

The group's trumpet player and vocalist, Roy Stevens (later to become a high-note trumpet specialist), had many happy memories of working with Hawkins. Stevens was leading his own band at the Famous Door on 52nd Street when he heard that Hawkins was looking for a new trumpeter:

I went over to Kelly's Stable, walked into the room and there were quite a few guys waiting to audition. Finally, it's my turn to come up, I figured I'd pick a ballad, a good tune, and by the time I got into my second chorus, I'd start taking some real liberties. Anyway, I started to play, but just as I was getting to the middle of my second chorus, Hawkins comes up to the stand and stops me. I thought, 'Was I that bad?' My heart dropped. He raised my hand and said, 'Thanks, fellows' to the others who'd auditioned. 'Roy's got it.' I opened up with him at Kelly's Stable (1943). I ran the band for Hawk. We had a jazz following we had to play for; there we weren't just blowing a club-date job. We used to talk a lot,' cause I ran the band for Bean. As a guy he was superb. I said to him, 'I didn't know how to get going when I auditioned for you.' He says, 'Don't forget man, I've got ears.'

Steven's work with Hawkins included a USO tour in which the band played at several bases:

He used to say to me on those dates, 'You keep the band jumping with the singing you do.' And whenever he felt we were lagging on the date he'd say, 'Let's get 'em with a tom number. Lay one of your tom numbers on them.' The 'tom' numbers were for the white audience squares. He was not a complicated man; musically he was the most complicated man. He was way ahead of Charlie Parker and all those guys.

1. John Chilton, *The Song of the Hawk*, (University of Michigan Press, 1990), pp. 197-198.