

WIGGLE WOBBLE

**THE
LES COOPER
COLLECTION**

**WITH
BOBBY DUNN**

JASMINE

**2
CD SET**

DISC 1

THE EMPIRES

Les Cooper (lead), John "Buddy" Barnes (Lead tenor), William Goodman (bass) & Bobby Dunn (baritone): Champion Jack Dupree, piano & vocals on tracks 5 and 6 only issued as Lightning Junior & The Empires:

1. MY BABY, MY BABY (*Shad*) (HARLEM 2325) 1954 [2:19]
2. CORN WHISKEY (*Kay, Shad*) Barnes, Lead (HARLEM 2325) 1954 [2:32]
3. MAGIC MIRROR (*Bobby Dunn*) (HARLEM 2333) 1955 featuring Johnny Ace Jr. [2:23]
4. MAKE ME OR BREAK ME (*Singleton*) (HARLEM 2333) 1955 [2:25]
5. SOMEBODY CHANGED THE LOCK (*Dalton, Shad*) (w/ "Champion" Jack Dupree) (HARLEM 2334) 1955 [2:40]
6. RAGGED AND HUNGRY (*Shad*) (w/ "Champion" Jack Dupree) (HARLEM 2334) 1955 [2:36]
7. I WANT TO KNOW (*Cooper, Kirkland*) Barnes, Lead (WING 90023) 1955 [2:20]
8. SHIRLEY (*Cooper, Kirkland*) (*Cooper-Dunn duet, w/ Mickey Baker, guitar*) (WING 90023) 1955 [2:51]

THE EMPIRES aka THE PRESTOS

9. LOOKING FOR LOVE (*Cooper, Kirkland*) Barnes, Lead (MERCURY 70747) 1955 [2:29]
10. TILL WE MEET AGAIN (*Cooper, Kirkland*) Dunn, Lead (MERCURY 70747) 1955 [2:23]

THE EMPIRES

11. TELL ME PRETTY BABY (*Cooper*) Dunn, Lead (WING 90050) 1955 [2:41]

12. BY THE RIVERSIDE (*Dunn*) Barnes, Lead (WING 90050) 1955 [2:32]
13. MY FIRST DISCOVERY (*Cooper*) Barnes and Goodman, Lead (WING 90080) 1956 [2:28]
14. DON'T TOUCH MY GIRL (*Cooper*) Barnes, Lead (WING 90080) 1956 [2:07]
15. WHISPERING HEART (*Lewis, Stock*) Barnes, Lead (WHIRLIN DISC 104) 1956 [2:48]
16. LINDA (*Dunn, Cooper*) Barnes, Lead (WHIRLIN DISC 104) 1956 [2:49]

THE EMPIRES aka THE WHIRLERS

17. MAGIC MIRROR (*Remake*) (*Dunn*) Barnes, Lead (WHIRLIN DISC 108) 1957 [2:16]
18. TONIGHT AND FOREVER (*Barnes*) Barnes, Lead (WHIRLIN DISC 108) 1957 [2:11]

THE EMPIRES (second group)

John "Buddy" Barnes & unidentified group:

19. IF I'M A FOOL (*Empires*) (AMP-3 132) 1957 [2:22]
20. ZIPPERTY ZIP (*Empires*) (AMP-3 132) 1957 [2:23]

THE CHARTS

group taken by Les Cooper who wrote & arranged for them:

Joe Grier (lead), Steven Brown (first tenor), Glenmore Jackson (second tenor), Leroy Binns (baritone) & Ross Buford (bass):

21. DESERIE (*Cooper, Grier*) (EVERLAST 5001) 1957 [2:43]
22. ZOOPE (*Cooper, Grier*) (EVERLAST 5001) 1957 [2:24]

THE LADDERS

group put together by Les Cooper who wrote & arranged for them:

Johnny Jackson (lead), Herb Jennings (first tenor), Irvin Jones (second tenor, Ron Clark (baritone) Douglas Jackson (bass):

23. COUNTING THE STARS (Cooper, Robinson) (HOLIDAY 2611) 1957 [2:17]
24. I WANT TO KNOW (Cooper, Robinson) (HOLIDAY 2611) 1957 [2:25]

THE KODOKS (KODAKS)

group coached & rehearsed by Les Cooper who wrote & arranged for them:

Pearl McKinnon (lead), James Patrick (first tenor), William Franklin (second tenor), Larry Davis (baritone), William Miller (bass):

25. TEENAGER'S DREAM (McKinnon, Robinson) (FURY 1007) 1957 [2:44]
26. GUARDIAN ANGEL (McKinnon, Patrick, Franklin, Davis, Miller) (FURY 1007) 1957 [2:44]

DISC 2

LES COOPER & THE SOUL ROCKERS

Les Cooper – piano/vocals, Joe Grier, tenor sax others unidentified:

1. WIGGLE WOBBLE (Cooper, Dunn) (EVERLAST 5019) 1962 [2:01]

BOBBY DUNN WITH LES COOPER & HIS TWISTERS

(Twist Vol. 1 Palace LP M689) 1961/1962

Les Cooper, piano; Bobby Dunn, vocals; others unidentified:

2. DO THE TWIST (Dunn, Cooper) [2:48]
3. TWISTING WITH JOYCE (Dunn, Cooper) [2:48]
4. THE CONGO TWIST (Dunn, Cooper) [2:55]
5. LES COOPER'S TWIST (Dunn, Cooper) (a.k.a. *Twistin' one more time*) [3:21]

6. I'VE GOT LOVE IN MY HEART FOR YOU (Dunn, Cooper) [2:16]
7. TWIST WITH THE TWISTERS (Dunn, Cooper) [1:40]
8. WHAT A THRILL!! (Dunn, Cooper) [2:31]
9. SHIMMY BABY (Dunn, Cooper) [2:43]
10. YOU ARE THE ONE (Dunn, Cooper) [3:35]
11. THE CHINESE TWIST (Dunn, Cooper) [2:48]
12. THE LATIN TWIST (Dunn, Cooper) [2:46]
13. TWISTING ON THE HILL (Dunn, Cooper) [2:08]

LES COOPER & THE SOUL ROCKERS

Les Cooper – piano/vocals, others unidentified:

14. DIG YOURSELF (Cooper, Dunn) (EVERLAST 5019) 1962 [2:27]
15. TWISTIN' (One More Time) (Cooper) (EVERLAST 5016) 1961 [2:39]

BOBBY DUNN & THE SENSATIONALS

(PALACE LP M680) 1961-1962

16. SOMEBODY IS ALWAYS BY MY SIDE (Unknown) [2:03]
17. TRY HIM AND SEE (Unknown) [2:43]
18. CLIMBING UP THE HILL (Unknown)
19. I CAN'T BEGIN TO TELL YOU (Jones) [2:54]
20. ONE DAY WHEN THE LORD WILL CALL ME (J. Tucker, J. Davis) [2:20]
21. FATHER (Unknown) [2:31]
22. JESUS IS WITH ME (Martin) [2:07]
23. IT'S ME (Public Domain) [2:34]
24. I WANT TO REST (Sands, Morris) [2:37]
25. MY GOD CALLED ME THIS MORNING (Jubilaires) [2:02]
26. PRAISE GOD (Unknown) [2:34]
27. I MUST TELL JESUS (Hoffman) [3:02]

LES COOPER

Les Cooper's foot-stompin', mid-tempo instrumental "Wiggle Wobble" (by definition a Watusi type of dance as demonstrated by the title) broke into the billboard R&B charts mid-August 1962, peaking at No.12 after a stay of seven weeks. "Wiggle Wobble's" high



point was the tenor sax solo by Joe Grier. Grier was the former lead singer of the Charts from 115th Street, a once active pre-teen, street-fighting gang in reform.

Despite Cooper's considerable vocal, composing, arranging and organizing talents, he never again dented the charts as a recording artist in his own right. He did however write "Deserie" for the Charts whom he scooped up and took to Danny Robinson's Everlast label. The hypnotic "Deserie" is referred to as the song without a bridge and has reportedly sold 3.5 million copies. The tune was also used as a blueprint for the soulful "I want to know," another Cooper chart recorded by the Ladders, a group

Cooper put together, managed and coached. Despite a not-too-impressive C.V., Cooper is today considered one of the early pioneers of gospel-based soul music.

Born March 15th, 1931 in Norfolk, Va., Cooper grew up steeped in church music. His nephew, lead tenor Johnny "Buddy" Barnes, and cousin, basso William Goodman sang gospel around the Old Dominion State. The trio moved to New York in the late 1940s to find a better life and met up with another gospel soldier Bobby Dunn, a baritone from Henderson, North Carolina. They formed a quartet and went out singing pop, blues and spirituals in schools, clubs and churches.

It took a year, but they eventually found a record label that would take an interest



in them. They signed as the Empires with Morty Shad's Harlem label on 10th Avenue in late 1954. "My baby, my baby," the Empires' initial outing, did not do too well. Shad's

label was still getting established and he could not afford much national promotion. Nevertheless, the group still got a chance to play a few reputable nightspots around town.

The second try came during the spring of 1955 billed as the Empires featuring Johnny Ace Junior who in reality was Johnny Barnes. It was a dumb promotion gimmick to cash in on the posthumous popularity of Johnny Ace whom Barnes could mimic perfectly. The top side, the exquisite "Magic Mirror," did not do too well at first either but later became a prized cult classic among collectors. Their pairing with Lightnin' Junior ("Champion" Jack Dupree) on their third outing did more for Dupree than for the group.

When Morty Shad was about to drop the group they were picked by his brother Bob who took them to Mercury where Shad served as A&R person. Given over to Mercury's fledgling Wing subsidiary, the quartet under Leroy Kirkland's supervision recorded the beautiful "I want to know" which drew notice enough to inspire a move to the Mercury flagship. Now billed as the Prestos and again put under Leroy Kirkland's arranging genius, they waxed the wonderful "Looking for love" but the worms did not bite and they were soon back at Mercury where they recorded two magnificent singles as the Empires once more.

When Mercury opted to go entirely pop, the Empires (who had four songs still in the can) switched to Bobby Robinson's Whirlin' Disc. This was the start of a lasting professional friendship between Cooper and Robinson. Cooper wound up a volunteer



talent scout and A&R man for Robinson. Apart from working with the Charts and Ladders, he coached and brought along the Kodoks (Kodaks) on Fury in the studios.

After two disappointing singles as both the Empires and Whirlers that included a fabulous remake of "Magic Mirror," the Empires called it quits. Barnes found a pick-up Empires group and recorded a single for Amp 3. Cooper developed his piano-playing skills and together with Bobby Dunn recorded at least an album's worth of songs for the budget market Palace label over on 9th Avenue. A collection of rootsy soul sides billed as Bobby Dunn with Les Cooper & His Twisters emerged to cash in on the twist craze.

Dunn went further and formed a gospel

group called the Sensationals. (Note: *this is likely the same Sensationals who previously recorded with basso Jimmy Jones on Savoy.*) They waxed a stunning album collection of gospel songs for Palace. When Dunn went solo, Cooper formed the Soul Rockers and recorded three singles back with Bobby Robinson for his Everlast label. "Wiggle Wobble," his second release, became a best seller and an album of the same title emerged on Everlast in 1963. That same year Cooper with wife Gloria waxed a duet version of "Twisting one more time" for Robinson's Enjoy imprint. Cooper parted company with Robinson in 1965 after recording for Dimension and Enjoy and supporting Wilbert Harrison on a session for Port. He was heard on Samar (1966), Atco (1969) and Sussex (1970). Unlike many others, Cooper is still around and tickling the ivories.

Opal Louis Nations, November 2012

With thanks to Dr. Alan Schefflin, Phil Groia and the indefatigable Marv Goldberg

Produced for reissue by Opal Louis Nations

Executive producer Bob Fisher

Photo list for The Les Cooper plus Bobby Dunn Collection by Opal Louis Nations

Photographs:

1. Les Cooper – tray card, page 4 and Disc 2 – courtesy Opal Louis Nations
2. The Empires (1954):
Left-to-right: John Barnes, Bobby Dunn, Les Cooper, William Goodman – page 4 – courtesy Marv Goldberg
3. Les Cooper and the Soul Rockers – front cover & Disc 1 – courtesy Marv Goldberg

Label shots:

4. Les Cooper – "Wiggle Wobble" 45 label shot – page 5 – courtesy Opal Louis Nations

Compilation and Annotation: Bob Fisher
Transfers & Digital Processing: Tall Order Mastering
Graphic Design: Mary & Mick Ltd

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