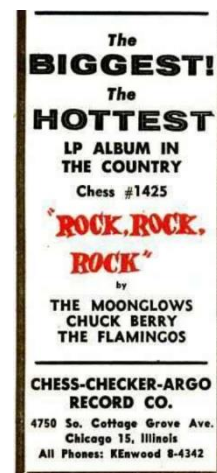
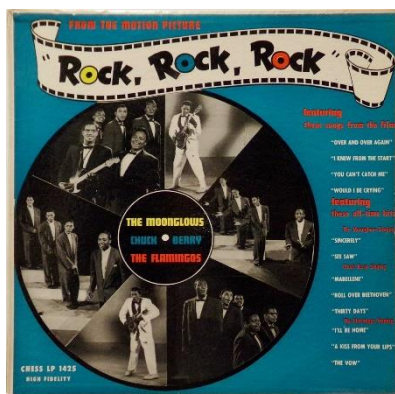


Early Chess Albums:

1956 to 1959

by Frank Daniels





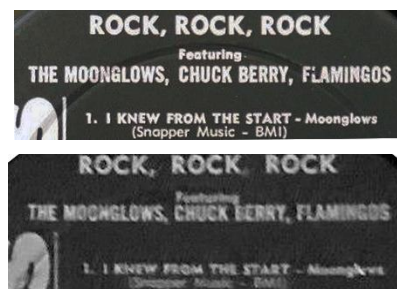
Soundtrack

First Appearance in Trades:

Rock, Rock, Rock

BB December 15, 1956

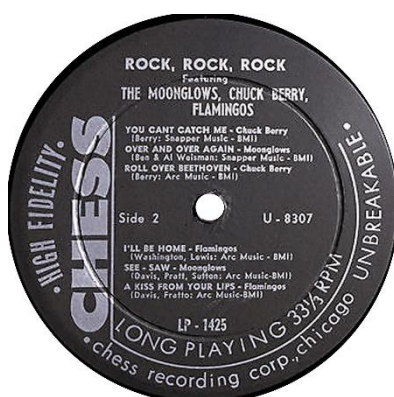
LP-1425



The labels from pressing plant A have the catalog number in wide, bold print at the bottom. The authors' names do not appear on the label. Neither side numbers nor master numbers appear on the label. Some copies (A1) have little space under the LP title, and little space above the first song on each side. Other copies (A2) have blank space separating the album title from the artists' names, and blank space above the song titles. Still other copies (A3) have even more space above the song titles.

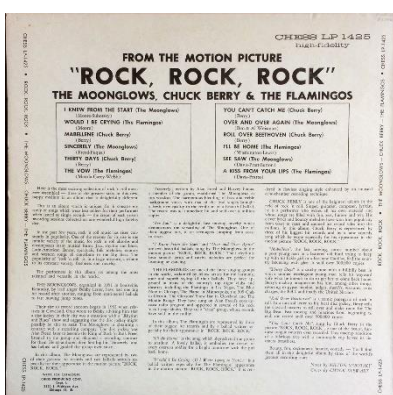
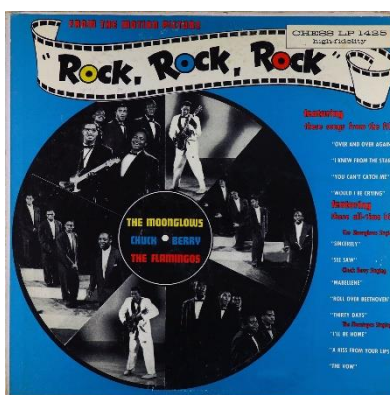
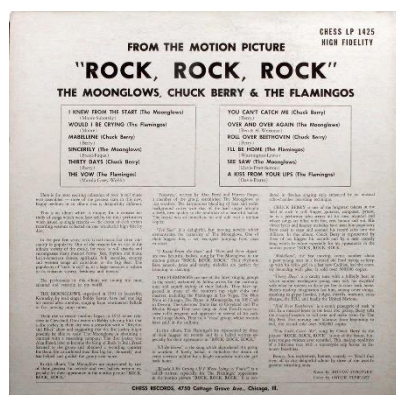


The labels from pressing plant B have the catalog number in narrow print at the bottom. The authors' names, side numbers, and master numbers all appear on the label, but the songs are not numbered. The first copies (B1) mistakenly list the author of "I Knew from the Start" as Moore and credit "Would I Be Lying" to Moore and Subotsky.

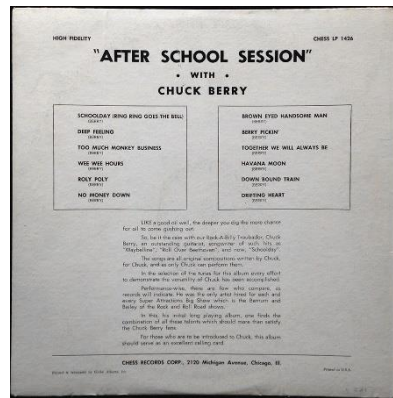
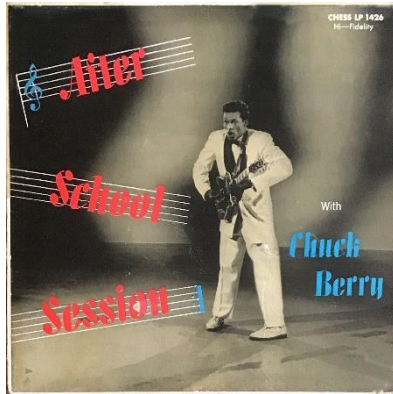


The second labels from pressing plant B correctly credit "I Knew from the Start" to Moore and Subotsky, and credit "Would I Be Lying" to Moore. Some copies (B2) have the Side information closer to the song title below, while others (B3) have it closer to the line above.

The original front cover design (fc1, shown above) indicated the LP number and "High Fidelity" in the lower left corner. The original back cover design (bc1, also above) only reads "HIGH FIDELITY" in the upper right corner. Second copies of the back cover (bc2) add "Chess LP 1425" to the upper right corner and have a line above the address at the bottom. Later front covers (fc2) have the catalog number and "high fidelity" in a box in the upper right corner, similar in design to the albums that were released from mid-summer 1958 onward. The back cover that properly accompanies front cover fc2 has a similar design (bc3). However, the cover manufacturers seem to have had plenty of front and back cover slicks in stock when they decided to change the design. Therefore, front and back covers appear mismatched in just every configuration possible.



. . . Each week something new is added to the impressive, soon to be moved into quarters of Chess/Checker. This week California redwood trim was added and Phil Chess was there to supervise installation. Along with the trim Chess released a new Chuck Berry LP entitled "After School Session". "This thing just has to be a hit", predicts the very excited Chess. . . .



Chuck Berry

First Appearance in Trades:

After School Session

CB May 11, 1957

LP-1426



The labels from both pressing plants show the album title as *Afterschool Session* instead of *After School Session*; they also (correctly) give the title to the first song on side 1 as "School Day" – the cover reads "Schoolday." Copies from pressing plant A have the catalog number in wide, bold print at the bottom. The master numbers appear under the catalog number.



The labels from pressing plant B have the catalog number in narrow print at the bottom. The master numbers appear on the label in wide print. The publishing society BMI is shown as "B M I."



1. SCHOOL DAY
(Ring! Ring! Goes The Bell)
(Arc Music - BMI)
2. DEEP FEELING (Arc Music - BMI)
3. TOO MUCH MONKEY BUSINESS
(Arc Music - BMI)

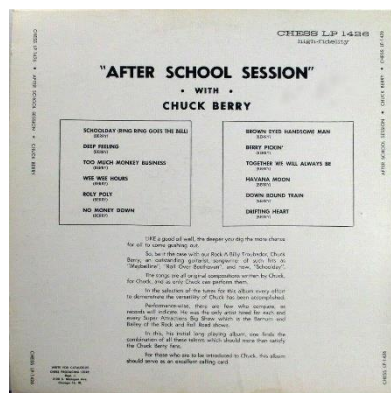
1. BROWN EYED HANDSOME MAN
(Arc Music - BMI)
2. BERRY PICKIN' (Arc Music - BMI)
3. TOGETHER (We Will Always Be)
(Arc Music - BMI)

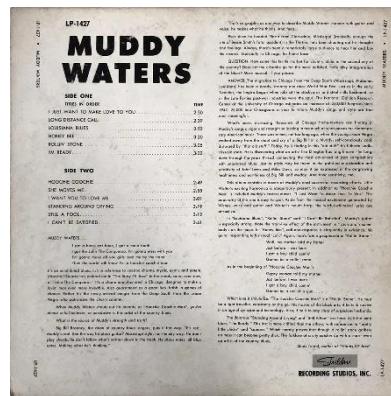
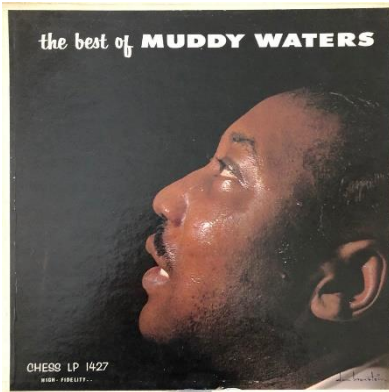
The labels from pressing plant C have the catalog number in narrow print at the bottom. The master numbers appear on the label in the same narrow print as the catalog number. The publishing society BMI is shown as "BMI." First copies with this label (C1) have the publishing credits for the first and third songs on each side indented; later copies (C2) have these credits left-justified. On all labels from this printer, some of the O's are actually zeros.



Later labels from pressing plant C have blue backdrops; they otherwise appear as label C2.

The original front cover design (fc1, shown above) indicated the LP number and "High Fidelity" in the lower left corner. The original back cover design (bc1, also above) reads "HIGH FIDELITY" in the upper left corner, and indicates that Globe Albums printed the covers. Later front covers (fc2) have the catalog number and "high fidelity" in a box in the upper right corner, similar in design to the albums that were released from mid-summer 1958 onward. These covers are also tinted yellow. The back cover that properly accompanies front cover fc2 has a similar design (bc2), with high fidelity in the upper right.





THE BEST OF MUDDY WATERS (1-12") – Chess LP 1427
 A great package of primitive-styled Southern blues. Muddy Waters' shouting, accompanied by his funky guitar and Little Walter's mouth organ, will absolutely prove a gasser to true lovers of this folk blues genre. Sides include "Louisiana Blues," "Honey Bee," "I Can't Be Satisfied"—a dozen in all, and every one with the stamp of authenticity.

Muddy Waters

First Appearance in Trades:

The Best of Muddy Waters

BB April 14, 1958

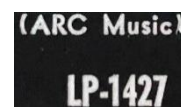
LP-1427



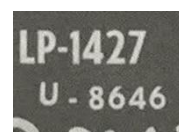
The labels from all pressing plants show the album title as *Muddy Waters*. Copies from pressing plant A have the catalog number in wide, bold print at the bottom. The publishing credit to song 6 is missing; the credits to songs 8 and 10 are shown as (ARC) instead of (ARC Music).



The labels from pressing plant B have the catalog number in narrow print at the bottom, but the matrix number is in normal (wide) print. The publishing credit to song 6 is missing; the credits to songs 8 and 10 are shown as (ARC). A few copies (B1) have song 10 above the spindle hole; most copies have song 10 below the hole.



Some of the copies with song 10 below the spindle hole (B2) have little space above the catalog number; other copies (B3) have blank space above the number. There are also other minor label shifts.

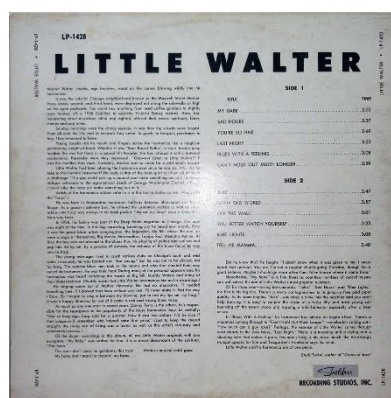


The labels from pressing plant C have the catalog number in narrow print at the bottom. The song titles are also in narrow print. Some copies with this label (C1) have the matrix number indented; other copies (C2) have the numbers nearly left-justified.



Later labels from pressing plant C have blue backdrops.

The job numbers from Monarch Record Mfg. Co. are Δ 502 and Δ 503, which agree with a date in April 1958.



Little Walter

First Appearance in Trades:

The Best of Little Walter

CB May 10, 1958

LP-1428



The labels from all pressing plants show the album title as *Little Walter*. Copies from pressing plant A have the catalog number in wide, bold print at the bottom. Some copies (A1) start the publishing credit to "My Babe" under the A in BABE; other copies (A2) have the credit indented further.



The labels from pressing plant B have the catalog number in narrow print at the bottom, but the song titles are in normal (wide) print. A few copies (B1) have song 4 below the spindle hole; most copies have song 4 above the hole.



Some of the copies with song 4 above the spindle hole (B2) have little space above the catalog number; other copies (B3) have blank space above the number. There are also other minor label shifts.

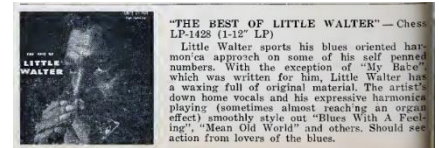
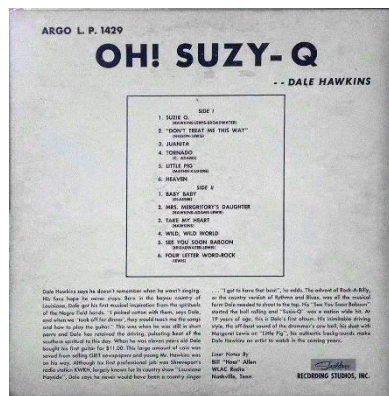
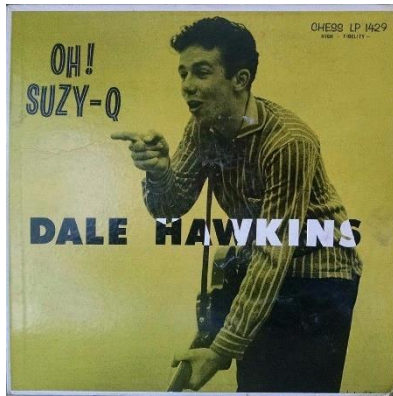


The labels from pressing plant C have the catalog number in narrow print at the bottom. The song titles are also in narrow print.



Later copies with label type C have blue backdrops.

The job numbers from Monarch Record Mfg. Co. are Δ 500 and Δ 501, which indicate that the album was prepared at the same time as *The Best of Muddy Waters*.



Dale Hawkins

Oh! Suzy-Q

Chess/Argo LP-1429

Approximate Release Time:

Spring 1958

Probably released around May, to support the "Little Pig" single.



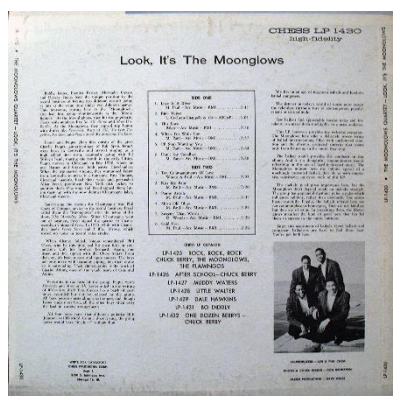
The labels from all pressing plants show the title song as "Suzie-Q" instead of "Suzy-Q." Copies from pressing plant A have the catalog number in wide, bold print at the bottom.



The labels from pressing plant B have the catalog number in narrow print at the bottom, but the song titles are in normal (wide) print. Some copies (B1) have song 6 indented on side one and song 1 indented on side two; other copies (B2) have the indenting issue corrected, so that the titles are left-aligned.



The labels from pressing plant C have the catalog number in narrow print at the bottom. The song titles are also in narrow print.



The Moonglows

First Appearance in Trades:

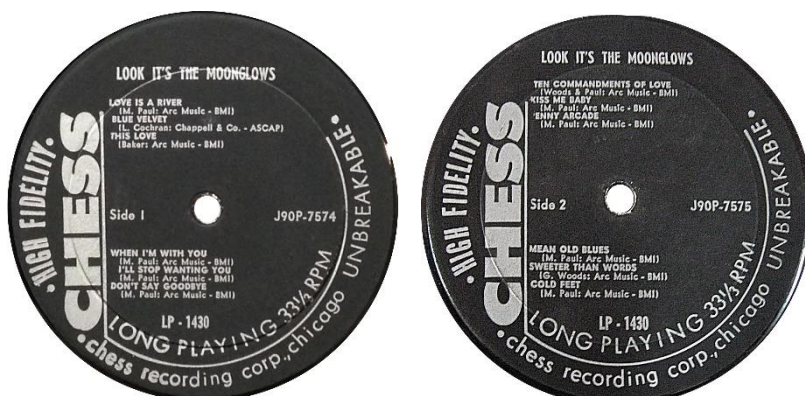
Look! It's the Moonglows

August 25, 1958

LP-1430



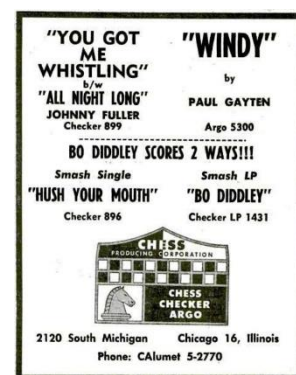
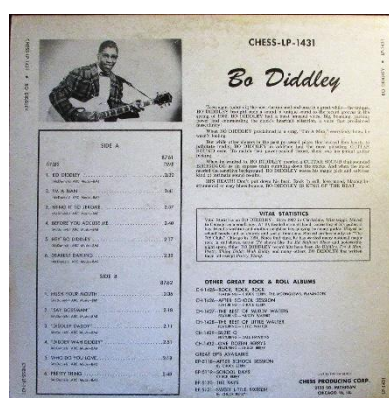
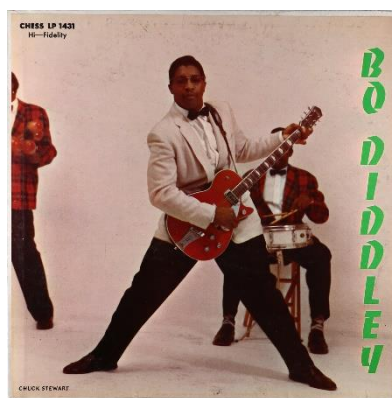
Since the album does not mention the recording studio, but Sheldon is pressed into the vinyl, it seems that Chess recorded the album elsewhere and had it pressed by RCA, although Sheldon prepared the lacquers. Copies from printer A have the catalog number in wide, bold print at the bottom.



The labels from printer B have the catalog number in narrow print at the bottom, but the song titles are in normal (wide) print. The matrix number is at the right side. Pressed by RCA-Indianapolis.



Based on the typeface, these labels were made by one of RCA's printers. Pressed by RCA-Indianapolis.



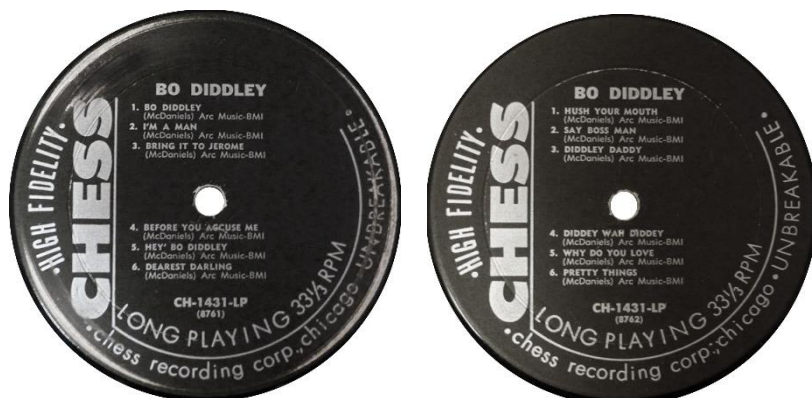
Bo Diddley
First Appearance in Trades:

Bo Diddley
June 23, 1958

Chess CH-LP-1431

White label promotional copy with labels in print style A (possibly 1960).





Copies from Bert-Co printers, pressed by Monarch, have the catalog number in wide, bold print at the bottom. They also have the title in a different typeface than printer A used. The only matrix number is the Universal number (8761/2), and the side numbers do not appear on the label.



These copies from printer A have the catalog number in wide, bold print at the bottom. The title appears in the same typeface as on LP-1430. The only matrix number is the Universal number (8761/2). Most copies have the side numbers on the label, but a few do not. Pressed by RCA.



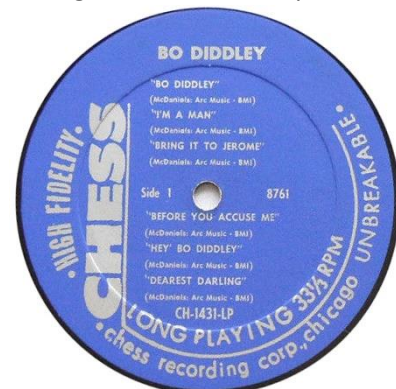
Later copies from printer A have the catalog number in wide, bold print at the bottom. The title appears in the same typeface as on LP-1430. These copies also have the RCA custom job number on the label, at the left side.



The labels from printer B have the catalog number in narrow print at the bottom, but the song titles are in normal (wide) print. The RCA job number is at the right side. Pressed by RCA-Indianapolis. Some copies (B1) have "Side 1" closer to the song above it than to the song below that line, and a blank line above the catalog number. Other copies (B2) have "Side 1" in approximately the same location as B1, but they have very little space above the catalog number. Still other copies (B3) have the line with the side number nearly centered between the song title above it and the one below it, and the song titles are more widely spaced. Other copies (B4) have the side number closer to the song title below it, and the song titles are close together (as they are in B1-2). Pressed by RCA-Indianapolis.

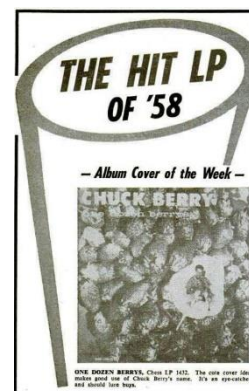
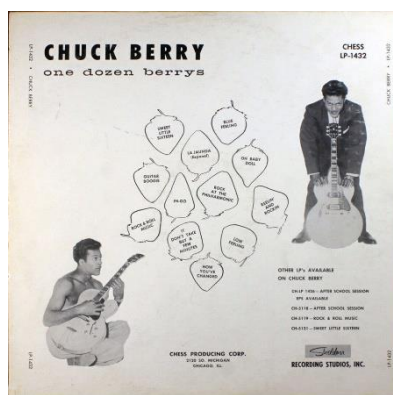
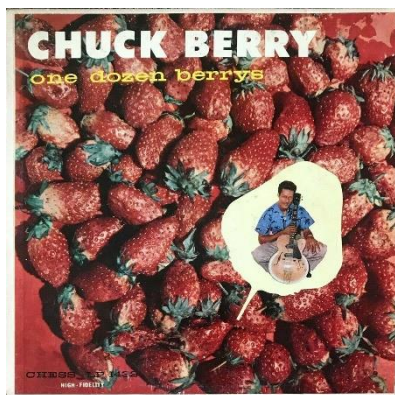


The labels from printer C have the catalog number in narrow print at the bottom. The matrix number is at the right side in narrow print. These copies were pressed by RCA-Indianapolis.



Later copies with label type C have blue backdrops.

The first job number from Monarch Record Mfg. Co. is Δ 553, indicating that it was prepared for release in June 1958. Most copies have a side-two number of Δ 642, which indicates a copy that was prepared for release no earlier than late September 1958.



Chuck Berry

First Appearance in Trades:

One Dozen Berrys

April 14, 1958

LP-1432



The first copies from printer A, have the catalog number in wide, bold print at the bottom. The side numbers do not appear on the label.

Observe that the Universal matrix numbers are lower than the numbers for LP-1431. Although Chess assigned it a catalog number after LP-1430 and LP-1431, Chuck recorded it earlier, and Chess released it earlier. This was likely the case with LP-1429 as well. The keen-eyed observer will note that the two later albums, 1430 and 1431, were not recorded at Sheldon Recording Studios – but this one was. Although the two businesses operated out of the same building, by late spring 1958 there was some friction between the two. At the beginning of June (as reported in *Billboard* 09 Jn 58), Jack Sheldon Wiener left Sheldon Recording Studios, which he co-owned, to form a new studio that was entirely his own. Universal Recording Corporation was in the process of shifting managers, too, and Malcolm Chisolm wound up leaving Universal to operate Sheldon Recording Studios. Wiener kept the Sheldon name (which was his own), and the studios in the Chess building were renamed after Terry and Marshall Chess, the sons of Phil and Leonard Chess. It became Ter-Mar Studios.



These copies from printer A have the catalog number in wide, bold print at the bottom. Although RCA-Indianapolis pressed the album, the only matrix number on the label is the Universal number (8689/90).

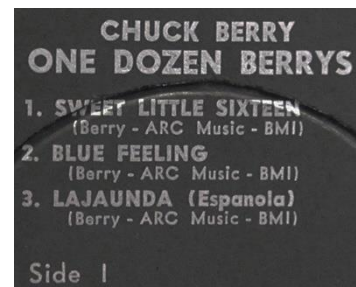
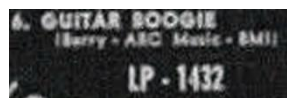


The labels from printer B have the catalog number in narrow print at the bottom, but the artist's name at the top is in normal (wide) print. Pressed by RCA-Indianapolis. Various label shifts exist, including:

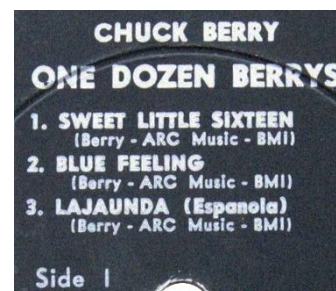
B1 (above) – The line with the side number is closer to the line of text above than to the line below; there is a blank line between the artist name and album title; there are about 1.5 blank lines above the catalog number; the album title is centered over the label, aligned further right than B4, below.

B2 – The line with the side number is closer to the line of text above than to the line below; there is a blank line between the artist name and album title; there is about 1 blank line above the catalog number.

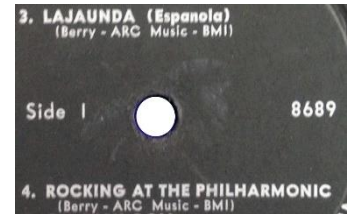
B3 – The line with the side number is closer to the line of text above than to the line below; there is NO blank line between the artist name and album title.



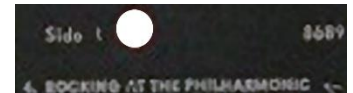
B4 – The line with the side number is closer to the line of text above than to the line below; there is a blank line between the artist name and album title; the album title on side 1 is left-aligned with the number 1 below it.



B5 – The line with the side number is centered vertically between the lines of text above and below it; there is a blank line between the artist name and album title; the album title on side 1 is left-aligned with the number 1 below it.



B6 – The line with the side number is closer to the line of text below it than to the line above; that line is indented to the right.

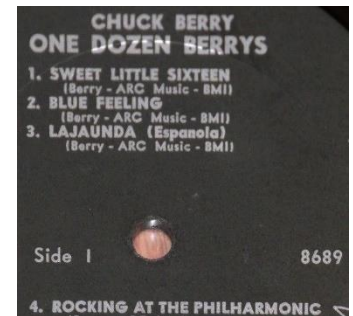


B7 – The line with the side number is closer to the line of text below it than to the line above; on side 1, the C in Chuck lies over the NE in ONE.



B8 – The line with the side number is closer to the line of text below it than to the line above; on side 1, the C in Chuck lies over the D in DOZEN.

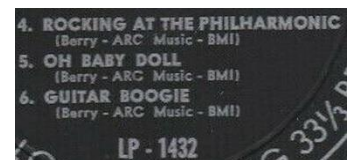
[On the others, below, the C is generally over the blank space between ONE and DOZEN.]



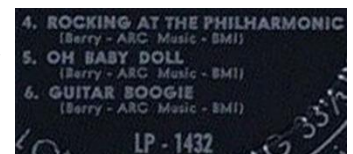
B9 – The line with the side number is closer to the line of text below it than to the line above; on side 1, the L in LP is under the A of ARC. The song titles are tightly spaced.



B10 – The line with the side number is closer to the line of text below it than to the line above; on side 1, the L in LP is under the A of ARC. The song titles are more widely spaced.



B11 – The line with the side number is closer to the line of text below it than to the line above; on side 1, the L in LP is under the RC of ARC. The song titles are widely spaced.

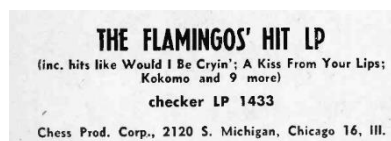
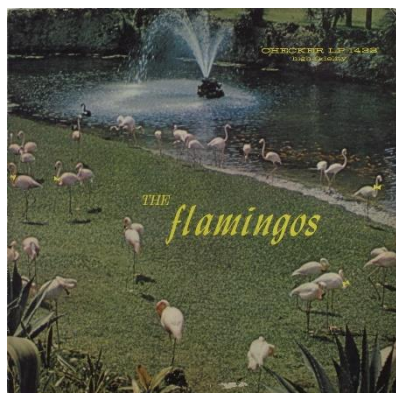




Later copies with label type C have blue backdrops. The artist name is in narrow print, and the 1 in “Side 1” has a serif. Most copies (C1) have the artist name close to the album title, with little blank space. Some copies (C2) have more blank space.



The RCA job numbers are not listed on the label. They are J80P-3237 and J80P-3238, indicating again that RCA prepared the album prior to *Bo Diddley* or *Look, It's the Moonglows*.



The Flamingos

First Appearance in Trades:

The Flamingos

March 23, 1959

Checker LP-1433

The RCA job numbers (J80P-3272/3) indicate that the metal parts were prepared near the end of 1958 (for release in early 1959).





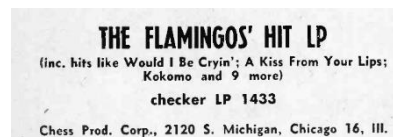
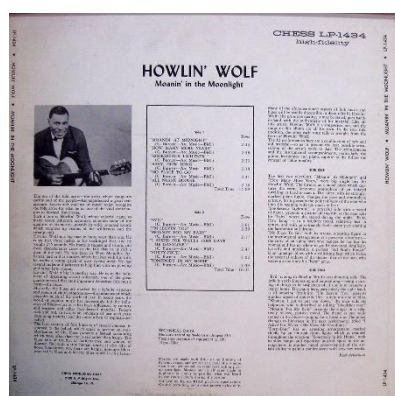
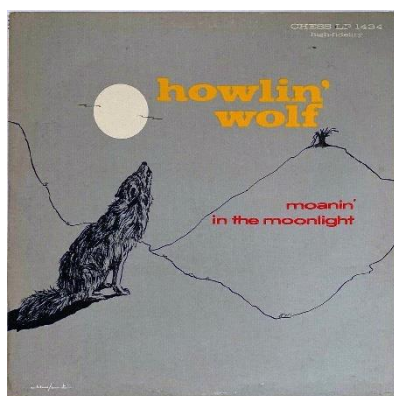
Copies from printer A have the matrix number in tiny print under the side number.



The labels from printer B have the catalog number in narrow print at the bottom.

Label B1 (above) has the song titles spaced apart from one another.

Label B2 (inset) – The song titles are close together with no blank space between songs, except at the spindle hole.



Howlin' Wolf

Approximate Release Time:

Moanin' in the Moonlight

May 1959

CH-LP-1434

The matrix numbers indicate an approximate release month of May, this album having been prepared just before the Invincibles' "Mr. Moonglow" single, which came out in May.



The first copies (B1) from printer B have the songs tightly spaced. On side 1, the H in the artist's name is over the I in MOANIN'; on side 2, the H in the artist's name is over the space between MOANIN' and IN.



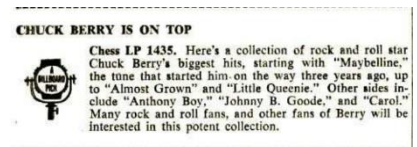
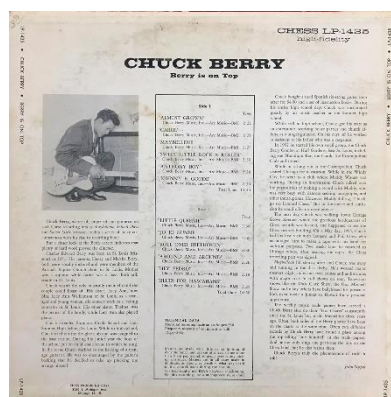
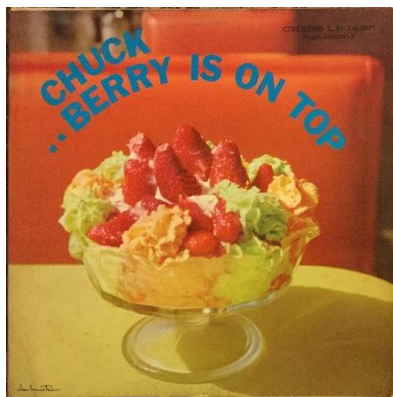
The next copies (B2) from printer B have the songs tightly spaced. On both sides, the H in the artist's name is over the N' in MOANIN'.



The remaining copies (B3) from printer B have the songs loosely spaced. On both sides, the H in the artist's name is over the N' in MOANIN'.



Copies with label type C have blue backdrops. The artist name is in narrow print, and the 1 in "Side 1" has a serif.



Chuck Berry

First Appearance in Trades:

Berry is on Top

July 6, 1959

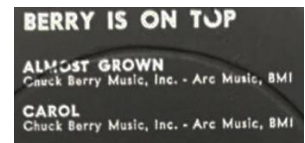
LP-1435



Printer B handled the vast majority of labels for this album. Since the album sold well, there were numerous requests for new labels. As a result, a great deal of minor label variations exist.

The variation shown above (B1) has a blank line under "Almost Grown" instead of over the title. The album title is indented on both sides, and there is blank space above the catalog number. The following other variations are known to exist and are described here based on the placement of text on side 1.

B2 – The B of Berry is over the A of ALMOST.



B3 – The B of Berry is over the L of ALMOST. The publisher credit for Johnny B. Goode is lined up properly with the author credit above it.



B4 – The B of Berry is over the L of ALMOST. The publisher credit for Johnny B. Goode is positioned to the left of the author credit above it.



B5 – The B of Berry is over the L of ALMOST. The publisher credit for Johnny B. Goode is positioned to the right of the author credit above it.



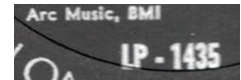
B6 – The B of Berry is over the LM of ALMOST. The line containing the side number is about evenly positioned between the line above it and the line below it.



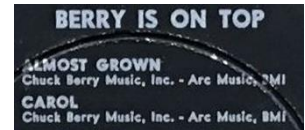
B7 – The B of Berry is over the LM of ALMOST. The line containing the side number is closer to the line below it than it is to the line above it. Additionally, the L of LP is under the B of BMI.



B8 – The B of Berry is over the LM of ALMOST. The line containing the side number is closer to the line below it than it is to the line above it. Additionally, the L of LP is to the left of the B of BMI.



B9 – The B of Berry is over the O of ALMOST.



These copies have the label information in a typeface with serifs, in that respect being unlike any of the others.



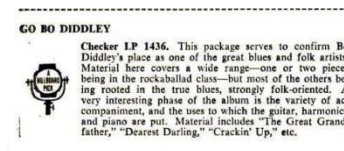
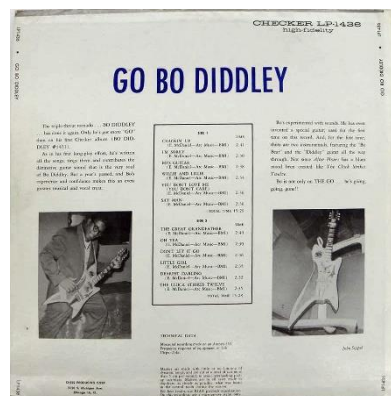
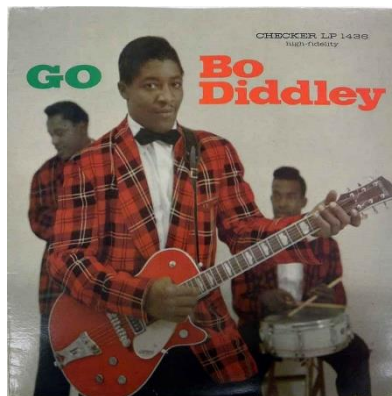
This pressing is from Monarch Record Mfg. Co., showing BERRY by itself on one line. Some of these copies (M1, left) have the title in a typeface normally used by Bert-Co. Others (M2, right) have the title in a typeface typically associated with printing A.

The Chess blue labels seem to have started at approximately the beginning of 1959. Before that time, printer C used black labels, but after that time labels from printer C only occur with blue labels.



Copies with label type C have blue backdrops. The album title is in narrow print, and the 1 in "Side 1" has a serif. Earlier copies have the usual wide pressing ring. Later copies (right) have a much smaller pressing ring; the positioning of the information on the label also differs slightly between the two printings.

The job numbers from Monarch Record Mfg. Co. are Δ 1530 and Δ 1531, which indicate a date in October 1959. Since the album came out in early July, the Monarch copies were made later – due to increased demand for Chuck Berry records.



Bo Diddley

First Appearance in Trades:

Go Bo Diddley

July 6, 1959

Checker LP-1436



Copies from printer A have the matrix number in tiny print under the side number.

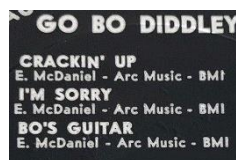
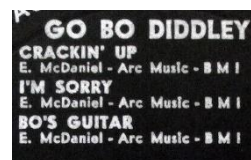


The labels from printer B have the catalog number in narrow print at the bottom. Label B1 (above) has the G in GO above the AC in CRACKIN; it also has blank space below the title.

Label B2 has the G in GO above the AC in CRACKIN; it has no blank space below the title.

Label B3 has the G in GO above the RA in CRACKIN.

Label B4 has the G in GO above the CK in CRACKIN.



Dealers: ask your salesman about...

CHESS & CHECKER'S FABULOUS FALL PLAN

featuring...

- ROCK—ROCK—ROCK—Chuck Berry—Moonglows—Flamingoes *CHESS 1425*
- AFTER SCHOOL SESSION—Chuck Berry *CHESS 1426*
- THE BEST OF MUDDY WATERS *CHESS 1427*
- THE BEST OF LITTLE WALTER *CHESS 1428*
- OH! SUSIE Q—Dale Hawkins *CHESS 1429*
- LOOK! IT'S THE MOONGLOWS—The Moonglows *CHESS 1430*
- BO DIDDLEY *CHESS 1431*
- ONE DOZEN BERRYS—Chuck Berry *CHESS 1432*
- THE FLAMINGOES *CHECKER 1433*
- HOWLIN' AT MIDNIGHT—Howlin' Wolf *CHESS 1434*
- BERRY IS ON TOP—Chuck Berry *CHESS 1435*
- GO BO DIDDLEY GO—Bo Diddley *CHECKER 1436*

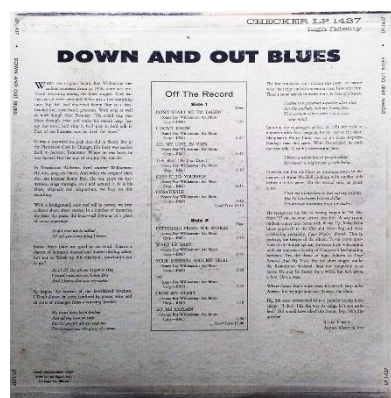
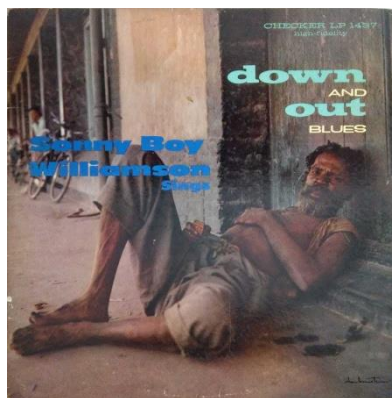
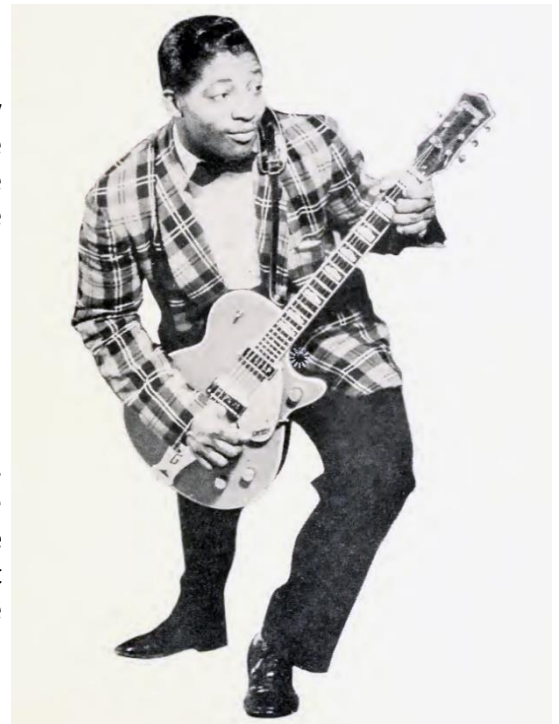
PICK IN THE CASH BOX ON THE CASH BOX CHART

SPOTLIGHT LPs OF THE MONTH...

CHESS PRODUCING CORP. 2120 Michigan Ave., Chicago 16, Ill.

Although the matrix numbers for Checker LP-1437 (Sonny Boy Williamson's *Down and Out Blues*) and Chess LP-1438 (John Lee Hooker's *House of the Blues*) would tend to place their release dates in July or August, Chess did not advertise them as available in their ads from August (such as the one on the previous page).

In November 1959, Chess released two various-artists albums, containing hits and celebrated songs from the previous decade (see, for example, *Oldies in Hi-Fi*, November 16 1959). These were accompanied by splash-vinyl promotional copies; therefore, it makes sense that the two blues albums had been released before November – even if there was little fanfare.



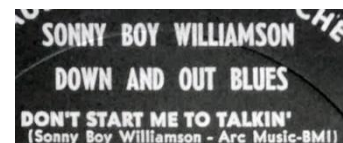
Sonny Boy Williamson
Approximate Release Time:

Down and Out Blues
Summer 1959

Checker/Chess LP-1437



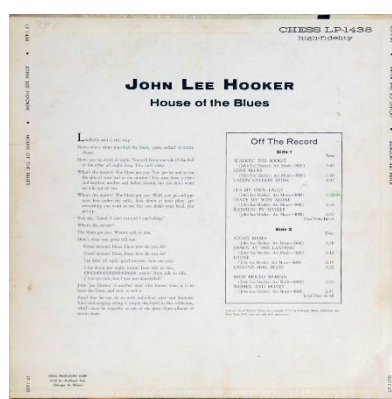
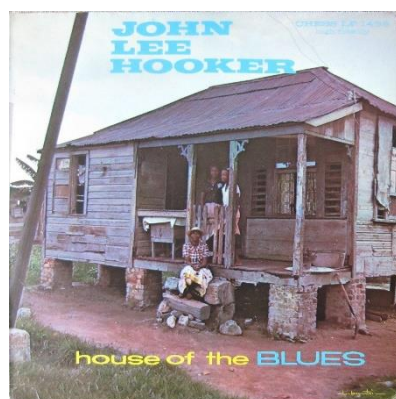
The labels from printer A have the matrix number in tiny print under the side number.



The labels from printer B have the catalog number in narrow print at the bottom. Most of these (B1) have no additional space between the artist name and the album title. Some copies (B2) have additional space on both sides.



Copies with label type C have blue backdrops. The artist name is in narrow print, and the 1 in "Side 1" has a serif. These labels appear on Chess instead of Checker, but it is probable that they came out at the same time as the others. Some copies (C1) have additional space between the artist and title; other copies (C2) lack that space.



John Lee Hooker: House Of The Blues
Chess LP1438

All of Hooker's other LP's are salvaged from single sides and the Chess release is a particularly horrible example of how he was recorded before. In more than one instance, the voice is echoed until the singer sounds like two persons engaged in a duet. Some poor copies were employed in the dubbing and the over-all quality is below that of the average field recording.

John Lee Hooker

Approximate Release Time:

House of the Blues

Fall 1959 (Audio: February 1960)

LP-1438



The labels from printer A have the catalog number in wide, bold print, and no side numbers.



The labels from printer B have the catalog number in narrow print at the bottom. Most of these (B1) have spacing between the top three song titles on each side. Some copies (B2) have very little space on both sides. A few copies (B3) have little space between songs and an indented song on side 1.



Copies with label type C have blue backdrops. The artist name is in narrow print, and the 1 in "Side 1" has a serif. This record is rare.

In fall 1959, Chess experienced a few great changes. They began releasing white-label promotional copies, and they also started exploring the use of stereo.