

# THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT/ THE JASMAN RECORDS STORY

## James C.

Moore



Executive Producer James C. Moore, Jr.  
Jasman Records  
P.O. Box 19720  
Oakland, CA 94619

by Opal Louis Nations

Beginning on October 20, 1991 and lasting for three days, a raging wildfire fueled by warm, high winds destroyed approximately 1,580 acres and over 2,700 structures in the East Bay Oakland Hills. This became the most expensive fire disaster in California's history. The all-consuming flames took twenty-five lives and caused over 1.6 billion dollars in damages.

- Chief Postel, East Bay Fire Commission

One of the survivors of the conflagration was **James C. Moore Sr.**, proprietor of Jasman Records and Eroom Music Publishing. Moore lost almost everything in the fire and fled with little save the clothes on his back. "I lost contracts, video tapes, masters, pictures, everything," says Moore, who looks back with sadness but is thankful for his life.

Moore was born in St. Louis, Mo. on December 18th, 1928. Soon thereafter, the family pulled up stakes and moved to Memphis, Tenn. Moore's mother, Lela, hailed from Arkansas, his father Charles came from Vicksburg, Mississippi. Charles was in the dry cleaning business. Moore's grandmother was a church person and sang in a choir. Moore's earliest musical recollection was when he caught the sounds of jug bands drifting across the fields from far away. He was a boy in knee pants at the time. The very first blues music to catch Moore's ear resounded from the juke box at the beer-garden. "I'll always remember the original version of 'Jelly, Jelly' by **Bill Eckstine** with the **Earl Hines Band** on Bluebird in 1941," says Moore. Lured by work in the shipyards, the Moore family moved out West to Berkeley, California in 1941. He attended Berkeley High when actor Robert Culp and Yankees manager Billy Martin both took up class space at the school. "It was just like it was, some little while back - the hip kids wore baggy pants hanging off their hips. It was the thing back then," says Moore. "Bob Culp and his buddies started the trend."

Moore used to sneak into the Oakland Auditorium and hide in the balcony whenever the big bands came to town. "I remember seeing the **Lionel Hampton** and **Duke Ellington** bands and boy, when Hampton played, the whole building shook like we were in the throws of an earthquake," says Moore. "We had a Black promoter around here, John A. Burton. Burton put on **Charles Brown** and the **Three Blazers**. I'll always remember how bright

and radiant Charles seemed to be in front of a crowd." Burton is best recollected today for the use of his pet one-liner "The future looks bright," a maxim Moore tries to recall whenever thoughts of disasters like the Oakland Hills fire cross his mind.

Moore remembers a trip out to Minnie Lou's in North Richmond to see **Wynonie Harris**. Places like Minnie Lou's were rough, dangerous places in those days. Moore recalls beer bottles being thrown and his rapid retreat out the back door. Things were pretty bleak out in North Richmond. There were no decent streets and no sidewalks.

When it rained, the water created large lakes and puddles everywhere. In 1949, Moore spent a year in the mechanical engineering department at San Francisco City College. It was during this time he met his first wife. The pair were married in 1950. His partner's parents were into the 'watering hole' business - they owned The Palladium Club on San Pablo Avenue near Twenty-second, the Midway Bar on Thirty-fourth and Market, and Skippy's Bar on Eighty-fifth and East Fourteenth.

James and his wife were blessed with three children. James Jr. is one of the organizing officials for the African American holiday exposition during the Kwanzaa celebrations. Moore, who was blessed with the talent of being able to work with wood, was encouraged to become an apprentice carpenter. In 1955, he was drafted into the Army where he served for three years. Moore was shipped out to Fort Richardson in Anchorage, Alaska where he ran into a bunch of guys from New York and Philadelphia who were devoted fans of be-bop. The gang formed a jazz appreciation society and sat around talking about the finer points of bop and listening to **Charlie Parker** recordings.

After discharge, Moore went back to school. Pressed by family, Moore signed up to take an electronics course at Contra Costa Junior College. But after a while, Moore did not think that electrical work was for him and switched to drama under the tutelage of Jerry Davison. Moore remembers that actor/comedian Paul Mooney was in his class. He got to play major roles in college dramatizations such as Duke Mantee in Robert Sherwood's "The Petrified Forest" and King Herod in the biblical "Salomé." Moore excelled at acting and became a star pupil. Davison, much impressed by Moore's work, recommended him for a place at The New York Drama School. But Moore had two strikes against him: he could neither sing nor dance, two necessary requirements on the application. Moore was told he needed to find an angle or a way to qualify.

Meanwhile, keeping up his interest in jazz and popular African American music, Moore befriended **Chick Morris**. Morris was a strange, eccentric person with a genius for composing, arranging and playing piano. One day, Morris, who had made an appointment to go see **Joan Adams**, a.k.a. Ernestine Moore (no relation), over at Ricardo Lewis' house, asked Moore to drive him over there. Lewis, who was A&R man at The Sierra Sound Studios on Alcatraz and Shattuck Streets in Berkeley and vocalist/recording artist on Don Barksdale's Rhythm label, was in the process of conducting auditions with the **Intervals** vocal group. Membership at this

point included **Jessie Lee**, **David Lee**, and **Cleve O'Dare**.

The quartet needed a female singer to round out the group, and both Joan Adams and **Denise Perrier** had come to audition for the place. Perrier, a resident of San Francisco, has since become a notable soloist in her own right and travels constantly, giving concerts the world over. Needless to say, Perrier won out over Adams. Moore, on the other hand, thought that Adams had the most talent, but lacked a good manager. Moore then offered to drive Adams home. On the way, he volunteered his services by showing his willingness to become Adams' manager. Moore did all he could to help Adams' career, and when **Count Basie** came to town to audition for a new vocalist, Moore was right there with Adams at the auditions. Basie was wowed by Adams' vocal ability, described by Moore as being a cross between the styles of Sarah Vaughan and Carmen McRae. Her timing on ballads matched that of Frank Sinatra.

However, Adams rejected Basie's offer of having her with his band. She was raising two children on a fixed sum and did not want to give up a steady source of income in exchange for the uncertainties of being in professional showbiz. Moore had enough faith in her to find sufficient dates to keep her working in California. He also recorded six songs on her at Sierra Sound, songs which never saw release. **Chick Morris** was enlisted to work on many of her musical arrangements. Beside the musical activity, Moore remained in school at Contra Costa College during which time he got himself elected chairman of "College Hour," an ongoing entertainment activity whereby certain artists in the music business would be hired to play on programs for the college.

Among the artists Moore asked to perform were **Sonny Rollins** (tenor sax) and hard-bop trumpet player **Freddie Hubbard**. It was during this time that he discovered songwriter **Trudy Rhone** with whom Moore wrote the incidental musical score for the drama college's production of Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin." It was Rhone who wrote **Big Mama Thornton's** 1966 Arhoolie release (Arhoolie LP 1032) of "Gimme A Penny," based on Rhone's observation of a bag-lady. She also penned "Wish You Were Mine" for soul-jazz sax legend **Hank Crawford**.

Adding to the management roster, Moore took on **Roosevelt** and the **Uncalled Three Trio**, a group which, unfortunately, was never given a chance to record. Moore wished to get into studio production. Using his carpentry skills, he helped Bob De Sousa remodel The Sierra Sound Studios at Shattuck and Alcatraz in return for free studio time. Through the tall, gangly **Bob Jeffries**, yet another artist who waxed for Don Barksdale's Rhythm label and who is thought to have been a member of **The Four Deuces** of "W.P.L.J." fame, Moore was able to secure Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton's management contract.

Moore's first project with Thornton was a venture put together with Bay Area guitarist **Johnny Talbot** who Moore also managed for a while. The March 1964 Sierra Sound session produced "Before Day (Big Mama's Blues)" and Thornton's original version of "Me And My Chauffeur." Both songs were leased to the Bihari brothers in Los Angeles who released them on a Kent single.

In early 1965 Thornton was busy recording for the tiny Sotoplay label down in Los Angeles, after which she returned to the Bay Area. Under



Moore's counsel and guidance, Thornton was chosen to appear on The American Folk Blues Festival. Thornton played concert dates in London and throughout Europe with harpist **Shakey Horton**, pianist **Eddie Boyd**, and guitarists **Buddy Guy** and **Fred McDowell**, among others. "I had made good friends of Cannonball Adderly," says Moore, "and it was he, along with Jon Hendricks and others, who encouraged me to go to Europe with Willie Mae." Thornton's live European recordings and subsequent San Francisco dates were recorded by Chris Strachwitz of Arhoolie Records.

In December 1966, Moore managed to get Thornton on the "Spirituals to Swing" concert, a joint benefit for the Institute of Jazz Studies and Carnegie Hall's Seventy-fifth anniversary bash, sponsored by John Hammond and Columbia Records. For a \$350 fee, Thornton joined **Count Basie**, **Joe Turner**, **Marion Williams** and others in a sold-out Sunday concert m.c.'d by Goddard Lieberson on January 15, 1967. Hammond also set up a Columbia studio date for the week Thornton was to be in New York.

It was not until 1967, with the aid of Ray Shanklin, that Moore was able to exert a measure of control in the recording studio. In this case, the old Fantasy Studios on Treat Street in San Francisco was where Thornton cut "Because It Is Love" and "Life Goes On" for Galaxy Records. This was after her momentous return engagement at the Monterey Jazz Festival. In 1969, Thornton, now riding high on the comeback trail, dropped Moore in favor of the big boys at Mercury Records, the label to which she was able to secure a five-year contract.

Back in 1964, Moore discovered **Judith Kennedy** at Don Barksdale's Showcase Club on Berkeley's Telegraph Avenue and took her under his wing. Changing her name to Jay Kennedy, Moore booked her into local Bay Area clubs including the Reno Club on Grove Street with **The Eugene Keel Trio**. Kennedy, like Joan Adams, was an excellent jazz singer with a penchant for ballads. Moore booked her into San Francisco's Purple Onion where she sang jazz ballads and standards. Kennedy also enjoyed a guest appearance alongside **Cal Tjader** at the Summit Club in Los Angeles. By sheer fluke, columnist Walter Winchell was out in the audience. Winchell wrote up Kennedy's appearance in his column the next day.

"She sings like Edith Piaf," he wrote. The management at Purple Onion were so impressed with



Kennedy's talent that they wanted her to do a residency. A series of untoward events took place which took Kennedy out of Moore's hands - Moore had not registered Kennedy's contract with the labor commission. Kennedy went on to appearances on **The Merv Griffin Show** and worked with many notable jazz musicians, including **Freddie Hubbard**. After a peak in her career, Kennedy took a downward turn and ended up in a wretched state.

One of Moore's first clients was **Ray Agee**. Moore managed crippled blues legend Ray Agee when he was recording for Bob Geddis' and Ronnie Badger's Check label out of San Francisco in 1960. **Johnny Heartsman**, **Bob Geddis Jr.** & **The Jets**, a female vocal group, played at the session. "I had Agee when he did "The Gamble," one of his best selling charts. Agee would do anything to get a hit record. He loved music and was always striving for fresh material. He believed that music was alive and embodied with its own spirit," says Moore.

Moore's first encounter with **Sugar Pie De Santo** came about in 1959. "I was helping Bob (Geddis Sr.) set up his new large studio at Eleventh and Clay in Oakland. Musicians were there to play on what would become Sugar Pie's first breakthrough session, the one which produced "I Want To Know" with **Pee Wee Kingsley** on guitar, Johnny Heartsman on guitar, Bob Geddis Jr. on keyboards and some White guy on bass. Bob Geddis' financial assistants, Ronnie Badger and Jack Hurst, were standing in the back of the studio. They had ideas of their own in regard to Sugar Pie's future career. They ended up buying her a yellow Cadillac and were involved in cutting a deal with Chess Records in Chicago." Sugar Pie ended up on Chess, but not before Badger and Hurst had made a considerable sum of money out of it.

The next time Moore met Sugar Pie was at Don Barksdale's Oakland nightclub - the Showcase. Sugar Pie shared billing with the late **Jackie Wilson**. During her performance Moore wished that she would do less of a physical work-out (she moved constantly like a gymnast) and more with her voice. At the close of her performance, Moore caught her before going through the door to her dressing room. "Would you let me manage you," he said, after a preliminary introduction. Sugar Pie smiled and took his card. A year later, she showed up at his door. "You said you could make me a star, so here I am," she said.

Sugar Pie quit music for a spell in 1970 after a session with **The Fuller Bros.** on Soul Clock with Ron Carson producing. The type of music she was doing did not appeal to the listening audience of the time. But in 1971, under Moore's supervision and with John Parrish's arrangements, Sugar Pie cut the "Hello, San Francisco" session which reactivated

her career.

Moore continues to manage and produce Sugar Pie's recordings to this day (see the two listed CDs currently available).

In 1966, jazz singer **Tressel Lewis** called Moore on the phone full of excitement. She had discovered a wonderful songwriter by the name of **Audrey Calvin** and wanted Moore to manage her. Lewis played on of Calvin's songs over the phone, live for Moore to audition. He was sufficiently impressed to take Calvin down to Sierra Sound and audition her fully there.

Calvin was also a very talented pianist and singer with an extremely difficult husband. The husband's interference made it very difficult for Moore to enter into any equitable business arrangement with Calvin. Eventually, a demo came about, with "Sweet Man" on one side and "Thank You Baby" on the other. Moore took the demo to wheeler-dealer Bug Scruggs who in

turn took it to L.A. Nothing happened until a friend pointed out to him that a prominent female vocalist on Detroit's Motown label had recorded it. Moore had been swindled out of the rights to the song. Capitol Records wanted Calvin under contract, but because of a third party's irrational interference, the deal never went through. After writing and collaborating with local soul artist **Jesse James**, Calvin faded from public view. She died of a stroke in 1988.

One of Moore's major achievements was that he was one of the founders of The Festival at the Lake in Oakland. The Festival used to be an annual event, showcasing musical acts of a folk-based nature from around the world for adults and children on a multiple staging system. Sadly, The Festival at the Lake is no more. Hooliganism and difficulties over maintaining adequate safety for everyone attending put a stop to it.

Moore is currently co-producing a third Sugar Pie De Santo CD with blues legend **Jimmy McCracklin**, the Bay Area's last remaining statesman of the blues. McCracklin wrote one of the songs intended for the release, "He Said, She Said," a typical true-to-life opus from the man who gave us "The Walk."

"After the fire," says Moore, "I went back up the hill to take a look at the damage. There were albums and master tapes sitting there as they had always done, in their seemingly untouched, original form, but now completely composed of ashes."

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Jasman Records

Moore founded his first label, Sharp, in 1963. **Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton's** "Me And My Chauffeur" backed with "Before Day" was the first and only release as Moore found out later that an older, more established Sharp label still existed in Newark under Herman Lubinsky's ownership. The record was leased to the Bihari brothers who issued it on Kent. Moore switched names to Jasman in 1969. Releases by **Audrey Calvin**, **Johnny Talbot**, **Sugar Pie De Santo**, **Willie Hoskins Jr.** and **Eddie Foster** plus production work with **The Ve-Shelles** (Vetrice Van Hook, Sheila and Eleanor Letcham) ensued.

*continued*



Sugar Pie DeSanto and Moore have a long successful history together.



# Sharp Records\*

## **"Big Mama" Thornton**

424-1 Before Day (Big Mama's Blues) Sharp 101 / Kent 424 (1964)  
424-2 Me And My Chauffeur Sharp 101 / Kent 424 (1964)

\* Moore insists that both The Ve-Shelles and Joan Adams first recorded for Sharp, but no material proof has been found as of this date

## **Jim Moore & Boola-Boola Records**

The Ve-Shelles  
M-H 200A Pledging My Love Boola-Boola 200 (1968)  
JMP 200B Shingaling (instr.) Boola-Boola 200 (1968)

## **Jasman Records**

The Good Guys (Willie Hoskins Jr. & Eddie Foster)  
UMM A Do Your Thing (Pt. 1) "Jasman" 1 (1969)  
UMM B Do Your Thing (Pt. 2) "Jasman" 1 (1969)  
(The song was originally recorded with The Ve-Shelles. For this release, the Ve-Shelles' vocal track was dropped out and The Good Guys' dropped in.)

## **Johnny Talbot & De Thangs**

UMM A Git Sum Jasman 2 (1970)  
UMM B Pickin' Cotton Jasman 2 (1970)  
UMM A Take It Off (Pt. 1) Jasman 3\* / Atlantic 45-2757  
UMM B Take It Off (Pt. 2) Jasman 3 / Atlantic 452757

\* The Atlantic reissue is an alternate mix and is of different duration

## **Sugar Pie De Santo**

UMM A Hello San Francisco (Pt. 1) Jasman 4 (1972)  
UMM B Hello San Francisco (Pt. 2) Jasman 4 (1972)  
UMM A Straighten It Out With Yo Man Jasman 5 (1972)  
UMM B Keep Your Woman's Lib Jasman 5 (1972)

## **Johnny Tolbert (sic)**

UMM A Check Your Battery (Pt. 1) Jasman 6 (1972)  
UMM B Check Your Battery (Pt. 2) Jasman 6 (1972)

## **Sugar Pie De Santo**

UMM A Git Back Jasman 7 (1974)  
UMM B Strange Feeling (remake)  
Jasman 7 (1974)

## **Audrey Calvin**

UMM A Thank You Baby Jasman 8  
UMM B Time Takes Care Jasman 8  
UMM A Sweet Man Jasman 9  
UMM B ? Jasman 9

## **CDs**

"Sugar Is Salty" - Sugar Pie De Santo Jasman 01000 (1993)  
Boom Boom Song / Super Fool / How Many Times / Steppin' Out / Close The Door / Enemy / I Want To Know / See The Light / Hello San Francisco, Parts 1 & 2 / Boyfriend / What Makes You Think

"Classic Sugar Pie" (The Last Of The Red Hot Mamas) - Sugar Pie De Santo - Jasman 10004 (1997)

Bread & Butter / I Still Care (remake) / (J.) Lump In My Chest (remake) / I Don't Want To Fuss (remake) / Use What You Got (remake) / Don't Worry About Me / Mama Didn't Raise No Fools (remake) / Crazy Lovin' (remake) / Ask Me (remake) / There's Gonna Be Trouble (remake of unissued Chess original) / Never Say Die

With The New Orleans Group & Sweet Nectar Singers. Songs arranged by Wardell Quezzerque and recorded in New Orleans.

## **Additional Songs Owned by Eroom Music**

Because It's Love - Big Mama Thornton - Galaxy 749 (1966)  
Life Goes On - Big Mama Thornton - Galaxy 749 (1966) / also: Arhoolie LP 1032 (1966)  
Gimme A Penny - Big Mama Thornton - Arhoolie LP 1032 (1966)  
Oil Man, Parts 1 & 2 - Willie Hoskins Jr. - Boola-Boola #1 (1968)  
Matter Of Time - Sugar Pie De Santo - Jasman CD / Cass. 01000-1993  
I Can't Stop It - Audrey Calvin (unreleased)

## **Related Releases**

(Production work)  
Dawn & Sunset

What It Is  
DT & V DT3 (1972)  
Include Me  
DT & V DT3 (1972)

With thanks to Alec Palao for supplying most of this information