

A close-up portrait of Brook Benton, a Black man with dark hair, wearing a light blue collared shirt and a yellow tie. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a gentle expression. The background is a solid, light yellow color.

JASMINE

Brook Benton

THE EARLY YEARS
1953-1959

2
CD SET

DISC 1

THE SANDMEN

1. WHEN I GROW TOO OLD TO DREAM
(*Hammerstein, Romberg*)
(OKEH 4-7052) 1955 [2:28]
2. SOMEBODY TO LOVE (*Cook*)
(OKEH 4-7052) 1955 [3:04]

BROOK BENTON AND THE SANDMEN

3. OOH (*Jones*) (OKEH 4-7058) 1955 [3:01]
4. THE KENTUCKIAN SONG (*Gordon*)
(OKEH 4-7058) 1955 [3:07]

BROOK BENTON w/ The Ray Ellis Orchestra

5. BRING ME LOVE (*Edwards, Wiltshire*)
(OKEH 4-7065) 1955 [2:16]
6. SOME OF MY BEST FRIENDS (*Gallop, Springer*)
(OKEH 4-7065) 1955 [2:38]

BROOK BENTON w/ The Leroy Kirkland Orchestra

7. LOVE MADE ME YOUR FOOL (*Blackwell, Freed*)
(EPIC 9177) 1956 [2:36]
8. GIVE ME A SIGN (EPIC 9177) 1956 [3:03]
9. THE WALL (*Diamond, Owens, Dreyer*)
(EPIC 9199) 1957 [2:45]
10. ALL MY LOVE BELONGS TO YOU (*Kirkland, McCoy*) (EPIC 9199) 1957 [2:52]

BROOK BENTON w/ The Ray Ellis Orchestra

11. ROCK 'N' ROLL THAT RHYTHM (ALL NITE LONG)
(*Curtis*) (EPIC LP LN 3573) 1959 [2:27]

BROOK BENTON w/ The Leroy Kirkland Orchestra

12. ANYTHING FOR YOU
(EPIC LP LN 3573) 1959 [2:40]
13. TELL ME (EPIC LP LN 3573) 1959 [3:10]

BROOK BENTON w/ The Ray Ellis Orchestra

14. PARTNERS FOR LIFE (*Kardon, Gordon*)
(HARMONY - COLUMBIA LP HL 7436)
recorded 1955 [2:43]

BROOK BENTON w/ The Quincy Jones Orchestra

15. CAN I HELP IT (HARMONY - COLUMBIA LP
HL 7436) recorded 1955 [2:22]

BROOK BENTON w/ The Leroy Kirkland Orchestra

16. YOU SHOULD HAVE TOLD ME (*Kirkland, Owens, McCoy*) (HARMONY - COLUMBIA LP
HL 7436) recorded 1955 [2:22]

BROOK BENTON

17. I WANNA DO EVERYTHING FOR YOU (*Otis, Benton*) (VIK 0285) 1957 [1:46]
18. COME ON, BE NICE (*Otis, Benton*)
(VIK 0285) 1957 [2:28]
19. IF ONLY I HAD KNOWN (*Otis, Benton*)
(w/ The Sounds) (VIK EP EXA 301) 1957 [2:16]
20. YOUR LOVE ALONE (*Myles*)
(VIK EP EXA 301) 1957 [2:11]
21. A MILLION MILES FROM NOWHERE (*Petty*)
(VIK 0311) 1957 BB Pop No 82 [2:37]
22. DEVOTED (*Henry, Hendricks*)
(VIK 0311) 1957 [2:22]
23. BECAUSE YOU LOVE ME (*Otis, Benton*)
(VIK 0325) 1958 [2:33]
24. CRINOLINE SKIRT (*McCoy, Kirkland*)
(VIK 0325) 1959 [2:07]
25. CRAZY IN LOVE WITH YOU (*Otis, Benton*)
(VIK 0336) 1958 [2:28]
26. I'M COMING BACK TO YOU (*Otis, Benton*)
(VIK 0336) 1958 [2:34]
27. ONLY YOUR LOVE (*Williams*)
(CAMDEN LP 564) 1959 [2:32]
28. YOU'RE FOR ME (*Benton, Colacrai*)
(CAMDEN LP 564) 1959 [2:03]
29. SENTIMENTAL DADDY-O (*Kirkland, McCoy*)
(CAMDEN LP 564) 1959 [2:30]

DISC 2

1. A DOOR THAT IS OPEN (*Williams, Brandon*)
(CAMDEN LP 564) 1959 [2:32]

THE DEMO SESSIONS recorded between 1955 and 1958 with unidentified vocal support

2. AIN'T IT GOOD [2:33]
3. ONE LOVE TOO MANY [2:06]
4. DON'T WALK AWAY FROM ME [2:50]
5. MAY I [2:53]
6. YOU'RE MOVIN' ME [2:13]
7. NOTHING IN THE WORLD [2:23]
8. NEXT STOP PARADISE [1:57]
9. KEEP ME IN MIND [2:53]
10. I'LL NEVER STOP TRYING [1:21]
11. WALKING TOGETHER [1:50]
12. WHAT A KISS WON'T DO [2:03]
13. COME ON LET'S GO [1:50]
14. MY LOVE WILL LAST [1:56]
15. COME BACK MY LOVE [2:27]
16. A LOVER'S QUESTION [2:40]
17. I'LL STOP ANYTHING I'M DOING [2:09]
18. EVERYTHING WILL BE ALRIGHT [2:21]
19. COMPLETELY [2:07]
20. THE REST OF THE WAY [2:15]
21. I'LL MEET YOU AFTER CHURCH NEXT SUNDAY
[2:16]
22. THIS BITTER EARTH [2:17]
23. LOOKING BACK [2:23]
24. MARK MY WORD [2:25]
25. DOGGONE BABY DOGGONE [1:39]
26. YOU CAN'T GET AWAY FROM ME [1:33]
27. NINETY-NINE PERCENT [2:01]
28. STEPPIN' OUT TONIGHT
(LA BREA LP L8021) [1:47]

29. A NEW LOVE (LA BREA LP L8021) [2:15]

**Brook Benton wrote tracks 2 – 29 under the
pseudonym of Willie Dixon**

THE BILL LANDFORD QUARTET

30. JESUS LOVER OF MY SOUL (*Trad*)
(RCA 20-5351) 1953 [2:46]
31. THE DEVIL IS A REAL BRIGHT BOY (*Landford,
Peay*) (RCA 20-5351) 1953 [2:21]
32. I DREAMED OF A CITY CALLED HEAVEN (*Trad.*)
(RCA 20-5459) 1953 [2:57]
33. YOU AIN'T GOT FAITH (*Trad arr O. Williams*)
(RCA 20-5459) 1953 [2:36]

**All titles composed by Brook Benton
unless otherwise indicated**

Brook Benton

Inspired by the likes of Jimmy Ricks, Ivory Joe Hunter and Percy Mayfield, the smooth, persuasive gospel-based crooning baritone of singer/songwriter Brook Benton rose to hit-making status in February 1959 with his #1 (Billboard) Mercury hit "It's just a matter of time." His writing / arranging partnership with Clyde Otis and Belford Hendricks turned out to be a match made in heaven. 25 more chart entries followed over the course of five years. But success came after ten disappointing years in the recording industry wilderness. This double CD collection is a musical chronology of his climb up to international recognition.

Brook Benton was born Benjamin Franklin Peay (pronounced Pee-a) on September 19th,

1931 in Lugoff near Camden, just north of Columbia, South Carolina. His father, Willie Peay, was a journeyman bricklayer and on weekends the choirmaster for the Camden Jubilee Singers of the Ephesus A.M.E. Church. Willie sired many children and all were required to join the junior choir when able to walk the distance to church. The Peays were very poor. Some of the children had to quit school early to support the family.

After three years of choir experience young Benny formed a pre-teen gospel quartet and sang at picnics and local Kershaw County churches. In 1943 young Benny took on occasional work. He helped out at a dairy, pressed pants and chauffeured when necessary, all the while developing his talent for songwriting and saving to better himself in New York. Pursuing his dreams he arrived in New York in 1948 and while wanting to make a success out of gospel singing hitched up with guitarist / singer Bill Landford. Landford founded the Golden Gate Quartet in Norfolk, Virginia in 1934 and sang with them for six years. Benny had tuned into their WBT radio show out of Charlotte during childhood and became an avid fan. Landford was planning on putting a similar-sounding quartet together labeled the Landfordaires and was looking for a singer who conveyed the same smoothness and texture as Gates' baritone Willie Johnson. Benny fit the bill perfectly.

As Benjamin Peay, Benny cut two sessions with the group, the first for Columbia in December 1949, the second for Victor in Nashville in May 1953. Eleven songs in all saw

national release. In between time Benny sang both with the future Drifters tenor Bill Pinkney and the unrecorded Jerusalem Stars and then Jimmy Manning and the Harlemaires (also unrecorded.) Finding it impossible to make a living singing gospel quartet, Benny took off for home for a while landing himself a truck-driving job.

By late 1953 Benny was back in New York seeking song publishers and a singing job. Adriel McDonald, ex-basso with the Ink Spots, was looking to form a secular group he was to label the Sandmen out of ex-gospel singers. Second tenor Walter Springer was taken aboard. He recommended his brother-in-law Benny, who picked up lead chores. Also included was baritone Furman Haynes who had sung in the 4 Deep Tones. The group befriended D. J. Bill Cook of "Musical Caravan" fame on Newark's WAAT. Cook was also Roy Hamilton's manager. Hamilton was contracted to Columbia's Epic subsidiary so it was only common sense for Cook to take the Sandmen to Epic.

The Sandmen were signed to a six-month contract with Columbia and recorded three songs, two of which were released on Okeh in January 1955. Benny warbled lead on the flip, "Somebody to love." The Sandmen supposedly sang background on one of Lincoln Chase's Columbia releases before being picked for backing vocals on one side of a Chuck Willis single, "I can tell," released on Okeh. It was then that Benny was singled out for label-prominence. Benjamin Peay had to go, as it might raise restroom ridicule and was replaced



with Brook Benton by Columbia's A&R man Marvin Holtzman.

The group's next Okeh outing came on the heels of the Willis session. "Ooh," a Brook Benton and the Sandmen opus, was matched with Brook's solo rendering of "The Kentuckian song," the theme from Burt Lancaster's movie in which he both starred and directed. Brook cut one final single for Okeh, now solidly established as a solo entity in 1956, then moved over to Columbia's Epic subsidiary where Brook cut two singles.

One chart, "The wall," sold promisingly enough for Epic to release an album called "Brook Benton At His Best" (Epic LN 3573) which included "The Kentuckian song," "The wall" and both his last Okeh and first Epic single. Additional material included "Rock 'n' roll that rhythm," "Anything for you," "Love made me your fool," "Some of my best friends," "Give me a sign" and "Tell me." Nine of these songs were reissued in the early 1960s on the Harmony Columbia label (HL7346) with the additions of "All my love

belongs to you." Collectors Choice (CCM-532) reissued all thirteen aforementioned cuts again on CD in 2005 with the addition of "Ooh" by Brook Benton & the Sandmen.

In late 1957 Brook's expired contract was picked up by Bob Rolontz at the RCA Vik subsidiary and put into the capable hands of A&R man Clyde Otis who was also co-writing songs with Brook at the time. Brook and Clyde's first single gave us the beautiful "I wanna do everything for you" released in July 1957. Too bad Vik threw most of their promotion money on Mickey & Sylvia's "Love makes you fall in love" as Brook's record deserved more exposure.

Then in August 1957 Vik came out with an EP (EXA 301) featuring Teddy Randazzo plus two beautiful Brook Benton ballads, "Your love alone" and "If only I had known" with The 5 Sounds, both from Brook's cameo role in the Paramount film "Mr. Rock And Roll," but nothing clicked despite on screen exposure. Vik's second singles release, "A million miles from nowhere," came out in December 1957 and fared a little better, peaking at #82 on the Billboard charts.

Brook's April and August 1958 Vik singles releases seemed to fall on deaf ears also, but he did score in the songwriting department with Clyde McPhatter's "A lover's question" and Nat King Cole's "Looking back." Just after Brook's defection to Mercury, RCA Camden released an album simply titled "Brook Benton" (CAL 564). It included Vik singles 311 and 336, "I wanna do everything for you," the two songs from "Mister Rock & Roll" plus three wonderful previously

unissued tracks, "You're for me, "Only your love" and "A door that is open."

In 2001 Taragon / BMG (1082) re-issued the entire RCA Camden CAL 564 album plus "Come on, be nice" (Mk 0285), "Crinoline skirt" and "Because you love me" (Vik 0325) plus one excellent previously unreleased chart, "Sentimental daddy-o."

It is alleged that Brook Benton sang on over five hundred demos between 1955 and 1958 but when and how they were first made commercially available is not known. Trip Records later issued 25 of these on a double album entitled "Ain't It Good." Twenty of these were reissued a second time on Brook's "Greatest Hits," a CD and (scaled down) cassette that surfaced on De Luxe Records in 1986. A number of Brook Benton budget albums were also released during the late 1950s-early 1960s on labels like La Brea, Crown and Coronet, containing songs such as "Steppin out tonight" and "A new love" (included on this collection) that were not commercially released on other labels. No information is known about these songs. They could possibly be demos or nightclub recordings.

Compiled and annotated by Opal Louis Nations
Executive Producer Bob Fisher

Transfers & Digital Processing by Giovanni Scatola
Graphic Design by Mary & Mick Ltd

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From 1959 to 1986 Brook recorded for fourteen labels in the following order: Mercury, RCA Victor (a second time), Reprise, Cotillion (where he enjoyed five charters), MGM, Brut, Stax, All Platinum, Musicor, Olde World, Polydor, HMC, Allegiance and Pair. Brook went through many transitions during his lengthy recording career, starting out with gospel and pop and moving on as styles changed into rock & roll and R&B, winding up as a beautifully polished, infectiously striking soul balladeer. Let us not forget his enormous song-writing talents that helped keep him on four squares a day during the lean years.

Weakened by spinal meningitis, Brook died of pneumonia in his hometown of Queens, New York at the age of fifty-six on April 9th, 1988.

Opal Louis Nations **August 2013**

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Brook Benton's career get
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