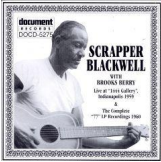


Scrapper Blackwell with Brooks Berry 1959 – 1960 (1994)

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 27 June 2013 16:16 -

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1- Introduction By Duncan Schiedt 2- E Blues (guitar Solo) 3- A Blues (guitar Solo) 4- Cold Blooded Murder (Brooks Berry, voc) @ Spotify 5- How Long Blues - No. 1 (piano solo) 6- Untitled Blues #1 (Brooks Berry, voc) @ Spotify 7- Little Boy Blues 8- My Heart Struck Sorrow (Brooks Berry, voc) @ Spotify 9- Untitled Blues #2 (Brooks Berry, voc) @ Spotify 10- Nobody Knows You When You're Down And Out 11- You're Down And Out 12- Untitled Blues #3 (guitar solo) 13- Shady Lane Blues 14- Blues Before Sunrise 15- Sally-In-The-Alley-Blues 16- Shady Lane Blues 17- E Blues (guitar solo) 18- Goin` To Jail About Her 19- Soft Blues (guitar solo) 20- No Good Woman Blues 21- Leaving You Blues 22- Blue`n Whistling (guitar solo) 23- Back Step Blues Live at 144 Gallery Indianapolis, Ind., September 20th, 1959 (1 – 13) The Complete 77 Recordings, March 31 & April 14, 1960 (14 – 23)

Like most present day blues singers, Brooksie Berry has been exposed to many traditions and absorbed varied influences, but the old country blues from the South are the backbone of her singing. She was born in March, 1915, in the country town of Sturgis, near the Ohio River in western Kentucky. As a girl she heard the blues which had drifted up along the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers from the Mississippi Delta country and recalls that the blues was the only music one could hear, with the exception of some string band dance music, outside of church; the young people would gather on some porch in the evenings and sing blues. Brooks mother taught her to play simple accompaniments on the guitar.

When she was in her middle teens Brooks moved up to Indianapolis, where she has lived ever since. She arrived in Indianapolis during that city's heyday as a blues center; Leroy Carr and Scrapper Blackwell were becoming famous as recording artists and were part of a large group of singers and musicians who could be heard at the house parties and gathering places around Indiana and Northwestern Avenues. Brooks learned the relaxed and ingrating blues that Leroy and his friends sang, blues with "that lonesome touch," as one singer put it, and these blended with the old country blues that she had grown up with, as well as with the very different jazz

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blues of the twenties that she had learned from the records of singers like Ida Cox and Bessie Smith.

Brooks met Scrapper shortly after she moved to Indianapolis and thus began a long though at times stormy friendship that was to end suddenly some fifteen months after the last of the present recordings were made. On October 6, 1962. Scrapper was shot to death in a back alley near his home. Brooks has been, during the four years I have known her, reluctant to sing blues without her friend's sensitive guitar or piano playing behind her; and she will sing less and less now that he is gone.

Brooks life has been for the most part unhappy; in recent years most of her family and many of her old friends have died. She finds it hard to make a living—the only employment she can get is occasional housekeeping, or "day work." She has very seldom had the opportunity to earn money by singing. Beset by loneliness and trouble, she remains a patient and unembittered person. Although she sings infrequently one has the feeling that her blues are a safety valve for the pressures of a hard life. Singing blues is for Brooks not a social activity or a performance for others, although it once might have been, but rather a completely internal and personal expression. She sings with her eyes shut, swaying back and forth to her music, apparently unconscious of those around her. It is a deeply moving and often slightly awkward experience to listen to her sing—one sometimes feels that he is intruding on her most private thoughts and feelings.

Brooks says that in order to sing the blues, "you have to get to studying about the blues, get the blues on your mind." This is important—her own esthetic demands that singing the Blues be a serious thing, that the emotion felt must be intense and completely engulf the singer; then the verses will fall into place and the sense of the song emerge. This is her only criterion for her own singing and for that of others. She will accept any sort of music that seems to have emotional validity 'That Ricky Nelson singing Lonesome Town, well, you can tell that boy's girl friend left him, and he got it on his mind to sing about it.' However, she dislikes flamboyant, showy singing "I despise to hear records of the blues with all that whoopin' and hollerin'!" She's aware that she has "a plain, heavy voice," and feels that it serves her purposes well.

The blues which Brooks sings were recorded during the summer of 1961, with the exception of numbers 2, 3, 4, and 5 on side A. These were recorded on portable equipment in late December, 1959, and their sound quality is poorer than that of the more recent recordings. However, Brooks has not since matched the textual richness and the emotional power of these blues, and it was felt that they had to be included. --- wirz.de

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