

Bunk Johnson - Superior Jazz Band From Storyville, New Orleans (1942/2006)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Storyville Blues* 2 *Bunk's Blues* 3 *Down By The Riverside* 4 *Moose March* 5 *Ballin' The Jack* 6 *Panama* 7 *Weary Blues* 8 *Make Me A Pallet On The Floor* 9 *Yes, Lord I'm Crippled* 10 *Bunk Johnson Talking Records* Banjo – Lawrence Marrero Bass – Austin Young Clarinet – George Lewis Drums – Ernest Rogers Piano – Walter Decou Trombone – Jim Robinson Trumpet – Bunk Johnson

This CD reissues the first recordings by the legendary Bunk Johnson. Cut in New Orleans on primitive acetates, the trumpeter is teamed with trombonist Jim Robinson and clarinetist George Lewis (both of whom would be in his regular band soon), plus a four-piece rhythm section, for nine numbers. Bunk's playing is primitive, as is Lewis's, but also listenable despite the erratic recording quality. Closing this set are nine minutes of "talking records" that feature Johnson reminiscing about the past. In reality, this release is more important historically than musically; get Bunk's final recordings (on Delmark) first. ---Scott Yanow, AllMusic Review

Bunk Johnson confused Jazz historians for years by lying about almost everything, but nevertheless he was an early Jazz pioneer who apparently played in bands led by Buddy Bolden. He definitely played in Frankie Dusen's Eagle Band, The Superior Orchestra and with Clarence Williams. He left New Orleans in 1915 and played in minstrel shows, theatre orchestras and circus bands, and with the Black Eagle Band. While playing with the Black Eagles in 1930 the band's other trumpet player Evan Thomas was stabbed to death on the

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bandstand. A fight broke out and Bunk's instrument was damaged. After this incident Bunk continued to play a from time to time, using a borrowed trumpet, but his heart was not in it any longer. His teeth were also starting to give him troubles and in 1931 he had pretty much retired from music. He worked as a truck driver, laborer, and as a WPA funded children's music teacher. In 1938 Bill Russell and Fredric Ramsey started to write their book, "Jazzmen". After interviewing several Jazz musicians, including Louis Armstrong, Bunk's name kept coming up as one of the early influential jazz musicians in New Orleans. They managed to track Bunk down in New Iberia, Louisiana where he was living, and interviewed him for the book. Bunk lied about a great many things, including his birth date, so that it would look like he had been one of the first Jazz musicians. It took years until other historians figured out that Bunk was shall we say, "full of bunk" . Despite all that, Bunk's colorful stories contributed to the success of the book, and the authors took up a collection among musicians and record collectors to fix Bunk's teeth and buy him a new horn. He made his first recordings in 1942, and became a popular fixture of the Dixieland revival of the 1940's. ---redhotjazz.com

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