

MILTON BROWN BIO

Milton Brown (7 September 1903 - 13 April 1936, Crystal Springs, Texas) born in Stephenville, Texas was a band leader and vocalist who was one of the founders of Western swing. While selling tobacco and singing in amateur groups, he joined Bob Wills and Herman Arnsperger in forming the group that became the Light Crust Doughboys in 1931, when Burrus Mill and Elevator Company, makers of Light Crust Flour, took over sponsorship of their radio show. In 1932, in need of additional money to support his aging parents, he left the Doughboys and organized Milton Brown and His Musical Brownies in Fort Worth, Texas. This was the first actual Western Swing band in that it had a standup bass, jazz piano by the gifted Fred "Papa" Calhoun, tenor banjo and twin fiddles. From 1934 to 1936, this band produced more than 100 recordings for Victor and Decca, maintained a very busy live appearance schedule throughout the North Texas region and broadcast a weekly radio show. He and Bob Wills remained friends, and Wills's original Waco-based band the Playboys were modeled on the Brownies.

In addition to their pioneering instrumental lineup, Brown and his musicians were responsible for numerous innovations, notably the introduction of electrified steel guitar. Bob Dunn, a skilled jazz guitarist who first heard electric steel guitar played by a blues performer on the Coney Island boardwalk, pioneered the instrument's use in Country and Western music, singlehandedly creating Country's most notable solo instrumental sound. "Taking Off" and "Cheesy Breeze" are excellent examples of his Jack Teagarden-inspired soloing.

In April of 1936, Brown had a major car accident, which may be attributable to his habitual falling asleep at inopportune times, possibly narcolepsy. Although he survived the impact and was expected to recover, he died from pneumonia five days after the crash at the height of his popularity. Following Milton's death, his brother guitarist Durwood Brown kept the Musical Brownies together for two years, recording a dozen sides for Decca in 1937.

(<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/MM/xgm1.html>

http://www.geocities.com/shakin_stacks/miltonbrown.txt

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milton_Brown)