

Damita Jo DuBlanc

Damita Jo DuBlanc was born in Austin, Texas on August 5, 1930. In her teens, she decided to take advantage of her unique vocal talents and pursue a career in music, shortening her name to Damita Jo professionally. After relocating to California, in 1949 the ground-breaking disc jockey Joe Adams helped her secure a residency at the Club Oasis in Los Angeles, where she quickly became a popular act. Adams opened doors for DuBlanc at Discovery Records, when he was hired to run their fledgling R & B division. He signed the young singer, and in 1950 produced her debut single "Until the Real Thing Comes Along," backed with a cover of Laurie Tate's R & B hit "Anytime, Anyplace, Anywhere." DuBlanc returned to the Club Oasis, backed by Count Basie's sextet, and also performed at the renowned Downbeat Club.

Discovery Records went out of business not long after releasing DuBlanc's single, and while continuing her well-received live appearances, she

sought for another recording opportunity. In 1951, she recorded "How Can I Live" for the Recorded In Hollywood label, and the label followed that release with a song recorded at an earlier session called "You Took My Heart." Neither singles met with much chart success, but DuBlanc persevered, joining popular and respected R & B combo Steve Gibson & the Red Caps for a two week residency at New Jersey's Riviera Club in 1951. This partnership sparked and RCA Victor to record them doing a cover of Bette McLaurin's "I May Hate Myself In The Morning," but the label paired her with tenor saxophonist and blues shouter Big John Greer on a recording called "Lonesome And Blue."

DuBlanc's partnership with Gibson didn't end – she rejoined the Red Caps, performing from coast to coast. She was the featured vocalist on the Red Caps' 1952 hit "I Went to Your Wedding," and two years later became Gibson's wife. After five years of marriage, with the Red Caps popularity on the wane, DuBlanc left her marriage and the group.



Hitmaker Shelby Singleton soon signed DuBlanc to Mercury Records as a solo artist, and produced her recording of the Steve Allen song "It Takes a Little Loneliness." Mercury released it as her debut single, promoting it, and her, by having her be a musical guest on Allen's popular television show. Although that single was not a hit, her next efforts were enormous successes. The first was an answer song, written by Doc Pomus and Mort Shuman in response to their own classic "Save the Last Dance for Me." "I'll Save the Last Dance for You" enjoyed more than two months in the R&B charts, cracking the top twenty. In mid-1961 they followed that with another answer song, this one a response to Ben E. King's "Stand by Me." "I'll Be There," crossed over to the pop charts, landing at a very respectable number twelve. Her subsequent efforts were not as successful, and in 1962, Mercury terminated her contact.

DuBlanc made a few more recordings, for Epic Records and the Ranwood label, but after 1968, focused her talents and energies on live performance. She began performing comedy sketches, as well as her music, and throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, she toured and performed with such luminaries as Redd Foxx, Ray Charles, Count Basie, Lionel Hampton, and Joey Bishop.

Despite her enduring popularity as a live performer, in 1984, DuBlanc dedicated herself and her career to religion. She performed gospel music only for the rest of career, performing regularly until respiratory illness forced her to retire. Damita Jo DuBlanc died on Christmas Day, 1998 at the age of 68.