

## Blind Willie McTell - Last Session (1961)

Wpisany przez bluesever  
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1. *Baby, It Must Be Love* 2. *The Dying Crapshooter's Blues* 3. *Don't Forget It* 4. *Kill It Kid*  
5. *That Will Never Happen No More* 6. *Goodbye Blues* 7. *Salty Dog* 8. *Early Life* 9. *Beedle Um Bum*  
10. *A Married Man's A Fool* 11. *A To Z Blues* 12. *Wabash Cannonball* 13. *Pal Of Mine* + 14. *Kill It Kid* 15. *Broke Down Engine Blues* Blind Willie McTell - Vocals, Twelve-String Guitar

This recording has a less-than-stellar reputation, principally because it was done so late in McTell's career, and it is true that he lacks some of the edge, especially in his singing, that he showed on his other postwar recordings. On the other hand, his 12-string playing is about as nimble as ever and a real treat. McTell cut these sides for record store owner Ed Rhodes, who had begun taping local bluesmen at his shop in Atlanta in the hope of releasing some of it -- McTell took to the idea of recording only slowly, then turned up one night and played for the microphone and anyone who happened to be listening, finishing a pint of bourbon in the process -- the result was a pricelessly intimate document, some of the words slurred here and there, but brilliantly expressive and stunningly played. No apologies are needed for "The Dying Crapshooter's Blues," "Don't Forget It," or "Salty Dog," however. McTell lived a few more years but never recorded again, which is a pity because based on this tape he still had a lot to show people. Rhodes never did anything with the tapes, and might've junked them if he hadn't remembered how important the McTell material was -- they turned out to be the only tapes he saved, out of all he'd recorded. ---Bruce Eder, AllMusic Review

Recorded in 1956, this was Blind Willie McTell's last recording session before his death in 1959. 'Last Session' is a record of simple and straightforward tunes that although lacking in great melodies throughout, presents a fine example of McTell's prowess as a topical songwriter.

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Lyricaly his records have much more to offer in terms of storytelling than those of the standard bluesman – whose writing style most often relied on the crafting of simple and circular lyrical patterns that all rolled toward the payoff in the form of a hook line resolution at the end of the twelfth bar. Blind Willie did adhere to traditional patterns with his guitar playing, however his lyrics typically told a story that developed from verse to verse toward a conclusion, and herein lies the element that has come to form this man's legacy and have such an impact on future songwriters, most notably of which being Bob Dylan, The Allman Brothers Band, and The White Stripes. On 'Last Session' both 'The Dying Crapshooter's Blues' and 'A Married Man's Fool' are great examples of this quality topical songwriting.

However, although this record offers a lot lyrically, the lack of strong melodies throughout the entire album really does limit it's overall appeal. Yes we are hearing something historically interesting through Willie's stories, but that's about all there is to be taken away from this record – a history lesson. It's not a terribly enjoyable record aesthetically due to the dryness and somewhat one dimensional quality of Willie's vocal delivery, and this makes it particularly hard to sit through the whole track list and find yourself still intently listening by the end. To put a simple finger on it – there's no balance created between lyrical substance and strong melody, so instead what we are left with on 'Last Session' are a bunch of tales that may have been just as interesting if they were read out as a tuneless audiobook.

It's crushing to think of what he could have done with the hooky potential of a track like opener 'Baby It Must Be Love'. You put that tune in the hands of say Neil Young and he would have put that hook out of the ball park and the song would have gone on to live forever. However with Blind Willie's version it sounds almost like a man in a rush to belt through a few numbers and get on home from the studio and as such the hook line is completely neglected. There's also a lack of feel and personal connection to the material here that stands in contrast with much of Willie's work from the 30's and 40's. At that time he had some rag time soul and the tunes sounded less like impersonal traditional standards as they do here, and more like pieces of work coming from deep in the gut of a man who had something truly original to say.

'Last Session' was the closer to Blind Willie's fantastic musical career and it's a very interesting listen in terms of the lyric. However that's where the buck stops really. There are no individual tracks that really force their way into memorable territory, and this along with McTell's somewhat complacent sounding approach to the recording session, stands to place 'Last Session' low on the ladder when compared to much of his brilliant and influential earlier work.  
---Roland Ellis, gaslightrecords.com

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