams College in Massachusetts. That had been fun even though Red had gotten sick and had to miss it, leaving Benny Goodman to front. They'd had Charlie Spivak on lead trumpet, the Dorseys, and Irving "Babe" Russin, pianist Jack Russin's kid brother." This is confirmed by a short item titled "Benny played Bix Part" published in *Metronome*. [17]

"It happened at one of the last, if not the last, jobs Bix ever played—in 1931 in Williams College. Babe Russin and Charlie Spivak tell about it—they were in the same band that Benny Goodman had assembled especially for the occasion. Bix's health was failing. He never should have gone in the first place. The band was playing "I Got Rhythm." Benny turned to Bix for a chorus. But Bix was practically out on his feet—on his chair, too. He couldn't blow out any notes. And so Benny Goodman, who could always play a few notes on the cornet, picked up Bix Beiderbecke's horn and played his cornet chorus for him."

Benny does not remember playing the cornet, but remembers Bix breaking down. [1]

*"What with that trip and his bad health, Bix was in pretty bad shape that night. There is a story that during one number he went out cold on the stand, and I picked up his cornet and played a chorus, but I really don't remember that part of it. It seems more likely to me that the other brass man would have played the chorus, even though I can play a little cornet in a pinch. However, I know that was the last time I ever played with Bix. I think he played one or two more jobs after that, at Amherst and Princeton, but he died in August—mourned only by the musicians who had worked with him, because hardly anybody else knew he even existed."*

Evidently, Goodman's recollection was faulty and he merged the two events in June 1931. The recollection of Bix and Tommy Dorsey flying to Williamstown applies to the May 1930 engagement. The recollection of the presence of Babe Russin and of Bix being in poor shape applies to the June 1931 gig.

## Benny's Tributes to Bix.

Carnegie Hall Concert, January 16, 1938. Described as the most important jazz concert in history, the concert consisted of ten parts. Part 2 was a history of jazz, *Twenty Years of Jazz*. The first number in this segment was *Sensation Rag*, performed by a quartet [Goodman (cl), Bobby Hackett (c), Jess Stacy (p), Gene Krupa (dr)] re-creating the Original Dixieland Jazz Band recording of June 25, 1918. The second number was *I'm Coming Virginia* with Bobby Hackett, known early in his career as the "new Bix," reprising Bix's solo in his May 13, 1927 recording of the tune with the Frank Trumbauer Orchestra. The note for note copy of Bix's solo represents an homage to the creativity of Bix and to the quality of his seminal solo in the 1927 recording.

Caravan Broadcast. On September 6, 1938, Benny Goodman and His Swingsters honored the memory of Bix in their Caravan program over the Columbia Broadcasting System network by playing Bix's most famous piano composition, *In A Mist*. A press release [18] read,

### GOODMAN HONORS BIX BEIDERBECKE

*Benny Goodman and His Swingsters will play a memorial to the late Bix Beiderbecke, one of music's greatest "hot" trumpeters and pianists during their Caravan broadcast over KGLO [19] Tuesday at 7:30 pm. Although it is not generally known, Goodman played in the same bands with Beiderbecke during their early days in Chicago. Other features of the broadcast will be "Chicago" and "Margie" by the band; the quartet's own arrangement of "Shine" and Martha Tilton's swing singing of "You Go to My Head."*

Benny About Bix. In his response to Richard Sudhalter's question, "What do you remember about him [Bix]?", Benny Goodman said, [20]

*I think my first impression was a lasting one. I remember clearly thinking, 'Where, what planet, did this guy come from? Is he from outer space? I'd never heard anything like the way he played; not in Chicago, no place. The tone -- he had this wonderful, ringing cornet tone. He could have played in a symphony orchestra with that tone. But also the intervals he played, the figures -- whatever the hell he did. There was refinement about his playing. You know, in those days I played a little trumpet, and I could play all the solos from his records, by heart.*

Randy Sandke wrote, "I once asked Benny Goodman if he would have hired Bix for his big band in the '30s if Bix had lived. Benny replied in an uncharacteristically modest answer, "You mean, would Bix have hired me?" He went on to say that he wouldn't have wasted Bix's talent in a big band. "No, he was someone you built a band around." [21]

## Conclusion.

Bix Beiderbecke and Benny Goodman were truly giants of jazz. In recognition of their phenomenal careers in jazz, they were inducted in the Lincoln Center Ertegun Jazz Hall of Fame, Bix in 2004 with the inaugural class, Benny the next year. Interestingly, Bix and Benny are two of only three white musicians (out of a total of 30 in the Hall) to have received this honor. Both Bix and Benny were recipients of multiple Grammy Hall of Fame Awards, established in 1973 "to honor recordings that are at least twenty-five years old and that have qualitative or historical significance". In the singles category, Bix was honored for his recordings of *Singin' the Blues* (1977) and *In A Mist* (1980); Benny for *Sing, Sing, Sing* (1982), *And the Angels Sing* (1987), and *Moonglow* (1998).

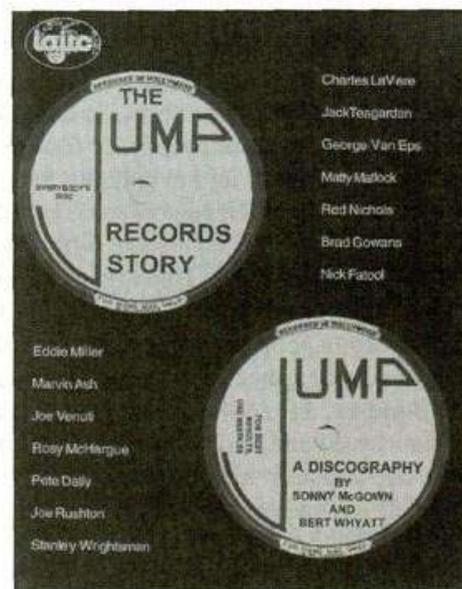
Although the careers of Bix Beiderbecke and Benny Goodman overlapped only a few times in the 1920s and early 1930s, it is clear that Bix was an inspiration for Benny. Benny paid tributes to Bix in concerts, broadcasts, and in his own words, "*I could play all the solos from his [Bix's] records, by heart*". Bix Beiderbecke's influence on Benny Goodman is clearly apparent on his alto saxophone solo in the June 4, 1928 recording of *Blue* (Brunswick 4013) by Bennie Goodman's Boys. [22] As remarked by Richard Wang [23], the influence of Bix on this recording "may be heard in Goodman's on-the-beat attacks, careful choice of notes and across-the-bar phrasing."

## References and Notes

- [1] *The Kingdom of Swing* by Benny Goodman and Irving Kolodin, Stackpole Sons, New York, NY, 1939.
- [2] *Bix, the Leon Beiderbecke Story* by Philip R. Evans and Linda K. Evans, Prelike Press, Bakersfield, California, 1996.
- [3] *Bix, Man and Legend* by Richard M. Sudhalter and Philip R. Evans, Arlington House Publishers, New Rochelle, NY, 1974.
- [4] The Brunswick, Vocalion, Melotone, and Polk records of both takes of *Loved One* were issued under the name of Jack Winn's Dallas Dandies.
- [5] The Brunswick record of *Deep Harlem* and *Strut, Miss Lizzie* was issued under the name of Irving Mills & His Hotsy Totsy Gang.
- [6] Jeff Healey in Liner Notes for Sensation Records CD *Irving Mills and His Hotsy Totsy Gang*, Volume Two, 1999.
- [7] *Benny Goodman-Listen to His Legacy* by D. Russell Connor, Studies in Jazz, No. 6, The Scarecrow Press, Inc. and the Institute of Jazz Studies, Metuchen, N.J., 1988.
- [8] Letter from Richard Sudhalter to Albert Haim, 04/06/1999.
- [9] Back cover of the LP *Benny Goodman with The Hotsy Totsy Gang*, Sunbeam SB-113 (Limited Ed. for Collectors), March 1972.
- [10] The superimposition was carried out by British reed player Norman Field. This technique was devised by musician/collector Brad Kay in analyzing Bix's solos.
- [12] Frederick Reed Dickerson was a faculty member at the Indiana University School of Law from 1958 until his death in 1991. Prior to joining IU, Dickerson was an attorney with the US Dept. of Defense.
- [13] *Esquire Magazine*, April 1969.
- [14] *Tommy Dorsey: Livin' in a Great Big Way, A Biography*, by Peter J. Levinson, Da Capo Press, New York, New York, 2005.
- [15] *Tommy Dorsey: On the Side*, by Robert L. Stockdale, Studies in Jazz, No. 19, The Scarecrow Press & The Institute of Jazz Studies, Metuchen, N.J., Inc., 1995.
- [16] Private email message, February 2004.
- [17] *Metronome*, November 1938.
- [18] *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, Tuesday Sep 6, 1938.
- [19] KGLO was a radio station in Mason City, Iowa, that was part of the Columbia Broadcasting System network. It is now a farming-oriented, news, weather and sports station.

- [20] *Lost Chords: White Musicians and Their Contribution to Jazz, 1915-1945*, by Richard M. Sudhalter, Oxford University Press, New York, New York, 1999.
- [21] *Bix Beiderbecke: Observing a Genius at Work*, by Randy Sandke, 1996.
- [22] The recording of *Blue* by Bennie Goodman's Boys is in volume 5, 'The Influence of Bix' in the *Bix Restored* set of 13 CDs.
- [23] Richard Wang: The Benny Goodman entry in the *Grove Music Online* [Oxford University Press, accessed March 4, 2009].

## The story of Hollywood's famous Jump Records



## A Discography by Sonny McGown & Bert



Stanley Wrightman, Eddie Miller and  
George Van Eps at a Jump Records session,  
March 8, 1949, one of the rare photos from  
The Duncan Schiedt Collection  
included in this publication

US\$ 27 - N. America - \$ 35 air overseas  
from Charles H. Waters, Jr.  
8809 Echo Valley, Houston, Texas 77055  
charleswatersjr @ sbell.net