

SONGS OF THE VIPERS

Notes on the "grass" roots of jazz.

Erik Wiedemann

*You gotta get high to have that swing.
(Stuff Smith)*

In 1931 Don Redman, one of the leading jazz composers and arrangers of that time, wrote a piece for the orchestra which he was then starting and titled it *Chant of the Weed*. Recorded by the Redman band in September, 1931, it was soon recognized as a highly original work and over the years has retained its reputation as one of the more adventurous orchestral pieces from the pre-swing era¹). *Chant of the Weed* is also an early example of what might nowadays be termed psychedelic²) music. For one thing, the "weed" of its title is none other than that very old herb Indian Hemp, mentioned in the Chinese pharmacopoeia of Emperor Shen Nung as early as about 2737 B.C., christened *cannabis sativa* by Linnaeus in 1753³), and much discussed in the Western world today because of the consciousness-altering properties of preparations derived from it called hashish and marijuana⁴), among many other names.

Because of their capacities for enhancing sensory awareness and inducing altered states of consciousness, hashish and marijuana, as well as other psychedelic substances, have been of particular interest to artists, who have found the visionary and synaesthetic experiences valuable for their work. Thus, numerous references to cannabis and related compounds are found in literature from the Vedas of ancient India (before 800 B.C.) and on⁵). Particularly well-known are the writings of members of the Club des Hachischins, founded in Paris in the 1840's by Théophile Gautier and including as well such authors as Charles Baudelaire, Gérard de Nerval, and Alexandre Dumas⁶).

Considering that the effects of these substances are especially prominent in the visual and auditory areas, it is remarkable that not nearly as many traces of their use are found in the histories of painting and music, even though ethnomusicology should certainly be able to turn up a number of examples⁷). In the music of the Western world the first more pronounced references to the effect of cannabis and to a subculture concerned with its use would appear to be those found in jazz recordings of the 1920's and 1930's. One of the first of these is,

in fact, Don Redman's *Chant of the Weed*, which not only pays tribute to cannabis in its title but is also an attempt at musical description of the moods which may be experienced by someone under the influence of cannabis.

As such, it precedes by many years the corresponding recordings made by rock singers and groups in the 1960's. It was written more than thirty years before Bob Dylan's tambourine man, Donovan's fat angel, and Grace Slick's white rabbit⁸⁾ entered the musical scene, and it had been played for several years before the musicians of The Doors, Country Joe & The Fish, Jefferson Airplane, The Grateful Dead and other psychedelic rock groups had even been born. It does, however, belong to the same American underground tradition of which the counter-culture of the 1960's and its music are a later manifestation.

For all the attention paid to the connection between cannabis and rock music it has often been overlooked that a similar relationship is to be found in the jazz world of the 1930's. Here, too, songs about the pleasures of cannabis reflect the value systems of a cultural minority, and do so in a language which acts as a code for insiders and is meant to elude the inquisitions of outsiders. In fact, many of the words which have become common currency in the counter-culture since the late 1960's were already used by the cannabis-smoking jazz musicians of the 1920's and 1930's and in some cases were even invented by them⁹⁾.

The aim of the following is to shed some light upon this particular chapter — in the cultural history of cannabis as well as in the social history of American jazz in the 1920's and 1930's. It is not my intention to discuss the relationship between cannabis-smoking and musical creativity, which would demand yet another article, and even less the moral and legalistic aspects, which some might still find interesting.

The smoking of cannabis was introduced in the United States in the early part of this century when Mexican laborers brought marijuana across the border into the south-western states of New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas¹⁰⁾. In 1910 it was first reported in New Orleans¹¹⁾ and this was the first American city where the use of marijuana took hold — by 1926 New Orleans was saturated with marijuana users¹²⁾. By this time the habit had already spread to Northern cities and it seems reasonable to assume that among the users active in this dissemination were a number of the New Orleans jazz musicians who migrated north between 1918 and the early 1920's.

Indeed, the earliest known case of a jazz musician smoking marijuana is that of the New Orleans clarinetist Leon Rappolo (1902–43). Mezz Mezzrow, a clarinetist from Chicago, reports¹³⁾ the following occasion (circa 1922) when Rappolo was working with the New Orleans Rhythm Kings at Friars Inn in Chicago:

One night during intermission at the Friars Inn Rapp took me into his dressing room, where he felt around on the molding and came up with a cigarette made out of brown wheatstraw paper. When he lit it up a funny odor came out that reminded me of the cubebs I smoked when I was a kid. He sounded more like he was sighing than smoking, sucking air in with the smoke and making a noise like an old Russian sipping tea from a saucer. After he got a lungful he closed his lips tight and held it in till he about choked and had to cough. "Ever smoke any muggles?" he asked me. "Man, this is some golden-leaf I brought up from New Orleans, it'll make you feel good, take a puff." The minute he said that, dope hit my mind and I god scared — working in my uncle's drugstore had made me know that messing with dope was a one-way ticket to the graveyard. I told him I didn't smoke and let it go at that, because I looked up to him so much as a musician.

Rappolo is also co-composer, with trumpeter Paul Mares (leader of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings), of the first jazz tune referring to marijuana in its title, *Golden Leaf Strut*, recorded by the Original New Orleans Rhythm Kings on January 25, 1925. This is a purely instrumental recording, a variant on Jelly Roll Morton's *Milenberg Joys* (itself based on *Tiger Rag*) with a couple of blues choruses added. It was recorded again twenty years later by Bunk Johnson and it may be identical with the *Golden Leaf Rag* recorded (but never released) by a third New Orleanian, trumpeter Wingy Mannone and his San Sue Strutters in November, 1925.

Mezzrow himself later became a central figure in the dissemination of cannabis-smoking among jazz musicians¹⁴). A couple of years after the episode with Rappolo, or some time in 1924, he finally tried smoking marijuana and gives the following description of the effect on his experience of playing:

After I finished the weed I went back to the bandstand. Everything seemed normal and I began to play as usual. I passed a stick of gauge around for the other boys to smoke, and we started a set.

The first thing I noticed was that I began to hear my saxophone as though it was inside my head, but I couldn't hear much of the band in back of me, although I knew they were there. All the other instruments sounded like they were way off in the distance: I got the same sensation you'd get if you stuffed your ears with cotton and talked out loud. Then I began to feel the vibrations of the reed much more pronounced against my lip, and my head buzzed like a loudspeaker. I found I was slurring much better and putting just the right feeling into my phrases — I was really coming on. All the notes came easing out of my horn like they'd already been made up, greased and stuffed into the bell, so all I had to do was blow a little and send them on their way, one right after the other, never missing, never behind time, all without an ounce of effort. The phrases seemed to have more continuity to them and I was sticking to the theme without ever going tangent. I felt I could go on playing for years without running out of ideas and energy. There wasn't any struggle; it was all made-to-order and suddenly there wasn't a sour note or a discord in the world that could bother me¹⁵).

In 1926 Mezzrow was playing in Detroit and he mentions that he used to supply other musicians with marijuana which he obtained from a Mexican connection in Chicago:

I was not without my muta at the time, and some of the boys (I won't mention any names) used to drop by to sit in and get high with me, because I always had the best stuff that could be found (. . .) In those days we used to get a Prince Albert tobacco-can full of

marihuana, clean and without any sticks or seeds in it, for two dollars. The grefa they pushed around Detroit was like the scrapings off old wooden bridges, compared with the golden-leaf being peddled in Chicago, and tasted twice as bad¹⁶).

However, it was not until Mezzrow took up residence in Harlem in late 1929 that he started supplying the jazz community with marijuana on a large scale. In his book he takes care not to mention any names but it is well-known that from around 1930 many prominent jazz musicians were his customers. The most prominent certainly was Louis Armstrong, who in 1928 had recorded an instrumental blues under the unmistakable title, *Muggles*. Armstrong may have been the first jazz musician to come into conflict with the law on account of cannabis when in March, 1931 he spent nine days in the Los Angeles county jail, after which he received a suspended sentence for smoking marijuana. At that time marijuana-smoking was not yet cause for much concern in the USA, where as late as 1930 only sixteen states had passed laws against it¹⁷).

Nevertheless, as a result of the later criminalization of cannabis use, Armstrong did not want to mention this episode until shortly before his death in 1971, when he recounted it for Max Jones' and John Chilton's book, "Louis". The first and the last paragraphs of his four page long account give a characteristic picture, in his own inimitable epistolary style, of Armstrong's (and other jazz musicians') experiences with marijuana:

Speaking of 1931 – we did call ourselves Vipers, which could have been anybody from all walks of life that smoked and respected gage. That was our cute little name for marijuana, and it was a misdomeanor in those days. Much different from the pressure and charges the law lays on a guy who smokes pot – a later name for the same thing which is cute to hear nowadays. We always looked at pot as a sort of medicine, a cheap drunk and with much better thoughts than one that's full of liquor. But with the penalties that came, I for one had to put it down though the respect for it (gage) will stay with me for ever. I have every reason to say these words and am proud to say them. From experience¹⁸).

As we always used to say, gage is more of a medicine than a dope. But with all the riggermaroo going on, no one can do anything about it. After all, the vipers during my haydays are way up there in age – too old to suffer those drastic penalties. So we had to put it down. But if we all get as old as Methusela our memories will always be of lots of beauty and warmth from gage. Well, that was my life and I don't feel ashamed at all. Mary Warner, honey, you sure was good and I enjoyed you 'heep much'. But the price got a little too high to pay (law wise). At first you was a 'misdomeanor'. But as the years rolled on you lost you misdo and got meanor and meanor. (Jailhously speaking.) Sooo 'Bye Bye,' I'll have to put you down, Dearest¹⁹).

It is worth noting, though, that in October, 1934, Armstrong recorded his own *Song of the Vipers* in Paris. Apart from a bit of humming and oh-ing by Armstrong this is an instrumental performance, so it must have been the title which caused the original issue to be withdrawn by the record company a few days after it had been released²⁰). A more disguised kind of viper song is the Mexican *La Cucaracha* (The Cockroach), which was recorded by Armstrong in 1935. One might find it regrettable that precisely he did not use the original Spanish text about

*La cucaracha, la cucaracha,
Ya no puede caminar,
Porque no tiene, porque le falta
Marihuana que fumar²¹)*

instead of the innocuous English one with its substitutions of lines like "'tain't no matter where you are" and "playing on your guitar". But at least this record was not withdrawn.

Several of the other early jazz recordings which refer to marijuana only do so in their titles. Thus the subtitle, *Song of the Viper*, to Fletcher Henderson's 1932-recording of the pseudo-spiritual *Take Me Away From the River* is just a gesture toward the community — there is nothing about marijuana in the lyrics. *The Stuff Is Here (And It's Mellow)* by the Mills Blue Rhythm Band, *Sending the Vipers* by Mezzrow, Fats Waller's *Viper's Drag* (all 1934), Richard M. Jones' *Blue Reefer Blues* and Freddy Taylor's *Viper's Dream* (both 1935) are all purely instrumental, and the only text in Willie Bryant's *A Viper's Moan* (1935) consists in introductions to the soloists and directions to the band. In Benny Goodman's *Texas Tea Party* (1933) there is, at least, a hint at the other meaning of the word "tea", when Jack Tea(!)garden sings "Now, mama, mama, mama, mama, oh where did you hide my tea-he-he."

The first real reefer song is *Reefer Man*, with music (on the chord sequence of *You Rascal You*) by J. Russell Robinson and lyrics by Andy Razaf. In 1932 this was recorded by among others, Cab Calloway, Don Redman, and the Mills Blue Rhythm Band. The lyrics are based on the surrealistic ideas and associations often experienced by marijuana-smokers, the "reefer man" being partly a personification of a reefer, partly the man who supplies the reefers:

*You never met the reefer man?
And yet you say you swim to China and you wanted to sell me South Carolina?
I believe you know the reefer man (. . .)
And yet you say you walk the ocean any time you take a notion (. . .)
Oh, he treats the dimes for nickels, and he calls watermelons pickles (. . .)
If he takes a sudden mania, and he wants to give you Pennsylvania (. . .)
So if you hear me sniff and giggle, start to squirm and wiggle,
Oh, that little reefer man (. . .)²²*

It says much about the public attitude toward marijuana at this time that in 1933 *Reefer Man*, sung by Cab Calloway, was used in "International House", a Paramount musical film, without any protest from either the Motion Picture Code Administration (Hays Office) or members of the public²³).

Apart from *Reefer Man*, Stuff Smith's *You'se a Viper* (first recorded by his own group in 1936) has been one of the most popular reefer songs among musicians:

*Dreamed about a reefer five feet long, the mighty mezz, but not too strong,
You'll get high, but not for long, 'cause you'se a viper.*

*Now, I'm the king of everything, you gotta get high to have that swing,
Light up tea, let it be, 'cause you'se a viper.
When your throat gets dry and you know you're high, everything is dandy,
Truckin' to the candy store, bust your conk on peppermint candy.
The you know your body's sent, you don't give a dirt if you don't pay rent,
The sky is high, you're high, 'cause you'se a viper.*

Fats Waller recorded this song (like most of the other later versions under the title *If You're a Viper*) in 1938, but apparently the staid Victor company did not want to risk offending anybody by releasing it. How surprising, then, that five years later a second Waller version was recorded by none less than the American War Department for distribution to the armed forces. Titled *Reefer Song*, this version begins in typical Waller style:

Hey, cats, it's four o'clock in the morning, I just left the V-disc studios, here we are in Harlem, everybody's here but the police, and they'll be here any minute. It's high time.

Of the other reefer songs from the 1930's some tell of "the man from Harlem":

(. . .) *She said, I'm kind of low. He said, I've got just what you need, come on sister, light up on this weed and get high and get above everything*²⁴).

He is also known as the man who brings the jive:

*There's a man from 'way uptown, he takes away your blues,
And every time the man comes 'round, vipers spread the news.
He's known from coast to coast, to every cat alive,
And any time you give a toast to the man who brings the jive.
Whenever you're feelin' small, don't care for this life at all,
Light up and get real tall, here comes the man with the jive.
Don't sit around and moan and sigh and act like you're goin' to die,
Light up, baby, and get real high, here comes the man with the jive*²⁵)

Like these songs, several others depict marijuana as an antidote to sadness — "(. . .) *when I get low, oh-oh-oh, I get high*"²⁶) — and praise the happiness it induces:

*I'm so high, I'm so dry, I'm sailin' in the sky,
Just blow some gage, I'm on a rampage, Jack, I'm mellow (. . .)
I got my roach 'round, I can't come down, Jack, I'm mellow*²⁷)

and often the scenery is that of the speak-easy with its good-time atmosphere:

*Close the windows and lock the door (. . .)
Hey, hey, let's all get gay, the stuff is here.
Everybody just pass your glass, hold a joint, but not too fast (. . .)*²⁸)

*Let the joint jump and the good times roll (. . .)
Light up, let's all get mellow, light up, get smoke in your eye (. . .)
Light up, let's all get ready, light up, I know how you feel.
Light up, now don't be afraidly (. . .)*²⁹)

Apart from the real reefer songs, references to the use of marijuana are found in several other recordings. There is, for instance, the "standing on the corner, high",

well-known from Armstrong's *You Rascal You* (1931), Bessie Smith's "gimme a reefer and a gang of gin" in her *Gimme a Pigfoot* (1933), Wingy Mannone's "I wish you had a weed for me" in *Got a Need For You* by Adrian (Rollini) and His Tap Room Gang (1935), Jack Teagarden's "Ladies and gentlemen, I'm for tea" in *The Mayor of Alabam*' by Frankie Trumbauer (1936), the dialogue "let's drink some tea – drink some tea? – yes, drink some tea – what old tea? – the mighty stew – the mighty mezz? – yes, the mighty mezz" in Stuff Smith's *I'se A-Muggin'* (1936), and Sarah Vaughan's "this mess is drivin' me to reefers, 'cause they ain't half as hard to find" (as cigarettes, during the war) in *No Smokes Blues* (1944).

In passing, it might be mentioned that not nearly as many references to marijuana use are found in folk blues as in jazz and jazz blues. Paul Oliver says³⁰) that because of the effect of marijuana on the sense of time, it is "favoured by improvising jazz musicians and features more prominently in their parlance and in the titles and content of their tunes than it does in the blues." A more systematic research in this area than the one I have been able to undertake might, however, turn up more examples than the ones by Champion Jack Dupree and St. Louis Jimmy quoted by Oliver³¹). For instance, even though the word "stuff" refers to liquor or sex in records by Tampa Red from 1930 and 1932, it might be worth investigating some of his later records, to which I have not had access, like *The Stuff Is Here* (1934), *I'm Gonna Get High* (1937), and *We Gonna Get High Together* (1938).

In 1936, in Andy Kirk's *All the Jive Is Gone*, Pha Terrell sang that:

*The latest craze, the country's rage, is jive, jive, jive,
This modern treat makes life complete, jive, jive, jive.*

A year later the American Congress passed the Marihuana Tax Act which criminalized the use, and even the possession, of cannabis in all of the United States, changing it from a misdemeanor into a felony. However, even in 1938 there were several recorded reefer songs. But in the next few years we see a marked decrease in the output. Also the lyrics become less explicit, though one may still recognize the origin of lyrics like:

*(. . .) makes you nine foot (sic) tall, when you're four foot five (. . .)
Makes you dig your jive on the mellow side³²*

and

*Hit that jive, Jack, put it in your pocket 'til I get back (. . .)
Standin' on the corner, all full of jive³³*

After 1941 I have only noted two reefer songs recorded by jazz musicians, both from 1945. Of these, Barney Bigard's *Sweet Marijuana Brown* is unusual in that its lyrics contain a warning against the seductions of marijuana in the person of a female user (but it may not be incidental that the lyrics are written by the producer of the record, not by one of the musicians:

*Boy, she's really frantic, the wildest chick in town,
 She blows her gage, flies in a rage, Sweet Marijuana Brown.
 In her victory garden, the seeds grow all around,
 She plants, you dig, she's flipped her wig, Sweet Marijuana Brown.*

The decrease in the number of reefer songs after 1938 must certainly be seen as a result of the increased illegality of marijuana and everything connected with it. On the other hand, the total (?) lack of this type of jazz record after 1945 should not lead anyone to believe that the use of marijuana became less widespread among jazz musicians after that time. Quite the contrary, but after 1945 jazz as a contemporary music became almost exclusively instrumental, so it took another kind of rhythmic music, with a vocal form, to continue the tradition of reefer songs twenty years later.

When the recordings dealt with in this article are compared to the corresponding rock records of the 1960's, it is apparent that whereas the latter usually refer to the experience both in the lyrics and in the musical style, the former are only reefer songs as far as the titles or texts are concerned. Apart from Don Redman's *Chant of the Weed*, which tries to illustrate the changing moods and strange sensations of the marijuana smoker through its intermittent use of whole-note scales (rather unusual in jazz of that time), the records might be ordinary jazz records, were it not for their titles or their texts.

One reason for this is certainly that to the jazz musician of the 1920's and 1930's marijuana was primarily a means of amplifying the auditory sense and of having a good time without the bad effects of alcohol. The philosophical and spiritual implications in being high were not evident to him as they were to the rock musician of the 1960's, who had usually tried the stronger psychedelics as well and, as a result, would often have acquired a wholly different view of life.

Another reason is the musical one that jazz of the period in question was a very active and outgoing music based on constantly changing chords. Only with the modal music of the 1960's does it become possible to create a truly spiritual, meditative type of expression within the jazz tradition — as exemplified by John Coltrane, Pharoah Sanders and their followers.

If it is possible to talk about a viper-type among the jazz musicians of the 1930's, it is also quite a different type of personality from John Coltrane et al., a flamboyant, eccentric, verbally adroit kind of showman along the lines of a Cab Calloway or a Stuff Smith, both of whom were specialists in reefer songs (and why did Hezekiah Leroy Gordon Smith get that particular nickname?). As other jazz musicians who might qualify, it seems natural to think of musical eccentrics like Slim Gaillard and Leo Watson.

What the records give us, besides quite a lot of good music, is an insight into a sub-culture which is both quaint and contemporary. Much of what has become

familiar to us through the counter-culture may be found hidden in those old grooves. As Mezzrow says³⁴): "That mellow Mexican leaf really started something in Harlem — a whole new language, almost a whole new culture."

It is part of our background, too.

Notes

- 1) Significantly, *Chant of the Weed* was one of the "Great Jazz Standards" re-arranged by Gil Evans for his 1959-album of that title, and in 1962 it was again recorded, in a re-arrangement by Duke Ellington, as one of Ellington's "Recollections of the Big Band Era" (released in 1974).
- 2) The term "psychedelic" was coined in 1957 by the Canadian psychiatrist Humphry Osmond to indicate the particular "mind-manifesting" or "consciousness-expanding" effect of a specific group of substances (among which cannabis, mescaline, psilocybin, and LSD) – not to be confused with drugs like narcotics (opiates), stimulants (cocaine, amphetamines) and depressants (alcohol, barbiturates).
- 3) These data from David Solomon (ed.): "The Marihuana Papers" (New York, 1968, orig. ed. 1966), pp. 35 and 39.
- 4) I personally prefer the Spanish spelling (with a *j*) to the phonetic English one (with an *h*) which obscures the female personification (Maria Juana – often anglicized as Mary Jane in the U.S.) of the Spanish word.
- 5) Cf. Part One: Traces in the course of history, in Georg Andrews and Simon Vinkenoog (eds.): "The Book of Grass. An Anthology of Indian Hemp" (New York, 1967), and Book Two: Literary and Imaginative Papers, in Solomon: op. cit.
- 6) On the relationships between psychedelics and literature, see R.A. Durr: "Poetic Vision and the Psychedelic Experience" (Syracuse, N.Y., 1970).
- 7) Cf., for instance, Bob Palmer: *Jajouka/Up the Mountain*, in Rolling Stone No. 93 (Oct. 14, 1971), and the lp record "Brian Jones Plays with the Pipes of Pan at Joujouka", Rolling Stones COC 49100 (1971), with notes by Brion Gysin. These report a thousand year old tradition continued by cannabis-smoking musicians in a remote Moroccan mountain village.
- 8) Cf. *Mr. Tambourine Man* (1965), *The Fat Angel* (1966) and Jefferson Airplane's *White Rabbit* (1967).
- 9) Some of the most common words connected with marijuana use in the U.S.A. are the following, which will also be met in quotations later in this article: *gage, gauge, golden-leaf, grass, grefa, jive, mess, (mighty) mezz, muta, pot, stuff, tea, weed* are all synonyms for marijuana; *joint, muggles, reefer, roach, stick (of gauge, tea etc.)* are all synonyms for marijuana cigarette(s); *high, get high, send, sent* refer to the feeling of elatedness when smoking marijuana; *mellow* can be a quality of marijuana or a synonym for "high"; *come down* is when you stop being high; *light up, blow* means to smoke marijuana; a *viper* is a marijuana-smoker; *dope* normally means narcotics (as opposed to cannabis).
- 10) Cf. Solomon: op. cit., p. 94, and E.R. Bloomquist: "Marijuana" (Beverly Hills, Cal., 1968), p. 32. The form of cannabis smoked in USA has always been marijuana, the dried tops of the female plant (as opposed to hashish, the much more potent resin).
- 11) Cf. Niels Pedersen: "Cannabis. Hash og marihuana" (Odense, 1973), p. 63.
- 12) Bloomquist: op. cit., p. 32.
- 13) In Mezz Mezzrow and Bernard Wolfe: "Really the Blues" (New York, 1946), p. 51.
- 14) A factor which has probably been more important to his career as a jazz musician than his actual musical talent.
- 15) Mezzrow and Wolfe: op. cit., p. 72
- 16) *ibid.*, p. 93.
- 17) Solomon: op. cit., p. 94.
- 18) Max Jones & John Chilton: "Louis. The Louis Armstrong Story 1900–1971" (London, 1971), p. 113.
- 19) *ibid.*, p. 116.
- 20) *ibid.*, p. 154.
- 21) Solomon: op. cit., p. 46.
- 22) Excerpts transcribed from the version by the Don Redman band.

- 23) Charles Winick: *The Taste of Music: Alcohol, Drugs and Jazz*, in *Jazz Monthly* vol. 8, no. 8 (October, 1962), p. 11.
- 24) Transcribed from Cab Calloway: *The Man From Harlem* (1932).
- 25) Transcribed from Stuff Smith: *Here Comes The Man With The Jive* (1936).
- 26) Transcribed from Chick Webb: *When I Get Low I Get High* (1936).
- 27) Transcribed from Trixie Smith: *Jack, I'm Mellow* (1938).
- 28) Transcribed from Georgia White: *The Stuff Is Here* (1937).
- 29) Transcribed from Buster Bailey: *Light Up* (1938).
- 30) In "Blues Fell This Morning" (London, 1960), p. 177.
- 31) *ibid.*, pp. 176–177.
- 32) Transcribed from Cab Calloway: *The Jumpin' Jive* (1939).
- 33) Transcribed from King Cole Trio: *Hit That Jive, Jack* (1941).
- 34) Mezzrow and Wolfe: *op. cit.*, p. 216.

A chronology of reefer songs.

Golden Leaf Strut

Jan. 23, 1925: Original New Orleans Rhythm Kings

May 17, 1945: Bunk Johnson's Band

Golden Leaf Rag

November, 1925: (Wingy) Mannone's San Sue Strutters ^{a)}

Muggles

Dec. 7, 1928: Louis Armstrong and his Orchestra

The Viper's Drag

Nov. 12, 1930: Cab Calloway and his Orchestra ^{b)}

The Viper's Song

Sept. 11, 1931: Garland Wilson (piano solo) ^{c)}

Chant Of The Weed

Sept. 24, 1931: Don Redman and his Orchestra

June 17, 1932: Harlan Lattimore and his Connie's Inn Orchestra ^{d)}

Jan. 17, 1940: Don Redman and his Orchestra

1959: Gil Evans and his Orchestra

Nov. 29, 1962: Duke Ellington and his Orchestra

Take Me Away From The River (Song Of The Viper)

Mar. 10, 1932: Fletcher Henderson and his Connie's Inn Orchestra

Reefer Man

June, 9, 1932: Cab Calloway and his Orchestra

June 17, 1932: Harlan Lattimore and his Connie's Inn Orchestra ^{d)} *

Aug. 17, 1932: Baron Lee and the Blue Rhythm Band ^{e)}

c. Oct., 1932: Joel Shaw and his Orchestra

The Man From Harlem

Nov. 30, 1932: Cab Calloway and his Orchestra *

Texas Tea Party

Oct. 27, 1933: Benny Goodman and his Orchestra *

The Stuff Is Here (And It's Mellow)

Feb. 20, 1934: Mills Blue Rhythm Band

Viper's Drag

Nov. 16, 1934: Fats Waller (piano solo)

Mar. 11, 1935: Fats Waller (piano solo)

Sendin' The Vipers

May 7, 1934: Mezz Mezzrow and his Orchestra

The Stuff Is Here And It's Mellow ^{f)}

Aug. 22, 1934: Eva Taylor and her Boy Friends ^{g)}

Mar. 12, 1935: Cleo Brown

Oct. 5, 1937: Georgia White ^{h)} *

Song Of The Vipers

October, 1934: Louis Armstrong and his Orchestra

A Viper's Moan

Jan. 4, 1935: Willie Bryant and his Orchestra

Blue Reefer Blues

Jan. 16, 1935: Richard M. Jones and his Jazz Wizards

Viper's Dream

- March, 1935: Freddy Taylor and his Swing Men From Harlem
 April, 1935: Freddy Taylor and his Swing Men From Harlem ^{j)}
 June 24, 1936: Tommy "Red" Tompkins and his Orchestra ^{j)}
 Nov. 25, 1937: Quintette du Hot Club de France
 Aug. 25, 1947: Souvenirs de Django Reinhardt

All The Jive Is Gone

- March 3, 1936: Andy Kirk and his Twelve Clouds Of Joy *

You're A Viper

- March 13, 1936: Stuff Smith and his Onyx Club Boys
 Oct. 5, 1937: Rosetta Howard ^{k)}
 Feb. 7, 1938: Bob Howard and his Orchestra ^{k)} *
 Feb. 9, 1938: Lorraine Walton ^{k)}
 Mar. 11, 1938: Fats Waller and his Rhythm ^{k,l)}
 Sept. 23, 1943: Fats Waller ^{m)}

When I Get Low, I Get High

- April 7, 1936: Chick Webb and his Orchestra

Smoking Reefers

- April, 1936: Larry Adler

Here Comes The Man With The Jive

- August 21, 1936: Stuff Smith and his Onyx Club Boys *

Weed Smoker's Dream

- Oct. 2, 1936: Harlem Hamfats *

Reefer Man's Dream

- Sept. 13, 1937: Sammy Butler and his Nite Owls

Viper Mad

- Feb. 10, 1938: Noble Sissle's Swingsters *

The Mess Is Here

- May 8, 1938: Cow Cow Davenport

Jack, I'm Mellow

- May 26, 1938: Trixie Smith *

Light Up

- Dec. 7, 1938: Buster Bailey and his Rhythm Busters *

Jive Is Here

- June 8, 1939: Rosetta Howard

The Jumpin' Jive

- July 17, 1939: Cab Calloway and his Orchestra

Hit That Mess

- Sept. 24, 1940: Slim Gaillard and his Flat Foot Floogie Boys

Hit That Jive, Jack

- Dec. 17, 1940: Skeets Tolbert and his Gentlemen Of Swing
 Oct. 23, 1941: King Cole Trio

Sweet Marijuana Brown

- Jan. 5, 1945: Barney Bigard Sextet *

The "G" Man Got The "T" Man

- Nov. 2, 1945: Cee Pee Johnson and his Band *

- a) This was never released.
 - b) This may be Fats Waller's composition, recorded by Waller on Nov. 16, 1934, but I have not been able to check the Calloway record, which is quite rare.
 - c) This was never released.
 - d) This is actually Don Redman's band.
 - e) This is also known as the Mills Blue Rhythm Band.
 - f) This is not the same tune as the one recorded by the Mills Blue Rhythm Band on Feb. 20, 1934.
 - g) This is actually a Clarence Williams group, in which Eva Taylor is not even present.
 - h) The title of this version is *The Stuff Is Here*.
 - i) This was never released.
 - j) I have not been able to check whether this is actually the same tune.
 - k) This version is titled *If You're A Viper*.
 - l) This was never released.
 - m) This version is titled *Reefer Song*.
- * These recordings have been reissued on an American lp, "Reefer Songs" (Stash ST-100) in 1975.

RESUMÉ

Et væsentligt træk ved ungdomskulturen fra sidste halvdel af 1960'erne er dens interesse for de såkaldt bevidsthedsudvidende, psykedeliske, stoffer, herunder det der udvindes af hampeplanten *cannabis sativa* og bl.a. kendes som cannabis, hash(ish) eller marijuana. En række velkendte sange fra ungdomskulturens musik handler om oplevelser med cannabis.

Disse sange har imidlertid forløbere allerede fra omkring 1930, da brugen af marijuana blev udbredt blandt amerikanske jazzmusikere og affødte en mængde indspilninger til dens pris. Som bidrag dels til cannabis'ens kulturhistorie, der går op mod 5000 år tilbage, dels til den amerikanske jazz' socialhistorie i 1920'erne og 30'erne undersøges i artiklen baggrunden for udbredelsen af marijuana i USA og især blandt jazzmusikere, og det vises at man i en række af sangteksterne møder udtryk som langt senere er blevet almindeligt kendte (også i Danmark) via ungdomskulturen og dens musik. Det vises desuden at cannabis-oplevelsen helt overvejende formuleres i sangteksterne, men ikke (som i en del rockmusik) præger selve den musikalske karakter. Endelig antydes det at man blandt musikere fra den omhandlede periode (ca. 1925 – ca. 1945) kan skelne en særlig type, hvis excentriske adfærd og musikalske stil synes forbundet med marijuana-erfaringer.