

STREET CORNER SERENADE II



TIME
LIFE
MUSIC

The
ROCK 'N' ROLL
•ERA•

Digital Remaster

STREET CORNER SERENADE II

- 1. Life Is But a Dream** The Harptones
- 2. Unchained Melody** Vito and the Salutations
- 3. I Promise to Remember**
Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers
- 4. Everyone's Laughing** The Spaniels
- 5. The Closer You Are** The Channels
- 6. Florence** The Paragons
- 7. Walking Along** The Solitaires
- 8. Pretty Little Girl** The Monarchs
- 9. Gloria** The Cadillacs
- 10. Can I Come Over Tonight** The Velours
- 11. The Plea** The Chantels
- 12. Zoom Zoom Zoom** The Collegians
- 13. Imagination** The Quotations
- 14. Six Nights a Week** The Crests
- 15. Count Every Star** The Rivieras
- 16. Please Send Me Someone to Love**
The Moonglows
- 17. A Kiss from Your Lips** The Flamingos
- 18. Babalu's Wedding Day** The Eternals
- 19. Mary Lee** The Rainbows
- 20. Shadows** The Five Satins
- 21. Up on the Mountain** The Magnificents
- 22. The Wind** The Jesters

SEE PROGRAM NOTES INSIDE

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WARNER
SPECIAL PRODUCTS

The
ROCK'N'ROLL
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2RNR-50
OPCD-2643

TIME
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COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO

TO OBCD SP43-S 28C+61

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The Paragons



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During rock 'n' roll's gestation, rhythm and blues vocal-group records were its backbone. Early rock 'n' roll radio was dominated by group sounds. Sixty-five percent of the R&B records that crossed over to the pop charts in 1954 and 1955 were by groups. So were the majority of R&B tunes covered by pop artists. Despite this exposure, relatively few early R&B group records became national pop hits. Still, some groups, such as New York's Harptones and Solitaires, established solid reputations without the benefit of a smash.

The Harptones, led by vocalist Willie Winfield and organist-arranger Raoul Cita, were unable to break out nationally even though Alan Freed gave them plenty of spins. But their early sides, especially *A Sunday Kind of Love*, *My Memories of You* and **Life Is But a Dream**, were influential in the New York neighborhoods that spawned younger groups and group-record collectors.

The Solitaires' superior ballads *The Wedding* and *The Angels Sang* likewise missed the big time, but the group's fame increased when some disc jockeys played their original version of **Walking Along** instead of the Diamonds' revival in 1958.

The Magnificents scored an R&B hit when Chicago DJ Nathan "the Magnificent" Montague changed their name from the Tams and wrote **Up on the Mountain** for them. It peaked only at No. 145 on the *Hot Charts*, but it has been a staple of oldies collections ever since.

Some R&B groups became more and more popular as the '50s rolled on. The Moonglows toiled in relative obscurity at Chance Records. Then the group switched to Chess and topped the R&B charts with *Sincerely*, but they were surprised in the pop market by the McGuire Sisters' cover. Their next pop crossover, *See Saw*, buried Don Cornell's rendition. And a revival of Percy Mayfield's 1950 million-seller **Please Send Me Someone to Love** had no competition at all. In 1958 the Moonglows

reached their zenith with the classic *Ten Commandments of Love*.

The Flamingos had several minor R&B hits including *Golden Teardrops for Change*. Then *I'll Be Home* and **A Kiss from Your Lips** on Checker established them as a leading R&B act, but it wasn't until they moved to End and cut records like *I Only Have Eyes for You* that they became rock 'n' roll stars.

Other pre-rock 'n' roll groups peaked in the mid-'50s but continued to be well received by group-harmony fans. The Spaniels were never able to top *Goodnite*, *Sweetheart*, *Goodnite*, but **Everyone's Laughing** sold well enough to the faithful to chart high in R&B and low in pop. The Five Satins, who began recording in 1954 as the Scarlets for Red Robin, made both charts with **Shadows** even as their magnum opus, *In the Still of the Nite*, began a second assault on the Hot 100.

As R&B gave way to rock 'n' roll, a new variant of the group sound emerged built around a very young lead



The Crosses

voice. When the Teenagers, who spearheaded the genre, heard Frankie Lymon's former classmate Jimmy Castor and the Juniors' disc *I Promise* (Smash 90078), they changed the doo-wop part and cut it themselves as **I Promise to Remember**. (Castor went on to make the pop and R&B top 10 with *Troglodyte* in 1972.) Classically trained Arlene Smith of the Chantels had so much poise for a 15-year-old that producer George Goldner is reported to have deliberately upset her during recording sessions to make her voice reflect the emotional content of *He's Gone*, its flip, **The Plea**, and *Maybe*.

In the late '50s, group sounds dominated the oldies movement just as they had early rock 'n' roll. **Mary Lee** by the Rainbows (a Washington, D.C., group that at various times included Don Covay, Billy Stewart and Marvin Gaye) was probably the first oldie-but-goodie to be re-issued. A demand arose in Boston in 1956 for the record, so the local distributor who had handled the 1955 original leased the master from then-inactive Red Robin and released it on Pilgrim (No. 703).

Around 1960, group-record collecting began to flourish. At places like Times Square Records in New York City, some out-of-print group discs were fetching prices from \$20 to \$40, while Elvis Presley releases on Sun could be had for two bucks. An oral history of various groups was also being collected wherever buying, selling and trading took place. The original success of many sides tended to become understandably exaggerated: access to back issues of music industry magazines was virtually nil, and the sales charts of these publications had often been too brief to cover all the releases in action. Besides, many quality discs, which might have done better, had been over-





The Harptones

looked in the disorganized and volatile early years of rock 'n' roll.

The Cadillacs' popularity came from their up-tempo numbers such as *Speedoo* and *Peek-a-Boo*. Today, however, New Yorkers and collectors revere them most for **Gloria**, the ballad side of their first release, because it has the classic group sound. **The Closer You Are** by Earl Lewis and the Channels (who also recorded *Gloria*) barely made it to the *Hot Charts* in 1956, but lots of New York teenagers in the '60s would have sworn it was a hit.

The first Times Square Records top-100 sales list (January 1961) contained five of the songs on this package: *Mary Lee*, *Gloria*, *The Closer You Are*, **Pretty Little Girl** by the Monarchs and **Can I Come Over Tonight** by the Velours. Of the batch, only the last ever made any *Billboard* chart, but oldies radio and films like *Mean Streets* give a quite different impression.

The Times Square chart for June 1961 included **Zoom Zoom Zoom** by the Collegians and the Eternals' flop follow-up to *Rockin' in the Jungle*, **Babalu's Wedding Day**. Bob Lewis, a New York DJ who called himself Babalu, played part of the song's refrain as his ID. By mid-1962 it had reached No. 1 on the Times Square survey. Today *Babalu's Wedding Day* is better known than its predecessor even though it sold less than 100,000 copies.

Florence by the Paragons and the Jesters' revival of the Diablos' **The Wind** were not major hits. None of the releases by either group were, but when their catalogs were issued together on the album *The Paragons Meet the Jesters*, with a cover featuring leather-jacketed delinquents, it sold well enough to inspire dozens of other group-anthology LPs, many with similar covers.

Veteran bandleader and music publisher George Paxton firmly believed that pop standards arranged for rock 'n' roll vocal groups were a viable commodity. He signed New Jersey's Rivieras (no relation to the Indiana group that later recorded *California Sun*) to his newly formed

Coed label. They charted with **Count Every Star**, popularized in 1950 by Hugo Winterhalter and Ray Anthony, and the Glenn Miller chestnut *Moonlight Serenade*.

Almost immediately, the Rivieras were overshadowed by their labelmates the Crests from Brooklyn and Staten Island, whose material was penned by contemporary songwriters. Lead singer Johnny Maestro had an operatic voice that displayed no discernible change in coloration as it soared into the falsetto range. He had already shown this virtuosity on *Sweetest One* (Joyce 103), which made the *Billboard* top 100 for two weeks in 1957. The Crests' second Coed record, the monster *16 Candles*, was rapidly followed by four more top-30 efforts: **Six Nights a Week**, *The Angels Listened In*, *Step by Step* and *Trouble in Paradise*.

After the Crests faltered, George Paxton found another winner in New Jersey: the Duprees. They placed three more pop standards in the top 20: *You Belong to Me*, a Jo Stafford hit from 1952; *Have You Heard*, a smash for Joni James in 1953; and *My Own True Love* (Tara's Theme from *Gene with the Wind*).

Two Brooklyn groups recorded classic versions of pop standards introduced in motion pictures using the extreme stylization popularized by the Marceles on *Blue Moon*. The Quotations' radical rendition of **Imagination**, from the Bob Hope-Bing Crosby picture *The Road to Singapore*, just missed the national charts. Vito and the Salutations, who took their name from New York DJ Jocko Henderson's opening rap, "Greetings, salutations, ooh-poo-pah-doo and how do you do?", did better. After their first record, a revival of *Gloria*, failed to break out nationally, they stuttered their way onto the charts with **Unchained Melody**, from the 1955 prison potboiler *Unchained*.

—Dr. Oldie and Big Al Pavlow

DISCOGRAPHY

*Indicates highest Billboard chart position

- 1. Life Is But a Dream** The Harptones • *Music and lyrics by Raoul Cita and Hy Weiss. Paradise 101 (1955). Vocal by Willie Winfield. Courtesy of Hy Weiss, Old Town Records. Did not chart.*
- 2. Unchained Melody** Vito and the Salutations • *Music by Alex North. Lyrics by Hy Zaret. Herald 583 (1963). Courtesy of Arista Records, Inc. No. 66**
- 3. I Promise to Remember** Frankie Lynton and the Teenagers • *Music and lyrics by Jimmy Castor and Jimmy Smith. Gee 1018 (1956). Under license from Rhino Records, Inc., by arrangement with Butterfly Entertainment Corp. No. 57**
- 4. Everyone's Laughing** The Spaniels • *Music and lyrics by Calvin Carter. Vee-Jay 246 (1957). Courtesy of Vee-Jay Records. No. 69**
- 5. The Closer You Are** The Channels • *Music and lyrics by Earl Lewis and Morgan C. Robinson. Whirlin' Disc 100 (1956). Under license from Rhino Records, Inc., by arrangement with Butterfly Entertainment Corp. Did not chart.*
- 6. Florence** The Paragons • *Music and lyrics by Julius McMichaels and Paul Winley. Winley 215 (1957). Under license from Rhino Records, Inc., by arrangement with Butterfly Entertainment Corp. Did not chart.*
- 7. Walking Along** The Solitaires • *Music and lyrics by Winston Willis and Hy Weiss. Old Town 1034 (1957). Courtesy of Hy Weiss, Old Town Records. Did not chart.*
- 8. Pretty Little Girl** The Monarchs • *Music and lyrics by Arthur Kemp, Fred Wells, Robert White, Robert Galloway and Arthur Allen. Neil 101 (1956). Courtesy of MC Productions. Did not chart.*
- 9. Gloria** The Cadillacacs • *Music and lyrics by Esther Navarro. Josie 765 (1954). Under license from Rhino Records, Inc., by arrangement with Butterfly Entertainment Corp. Did not chart.*
- 10. Can I Come Over Tonight** The Velours • *Music and lyrics by Donald Haywood and Jerry Winston. Onyx 512 (1957). Courtesy of Relic Record Prod., Inc. No. 83**
- 11. The Plea** The Chantels • *Music and lyrics by Richard Barrett and A. Smith. End 1001 (1957). Under license from Rhino Records, Inc., by arrangement with Butterfly Entertainment Corp. Did not chart.*
- 12. Zoom Zoom Zoom** The Collegians • *Music and lyrics by Donald Hayes and Harlan Jackson. Winley 224 (1957). Under license from Rhino Records, Inc., by arrangement with Butterfly Entertainment Corp. Did not chart.*
- 13. Imagination** The Quotations • *Music by Jimmy Van Heusen, lyrics by Johnny Burke. Verve 10245 (1962). Courtesy of PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Group Distribution, Inc. Did not chart.*
- 14. Six Nights a Week** The Crests • *Music and lyrics by Alicia Eeklyn and Billy Smith. Coed 509 (1959). Courtesy of Post Records by arrangement with Celebrity Licensing Inc. No. 28**
- 15. Count Every Star** The Rivieras • *Music by Bruno Coquatrix, lyrics by Sammy Gallop. Coed 503 (1958). Courtesy of Post Records by arrangement with Celebrity Licensing Inc. No. 73**
- 16. Please Send Me Someone to Love** The Moonglows • *Music and lyrics by Percy Mayfield. Chess 1661 (1957). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 73**
- 17. A Kiss from Your Lips** The Flamingos • *Music and lyrics by Roquel Davis and Russell Fratto. Checker 837 (1956). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. Did not chart.*
- 18. Babalu's Wedding Day** The Eternals • *Music and lyrics by William Martin, Carlos Girana and Alex Miranda. Hollywood 70 (1959). Courtesy of MC Productions. Did not chart.*
- 19. Mary Lee** The Rainbows • *Music and lyrics by Morgan Robinson and Larry Robinson. Red Robin 134 (1954). Under license from Rhino Records, Inc., by arrangement with Butterfly Entertainment Corp. Did not chart.*
- 20. Shadows** The Five Satins • *Music and lyrics by Fred Parris. Ember 1056 (1959). Courtesy of Arista Records, Inc. No. 87**
- 21. Up on the Mountain** The Magnificents • *Music and lyrics by Nathaniel Montague and Ewart Abner Jr. Vee-Jay 183 (1956). Courtesy of Vee-Jay Records. No. 9 (R&B)**
- 22. The Wind** The Jesters • *Music and lyrics by Nolan Strong, Bob Edwards, Willie Hunter, Quentin Eubank and Juan Gutierrez. Winley 242 (1960). Under license from Rhino Records, Inc., by arrangement with Butterfly Entertainment Corp. Did not chart.*

Street Corner Serenade II

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NOTES INSIDE

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