

Jimmy McCracklin Modern discography

While working on the fifth volume of “The Downhome Sessions”, John Broven and I decided to revise Jimmy McCracklin’s early Modern discography, after encountering discrepancies during our analysis of the many out-takes available for this compilation. As there was no room to include this information within the booklet, it was decided that these and future revisions would henceforth be featured on the Ace website, for the discographically-minded to refer to at their leisure.

This revision incorporates a summary and revised sequence for Jimmy’s previous sessions. Confusion surrounding the Modern sessions is compounded by a similarity in titles for different songs, as in the case of “Deceivin’ Blues” and “I’ve Been Deceived”. Additionally, the latter piece was recorded at two sessions, with the first version being retitled “Your Heart Ain’t Right” upon eventual release. On the other hand “Josephine” and “Just Won’t Let Her Go” *are* the same song, with versions cut at different sessions. There are around a dozen full takes of “I’ll Get A Break Someday” - as explained in the sleeve notes, it became apparent that there were two versions of this song, assigned different master numbers, within the same session. Thus the notation “Take 7” could apply to two different masters.

Given that complexity, and the difficulty of accurately dating many small West Coast labels, errors have inevitably crept into McCracklin’s discography over the years. It is also apparent that too much of the overall repertoire that Bob Geddins produced has been placed within the single year of 1948. A couple of sessions have been moved in totality, with full explanation of the rationale that led to these conclusions. This update should not be taken as a criticism of anybody’s earlier research and, furthermore, no infallibility is claimed by this researcher!

McCracklin sessions prior to Down Town and Modern recordings.

For further information see Blues Records (Fancourt & McGrath).

1. Globe Records – 2 to 3 sessions (1945) – vocal only
2. Excelsior Records (1946) – vocal only
3. Courtney Records (1946) – vocal only
4. W&W Records (1946/7) – first session with piano.
5. W&W Records (1947) -- Jerry Perkins & His Blues Blasters (see note)
6. CavaTone Records (1947)
7. Trilon Records 187 & 231 (1947)
8. Trilon Records 244 & 245 (c. late 1947/1948)

Notes: The two records by Jerry Perkins & His Blues Blasters represent the first use of the Blues Blasters name and suggest that McCracklin took over this band. Aurally, LuSell Clark plays guitar as he did on his first W&W record. The vocalist on “My Baby’s Last Good-bye” is different from the remaining sides and does sound like McCracklin, as does the pianist throughout the session. After this point he teams up with Robert Kelton who, with McCracklin’s piano well in the background, dominates the slow blues sides of the CavaTone session. This intermittent Geddins label is not easy to date but this record does sound to be the first where Kelton is present. The Trilon sessions exhibit considerably more interplay between piano and guitar.

The Down Town and Modern recordings (1949/50).

After close to a year of no recording – probably due to the AFM strike that lasted for most of 1948 - “Bad Condition Blues” thus follows the sessions listed above. From a blues perspective, McCracklin’s proficiency reached its peak over the next year while Kelton turned up his guitar amp to the maximum.

McCracklin (v/p). (demos)

unknown date(s), 1948/49

no mx. Mistreating Me Ace CDCHD 720
no mx. Bad Health Blues Ace CDCHD 720
no mx. Going Down Slow (fragment) unissued

McCracklin (v/p), Robert Kelton (g), Little Red (d),

c. January 1949

Q 31. MM 1180 Bad Condition Blues Down Town 2023, Mod 20-706, Ace CDCHD 720
Q 12. MM 1181 Blues Blasters Shuffle (inst) Down Town 2023, Mod 20-706, Ace CDCHD 720

McCracklin (v/p), Earl Brown (ts), Robert Kelton (g), Little Red (d).

prob. c. June, 1949

SR 104A Low Down Mood Down Town 2027
SR 104B She's My Baby Down Town 2027

McCracklin (v/p), Earl Brown (ts-1), Robert Kelton (g), Little Red (d).

August 1949

MM 1182-2 Josephine (Just Won't Let Her Go*)-1 Ace (10 inch LP) CH 28*
MM 1182-5 Josephine-1 Ace CDCHD 720
MM 1182-6 Josephine-1 Ace CDCHD 1194
MM 1183-4 I'll Get A Break Some Day-1 Ace CDCHD 720
MM 1184-1 I'll Get A Break Someday (Some Day*) -1 Ace (10 inch LP) CH 28*, Ace CDCHD 993
MM 1184-7 I'll Get A Break Someday -1 Ace CDCHD 1194
MM 1185-3 Love When It Rains RPM 317, Ace (10 inch LP) CH 28, Ace CDCHD 720
MM 1186-2 Your Heart Ain't Right RPM 317, Ace CDCHD 720

Note: Original titles: Although these master numbers follow on directly from Down Town 2023, this simply indicates that Modern mastered the recordings at the same time. MM 1185 "Rainy Weather Blues", MM-1186 "You Deceived Me" were retitled for the later RPM release. MM 1186-2 has been misidentified as MM 1286-2. MM 1184 is a revised arrangement of MM 1183. (Incidentally, we have come to belatedly realize that John Lee Hooker and his first road band based "609 Boogie" almost entirely on Kelton's greatest showcase, "Blues Blasters Shuffle").

NB – The above session was recorded on mobile equipment, in an unidentified nightclub.

McCracklin (v/p), Earl Brown (ts-1), Robert Kelton (g), L. J. Thomas (g), Little Red (d), band vcl -2.

10/10/49

MM 1235-5 Just Won't Let Her Go -1 Mod 29-762, Ace CDCHD 720
MM 1236-1 Rockin' All Day -1, 2 Ace CDCHD 993
MM 1236-3 Rockin' All Day -1, 2 Mod 29-762, Crown CLP 5244,
(Reelin' and Rockin'*) Ace (10 inch LP) CH 28*, Ace CDCHD 720
MM 1237-1 I Think My Time Is Here Ace CDCHD 1194
MM 1237-2 I Think My Time Is Here Mod 29-728, Ace (10 inch LP) CH 28, Ace CDCHD 720
MM 1238-1 Deceivin' Blues Ace CDCHD 720
MM 1238-2 Deceivin' Blues Mod 29-728, Ace CDCHD 720
MM 1238-3 Deceivin' Blues Ace CDCHD 993
MM 1239-1 Beer Drinkin' Woman Mod 29-722, Ace CDCHD 720
MM 1239-2 Beer Drinkin' Woman Ace (10 inch LP) CH 28
MM 1239-4 Beer Drinkin' Woman Ace CDCHD 1194
MM 1240-2 Up and Down Blues Mod 29-722. Ace (10 inch LP) CH 28, Ace CDCHD 720

Note: MM 1236-3 was reissued on Crown CLP 5244 and several subsequent LPs as "Reelin' and Rockin' Twist".

McCracklin (v/p), Earl Brown (ts-1), Robert Kelton (g), L. J. Thomas (g), Little Red (d), band vcl -2,
McCracklin & another (speech) -3.

12/16/49

MM 1290-5 Gotta Cut Out -1. 2 Mod 29-741, Ace CDCHD 720
MM 1291-1 You Deceived Me Ace CDCHD 720
MM 1292-1 Bad Health Blues -1 Mod 29-741, Ace CDCHD 720
MM 1293-2 Hamburger Joint (Ragged As A Mop*) -3 Ace (10 inch LP) CH 28*, Ace CDCHD 720

MM 1293-3 Hamburger Joint -3**Ace CDCHD 993**

Note: Intro for MM 1292 is cut on P-Vine PCD 3053, which is only listed here for sides that first appeared on that compilation. A remake of “You Deceived Me” has been identified as MM 1286, which is a Roy Hawkins master. As noted, MM 1186 is the first version of this song and CDCHD 720 apparently misidentifies the issued take as MM 1286-2. However, because an 11/1/49 date has been given in Blues Records, the possibility exists that a new version was sent to Modern and given the old master number, complete with the typo. However, Ace’s archivist Peter Gibbon is unable to find any trace of this date.

McCracklin (v/p), Earl Brown (as), prob. Pee Wee Kingsley (g), prob. Little Red or San Francisco Jeffries (d), band vcl -1.

unknown date, 1950

no mx. 1942 Boogie -1
no mx. Crying Blues

Ace CDCHD 720
P-Vine PCD 3053, Ace CDCHD 720

Note: This low fidelity session may have been recorded for demonstration purposes. Sequence with next session is uncertain.

McCracklin (v/p), Jake Porter (tp), Earl Brown (ts and as; ts only -1), prob. Pee Wee Kingsley (g), Joe Toussaint (b), prob. San Francisco Jeffries (d), band vcl -2.

c. early-mid 1950

tk. 1	Oh I’m In Love	Ace (10 inch LP) CH 28; CDCHD 720
tk. 2	Oh I’m In Love	Ace CDCHD 993
tk. 1	Don’t Mistreat Me (My Life Depends On You*)	Ace (10 inch LP) CH 28*, CDCHD 720
tk. 2	Racket Blues -1, 2	Ace CDCHD 720
tk. 1	Cold Hearted	Ace CDCHD 993
tk. 2	Cold Hearted (Gonna Find Another Woman*)	Ace (10 inch LP) CH 28*, CDCHD 720

Notes: As discussed within the CD notes , this session was initially thought to originate from an early date. The guitarist on the first Swingtime date is thought to be Pee Wee Kingsley and the same guitarist is heard here, playing a slow walking boogie riff. This is augmented by the piano on “Cold Hearted”, which is quite similar to Swingtime’s “You Don’t Love Me”. Likewise, a more complex guitar pattern is heard on “Oh I’m In Love” which is McCracklin’s first recording outside the 12 bar blues format. The band vocal response on “Racket Blues” builds on the idea already used on “Gotta Cut Out”. Thus the two sessions listed above would represent the first work of McCracklin’s new band after Robert Kelton left.

1951 – 1955 and the return to Modern:

A stay with Swingtime was followed by a lot of recording, but only sporadic releases, on Peacock and a return to Modern after falling out with Peacock boss, Don Robey. “She Felt Too Good” on Peacock is the prototype for a comedy format that would be repeated for “Couldn’t Be A Dream” and again as “He Knows The Rules” for Chess in 1958. Each time the story was different but the musical format was the same. “She Felt Too Good” itself modified the story first heard on “Beer Drinking Woman” as included within our compilation.

1. Swingtime (January 1951 -- January 1952) 3 or 4 sessions
2. Peacock (early 1952 -- early 1954) At least 8 sessions
3. Modern (early 1954) Mod 926, 934. Six additional sides were released by band members L. J. Thomas, Johnny Parker as well as Pee Wee Parham who likely played bass with the band at this time.

Modern 1955 (Session 2):

Upon hearing the recording of “Couldn’t Be A Dream” included on this CD, it was assumed that it had originated from a 1954 demo session, given the loud drums and absence of electric bass. Later it was realized that there are two session-mates on Ace CD CHD 993 and that take 3 of “Dream” was the same as

the released version but without the bass. The decision to overdub the bass afterwards may have been taken to provide flexibility for a better balance than that obtained on some of the 1954 recordings.

McCracklin (vcl/pno), Johnny Parker (as), (ts), (bs), L. J. Thomas (g), unknown (el-bs) overdubbed -1
Probably 1/17/55

no mx.	Let's Get Together	Ace CD CHD 993
no mx.	It Ain't No Use	Ace CD CHD 993
tk. 1	Couldn't Be A Dream	P-Vine PCD 3053, Ace CD CHD 1194
tk. 3	Couldn't Be A Dream -1	Mod 951, Crown CLP 5244, Ace CD CHD 993
no mx	Please Forgive Baby -1	Mod 951, Crown CLP 5244, Ace CD CHD 993

Note: Remastered for Mod 951 as MM 2160-3 & 2161 respectively. The latter was retitled "Please Forgive Me Baby" on all reissues. The date found in the files probably refers to the initial recording date.

Modern and other sessions 1955 – 1956:

1. Modern (c. Spring 1955) vocal/hca/pno
2. Aladdin (1955) vocal/hca/pno (unissued)
3. Hollywood (early 1956) vocal/hca (2 sides unissued)
4. Irma (1956) first session(s)

Notes: McCracklin recorded an excellent, final Modern session with rack harmonica, but went through a commercially lean period for a considerable time thereafter. Geddins sent out further harmonica sessions of which only two sides ever saw release. It is still to be hoped that this material can eventually be heard. The rare Hollywood record reveals that on this occasion he plays harmonica only and plays in true rural fashion for the deep blues "It's Alright". It remains to be confirmed if he actually played piano on Aladdin. He reverted to his band style in 1956, and soon gained a good seller with "You're The One" on Geddins' new Irma label.

It is clear that the Irma sessions continued into 1957 but McCracklin himself funded a session that November, which resulted in a piece of Rock & Roll history. "The Walk" immediately hit the charts, even gaining McCracklin a spot on Bandstand. Little more need be added for the purposes of this revision, unless anyone has forgotten that "Just Got To Know" hit in 1961, ensuring a period of success that endured throughout the decade and well beyond the remit of this discography.

It is hoped that this information will enhance the listener's enjoyment, as it gives context to the McCracklin sides heard on Vol. 5, as well as two prior Ace CDs that are completely devoted to this exceptional musician and bandleader. Along with Lowell Fulson, Jimmy possessed the insight to remain commercially relevant to black audiences for 25 years. (On the subject of Fulson, it should be mentioned that discographical reference to his sides being 'edited' by Modern is not strictly accurate, In fact, they were simply faded in for the RPM reissue 78, to omit most of intros. They are heard on Vol. 5 in their entirety).

Dave Sax, August, 2008.

With thanks and acknowledgements to John Broven, Peter Gibbon and Tony Rounce.