

= Dust My Broom =

" Dust My Broom " is a blues song originally recorded as " I Believe I 'll Dust My Broom " by American blues artist Robert Johnson in 1936 . It is a solo performance in the Delta blues @-@ style with Johnson 's vocal accompanied by his acoustic guitar . As with many of his songs , it is based on earlier blues songs , the earliest of which has been identified as " I Believe I 'll Make a Change " , recorded by the Sparks brothers as " Pinetop and Lindberg " in 1932 . Johnson 's guitar work features an early use of a boogie rhythm pattern , which is seen as a major innovation , as well as a repeating triplets figure . " I Believe I 'll Dust My Broom " was issued before blues records were tracked by recording industry trade publications and , as with most of Johnson 's recordings , has not been otherwise identified as a big seller at the time .

However , Elmore James ' 1951 recording as " Dust My Broom " " made it the classic as we know it " , according to blues historian Gerard Herzhaft . James ' slide guitar adaptation of Johnson 's triplet figure has been identified as one of the most famous blues guitar riffs and has inspired many rock performers . The song has become a blues standard , with numerous renditions by a variety of musicians . It also has been selected for the Blues Foundation Blues Hall of Fame , the Grammy Hall of Fame , and the Library of Congress ' National Recording Registry .

= = Earlier songs = =

Elements of " Dust My Broom " have been traced back to several earlier blues songs . Blues researcher @-@ writer Edward Komara has suggested that Johnson may have begun developing his version as early as 1933 . The Sparks brothers ' 1932 recording of " I Believe I 'll Make A Change " and Jack Kelly 's " Believe I 'll Go Back Home " in 1933 both use a similar melody and lyrics . Some verses are also found in Carl Rafferty 's 1933 " Mr. Carl 's Blues " :

Kokomo Arnold , whose " Old Original Kokomo Blues " served as the basis for Johnson 's " Sweet Home Chicago " , recorded two songs with similar lines , " Sagefield Woman Blues " in 1934 :  
and " Sissy Man Blues " in 1935 :

The melody that Johnson uses is also found in 1934 recordings of " I Believe I 'll Make a Change " by Leroy Carr and Josh White .

= = Lyrics and interpretation = =

Johnson 's " I Believe I 'll Dust My Broom " combines lyrics , also identified as " floating verses " , from the earlier songs and adds two new verses of his own . Music historian Elijah Wald calls the result " a more cohesive lyric than either of the Arnold pieces [ and ] concentrates on the theme of traveling , and being away from the girl he loves " . Attempts have been made to read a hoodoo significance into the phrase " dust my broom " . However , bluesman Big Joe Williams , who knew Johnson and was familiar with folk magic , explained it as " leaving for good ... I 'm putting you down , I won 't be back no more " . Music writer Ted Gioia also likens the phrase to the biblical passages about shaking the dust from the feet and symbolizing " the rambling ways of the blues musician " :

While Johnson is disillusioned with one woman , he also yearns for another :

The last verse shows Johnson 's unusual use of geographical references . These are taken from topical events , including the Second Italo @-@ Ethiopian War , the Japanese invasion of Manchuria , and the creation of the Commonwealth of the Philippines . However , their use in Johnson 's song is seen as escapism by music writer Greil Marcus . Music writer Thomas Beebee notes that while the world of many blues listeners was limited to the Mississippi Delta ,

The last stanza of the song raises the stakes , exploding into a fantastic geography ? the singer 's voice trails a bit behind the guitar line here , as if burdened by the imaginative leap involved ... Mixed with all the bitterness , after all , is a geographic expansiveness that suddenly stretches the thirty miles of Arkansas backroads into a trip around the world .

" Sweet Home Chicago " ( the next song Johnson recorded ) includes the refrain " Back to the land of California , to my sweet home Chicago " . Comparing the two , Marcus comments , " ' Chicago '

functioned in the lyric as a place as distant as ' the Philippine Islands ' ; ' California ' was a place as mythical as ' Ethiopia ' " .

= = Recording and composition = =

" I Believe I 'll Dust My Broom " was recorded by Johnson during his first recording session on November 23 , 1936 . The recording took place in a makeshift studio in Room 414 at the Gunter Hotel in San Antonio , Texas , and was produced by Art Satherley and Don Law . It was the second song that Johnson recorded and followed " Kind Hearted Woman Blues " . As with most of his recordings , it appears that a second take of the song was recorded and assigned a reference number . Stephen LaVere , who manages Johnson 's recording legacy , notes that this take , along with several others , " remain [ s ] unfound , if ever issued ; destroyed after being recorded ( if ever ) ; or otherwise unknown to collectors " .

Johnson recorded the song as an upbeat boogie shuffle . As with several other Johnson songs and typical of Delta blues from the era , he does not adhere to a strict twelve @-@ bar blues structure , but rather varies the timing to suit his whim . The song is performed in the key of E at a moderate tempo of 100 ? 105 beats per minute . Unlike some of the earlier songs that influenced Johnson , " I Believe I 'll Dust My Broom " does not feature a bottleneck or slide guitar . Instead , Johnson employs a fingerstyle guitar in which melodic lines are played against a driving bass boogie figure , creating an effect similar to the then popular combination of piano and guitar accompaniment . Wald has identified the use of the boogie bass line , adapted for guitar from the piano boogie style , as a major innovation by Johnson , although it had been used in a 1935 recording by Johnny Temple , titled " Lead Pencil Blues ( It Just Won 't Write ) " . To facilitate his fingerpicking style , Johnson also used an open tuning . Komara describes it as a modified open @-@ A tuning with the fifth string retuned from A to B , giving a new tuning of E ? B ? E ? A ? C ? ? E or a standard open E tuning of E ? B ? E ? G ? ? B ? E .

The song also features Johnson 's use of a repeating guitar figure consisting of fast high @-@ note triplets . This riff came to define the song , although Johnson also used it in several other of his songs , including a slide version for " Ramblin ' on My Mind " .

= = Releases = =

" I Believe I 'll Dust My Broom " was released in 1937 by three related record companies : Vocalion Records ( using catalogue number 03475 ) , ARC ( no . 7 @-@ 02 @-@ 81 ) , and Conqueror Records ( no . 8871 ) . These were issued on the then standard ten @-@ inch 78 rpm record , backed with Johnson 's " Dead Shrimp Blues " . The single was Johnson 's third record of eleven released during his lifetime .

As one of three Johnson songs to become early blues standards , Wald questions why " I Believe I 'll Dust My Broom " was not included on the first reissue of his recordings , the King of the Delta Blues Singers album released by Columbia in 1961 . Authors Pearson and McCulloch note that its place on the album " would have connected Johnson to the rightful inheritors of his musical ideas ? big @-@ city African American artists whose high @-@ powered , electrically amplified blues remained solidly in touch with Johnson 's musical legacy " . In 1970 , the song was included on Columbia 's second Johnson compilation , King of the Delta Blues Singers , Vol . II , in 1990 , on the The Complete Recordings box set , and on several compilation albums .

= = Elmore James renditions = =

= = = Background = = =

" Dust My Broom " was one of the earliest songs Elmore James performed regularly while he was still living in the Mississippi Delta in the late 1930s . Blues historian Ray Topping has suggested that

James may have encountered Robert Johnson during this time , when he learned how to play the song . James often performed with Aleck Rice Miller , better known as Sonny Boy Williamson II as a duo . However , his music career was interrupted by a stint in the U.S. Navy during World War II . After his discharge , he again joined up with Williamson , who regularly performed on radio . In January 1951 , Williamson was offered the opportunity to record some songs for Trumpet Records , where , by one account , he was accompanied by James . In August , the duo auditioned " Dust My Broom " for Trumpet owner Lillian McMurry , who signed James to a recording contract . Meanwhile , two versions of " Dust My Broom " were recorded ? Arthur " Big Boy " Crudup in 1949 and Robert Lockwood in 1951 . Neither rendition appeared in the record charts .

= = = Recording and composition = = =

On August 5 , 1951 , after a Sonny Boy Williamson II recording session , Elmore James recorded " Dust My Broom " at Ivan Scott 's Radio Service Studio in Jackson , Mississippi . James , who provided the vocals and amplified slide guitar , is accompanied by Williamson on harmonica , Leonard Ware on bass , and Frock O 'Dell on drums . The recording studio had not made the transition to tape technology , so the group was recorded direct @-@ to @-@ disc using one microphone . It was the only song recorded by James ; Trumpet 's McMurray felt that his other songs were not suitable for recording . However , Williamson and James ' cousin , Homesick James , later claimed that McMurray secretly taped the performance and that Elmore was so upset that he was unable to record a B @-@ side . McMurray denied this and presented a check made out to and endorsed by James the day before the session to show his knowledge of and agreement to participate in the recording .

To record his song , Elmore James used Robert Johnson 's first four verses and concluded with one similar to that found in Arthur Crudup 's 1949 recording :

James ' song also followed Johnson 's melody , key , and tempo , but adhered more closely to the chord changes of a typical twelve @-@ bar blues . However , according to musicologist Robert Palmer , he " transformed what had been a brisk country blues into a rocking , heavily amplified shuffle " . Besides the backing musicians , the most notable addition to the song is James ' overdriven slide guitar , which plays the repeating triplet figure and adds a twelve @-@ bar solo after the fifth verse . Compared to Johnson guitar work , Gioia describes them as " more insistent , firing out a machine @-@ gun triplet beat that would become a defining sound of the early rockers " . His use of vibrato with the slide has been called as " his distinctive jangling guitar style " by musicologist Charlie Gillett . Music critic Cub Koda notes that , in James ' hands , " this may be the most famous blues riff of all time , [ n ] ext to the four @-@ note intro of Bo Diddley 's ' I 'm a Man ' " .

= = = Releases and charts = = =

Elmore James never recorded any more of his own material for Trumpet , although he later appeared as a sideman . McMurray , who was unaware of prior recordings of the song , arranged to copyright " Dust My Broom " in James ' name and subsequently issued the single , with a rendition of " Catfish Blues " by Bobo Thomas as the B @-@ side . Both songs listed the performer as " Elmo James " , although James does not perform with Thomas . Regional record charts show that " Dust My Broom " gradually gained popularity in different parts of the U.S. It eventually entered Billboard magazine 's national Top R & B singles chart April 5 , 1952 and peaked at number nine . In 1955 , after the release of an updated version by another record label , McMurray leased the recording to Ace Records , who re @-@ released it . Jewel Records also re @-@ released the original Trumpet recording as a single in 1965 .

Since it was originally released by Trumpet , the original recording does not appear on many of James ' early compilation albums by Crown / Kent . However , it is included on King Biscuit Time , a Sonny Boy Williamson II collection by Arhoolie Records , and a James box set , The Early Classic Recordings 1951 ? 1956 . The versions of " Dust My Broom " that appear on many Fire / Fury /

Enjoy / Sphere / Sue compilations , such as King of the Slide Guitar , were recorded during his first session in Chicago in 1959 and last session in New York in late @-@ 1962 or early @-@ 1963 . These later renditions do not include harmonica , but have piano accompaniment .

= = = Derivatives and " Dust My Blues " = = =

The success of the single by the relatively small Trumpet Records led other record companies to pursue James in the hope of landing his follow @-@ up singles . Joe Bihari , who owned Los Angeles @-@ based Modern Records with his brothers , and his talent scout Ike Turner were one of the first . A later session in Chicago produced " I Believe " , a " Dust My Broom " knockoff , that became a number nine charting single and the first issued on the new Modern subsidiary Meteor Records in 1953 . Being able to score two hits within a year with essentially the same song by the same artist prompted record companies to exploit it as much as possible . Thus , many re @-@ workings of " Dust My Broom " with small variations were recorded by James for different record labels during his career .

In 1955 , Flair Records , another Bihari label , issued a reworking of the song titled " Dust My Blues " ( catalogue no . 1074 ) . Recorded in New Orleans at Cosimo Matassa 's J & M Studios , James was backed by veteran New Orleans musicians , including bassist Frank Fields , drummer Earl Palmer , and pianist Edward Frank . Topping calls it " a powerful reincarnation of the old broom theme " and Gillett adds that it is " a fine hard driving song " . " Dust My Blues " is perhaps the definitive re @-@ recording of the James ' original , with an updated accompaniment . It appeared in some regional charts when the single was reissued in the 1960s . Following the 1964 UK release of " Dust My Blues " , James ' slide guitar sound was adapted by many British blues @-@ oriented guitarists .

= = = Recognition = = =

Elmore James ' " Dust My Broom " was inducted into the Blues Foundation Blues Hall of Fame in 1983 ; Jim O 'Neal that it received more votes than any other record in the first year of balloting for singles . His song was also inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 1998 . In 2003 , the original 1951 Trumpet recording was selected for preservation in the U.S. Library of Congress ' National Recording Registry , which commented " James is known to have tinkered with his guitar pickups and fans still argue about how he achieved his signature sound . Whatever combination of guitar and pickup was used in his slide guitar opening , Elmore James created the most recognizable guitar riff in the history of the blues " .