

## Sidney Bechet – Jazz Masters 87 (1997)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Blame it on The Blues* 2. *Laura* 3. *Groovin' The Minor* 4. *Darkdown Strutters Ball* 5. *Blue Horizon* 6. *Love for Sale* 7. *St. Louis Blues* 8. *I Had It But It's All Gone* 9. *Old Stack O'Lee Blues* 10. *Summertime*

Sidney Bechet was a child prodigy in New Orleans. He was such good clarinet player that, in his youth he was featured by some of the top bands in the city. Bechet's style of playing clarinet and soprano sax dominated many of the bands that he was in. He played lead parts that were usually reserved for trumpets and was a master of improvisation. In 1917 he moved to Chicago. In 1919 he was playing with Will Marion Cook's Syncopated Orchestra and with Louis Mitchell's Jazz Kings in Europe. While overseas he bought a soprano sax and from then on it was his main instrument. Back in the U.S. Bechet made his recording debut in 1923 with Clarence Williams and during the next two years he appeared on several of Williams' records backing up blues singers and on a classic session with the Clarence Williams Blue Five, featuring Louis Armstrong whom he knew as a child in New Orleans. He played in an early version of Duke Ellington's Washingtonians but unfortunately never recorded with them. From 1925 to 1929 Bechet lived and played in Europe, playing in England, France, Germany and Russia. While living in Paris, Bechet got into a dispute with another musician and a gun fight broke out. Three people were wounded and Sidney spent a year in a French jail as a result of the fracas. He was deported upon release from prison and went to Berlin, Germany. He could not stay in France and he would not get a visa for England so he stayed in Berlin till 1931 then joined the Noble Sissle Orchestra and returned to America. Bechet managed to keep playing during the Thirties, but he also ran an unsuccessful tailor's shop with Tommy Ladnier and made some memorable recordings with the trumpeter under the name of the New Orleans Footwarmers. In 1938 he had a hit record of "Summertime". In the Forties Bechet worked regularly in New York with Eddie Condon and tried to start a band with Bunk Johnson. Bechet was a popular figure of the Dixieland revival of the late Forties often recording with Mezz Mezzrow. Bechet returned to France in 1952 and was warmly received there. While in France he recorded hit records that rivaled the sales of pop stars. Bechet was one of the great soloists of early Jazz. He lived a very rich life, always managing to "make the scene" where it was "happening", whether it be in New Orleans, Chicago, New York, Berlin or Paris. --- redhotjazz.com

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