

The Mystery Of The Modern 78rpm 20-673 Release Of Gold Star 640 – ‘Tim Moore’s Farm’

By Chris Strachwitz



Bill Quinn, circa 1960. Courtesy Chris Strachwitz and (c) Arhoolie Foundation.

This truly remarkable and very emotional recording made by Sam ‘Lightnin’ Hopkins, circa September 1948 for Bill Quinn’s Gold Star label, was licensed for wider distribution by Bill Quinn to the Bihari Brothers for release on their Modern label. The Biharis had already issued quite a number of previous Gold Star recordings by Lightning Hopkins on Modern. After asking a few collectors if they had this disc or even seen it, their answer was always, no!

So I called Frank Scott, who helped me put my search out to the Facebook site, ‘Real Blues Forum’. Only one positive reply came back: from Barrett Hansen, better known as Dr. Demento! In order to get Barry’s phone number, Frank suggested I call Mary Katherine Aldin, who gave me his number!

I had known Barry as a record collector and Arhoolie fan since the early 1960s and he told me, yes he found that Modern 78 at a Salvation Army store (or similar) around 1960 or 1961 where he saw a pile of Modern 78s in fine shape (Probably contributed by a local juke box man?). Barry looked through them – but found only one by Lightning Hopkins which he bought and it was this one! He bought it while attending Reed College in Portland!

In the meantime, Frank Scott found and sent me copies of the attached cuttings from *Billboard*. Keep in mind that at that time juke box operators were the prime distributors for Race records. I believe that this, the first mention of ‘Tim Moore’s Farm’ and as number thirteen and without a catalogue number, was probably a paid ‘commercial’ to test potential interest in this item.

Bill Quinn had told me that he would usually send out samples of new releases to his prime juke box operators to check if they might want it for their juke boxes in black neighbourhoods. When Bill issued Gold Star 671, ‘Jazz Blues’, for example, he heard right back from one who told him that the record had a bad hum and that he could not use it! So no further copies were pressed – causing the item to be one of the very rare ones! Judging by the second mention in *Billboard* I feel that it was rejected by Modern for unknown reasons, but we might ask ourselves, why was the title suddenly changed to Tom Moore and potential operators were referred back to Gold Star as the source of this disc? Possible liabilities?

One further mystery about the matrix number of this and all further pressings of the Gold Star release and the Modern disc is this: The first pressing on the yellow and red label with the phrase ‘King Of The Hillbillies’ has the word QUINN as well as the release # 640-A engraved into the out grooves of the disc. But all subsequent releases on the other two coloured Gold Star labels, as well as the Modern disc, have the following in the out grooves, (WQ)!

All these pressings also seem to have some noticeable surface noise, except for the final Gold Star pressing made by Research Craft (the name is engraved in the run-out grooves), which sounds to my ears very clean and is pressed on newly invented vinyl! Here again, Bill mentioned to me that in his early days he had a hard time getting shellac for his pressings and he would hold ‘biscuit days’ when people would stop by and bring him a stack of old assorted 78s which he would grind up and use for new (but often noisy discs), and then give them one of his latest ‘hits’ in exchange!

We can only guess how this new stamper was created. Many small labels at that time processed the original acetate recording by the so called two step method whereby the first master off the original acetate was also used as a metal stamper for pressing. Once that stamper was worn out or damaged it meant the end of making more copies of that record! Unless the original acetate had been copied!

Most bigger labels used the three step method: Original acetate recording goes into the tank and out comes the metal Master which is then put into the tank for a metal Mother from which you can produce many Stampers!

After I spoke with Barry Hansen he kindly agreed to sell and send me this Modern 78. The label image of this 78 seen on the amazing discographic web site produced by Stefan Wirz in Germany came to him many years ago from a German record collector! As I was putting all my 78s of this song back in my files, I actually discovered that I had an E+ copy of this Modern disc all along – but I had it filed differently!

Special thanks to Roger Armstrong (Ace Records), Bruce Bastin, Chris Bentley, Jesse Birdsall, Alan Govenar, Bill Greensmith, Victor Pearlin, Frank Scott and Mary Katherine Aldin and Barry Hansen.

JOHNNY LONG cut eight sides for Signature this week, his first waxings since the ban. . . Jubilee Records pacted **JOYA SHERRILL**, ex-Ellington thrush. . . Modern Records has taken over the **LIGHTNING HOPKINS** “Tom Moore’s Farm,” for distributing in the East. The side, a sleeper in the South, is on Gold Star. . . **ENOCH LIGHT** plays the Columbia junior prom at the Biltmore Friday (23), . . . National Records

From *Billboard*, 1949. Above: 26th December. Below: 2nd December. Both Courtesy Frank Scott.

MOST-PLAYED JUKE BOX RACE RECORDS			
Records listed are race records most played in juke boxes according to The <i>Billboard</i> 's special weekly survey among a selected group of juke box operators whose locations require race records.			
POSITION	Weeks Last (This)	Week / Week	RECORDS
13	2	1.	BEWILDEREDRed Miller Trio
8	—	2.	BEWILDEREDA. Milburn.....Bullet 296—ASCAP
12	1	3.	CHICKEN SHACK BOOGIE...A. Milburn.....Aladdin 3018-Monogram 105—ASCAP
2	—	4.	BOOGIE CHILLEN.....J. L. Hooker.....Modern 627
9	8	5.	A LITTLE BIRD TOLD ME...P. Watson.....Modern 627
6	8	6.	TEXAS HOP.....Supreme 5-1507—ASCAP
2	11	7.	HUCKLEBUCK.....F. Williams.....Modern 643
22	—	8.	CORN BREAD.....Hal Singer Seattle.....Savoy 683
1	—	9.	GET YOURSELF ANOTHER POOL.....C. Brown.....Aladdin 3020
10	—	10.	PLEASING YOU.....L. Johnson.....King 4245—BMI
3	4	11.	DEACON'S HOP.....Big Jay McNeely.....Savoy 683
6	13	12.	WRAPPED UP IN A DREAM.....Do, Ray and Ma.....Commodore C-7505—ASCAP
1	—	13.	TIM MOORE'S FARM.....L. Hopkins.....Modern
9	—	14.	BLUES FOR THE RED BOY...Todd Rhodes.....King 4240
3	2	15.	TREESA. Hibbler.....Miracle M-501—ASCAP