

## Billie Holiday – Last Recording (1959)

Written by bluesever

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## Billie Holiday – Last Recording (1959)



1. *All of You*
2. *Sometimes I'm Happy*
3. *You Took Advantage Of Me*
4. *When It's Sleepy Time Down South*
5. *There'll Be Some Changes Made*
6. *'Deed I Do*
7. *Don't Worry 'Bout Me*
8. *All The Way*
9. *Just One More Chance*
10. *It's Not For Me To Say*
11. *I'll Never Smile Again*
12. *Baby, Won't You Please Come Home*

Personnel Billie Holiday, vocals Ray Ellis, arranger & conductor Harry Edison, trumpet Joe Wilder, trumpet Al Cohn, tenor sax Danny Bank, baritone sax Billy Byers, trombone Hank Jones, piano Barry Galbraith, guitar Osie Johnson, drums Milt Hinton, bass

Last Recordings, originally titled Billie Holiday before her death, is the last album of Billie Holiday released in 1959. After the success of her album, *Lady in Satin* (1958), Billie Holiday wanted to record another album with arranger Ray Ellis. Ellis had switched from Columbia to MGM, so Billie switched labels also to avoid breaching her contract with Columbia. When she returned to the studio in March 1959, jazz critic and friend of Holiday's Leonard Feather, said Holiday "walked into the studio statuesque and sharp as ever."

Unlike *Lady In Satin*, Billie Holiday had a lighter string orchestra, minus the choir, and more horns, including a saxophone and a more jazz like feeling. It also demand less fanfare. Songs like "All of You", "'Deed I Do", and "Baby Won't You Please Come Home" have a lighter and

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happier tempo and do not include strings. Holiday told Ellis she wanted to “sound like Sinatra” on this album; but she was in such poor health from years of difficulty and substance abuse that a nurse sometimes had to help keep her propped up on a high stool as she sang.

During the time of recording Billie Holiday, Holiday's health was taking its toll. Some say that she did not look like herself at all, and looked like a ghost of what she once was. In the song "There'll Be Some Changes Made", Holiday replaces the name Jack Benny in the lyric "Even Jack Benny has been changin' his jokes" to Frank Sinatra, her jazz friend. The album was completed on March 11, 1959. Four days later, Billie Holiday's lifelong friend and music partner Lester Young died on March 15, 1959. She would die four months later on July 17, 1959 at the age of 44. Allmusic music critic Ron Wynn gave the album one and half stars out of five stating, "In many ways, a sad event... It's poignant in a tragic way."

By 1959, use of hard drugs and alcohol had taken their toll on Holiday's voice . It is evident that her voice had deteriorated since her previous album Lady In Satin. Producer and arranger Ray Ellis said that the producers "accidentally" adjusted the speed at 1/4 pitch faster in the studio making Holiday's voice high pitched in some songs like "You Took Advantage of Me".

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