



Leroy Carr & Scrapper Blackwell - Vol. 1 1928-1934 (JSP)

Leroy Carr & Scrapper Blackwell - Vol. 2 1934-1941 (JSP)

Leroy Carr (1905-35), who is best remembered for introducing his "How Long, How Long Blues," was a major blues pianist and singer during his short life. He primarily performed medium-tempo blues and blues ballads (with an occasional swing tune) during a long series of duets with guitarist Scrapper Blackwell. Carr's singing style sometimes recalls early Jimmy Rushing while his piano playing was among the most fluent and soulful of the blues-oriented pianists of the era. Leroy Carr would certainly be better known today were it not for his early death which was partly due to him being an alcoholic.

All of Leroy Carr's recordings are on this pair of four-CD sets from the British JSP label (available from MVD Distribution at [www.mvdb2b.com](http://www.mvdb2b.com)). The first box, which covers 1928-34, has the first 95 of the Carr-Blackwell duets including seven previously unreleased performances. Scrapper Blackwell, who joins Carr for a vocal duet on seven of the numbers, was a very sympathetic acoustic guitarist whose supportive playing and occasional solos fit in perfectly with Carr. While the music is best enjoyed one CD at a time, it contains plenty of highpoints and never gets tired nor loses its enthusiasm.

Vol. 2 1934-1941, in its first two discs, has the final 49 Leroy Carr recordings (15 were previously unissued), concluding with the ironic "Six Cold Feet In The Ground." Josh White guests on some of the numbers on second guitar and the last four selections feature Carr singing and playing piano unaccompanied. The remaining two CDs are a bit unusual. One has a sampling of selections by singers Bumble Bee Slim and Little Bill Gaither. They are included because both Slim and Gaither recorded tributes to Leroy Carr, they cover some of his songs, and the pianists (including Honey Hill) play in a similar style to Carr. The last disc, called Friends Of Leroy Carr 1926-1940, is a grab-bag of selections that often either influenced Carr or vice versa. Sippie Wallace (with Louis Armstrong), Roosevelt Sykes, Tampa Red, Leadbelly, Lucille Bogan, Robert Johnson and Washboard Sam are among the many greats who make appearances. Scrapper Blackwell concludes the program by singing "My Old Pal Blues" for his late friend.

Both of these superb boxes from the JSP label have the best sound quality possible and together make it possible for one to hear the complete recordings of the immortal Leroy Carr.

- Scott Yanow