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C2K 65229

the columbia okeh post war gospel story 1947-1962

THERE WILL BE NO SWEETER SOUND

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COLUMBIA OKeh LEGACY

C2K 65229

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THERE WILL BE NO SWEETER SOUND

COLUMBIA
OKeh
"360" SOUND

disc ONE

1. Rough And Rocky Road *(2:00)*

(R. Rowell)

IKEA 6928

The Mello-Tones

Columbia/OKeh, CO 46300

Recorded October 1950, NY

Originally released 1951 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

2. What Are They Doing In Heaven *(3:13)*

(R. Rowell)

The Mello-Tones

Columbia/OKeh, CO 44533

Recorded October 1950, NY

Originally released 1950 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

3. Flying Saucers *(2:11)*

(R. Rowell)

The Mello-Tones

Columbia/OKeh, CO 44800

Recorded October 23, 1950, NY

Originally released 1951 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

4. When The Pearly Gates Unfold *(2:48)*

(Traditional/M.A. Brunner)

The Mello-Tones

Columbia/OKeh, CO 44534

Recorded October 23, 1950, NY

Originally released 1950 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

5. Cool By The Riverbanks *(2:17)*

(R. Rowell)

OKEH 6928

The Mello-Tones

Columbia/OKeh, CO 46893

Recorded October 24, 1950, NY

Originally released 1951 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

6. Looking For That City Called Heaven *(2:36)*

(Traditional/M.A. Brunner)

The Mello-Tones

Columbia/OKeh, CO 44799

Recorded October 1950, NY

Originally released 1951 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

7. Run On For A Long Time *(2:34)*

(Traditional)

Bill Landford & The Landfordaires

Columbia, CO 42504

Recorded December 1949, NY

Originally released 1950 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

8. Touch Me Jesus *(2:16)*

(L.E. Campbell)

Bill Landford & The Landfordaires

Columbia, CO 42503

Recorded December 1949, NY

Originally released 1950 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

9. You Ain't Got Faith (Till You Got Religion) *(2:42)*

(W. Price)

Bill Landford & The Landfordaires

Columbia, CO 42505

Recorded December 1949, NY

Originally released 1950 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

10. Lord I've Tried *(2:50)*

(Unknown)

Bill Landford & The Landfordaires

Columbia, CO 42508

Recorded December 1949, NY

Previously unreleased

Originally recorded 1949 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

11. Troubled, Lord I'm Troubled *(2:54)*

(Landford)

Bill Landford & The Landfordaires

Columbia, CO 42509

Recorded December 1949, NY

Originally released 1950 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

12. Devil Is No Relation To Me *(3:13)*

(H. Porter)

Brother Porter & Brother Cook with The Porterettes

Columbia, CO 44088

Recorded July 1950, NY

Originally released 1950 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

Courtesy of Lynn Abbott

Jackson Gospel Singers

circa 1952

13. Don't Turn Around *(2:44)*

(S. Lewis, M. Brown)
The R.S.B. Gospel Singers
Columbia/OKeh, CO 45089
Recorded 1951, NY
Originally released 1951 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

14. Oh, What A Time *(2:36)*

(L.E. Matthews)
The R.S.B. Gospel Singers
Columbia/OKeh, CO 45090
Recorded 1951, NY
Originally released 1951 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

15. Father, I Pray *(2:52)*

(Washington)
The R.S.B. Gospel Singers
Columbia/OKeh, CO 45091
Recorded 1951, NY
Originally released 1951 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

16. My Lord And I *(2:10)*

(L. Campbell)
The R.S.B. Gospel Singers
Columbia/OKeh, CO 45092
Recorded 1951, NY
Originally released 1951 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

17. Inside The Beautiful Gate *(2:19)*

(T.A. Dorsey, S. Martin)
The R.S.B. Gospel Singers
Columbia/OKeh, CO 46459
Recorded 1951, NY
Originally released 1951 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

18. Just A Little Talk With Jesus *(2:55)*

(C. Derricks)
Deep South Boys
Columbia, CO 38702
Recorded December 1947, NY
Originally released 1948 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

19. Holy Ghost Getting Us Ready *(2:38)*

(W. Fowler)
Deep South Boys
Columbia, CO 38703
Recorded December 1947, NY
Originally released 1948 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

20. My Soul Is A Witness *(2:31)*

(Traditional)
Deep South Boys
Columbia, CO 38704
Recorded December 1947, NY
Originally released 1949 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

disc TWO

1. **All The Way** *(3:01)*
(Traditional)
Sunset Jubilee Singers
OKeh, CO 46464
Recorded June 1951, NY
Originally released 1951 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

2. **Rasslin' Jacob** *(2:43)*
(Traditional)
Sunset Jubilee Singers
Okeh, CO 46465
Recorded June 1951, NY
Originally released 1951 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

3. **Poor Pilgrim Of Sorrow** *(3:04)*
(Traditional)
Sunset Jubilee Singers OKEH 6811
OKeh, CO 46466
Recorded June 1951, NY
Originally released 1951 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

4. **There'll Be A Jubilee** *(2:42)*
(Traditional)
Sunset Jubilee Singers
OKeh, CO 46467
Recorded June 1951, NY
Originally released 1951 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

Bill Landford

Date unknown

Archival Publicity Photo

5. **Jesus Is The Searchlight** *(2:32)*
(S. Lewis, V. Davis)
The Bailey Gospel Singers
Columbia/OKeh, CO 45100
Recorded January 27, 1951, NY
Originally released 1951 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

6. **Journey To The Sky** *(2:39)*
(Austin)
The Bailey Gospel Singers
Columbia/OKeh, CO 45098
Recorded January 27, 1951, NY
Originally released 1951 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

7. **Count Your Blessings** *(3:09)*
(Unknown)
Jackson Gospel Singers
OKeh, CO 47621
Recorded December 1951, New Orleans
Originally released 1952 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

8. **Lord Take Care Of Me** *(2:32)*
(Unknown)
Jackson Gospel Singers
OKeh, CO 47622
Recorded December 1951, New Orleans
Originally released 1952 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

9. **Softly And Tenderly (Jesus Is Calling)** *(2:45)*
(Unknown)
Brother Rodney
OKeh, CO 47143
Recorded November 5, 1951, NY
Originally released 1952 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

10. **Sweet Hour Of Prayer** *(2:25)*
(Unknown)
Brother Rodney
OKeh, CO 47144
Recorded November 5, 1951, NY
Originally released 1952 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

11. **I'm Going Through** *(2:57)*
(Unknown)
Brother Rodney
OKeh, CO 47858
Recorded April 23, 1952, NY
Originally released 1952 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

12. **Rock Of Ages** *(3:05)*
(A. Toplady)
Brother Rodney
OKeh, CO 47859
Recorded April 23, 1952, NY
Previously unreleased
Originally recorded 1952 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

13. **I Know The Lord Laid His Hands On Me** *(2:27)*
(E. Rivers, W. Holford)
The Pearly Gates Spiritual Singers
OKeh, CO 49388
Recorded May 1953, NY
Originally released 1954 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

14. **Not Alone** *(2:50)*
(E. Rivers, W. Holford)
The Pearly Gates Spiritual Singers
OKeh, CO 49389
Recorded May 1953, NY
Originally released 1953 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

15. **Man Called Jesus** *(2:37)*
(Nelms)
The Pearly Gates Spiritual Singers
OKeh 6494
OKeh, CO 49390
Recorded May 1953, NY
Originally released 1953 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

16. **Jesus At the Well** (2:41)
(Unknown)
Sister Myrtle Fields with Austin McCoy Trio
Columbia, CO 3991
Recorded January 1950, Hollywood
Originally released 1950 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

17. **I'm Toiling** *(2:41)*
(Alan)
Sister Myrtle Fields with Austin McCoy Trio
Columbia, CO 3992
Recorded January 1950, Hollywood
Originally released 1950 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

18. **Death Draws Nigh** *(4:56)*
(J. Thompson)
Sanders Cooper & Sons of Glory
OKeh, LP OKM 12100
Recorded February 3, 1962, NY
Originally released 1962 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

19. **I'll Journey On** *(4:44)*
(S. Cooper)
Sanders Cooper & Sons of Glory
OKeh, LP OKM 12100
Recorded February 3, 1962, NY
Originally released 1962 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

20. **I Thank The Lord** *(1:39)*
(L. Edwards)
Sanders Cooper & Sons of Glory
OKeh, LP OKM 12100
Recorded February 3, 1962, NY
Originally released 1962 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

For an understanding of Columbia's involvement in Afro-American church music, one has to go back to Thomas A. Edison. In 1877, Edison invented the phonograph as a novelty item for people to record and play back their own voices.

The first phonographs were manufactured in 1888, and shortly thereafter the establishment of The North American Phonograph Company was set up to handle sales. The N.A.P.C. organized thirty regional subsidiaries, the most promising being The Columbia Phonograph Company which covered the Maryland, Delaware and District of Columbia territories.

Although the N.A.P.C. failed as a parent company, Columbia prospered under the stewardship of John Philip Sousa. By 1900, two companies competed for phonograph and cylinder sales — Columbia and Edison's new National Phonograph Company. But competition was met from another quarter. The National Gramophone

Company had been manufacturing record discs since 1897. Discs gained ground over cylinders and in 1902, Columbia entered the recording disc business. It was, however, The Victor Talking Machine Company who first recorded Afro-American gospel singing when they issued six single-sided records by The Dinwiddie Colored Quartet in 1902.

Discs advanced from lateral recordings in which the needle moved from side to side in the groove to hill-and-dale ones, where the needle moved vertically in the groove, as it did on cylinders. In 1915, the General Phonograph Corporation, financed by a German company, issued discs on the OKeh label.

In 1925, Bell Labs perfected the electric recording technique and offered the technology at a stiff price to Victor and Columbia. The consortium that controlled the near bankrupt Columbia Record Company was, however, reluctant to make such a large investment. The American-owned English Columbia subsidiary was determined to go electric, and in order to do so bought the controlling rights of the parent company. It is speculated that this move was responsible for the widening of the Columbia 14000D "race" (Negro) series established in 1922.

OKeh Records, which had set up its 8000 "race" series two years earlier, was the first to make southbound field trips to record African American blues and gospel artists (A.R.C. acquired OKeh from the Grigsby Grumow Company in 1934.) OKeh made forays into Atlanta both in 1923 and 1924. In 1925, Columbia made its initial field trip into Atlanta. The company

Deep South Boys

Circa 1947

Frank Driggs Collection

recorded the "sermons with singing" of the Rev. J.M. Gates, blues singer Virginia Childs, and The Birmingham Jubilee Singers. Field trips were made into New Orleans in 1926, and expeditions into Dallas and Memphis followed a year later.

THE SALES OF "RACE" RECORDS REACHED THEIR PEAK AT THE CLOSE OF 1928. Approximately five hundred blues and gospel records were issued in that year alone. However, by late 1931 in the depths of the Depression, manufacture of different titles had dwindled to under three hundred and Columbia's ambitious 14000D series was discontinued. Except for the lean years of 1932-34, Columbia issued the minimum of thirty gospel quartet records per year up until 1941. Columbia's first major selling gospel release was "Death's Black Train Is Coming" by Rev. J.M. Gates, issued in July 1926 on Columbia 14145D. Its overdubs of train whistles and attendant background sounds made it an irresistible and instantaneous success.

COLUMBIA WAS BOUGHT BY A.R.C. IN 1934 AND IN 1938 SOLD TO C.B.S. WHO IN TURN ACQUIRED A.R.C.. The Columbia Broadcast System phased out the Brunswick and OKeh full price lines it had acquired and revamped its Columbia holdings in 1939. (A new OKeh label emerged in the summer of 1940.)

THE COLLECTION YOU HAVE IN YOUR HANDS SPANS THE YEARS 1947 THROUGH 1962 AND OFFERS A RARE GLIMPSE OF LESS FAMILIAR ARTISTS WHO NEVERTHELESS WERE EXCEPTIONALLY TALENTED BUT WHOSE WORK FOR THE MOST PART ESCAPED THE ATTENTION OF THE GOSPEL RECORD BUYING PUBLIC AT LARGE. Nothing much is known of The Deep South Boys, except that they were an all-male jubilee quartet who recorded twelve sides at Columbia's New York studios during the latter part of December 1947. Matrices suggest that they may have shared sessions time with Duke Ellington. A good deal more is known about baritone/tenor Bill "Highpockets" Landford (a.k.a. Langford) who sang second lead and played guitar accompaniment on recordings with The Four Chocolate Bars, a.k.a. Golden Gate Quartet of Charlotte, VA, in 1937 and 1938. He sang as second tenor with Kissler James Baxter and The Southern Sons in 1943-44 and switched to Thermon Ruth and The Selah Jubilee Quartet in 1945.

ACCORDING TO RUTH, LANDFORD STARTED THE BILL LANDFORD QUARTET (LANDFORDAIRES) WITH THE LATE BROOK BENTON SOME TIME IN LATE 1945. Landford's singing style is described by Tony Heilbut as being sly in tone with a satisfied oily vibrato, unmistakably Southern. Besides Landford's sparse chording, The Landfordaires owe much to The Golden Gate jubilee tradition.

SISTER MYRTLE FIELDS, A.K.A. ALEXANDER, POSSESSED A STRIKING VIBRATO AND SANG IN THE SISTER ROSETTA THARPE STYLE. A publicity photo from the period shows Myrtle wearing a broad smile, a modest shin-length, pinstriped dress and broad brimmed hat bedecked with trim. Fields cut four songs for Columbia in Hollywood with The Austin McCoy Trio. McCoy also played organ behind Sister Wynona Carr on her first Specialty session in 1949. Little is known about Brother Porter, a.k.a. Prof. Hugh E. Porter, and Brother Cook, a.k.a. Rev. Ernest Cook, except they first recorded on the Circle label in 1946 and after four titles for Columbia (two unreleased), went on to wax an album for the Gospel Recording label supported by organ and vibes.

THE MYSTERIOUS PORTERETTES WERE A FEMALE AGGREGATION SUPPOSEDLY BASED IN HARLEM. In 1958, Porter and Cook hooked up with Jobe Huntley and recorded for Folkways as The Porter Singers out of The Second Canaan Baptist Church in Harlem.

ACCORDING TO CHARLIE STOREY OF THE CHARLES STOREY ALL STARS, THE MELLO-TONES WERE A TOUGH SINGING JUBILEE QUARTET WHO OFTEN SHARED BILLING WITH STOREY WHEN HE HEADED UP THE BROOKLYN ALL STARS. There were many Mello-Tones groups recording during the 1950s. This set cut seven songs for Columbia/OKeh. "When The Pearly Gates Unfold" is firmly rooted in the jubilee tradition. The song bounces along to stride-like piano, hand clapping and jubilant sermonizing. "Looking For That City Called Heaven," done up in the same mode with guitar instead of piano, features an astounding lead tenor whose identity is unknown.

THE R.S.B. GOSPEL SINGERS WERE AGNES WASHINGTON, PAUL MARTIN, MARION H. DUDLEY, MRS. ROBBIE HUMPHRIES AND GERALD C. SMITH. PAUL MARTIN SERVED AS PIANIST AND ARRANGER. The group conducted three New York sessions in 1951-'52 alone, one for Columbia and two for OKeh. Thirteen songs were taped, from which ten were chosen for release. The last session featured a heavy rhythm accompaniment.

THE BAILEY GOSPEL SINGERS WERE A SHORT-LIVED ACAPPELLA MALE JUBILEE QUARTET OUT OF NEW YORK WHO RECORDED SIX SIDES FOR COLUMBIA/OKEH IN 1951. The group was

Courtesy of Opal Louis Nations

Sunset Jubilee Singers

Circa 1950

blessed with a thundering bass singer and group members with strong, impressive voices. The Sunset Jubilee Singers were one of New York's premier 1940s quartets. Founding members included Carl McCarter, Vernon Downey (lead), Sam Kellam (tenor), Thomas Williams (baritone) with Ernest Bunker and William Kelly (bassos.) William Kelly was from Mt. Holly, South Carolina and organized the popular Harmonaires during the War, out of co-workers at a Seventh Avenue fur factory. Kelly and The Harmonaires sang behind "The Georgia Peach" (Clara Hudmon) on Apollo in 1945. Kelly joined The Sunset Jubilees for their initial recordings on Hub in 1946. They went from Hub to Duke in 1946 and then as The Sunset Four with Marie Knight on the Haven and Candy labels that same year.

The Sunset Jubilees were a sacred quartet who successfully moved from singing jubilee over into the looser style of hard gospel. The group often spotlighted the bass singer and stuck to minimal instrumentation. They favored the old church hymns over gospel songs. The group's reading of "Poor Pilgrim Of Sorrow" is wildly extrovert in form and color. "There'll Be A Jubilee" rocks the church and gets the hands and feet in frenzied motion.

The New Orleans-based Jackson Gospel Singers have been well documented by researcher Lynn Abbott who states that the women began in family gatherings at Alma Jackson's South Tonti Street home in 1936. Jackson's husband, Felton, became The Jacksons' manager. Members of the singing Jackson family warbled in four of the Crescent City's top quartets. Abbott goes on to state that during the 1930s, The Jacksons' hard singing

bested most male quartets. The Jackson girls hitched up with electric guitar playing singer/evangelist Elder Utah Smith and shared in his big-tent broadcasts of 1945. The group recorded one acappella session for Star Talent in 1949. By 1951, they were signed to OKeh where they recorded two sessions over a seven month period. Of the eight sides taped, six were issued. The group was composed of Alma Jackson (lead), Mattie Joseph Gilbert (swing lead), Marjorie Kelley (tenor), Emma Golden (baritone) and Mary Thames Coleman (bass.) Gilbert doubled on piano.

THE GROUP HUMS, WAILS AND MOANS ALONG WITH CONVICTION ON "COUNT YOUR MANY BLESSINGS" OVER COLEMAN'S EFFECTIVE BLOW-BASS RHYTHM. The group went on to record for Atlantic in 1953 but was not as persuasive as on their OKeh sides.

BROTHER

RODNEY STURGIS FIRST WAXED FOR GOTHAM IN 1950 WHERE HE RECORDED THE DELICIOUSLY COLORFUL "KEEP YOUR HAND UPON THE THROTTLE" WHICH SOLD IN IMPRESSIVE QUANTITIES. After two more Gotham releases, Sturgis signed with OKeh and completed two New York sessions with them in November 1951 and April 1952. Six sides were placed on the market. By June 1954, Sturgis was back with Gotham, having formed a mixed vocal backing group called The Harmonic Choralaires (or Choraliers.)

THE PEARLY GATES

SPIRITUAL SINGERS WERE IN NO WAY THE SAME GROUP AS RECORDED BEHIND GEORGIA BASED SOLOIST, SISTER LUCILLE POPE. The Pearly Gates were a short-lived male vocal group out of New York who recorded briefly in 1953 for OKeh. Their exciting interpretation of "Not Alone" is powerfully rendered in the style of the famous Bells of Joy of Texas to simple guitar and loud drum accompaniment. "Man Called Jesus" follows the same formula but at a slower tempo.

BY FAR THE MOST OUTSTANDING GOSPEL ALBUM EVER ISSUED ON THE OKEH LABEL WAS *GOD GLORIFIES* BY SANDERS COOPER AND THE SONS OF GLORY FROM NASHVILLE WHO WERE: SANDERS COOPER (LEAD), LEE EDWARDS (SECOND LEAD), WILLIAM BERNIE, WILLIAM BLEDSOE, JOSEPH THOMPSON AND FRANK NEWSOM. Cooper had sung alongside soul singer Gene Allison in The Israelite Travelers out of Nashville. Fairfield Four soldier Clarence Mills also sang in The Israelite Travelers who recorded for Tennessee in 1954 and behind Lucille Barbee on Nashboro in 1956. The album liner notes state that The Sons of Glory, founded in 1960, toured the length and breadth of the country and that *God Glorifies* (1962) was their debut on vinyl.

SANDERS COOPER STRETCHES OUT AND BARES HIS SOUL ON "DEATH DRAWS NIGH." He sings in an anguished style much borrowed by the great deep-soul music masters of the 1960s. On "I'll Journey On" Cooper squarely burns up the tracks as the tension builds. "I Thank Lord" gives Edwards a chance to show his mettle. The Sons of Glory were one of the most convincing yet neglected quartets of the 1960s who came and went after two equally remarkable singles on Nashboro in 1963-'64.

ONLY A FEW TRADITIONAL GOSPEL SINGING QUARTETS TRAVERSE THE HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS ON A PROFESSIONAL BASIS TODAY. The quartet tradition is for the most part neglected in favor of the choir or choral singing aggregation. While we look to the future, let us not turn our backs on the past and the glories of the Afro-American quartet tradition.

Opal Louis Nations
February 1997

PRODUCER'S NOTE:

Every effort has been made to preserve the integrity of the original analog recordings. The listener should be aware, however, that these transfers from metal or shellac parts contain imperfections. Surface noise, lip smacks and abrupt endings are presented as originally recorded.

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