
JULIA LEE: THE EMPRESS OF KANSAS CITY

Charles J. Haddix

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

More than any other artist, Julia Lee embodied the intemperate spirit of Kansas City jazz. A pianist, vocalist, entertainer, and composer, Julia achieved national recognition with salty, humorous songs which she referred to as "songs my mother taught me not to sing."¹ Between the years 1946 and 1949, she reached the peak of her popularity with nine of her recordings, including "King Size Papa," "Snatch and Grab It," and "Gotta Gimmie What Cha Got," ascending on Cashbox's R & B chart.² Yet to the detriment of her national career, she remained close to her musical roots in Kansas City.

Chronologically, Julia's recording career began near the dawn of the age of women blues shouters, and ended during the zenith of rock and roll. She was the first Kansas City jazz artist to record. While playing a solo engagement in Chicago in June 1923 she recorded "Waco Blues" and "Just Wait til I'm Gone" for the Okeh label. Because these sessions never were released, Ada Brown usually gets credit for being the first Kansas City jazz artist to record. With the Bennie Moten Orchestra, Ada recorded "Evil Mama Blues" for the Okeh label in September 1923.

Julia helped define and foster the growth of the Kansas City jazz style, first with her brother's band, the George E. Lee Novelty Singing Orchestra, and then with her own band, Julia Lee and Her Boy Friends. A talented vocalist and pianist with big powerful hands and a large musical repertoire, Julia's unique musical voice defies neat categorization. She performed and recorded blues, pop, rhythm and blues, boogie woogie, jump blues, jazz and toward the end of her life flirted with rock and roll. Unfortunately, her fine piano playing was not showcased owing to commercial pressures to perform and record songs with sexual double-entendre. Not that she did not enjoy performing risqué material; she lustily sang, "Julia likes her men and whiskey straight."³

Julia was born to a musical family in Kansas City, Missouri, October 31, 1902.⁴ Her father, a violinist, led a string trio and her brother George played reeds. At the age of 10, Julia studied piano with ragtime pianists Charles Williams and Scrap Harris. She attended Attucks Elementary School and graduated from Lincoln High School in 1917. Lincoln had a strong music education program begun by Major N. Clark Smith and continued under the direction of Alonzo Lewis. Students received

instruction in theory as well as performance. Some of the finest musicians in Kansas City, including Walter Page, Harlan Leonard and Charlie Parker, were alumni of the Lincoln High music program. After her graduation from Lincoln, she attended West-ern University.⁵

Julia's talents were honed in the golden age of Kansas City jazz. During the 1920s and 1930s, Kansas City was a wide open, prosperous, swinging town. Syndicated columnist Westbrook Pegler advised his readers, "If you want to see sin forget Paris, go to Kansas City." Kansas City at this time was the commercial and enter-tainment center for points west, north and south.

Mary Lou Williams recalled 50 clubs featuring jazz in a six block area between 12th and 18th streets.⁶ The clubs had floor shows at 8 pm, 10 pm, 12 am, 2 am and 4 am. Many of the clubs never closed. It has been estimated that there were between 200 and 500 clubs in Kansas City during the mid-thirties,⁷ quite an entertainment center for a town of 400,000.

All the good times were presided over by political boss Tom Pendergast, who ran the town from the Jackson County Democratic Club. Gambling, bootlegging and prostitution constituted profitable enterprises. In this environment ample jobs ex-isted for musicians during the darkest days of the depression, and Kansas City became a magnet for many of the finest musicians from the hard hit southwest.

This concentration of talent gave birth to the late night jam sessions where mu-sicians tested each other's improvisational skills. Julia Lee and Mary Lou Williams were among the handful of female musicians who held their own in these late night cutting contests.⁸

While in high school Julia played house parties with bassist Walter Page. In 1917 she began her professional career playing at Love's Theater at 24th and Vine Street. She formed a trio with her brother George in 1918; Julia was featured on piano and vocals, and George sang and played tenor and soprano saxophones, clari-net, banjo, ukulele and musical saw. In 1919 Julia married Frank Duncan, the catcher and manager of the Kansas City Monarchs baseball team, the pride of the black league. This union lasted for nine years and produced one son.

Julia doubled as an intermission pianist during a 1922 engagement at the Novelty Club where the George E. Lee Novelty Singing Orchestra played an ex-tended engagement. By the mid-twenties, this group had expanded to seven pieces with the instrumentation including trumpet, trombone, tuba, banjo, piano, drums, clarinet, and alto, tenor and baritone saxophones.

The George E. Lee Novelty Singing Orchestra recorded "Down Home Syncopated Blues" and "Meritt Stomp" in 1927 for the Meritt label, a small Kansas City, Mis-souri label owned by the Winston Holmes Music Company located at 1704 E. 18th St.⁹ Winston Holmes began his career as a piano technician for the Baldwin Piano Company in 1898 and opened his own shop that repaired Victrolas as well as pianos in 1918. During the early twenties, he expanded his inventory to include records and billed his store as the "only Negro music house in Kansas City."¹⁰ In addition to the George E. Lee band, Winston Holmes also recorded Sylvester and Lena Kimbrough with the Paul Banks Trio and a number of sermons.

As the band grew in numbers, they became more musically sophisticated and played a crucial role in the development of Kansas City jazz style, particularly after arranger Jesse Stone joined the band in 1928. By 1929 the band had grown to fourteen pieces and frequently bested the musically superior Bennie Moten Band in

battles of the bands largely because of Julia's and George's strong vocals and showmanship.

The George E. Lee Novelty Singing Orchestra recorded four selections for the Brunswick label on November 6, 1929. Two days later the band recorded two more selections, with Julia as the featured vocalist. Her vocals on "Won't You Come Over to My House" and "He's Tall, Dark, and Handsome" anticipated her most playful and suggestive later recordings for the Capitol label. The Brunswick sessions were recorded in the studio of WDAF in the Kansas City *Star* building with Winston Holmes coordinating and J. Mayo Williams supervising.¹¹ That month Brunswick also recorded two other significant Kansas City groups, Andy Kirk and the Twelve Clouds of Joy, as well as Walter Page's Blue Devils.

The February 6, 1930 issue of the *Kansas City American*, a weekly black newspaper, advertised the George E. Lee first two releases on the Brunswick label as "Hot, sweet, knock out records-both of them. Rhythm that makes you dance. Seething sentiment and golden vocal choruses by George E. Lee himself." A May 8, 1930 edition of the same weekly announced the release of the recordings featuring Julia.

Because of the Depression, these recordings did not receive much national distribution, but with the help of Winston Holmes they did sell well in Kansas City. The depression also made engagements outside of Kansas City harder to get and the band was not working enough to support all of the members, so some musicians migrated to other bands. Herman Walder and Sam "Baby" Lovett left the band in New Orleans and joined Thamon Hayes.¹²

In the fall of 1932 the Lee and Moten bands merged. The Lee-Moten Band featured three pianists: Bennie Moten, Count Basie and Julia Lee. This band played at the Harlem Club and the personnel included Herschel Evans, Buster Smith, Oran "Hot Lips" Page, and Eddie Durham. In 1933, Moten re-formed his own band and stayed at the Harlem Club. George also re-grouped and went back on the road.¹³

Because she did not like to travel, Julia split with her brother in 1934 and followed her own musical path. She worked several different venues as a solo or with a drummer. Due to the fact that she was a powerful player and left-handed, she did not really need a bassist. In 1935 she began her long tenure at Milton's Tap Room at 35th and Troost in Kansas City. During this time she renewed her association with her musical alter ego and close friend, drummer Sam "Baby" Lovett.

Julia was the consummate night club entertainer. Every club had a "kitty" for tips. The club owners paid very little, causing musicians to rely on their tip money for their income. Julia would remember the musical favorites of the big tippers and when they walked through the door she would play their song.¹⁴ Her humorous banter with Kansas City audiences was legendary; she was the most popular entertainer in town. Out of town visitors would flock to Milton's Tap Room for an evening on the town. The two most requested songs from the audience were "Two Old Maids In A Folding Bed" and "I've Got A Crush On The Fuller Brush Man." These two overtly suggestive tunes never were recorded, but they remained in Julia's repertoire for her entire career. She would perform these tunes and improvise on the lyrics making them even more risqué in return for shots of bourbon purchased by the enthusiastic audience.

On the darker side of the bright night life, the club owner, Milton Morris, had strong underworld connections. Any weekend out-of-town engagements were frowned

on by Morris, even during the height of her career when she had records climbing the national R and B charts and selling well across the country.¹⁵

In 1944, Julia renewed her recording career with the help of Dave E. Dexter, Jr. A native Kansas Citian and former editor of *Downbeat*, Dexter had been hired as a producer by Capitol Records in 1942. He returned to Kansas City to record Julia and Jay McShann for a "History of Jazz" series. He already had produced a 78 album set of Kansas City jazz for the Decca label in 1940 which sold well. Capitol Records was just a few years old, and Dexter was trying to build their catalog. Seeking to duplicate the success of the Decca "Kansas City Jazz" album, Dexter appeared at the Musicians Protective Union, Local 627, and recruited Julia, Jay McShann, Tommy Douglas, Walter Page, Baby Lovett and others. He was well acquainted with the members of the union and had written a profile of the local which was published by *Billboard* January 1, 1938. These sessions featured Julia singing on "Come Over to My House" and "Trouble in Mind." Of the four discs in the album, "Trouble in Mind" was favored by disc jockeys and received good airplay.¹⁶

During the summer of 1945 in Kansas City, Julia recorded for the Premier label, a subsidiary of Mercury records. She was accompanied on this recording date by alto saxophonist Tommy Douglas and his orchestra. One of the songs she recorded was "Sweet Lotus Blossom." Julia wanted to record it under the original title, "Sweet Marijuana," but her manager, John Tumino, suggested the alternate title.¹⁷ During this session they also recorded two original compositions by Julia, "Dream Lucky Blues" and "If It's Good."

Dave Dexter had been an admirer of Julia's since his high school days. He recognized Julia's great commercial potential, and signed her to a contract with Capitol Records in 1946. As Dexter took charge of her career, Julia travelled by train to Los Angeles in late summer. Both she and Baby Lovett were afraid of flying. There Dexter had assembled an all-star group of musicians for her, christening them her "Boy Friends." At various times, her "Boy Friends" included Benny Carter, Vic Dickenson, Red Norvo, and Red Callendar. They were so named by Dexter after the succession of men on whom Julia lavished her affection and money.¹⁸

Dexter produced all of Julia's sessions for the Capitol label. The sessions were totally improvised with Dexter selecting the musicians and the material. His choice of music included a mix of suggestive uptempo songs, blues ballads and standards like "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles" and "Until the Real Thing Comes Along." Unfortunately, Julia was not encouraged to choose her own material. But, Dexter knew the record business, and her records received good distribution and sold well. After each session with Capitol, Julia would return to her beloved Kansas City.¹⁹

Julia's first big record was "(Opportunity Knocks But Once) Snatch and Grab It." Recorded June 11, 1947, it sold over 500,000 copies nationally without any radio airplay. The commercial strength of "Snatch and Grab It" resulted from the heavy play it received on juke boxes. Even though Julia had a national hit she still remained in Kansas City, playing at Milton's on Troost. She made good money from her tips and said she would "travel if she could keep one foot on the ground."²⁰ Julia never took full advantage of the employment possibilities presented by the success of her records.

Julia returned to Los Angeles in June and November 1947 and repeated the success of "Snatch and Grab It" with "King Size Papa." It was recorded November

11, 1947 and sold 325,000 copies nationwide. This was one of her last recording dates in Los Angeles.

In the early spring of 1949, Julia embarked on a short national tour which included dates at the Apollo Theater in New York, the Regal Theater in Chicago, and the Million Dollar Theatre in Los Angeles. On March 5th, 1949 Julia and Baby Lovett played at the White House for the annual dinner of the White House Correspondents Association. Among the guests of President Harry S. Truman at the dinner were Vice-President Barkley and several Supreme Court justices. Julia sang "King Size Papa" and Baby Lovett soloed on "Anchors Aweigh."²¹

The next session Julia recorded for Capitol took place in the studios of Vic Damon in Kansas City April 20, 1949. Dave Dexter returned to record Julia and other Kansas City artists including Bus Moten, Tommy Douglas, Joshua Johnson and Charlotte Mansfield. Dexter wanted to reproduce the success that he previously had enjoyed with Julia. These sessions produced fine recordings, but they never proved as commercially successful as Julia's earlier efforts.

Julia ended her association with Milton Morris in 1950 and began a residency at the Cuban Room located across town. She continued recording sporadically for Capitol, but her records no longer sold well. Ironically, her last release for the Capitol label was "Last Call for Alcohol" recorded July 2, 1952. During this same session Julia recorded two piano performances, "Kaycee Boogie" and "Love in Bloom." They were never issued because Dave Dexter's associates at Capitol did not see their commercial potential. Julia's recording of "Love in Bloom" reveals a different musical facet of her artistry. Freed from the usual commercial considerations, she played what she wanted to play. Her introspective piano work is an aspect of her music which was never heard by the record-buying public. This proved to be her last recording session for Capitol Records.

In 1955 Julia continued her association with Vic Damon, recording "Scat You Cats" and "I Can't See How" for his Damon label in 1955. These records sold well locally but did not receive national promotion or distribution. That same year, Julia played her last out-of-town engagement, appearing with T-Bone Walker in Wichita, KS.

At this time, the music industry was changing; rock and roll was becoming popular, Julia tried to change with the times. In 1957 she appeared in a movie called "The Delinquents," produced, directed, and written by Robert Altman, who was producing industrial films in Kansas City. Her brief cameo at the beginning of the film featured her with the Bill Nolan Quintet Minus Two performing "A Porter's Love Song."²² Later that year, she recorded "Bop and Rock Lullaby" and three other selections for the Foremost label in Kansas City. Her attempt at remaining current with popular taste proved unsuccessful. Neither the movie nor the records received much national recognition.

Julia died December 8th, 1958 of a heart attack in her apartment, just a few blocks from where her career had begun 40 years earlier. She had been playing at the High-Ball Lounge on 12th St. attracting good audiences, content to be the Empress of Kansas City.

DISCOGRAPHY

Julia's early recordings for Capitol records have been in constant demand since they first were issued. Her recorded legacy has been repackaged and issued on LP and in a 45 rpm box set appropriately titled, "Party Time." These recordings eventually went out of print and are now collector items. In the last five years Julia's recordings again have been repackaged and reissued by several European record labels which contain much previously unavailable material. Much of the material reissued had been previously unavailable. These records have sparked a renewed interest in her music and career. This renewed interest in her music and life is a tribute to the unique artistry of Julia Lee and the significant contribution she made to the growth and development of the Kansas City jazz style. Several primary sources were utilized. Whenever possible the 78 rpm recordings themselves were examined. Also invaluable were the recording logs of Dave E. Dexter, Jr., who produced all of Ms. Lee's Capitol recordings. Several participants in Ms. Lee's recording sessions were interviewed, specifically Dave E. Dexter, Jr., Herman Walder, Franz Bruce, and John Tumino.

Sources used for this discography include Walter Bruyninckx, *60 Years of Recorded Jazz, 1917-1977*, (Mechelen, Belgium: n. d.), Brian Rust, *Jazz Records, 1897-1942*, (New Rochelle, NY: 1978), *The Rigler and Deutsch Record Index*, and the discographic information found with the LPs cited. Lastly, *The Capitol*, a newsletter published by the Capitol label was consulted extensively.

This listing of recordings is arranged chronologically by date. The discographic information includes: (1) artist, (2) personnel, (3) recording place and date, (4) matrix number, (5) title, (6) format, (7) label, (8) issue number, and (9) re-issue label and number. At the end of the discography is a list of LPs that are cited in the discography. If additional matrix numbers exist, they are listed directly below the primary matrix number.

JULIA LEE AND INSTRUMENTAL TRIO (1)

Julia Lee (v,p) ; Sam "Baby" Lovett (d) ; Ben Curtis (b). (2)
Kansas City, summer 1945 (3)

20240 *DREAM LUCKY BLUES*
 10" 78 Premier 29013, Mercury 8013
 12" LP Jukebox Lil JB603

JULIA LEE

Vocal with unknown accompaniment
Chicago, late June 1923

WACO BLUES
Okeh (unissued)
JUST WAIT TIL I'M GONE
Okeh (unissued)

GEORGE E. LEE AND HIS NOVELTY SINGING ORCHESTRA

George E. Lee (dir,v); Sam Utterback (t); Thurston "Sox" Moppins (tb); Clarence

"Tweedy" Taylor (ss,as,bsx); Clint Weaver (ts); Abe Price (d); Julia Lee (p,v); unknown clarinet and banjo.

Kansas City, 1927

Note: Brian Rust attributes the piano performances on the Meritt and Brunswick sessions to Jesse Stone. In fact, Julia Lee played piano on these sessions. Jesse Stone did not participate in the Meritt sessions as he did not join the band until 1928. According to Herman Walder, Julia played piano on the Brunswick sessions, with Jesse Stone providing the arrangements and conducting the band.

DOWN HOME SYNCOPATED BLUES

10" 78 Meritt 2206

12" LP Historical HLP26

MERITT STOMP

10" 78 Meritt 2206

12" LP Historical HLP26

GEORGE E. LEE AND HIS ORCHESTRA

George E. Lee (dir.,v); Sam Utterback, Harold Knox (t); Jimmy Jones (tb); Herman Walder (as,cl); Clarence "Tweedy" Taylor (as,ss,bsx); Albert "Budd" Johnson (ts); Jesse Stone (a); Charles Russo (bj); Pete Woods (d); Julia Lee (p,v).

Kansas City, November 6, 1929

KC-583 *IF I COULD BE WITH YOU ONE HOUR TONIGHT*

10" 78 Brunswick 7132

KC-584 *PASEO STRUT*

10" 78 Brunswick 7132

12" LP Time-Life STBB20

KC-585 *RUFF SCUFFLIN'*

10" 78 Brunswick 4684

KC-586 *ST. JAMES INFIRMARY*

10" 78 Brunswick 4684

12" LP IAJRC 44

JULIA LEE WITH GEORGE E. LEE'S NOVELTY SINGING ORCHESTRA

George E. Lee (dir.); Harold Knox (tp); Jimmy Jones (tb); Clarence "Tweedy" Taylor (ss,as); Albert "Budd" Johnson (ts); Jesse Stone (a); Charles Russo (bj,g); Pete Woods (d); Julia Lee (p,v).

Kansas City, November 8, 1929

KC-602 *HE'S TALL, DARK, AND HANDSOME*

10" 78 Brunswick 4761

KC-603 *WON'T YOU COME OVER TO MY HOUSE*

10" 78 Brunswick 4761

JAY McSHANN'S KANSAS CITY STOMPERS FEATURING JULIA LEE

Julia Lee (v); Oliver Todd (tp); Tommy Douglas (as); Clairborne Graves (ts); Jay McShann (p); Efferge Ware (g); Walter Page (b); Sam "Baby" Lovett (d).

Kansas City, November 1, 1944

F-346B-RE 1 *COME ON OVER TO MY HOUSE*

10" 78 Capitol 10030

12" LP Charly CRB1039

F-347B-RE 1 *TROUBLE IN MIND*

10" 78 Capitol 10030

12" LP Charly CRB1039

JULIA LEE AND TOMMY DOUGLAS' ORCHESTRA

Julia Lee (p,v); Clarence Davis (tp); Tommy Douglas (cl,as); Freddie Culliver; Harry Ferguson (ts); Effergé Ware (g); Ben Curtis (b); Sam "Baby" Lovett (d).

Kansas City, summer 1945

20237 *IF IT'S GOOD*

10" 78 Premier 29012; Mercury 8005 (Mercury matrix number 280-1)

12" LP Jukebox Lil JB614

20238 *SHOW ME MISSOURI BLUES*

10" 78 Premier 29012; Mercury 8005 (Mercury matrix number 281-1)

12" LP Jukebox Lil JB614

20239 *LOTUS BLOSSOM*

10" 78 Premium 29013; Mercury 8013 (Mercury matrix number 282-1)

12" LP Juke Box Lil JB603

JULIA LEE AND INSTRUMENTAL TRIO

Julia Lee (v,p); Sam "Baby" Lovett (d); Ben Curtis (b).

20240 *DREAM LUCKY BLUES*

10" 78 Premier 29013; Mercury 8013 (Mercury matrix number 283-1)

12" LP Jukebox Lil JB603

JULIA LEE AND HER BOYFRIENDS

Julia Lee (p,vcl); Vernon "Geechie" Smith (tp); Henry Bridges (ts); Nappy Lamare (g); Billy Hadnott (b); Sam "Baby" Lovett (d).

Los Angeles, August 23, 1946

1370-3L *LIES*

10" 78 Capitol 308

1371-1D-1 *GOTTA GIMMIE WHAT'CHA GOT*

10" 78 Capitol 308; 830

12" LP Capitol T2038; Pathé Marconi EMI 2C068-86.524; Charly CRB1039; Pausa PR9020

7" 45 Capitol F830

1369-3R *JULIA'S BLUES*

10" 78 Capitol 320

12" LP Jukebox Lil JB603

1372-4L *WHEN A WOMAN LOVES A MAN*

10" 78 Capitol 320

12" LP Jukebox Lil JB614

JULIA LEE AND HER BOYFRIENDS

Same personnel except that Leonard "Lucky" Enois replaces Lamare on guitar.
Los Angeles, September, 1946

- 1376-3R-1 *OH, MARIE!*
10" 78 Capitol 340
12" LP Jukebox Lil JB614
- 1377-4R-3 *I'LL GET ALONG SOMEHOW*
D-3
10" 78 Capitol 379; 830
12" LP Jukebox Lil JB614
7" 45 Capitol F830
- 1378-2L *A PORTER'S LOVE SONG*
10" 78 Capitol 40008
12" LP Jukebox Lil JB614
- 1379 *HAVE YOU EVER BEEN LONELY?* (unissued)

JULIA LEE AND HER BOYFRIENDS

Julia Lee (p,vcl); Karl George (tp); Dave Cavanaugh (ts); Leonard "Lucky" Enois (g);
Red Callender (b); Sam "Baby" Lovett (d).
Los Angeles, September 1946

- 1391-3L-2 *SINCE I'VE BEEN WITH YOU*
10" 78 Capitol 40008
12" LP Jukebox Lil JB614
- 1392 *OUT IN THE COLD AGAIN*
10" 78 Capitol 1896
- 1393-5R *YOUNG GIRL'S BLUES*
10" 78 Capitol 379
12" LP Jukebox Lil JB614
- 1394-3R-3 *ON MY WAY OUT*
10" 78 Capitol 340
12" LP Jukebox Lil JB614

JULIA LEE AND HER BOYFRIENDS

Julia Lee (p,vcl); Ernie Royal (tp); Dave Cavanaugh (ts); Jack Marshall (g); Harry
Babasin (b); Sam "Baby" Lovett (d).
Los Angeles, June 11, 1947

- 2042-4D2 *THERE GOES MY HEART*
10" 78 Capitol 1009
12" LP Capitol T2038; Pausa PR9020
7" 45 Capitol F1009
- 2043-3D-4 *(OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS BUT ONCE) SNATCH AND GRAB IT*
D-7
10" 78 Capitol 40028
12" LP Capitol T228, T2038; Rosetta RR1303; Charly CBR1039; Pausa
PR9020; Pathé Marconi 2CO68-86.524
7" 45 Capitol F15589

Julia Lee

- 2044-3 *IF YOU HADN'T GONE AWAY (I WOULDN'T BE WHERE I AM)*
12" LP Jukebox Lil JB603
7" 45 Capitol F1798

JULIA LEE

Julia Lee (p, vcl)

- 2045-2D-8 *NOBODY KNOWS YOU WHEN YOU'RE DOWN AND OUT*
10" 78 Capitol 1009
12" LP Charly CRB1175
7" 45 Capitol F1009

Red Callender (b) replaces Babasin and Vic Dickenson (tb) added
Los Angeles, June 13, 1947

- 2057-4 *THE CURSE OF AN ACHING HEART (unissued)*
2058-2D-9 *BLEEDING HEARTED BLUES*
10" 78 Capitol 1252
12" LP Jukebox Lil JB603
2059-2D-4 *LIVING BACKSTREET FOR YOU*
10" 78 Capitol 15300
12" LP Charly CRB1175
2060-4D-1 *WISE GUYS (YOU'RE, A WISE GUY)*
10" 78 15106
12" LP Jukebox Lil JB614

JULIA LEE AND HER BOYFRIENDS

Julia Lee (p,vcl); Bobby Sherwood (tp); Vic Dickenson (tb); Benny Carter (as); Dave Cavanaugh (ts); Red Norvo (xyl); Jack Marshall (g); Red Callender (b); Sam "Baby" Lovett (d); Joe Alexander (vcl) on *Knock Me A Kiss*.
Los Angeles, June 16, 1947

- 2061-3D-2 *MAMA DON'T ALLOW IT*
10" 78 Capitol 1589
12" LP Charly CRB1039
2062-5D-4 *DOUBTFUL BLUES*
10" 78 Capitol 40056
12" LP Jukebox Lil JB614
2063-2D-3 *AIN'T IT A CRIME*
D-2
10" 78 Captiol 838
12" LP Capitol T228; Charly CRB1175; Pathé Marconi 2C068-86.524
7" 45 Capitol F15589, F838
2064-2 *KNOCK ME A KISS*
12" LP Charly CRB1039

Red Nichols (cnt) replaces Sherwood
Los Angeles, June 18, 1947

- 2065-3D-3 *COLD-HEARTED DADDY*
D-1 10" 78 Capitol 15300
- 2066-4D-4 *MY SIN*
10" 78 Capitol 40056
12" LP Capitol T1057
- 2067-5D-7 *WHEN YOU'RE SMILING (THE WHOLE WORLD SMILES WITH YOU)*
D-4 10" 78 Capitol 40082
- 2068-3D-4 *I WAS WRONG*
D-10 10" 78 Capitol 40028
12" LP Capitol T228, T2038; Pausa PR9020; Charly CRB117;
Pathé Marconi 2C068-86.524

JULIA LEE AND HER BOYFRIENDS

Julia Lee (p,vcl); Geechie Smith (tp); Vic Dickenson (tb); Benny Carter (tb,as); Dave Cavanaugh (ts); Jack Marshall (g); Red Callender (b); Sam "Baby" Lovett (d).
Los Angeles, November 11, 1947
Note: Benny Carter played trombone on *Pagan Love Song* and *All I Ever Do Is Worry*. Bruyninx claims that "aural evidence proves" that Vic Dickenson was the trombone player. According to Dave E. Dexter, Jr. Benny Carter played the trombone on these two recordings.

- 2441-D-7 *PAGAN LOVE SONG*
10" 78 Capitol 1149
7" 45 Capitol F1149
- 2442-1D-8 *ALL I EVER DO IS WORRY*
D-2 10" 78 Capitol 15106
12" LP Jukebox Lil JB614
- 2443-4D-4 *TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT*
10" 78 Capitol 57-70006
12" LP Charly CRB1039
- 2444-3D-10 *THAT'S WHAT I LIKE*
12" LP Charly CRB1039
- 2445-4D-7 *KING SIZE PAPA*
10" 78 Capitol 40082
12" LP Capitol T228, T2038; Charly CRB1039; Pausa PR9020;
Pathé Marconi 2C068-86.524
7" 45 Capitol F15588
- 2446-2D-2 *BLUES FOR SOMEONE*
10" 78 Capitol 57-70051
- 2447-5D-7 *I'M FOREVER BLOWING BUBBLES*
10" 78 Capitol 1149
7" 45 Capitol F1149
- 2448-D-2 *BREEZE (BLOW MY BABY BACK TO ME)*
10" 78 Capitol 1589
12" LP Jukebox Lil JB614

Geechie Smith (tp) out, Billy Hadnott (b) replaces Callender
Los Angeles, November 13, 1947

- 2458-3D-1 *I DIDN'T LIKE IT THE FIRST TIME (THE SPINACH SONG)*
D-4
10" 78 Capitol 15367
12" LP Capitol T228; Stash ST107; Charly CRB1039; Pathé Marconi 2C068-86.524
7" 45 F15590
- 2460-2D-2 *CRAZY WORLD* (saxes out)
2D-4
10" 78 Capitol 15060
12" LP Capitol T2038; Pausa PR9020
- 2461-3D-11 *TELL ME, DADDY*
(6,8)
10" LP Capitol 15144
12" LP Capitol T228; Charly CRB1175; Pathé Marconi 2C068-86.524
- 2462-2D-7 *CHRISTMAS SPIRITS*
10" 78 Capitol 15203
12" LP Jukebox Lil JB614
- 2463-1D-3 *UNTIL THE REAL THING COMES ALONG* (saxes out)
D-5
10" 78 Capitol 15144
12" LP Capitol T794

JULIA LEE AND HER BOYFRIENDS

Julia Lee (p,vcl); Dave Cavanaugh (cl,ts); Jack Marshall (g); Charles Drayton (b);
Sam "Baby" Lovett (d).

Los Angeles, November 14, 1947

- 2479-2D-2 *CHARMAINE*
D-7
10" 78 Capitol 15203
12" LP Jukebox Lil JB614
- 2480-2 *SWEET MARIJUANA* (unissued)
- 2480-3 *LOTUS BLOSSOM*
10" 78 Capitol 1376
12" LP Charly CRB1175
7" 45 F1376
- 2481-2D-6 *SIT DOWN AND DRINK IT OVER*
2D-2
10" 78 Capitol 15367
- 2482-3 *AWAY FROM YOU*
12" LP Charly CRB1175
- 2483-2D-4 *THE GLORY OF LOVE*
10" 78 Capitol 57-70006
12" LP Jukebox Lil JB614

JULIA LEE AND HER BOYFRIENDS

Julia Lee (p,vcl); Tommy Douglas (ts); Jim "Daddy" Walker (g); Clint Weaver (b); Sam "Baby" Lovett (d).
Kansas City, April 20, 1949

4138-3D-2 *TONIGHT'S THE NIGHT*

10" 78 Capitol 57-70013

12" LP Capitol T228, T2038; Charly CRB1039; Pausa PR9020;

Pathé Marconi 2C068-86.524

7" 45 Capitol 54-70013

4139-2D-4 *MY MAN STANDS OUT*

10" 78 Capitol 1111

12" LP Capitol T228, T2038; Charly CRB1039; Pausa PR9020; Pathé Marconi 2C068-86.524

4140-1D-4 *DO YOU WANT IT?*

D-2

10" 78 Capitol 956

12" LP Jukebox Lil JB603

4141-1 *IT COMES IN LIKE A LION*

12" LP Charly CRB1175

Kansas City, April 21, 1949

4146-2D-4 *DON'T COME TOO SOON*

10" 78 Cap 1111

12" LP Charly CRB1039

4147-1 *UGLY PAPA*

10" 78 Capitol 1432

12" LP Jukebox Lil JB603

4148-1D-2 *DON'T SAVE IT TOO LONG (THE MONEY SONG)*

10" 78 Capitol 838

12" LP Capitol T228; Charly CRB1175; Pathé Marconi 2C068-86.524

7" 45 Capitol F15588; F838

4149-3D-2 *AFTER HOURS WALTZ*

10" 78 Capitol 57-70013

12" LP Capitol T228, T2038; Pausa PR9020; Pathé

Marconi 2C068-86.524

7" 45 54-70013

JULIA LEE AND HER BOYFIRENDS

Julia Lee (vcl,p,org); Jim "Daddy" Walker (g); Clint Weaver (b); Sam "Baby" Lovett (d).

Kansas City, April 24, 1949

4166-2D-2 *YOU AIN'T GOT IT NO MORE*

10" 78 Capitol 57-70031

12" LP Capitol T228, T2038; Rosetta RR1306; Pausa PR9020; Charly CRB1175; Pathé Marconi 2C068-86.524

7" 45 F15590

- 4167-2 *WHEN YOUR LOVER HAS GONE*
12" LP Charly CRB1175
- 4168-3D-2 *OH, CHUCK IT (IN A BUCKET)*
D-1
10" 78 Capitol 57-70031
12" LP Charly CRB1175; Jukebox Lil JB603
- 4169-1D-3 *DECENT WOMAN BLUES*
10" 78 Capitol 956
12" LP Jukebox Lil JB603
7" 45 Capitol F956
- 4170-2D-3 *DRAGGIN' MY HEART AROUND*
10" 78 Capitol 57-70051
12" LP Capitol T2038, T1057; Pausa PR9020

JULIA LEE AND HER BOYFRIENDS

Julia Lee (p,vcl); Tommy Douglas (as,ts); Gene Carter (ts); Jim "Daddy" Walker (g); Clint Weaver (b); Sam "Baby" Lovett (d).
Kansas City, July 21, 1950

- 6330-2D-3 *IT WON'T BE LONG*
D-1
10" 78 Capitol 1252
12" LP Jukebox Lil JB603
- 6331-2 *YOU'RE GONNA MISS IT*
12" LP Charly CRB1175
- 6332 *CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF THAT STUFF*
12" LP Charly CRB1039
- 6333 *WHEN A MAN HAS TWO WOMEN*
12" LP Charly CRB1175

Kansas City, July 22, 1950

- 6334 *SCREAM IN THE NIGHT*
10" 78 Capitol 1798
12" LP Jukebox Lil JB603
- 6335 *I KNOW IT'S WRONG (THE DIET SONG)*
10" 78 Capitol 1432
12" LP Jukebox Lil JB603
- 6336 *MUSIC MAESTRO PLEASE* (unissued)
- 6337 *PIPE DREAMS (UP ON CLOUD NINE)*
10" 78 Capitol 1376
7" 45 Capitol F1376

JULIA LEE AND HER BOYFRIENDS

Julia Lee (p,vcl); Elmer W. Price (tp); Clairborne Graves (ts); Franz Bruce (as); Cleophus Berry (b); William "Bill" Nolan (d).
Kansas City, July 14, 1951

- 7800-2 *WHEN JENNIE DOES THAT LOWDOWN DANCE*
 10" 78 Capitol
 12" LP Charly CRB1175
 7801 *IF I DIDN'T CARE* (unissued)
 7802 *UP THE LAZY RIVER* (unissued)
 7803 *ALL THIS BEEF AND BIG RIPE TOMATOES*
 12" LP Charly CRB1039

Julia Lee (p,vcl); "Big Bob" Dougherty (ts); James Scott (g); Clint Weaver (b); Robert Jordan (d).
 Kansas City, July 2, 1952

- 10301-3 *CAN'T GET IT OFF MY MIND* (unissued)
 10302-2 *I GOT NEWS FOR YOU*
 12" LP Charly CRB1175
 10303-1-D2 *GOIN' TO CHICAGO BLUES*
 D-1
 10" 78 Capitol 2203
 12" LP Rosetta RR1302; Jukebox Lil JB603
 10304-D-1 *LAST CALL (FOR ALCOHOL)*
 10" 78 Capitol 2203
 12" LP Capitol T228, T2038; Charly CRB1039; Pausa PR9020;
 Pathé Marconi 2C068-86.524
 10305-1 *KAYCEE BOOGIE* (p solo) (unissued)
 10306-3 *LOVE IN BLOOM* (p,b,d) (unissued)

JULIA LEE AND HER SCAT CATS

Julia Lee (p,v); "Big Bob" Dougherty (ts); Gene Carter (as); Ted Williams (g); Jack Lewis (b); Corky Jackson (d).
 Kansas City, 1954-55

- 12151-A *SCAT YOU CATS*
 10" 78 Damon 12151-A
 12" LP IAJRC 44; Jukebox Lil JB603
 12151-B *I CAN'T SEE HOW*
 10" 78 Damon 12151-B

Julia Lee (p, vcl) with "Big Bob" Dougherty band. The personnel of this group was probably similar to the personnel on the Damon session.
 Kansas City, 1956-57

KING SIZE PAPA
 12" LP Jukebox Lil JB603
 7" 45 Foremost 104
BOP AND ROCK LULLABY
 12" LP Jukebox Lil JB603
 7" 45 Foremost 104
TROUBLE IN MIND
 7" 45 Foremost 105
SATURDAY NIGHT
 7" 45 Foremost 105

LPS CITED IN JULIA LEE DISCOGRAPHY

- Lee, Julia, *Of Lions and Lambs*. Charly CRB1175.
 _____, *Party Time*. Capitol T228.
 _____, *Party Time*. Pathé Marconi 2C068-86524.
 _____, *Tonight's The Night*. Charly CRB1039.
 Lee, Julia and Her Boy Friends, *Julia Lee And Her Boy Friends*. Capitol T2038.
 _____, *Julia Lee And Her Boy Friends*. Pausa PR9020.
 _____, *A Porter's Love Song*. Jukebox Lil JB614.
 _____, *Ugly Papa*. Jukebox Lil JB603.
 Various Artists, *Big Bands*. Time Life STBB20.
 _____, *Big Mamas (Independent Women's Blues, Vol. 2)*. Rosetta 1306.
 _____, *The History of Jazz Vol. Two--The Turbulent 'Twenties*. Capitol T794.
 _____, *K. C. In The 30's*. Capitol T1057.
 _____, *Kansas City Memories*. IAJRC 44.
 _____, *Piano Singers Blues (Women Accompany Themselves)*. Rosetta RR1303.
 _____, *Red, White And Blues (Women Sing Of America)*. Rosetta RR1303.
 _____, *Territorial Bands Vol. Two 1927 - 1931*. Historical HLP26.

NOTES

- ¹ "Julia Lee, Singer, Dies," *Kansas City Star*, Dec. 8, 1958.
- ² Millar, Bill, *Ugly Papa*, Jukebox Lil, JB603, 1983.
- ³ Lee, Julia. "Can't Get Enough of That Stuff," 1950.
- ⁴ Some biographical sketches give Julia's birthplace as Booneville, Missouri. According to her death certificate and her obituary in the *Kansas City Call*, she was born in Kansas City, Missouri.
- ⁵ Pease, Sharon A. "30 Years in KC, Julia Nabs National Fame," *Downbeat*, January 15, 1947, p. 12.
- ⁶ Russell, Ross. *Jazz Style in Kansas City and the Southwest*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971, p. 8.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- ⁸ Dahl, Linda. *Stormy Weather: The Music and Lives of a Century of Jazz Women*. New York: Pantheon, 1984. p. 67.
- ⁹ Rust, Brian. *The American Record Label Book*. New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1978, p. 194. Note: Rust misspells Merritt as Merrit.
- ¹⁰ *Kansas City American* (February 6, 1930): 4.
- ¹¹ *Kansas City American* (November 7, 1929): 1, 3
- ¹² [Kansas City, Mo.] *Call* (December 12, 1958): 1.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ Interview with John Tumino, March 10, 1989.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶ Tate, Carey James. "Julia Lee: The Last of the Great Blues Singers," *Second Line* (Jan/Feb, 1960), p. 9.
- ¹⁷ Interview with John Tumino, March 10, 1989.
- ¹⁸ Interview with Dave E. Dexter, Jr., January 10, 1989.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ²⁰ Interview with John Tumino, March 10, 1989.
- ²¹ [Kansas City] *Call* (December 12, 1958): 1, 10.
- ²² *The Delinquents*. Written, produced, and directed by Robert Altman, 1957. 