Noone, Jimmie

(b. April 23, 1895, near New Orleans, La., U.S.--d. April 19, 1944, Los Angeles, Calif.), black American jazz clarinetist noted for his lyricism and refinement of technique. He is one of the three principal clarinetists of early jazz, the other two being Johnny Dodds and Sidney Bechet.

Noone studied with Bechet and began his career with New Orleans bands, including important ones led by Freddie Keppard, Kid Ory, and Buddy Petit. In 1918 he settled in Chicago, where he played with Doc Cooke's band (1920-26, 1927) and studied with classical clarinetist Franz Schoepp. He recorded with King Oliver's Creole Band in 1923. By the late 1920s he was also leading his own group at the Apex Club (1926-28) and other Chicago venues. Despite some touring, he remained largely in Chicago throughout the 1930s and led a big band in 1939. About 1943 he resettled in California, where he led a band and also played on recordings and radio programs with Ory.

A masterly ensemble player in the traditional New Orleans style, Noone also proved an adept partner for the more modern Louis Armstrong, as the two accompanied singer Lillie Delk Christian's 1928 recordings. Noone's greatest impact was as a soloist. His full sound, melodic fertility, and graceful command of instrumental technique influenced other early jazz players and also swing-era clarinetists, most significantly Benny Goodman.

The 1928 recordings of his Apex Club band, featuring his interplay with alto saxophonist Joe Poston, are a transition between the early jazz ensemble style and the more modern swing style, as represented by the solos of Noone and his pianist, Earl Hines. They include "Apex Blues," "Four or Five Times," "Sweet Sue," and "I Know That You Know" and are considered Noone's finest works.