CDCHD 687

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THE BEST OF EXCELLO Records GOSPEL

The Golden Era Of The 1950s

The SILVERTONE SINGERS
The SONS OF THE SOUTH
The BOYER BROTHERS
The WALDO SINGERS
The JEWEL GOSPEL-AIRES
(with Candi Staton)

ace

THE BEST OF EXCELLO Records GOSPEL

1. **STEP BY STEP - THE BOYER BROTHERS** ℗ 1952
2. **OH LORD STAND BY ME - THE BOYER BROTHERS** ℗ 1952
3. **ON THE BEAUTIFUL SHORE - THE HENDRIX SINGERS** ℗ 1952
4. **JESUS BE MY KEEPER** (S William) **THE SILVERTONE SINGERS** ℗ 1952
5. **SINCE JESUS CAME INTO MY HEART** (C Gabriel, R McDaniel, Arr S William) **THE SILVERTONE SINGERS** ℗ 1952
6. **I CAN CALL JESUS ANYTIME - YOUNG GOSPEL SINGERS** ℗ 1953
7. **I GOT A HOME IN THAT ROCK - THE SILVERTONE SINGERS OF CINCINNATI** ℗ 1953
8. **IN MY HEART - THE SILVERTONE SINGERS OF CINCINNATI** ℗ 1953
9. **IN THE SWEET BYE AND BYE** (J Webster, S Benett) Public Domain **THE SERMONAIRS** ℗ 1953
10. **IS THERE ANYBODY ELSE LIKE JESUS - BRO. HENRY EDWARDS** ℗ 1953
11. **RUN ON TO THE END - THE SILVERTONE SINGERS OF CINCINNATI** ℗ 1954
12. **WAY BYE AND BYE - THE SILVERTONE SINGERS OF CINCINNATI** ℗ 1954
13. **JUST TELL JESUS - THE WALDO SINGERS** ℗ 1954
14. **TRUST HIM TODAY** (E Byrd) **THE WALDO SINGERS** ℗ 1954
15. **IN MY SAVIOUR'S CARE** (T Dorsey) Carlin Music Corp **THE SONS OF THE SOUTH** ℗ 1954
16. **DIDN'T IT RAIN CHILDREN** (Trad arr E Ratcliff) **THE SONS OF THE SOUTH** ℗ 1954
17. **JESUS MY SAVIOUR - THE SILVERTONE SINGERS OF CINCINNATI** ℗ 1954
18. **RESCUE THE PERISHING** (W Doane, F Crosby) Public Domain **THE SILVERTONE SINGERS OF CINCINNATI** ℗ 1954
19. **I'M WAITING AND WATCHING** (D Smith) **THE SONS OF THE SOUTH** ℗ 1954
20. **ONE DAY - THE SONS OF THE SOUTH** ℗ 1954
21. **GOD IS ALRIGHT - THE SONS OF THE SOUTH** ℗ 1955
22. **TRAVELIN' DOWN THIS ROAD - THE SONS OF THE SOUTH** ℗ 1955
23. **OH LORD, GUIDE THE WAY - THE JEWEL GOSPEL-AIRES** ℗ 1955
24. **AFTER AWHILE WITH JESUS - THE JEWEL GOSPEL-AIRES** ℗ 1955

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CDCHD 448 - **The Radio Four (with Morgan Babb) - There's Gonna Be Joy**
CDCHD 432 - **The Swanee Quintet - What About Me? / Anniversary Album**

Afro-American gospel and church music was very much alive and flourishing in and around Nashville during the post-war era. The Ryman Auditorium (currently the home of the Grand Old Opry) began as a worship place and throughout the 1950s engaged gospel musicians to play on programs MC'd by Rev Sam McCrary of the Fairfield Four and Rev Dr Morgan Babb of the Radio Four, respectively. Acts often went from the Ryman to the Mt Calvary Baptist Church pastored by Rev CL Hoag on 25th and Herman or to The War Memorial Building on 5th Avenue. McCrary also booked troupers into his own ministry, St. Mark's Missionary Baptist. Many touring groups stayed at Brown's Hotel on Jefferson. Others found lodging at the Valdot or Del Monaco.

Three principal independent record companies with an interest in recording black spiritual talent blossomed during this time. The first of these, The Bullet Recording and Transcription Company, established itself in 1946. Bullet was founded by hillbilly singer Wally Fowler, coin operator C V Hitchcock, and radio announcer Jim Bulleit who served as the company's front man. Bulleit recorded the Fairfield Four in 1946, the Evangelist Singers in 1948, and Mrs James A Myers with the famous Jubilee Singers, an offshoot of the Fisk Jubilee Singers of Fisk University, who since the end of the last century paved the way for all concert-touring aggregations.

The Tennessee/Republic Record Company was established in 1951 by the Bubis brothers in partnership with William Beasley and Howard Allinson. The firm issued sides by the Radio Four, Mdm Edna Gallmon Cooke, Sister Lucille Barbee plus a legion of lesser-known aspirants during 1952-53.

The Nashboro Record Company was set up at roughly the same time by Ernest L Young, a savvy southern businessman who rapidly branched out into record mail-order through Ernie's Record Mart, his shop. Both Young and the Bubis brothers crossed paths and cut deals. Nashboro's Excello subsidiary was set up in early 1952 expressly to promote the burgeoning popularity of Afro-American spiritual music. However, in 1955, after hooking up with record dealer/producer Jay Miller in Crowley, La., Young carried over his entire gospel roster to the Nashboro parent label. From then on, Excello was devoted mainly to blues and R&B.

Nashboro became a permanent outlet for gospel music, a genre Young enjoyed and much admired. Rev Dr Morgan Babb, one of Young's new, aspiring gospel items, was taken on as guiding light and principal gospel talent scout.

Three significant radio-jocks ruled Nashville's gospel and blues airwaves from the powerful 50,000 watt studios of WLAC. Bill "Hoss" Allen from Gallatin, described as possessing the finest, mature voice-over southern drawl in the business, John R. (Richbourg), the deep-voiced late-night

legend who played dubs of impending releases almost exclusively (John R. was Young's man and tirelessly plugged Nashboro product through his Ernie's Record Mart program), and Gene Nobles. Nobles, former carnival bingo-barker from Hot Springs, Arkansas, represented Young's competition. Sponsored by Randy Wood of Randy's Record Shop and mail order, Nobles hawked Wood's wares.

The Boyer Brothers were Excello's first signing. The Boyers, James Buchanan, born 1934, and Horace Clarence, born 1935, were affiliated with The Faith Holy Temple COGIC. As two of eight offspring born to The Rev Climmie and Ethel Boyer of Winter Park, Florida, both siblings played piano but only Horace directed The Faith Holy Temple Choir. The Boyer Brothers were still at high school when, in July 1952, Horace (tenor) and James (baritone) cut eight sides in back of Ernie's Record Shop (as it was then called) at 179 Third Avenue North.

It was usual for the duo to sing harmony on the slower numbers, as on 'Step By Step', but on shout and jubilatory charts, the couple practiced call and response. Today, each holds a PhD and teaches at college level. James is at Kansas State, and Horace at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

The Hendrix Singers were natives of Nashville. James Hendrix directed and managed the group, played piano, wrote the material, and sang lead. 'On The Beautiful Shore', one of only four sides cut for Excello, is a close choral vehicle, rendered in

Concert advert - Atlanta, Georgia, 1955

the traditional manner with verve and gusto. James Hendrix currently resides in a Nashville nursing home.

Unlike the Hendrix Singers, the Silvertone Singers, (one of many outfits bearing that name), enjoyed a lengthy and somewhat successful career. Originally out of Trenton, New Jersey and managed by a high school principal, the Silvertones were honoured as being Ernie Young's first recording artists. Starting out on the Nashboro imprint, the group was switched to Excello in 1952. Eight songs were cut for Excello before the outfit, undoubtedly made up of different soldiers, switched back again to Nashboro for a final session.

All the Silvertone Singers' Jubilee and post-Jubilee sides were exceptional and have suffered from being overlooked up to now. Just take a listen to the doom-laden 'Run On To The End' with its "chiming" lap-steel and driving tempo or the RH Harris sound-alike lead on 'Jesus My Saviour', to mention just two of the eight outstanding selections collected here.

Brother (Rev) Henry Edwards was an eccentric, shadowy figure who cut only one record for Excello. Edwards sang and played organ and piano. By day, he worked as a cook at the Andrew Jackson Hotel. His culinary skills were excellent. He was also a self-styled gospel concert promoter who brought acts to town and put them up at his home. Shannon Williams remembers seeing gospel singers sleeping everywhere in Edwards' house, even under the dining room table. Edwards put big-name gospel luminaries like Brother Joe May up at the Andrew Jackson. Edwards hosted his own gospel radio show over WVOL on Sunday mornings and would open his program by talking over organ solos by Eloise Brown and Alfred Bolden. He used this method to promote his gospel events and introduce his own airplay segments. His 'Is There Anybody Else Like Jesus' displays his ample vocal talents. Edwards died of cancer seven or eight years ago.

Little is known of the Young Gospel Singers or Young Sisters except that they began recording for Mercury in 1950, moved over to RCA-Victor in 1952, and after one unissued session for Glory that same year, enjoyed one Excello release in 1953. Probably composed of two males and three females, the Youngs in all likelihood were related to, or interchangeable with, the Waldo Singers as both are musically alike and were accompanied by the same principal musicians. As the Young Gospel Singers, the unit gives a burning Davis Sisters-like rendition of 'I Can Call Jesus Anytime' and billed as the Waldos, match anything put out by the better-known Gospel Harmonettes.

The Sermonairs are probably a third group in some way connected to the Youngs and Leroy Waldo. This mixed vocal ensemble cut one record for Excello. Their 'In The Sweet Bye And Bye' is belted out with grit and conviction. Unfortunately,

the Sermonairs faded into obscurity. According to Bishop Naomi Manning of the Jewel Dominion, (a sect of the Holiness Pentecostal denomination), the Jewel Gospel Singers, Jewel Gospel Trio, and Jewel Gospel-Aires were all interconnected female groups sponsored by the Jewel Dominion centering around five singers, all soloists. Three of these, soul diva Canzetta 'Candi' Staton (lead), Maggie Staton-Peebles, and Bishop Naomi Manning, constituted the Jewel Gospel-Aires accompanied, among others, by Roma Jones on piano and Harvey Jones on guitar.

The Jewel Gospel-Aires waxed one single on Excello in February 1955. Roma's blues-colored piano supports a high-spirited run-through of 'Oh Lord, Guide The Way' with Candi coming through strongly on lead on occasion. Harvey's pretty blues guitar figures orchestrate a furious-sounding 'After Awhile With Jesus'.

A good deal is known about the Sons of the South, formerly the Southern Sons Quartet on Lillian S McMurry's Trumpet label out of Jackson, Mississippi. The Sons of the South comprised Jessie White (lead vocal), Sammy Downs (who replaced the great Roscoe Robinson in the former group), tenor, Earl Ratcliff and David C Smith (tenors), both out of the Southern Sons, and the legendary Jimmy Jones (bass.) The unpredictable Jones was moonlighting back and forth between the Sons and the Harmonizing Four of Richmond, Virginia at the time.

We have included all six songs the quartet recorded for Excello. Jimmy Jones weaves in and out of the fabric to 'In My Saviour's Care'. Notice that the Sons give Jones far more room to stretch out than the Harmonizing Four ever allowed. 'God Is Alright' is one of those singing testimonies Archie Brownlee was want to holler with the Blind Boys of Mississippi. Here, White briefly bares his soul and gets in the amen

The original Jewell Trio, aka Jewel Gospel-Aires in the early 50s. L-r: Canzetta (Candi) Staton, Maggie Staton-Peebles and Bishop Naomi Harrison-Manning (current head of the Jewel Pentecostal Denomination).

corner. 'I'm Waiting And Watching' and 'Traveling Down This Road' start with a bounce and end with an open display of hard Blind Boys-type singing.

'One Day' is brought to the group from the Harmonizing Four by Jones. Unlike the Harmonizing Four's well-mannered version, the Sons infuse the chart with joy and excitement. Unfortunately, the group disbanded shortly after one final Nashboro release.

The Nashville quartet scene still thrives forty three years after the last of these recordings were made. Groups like the Fisk Jubilees, Fairfield Four, Dynamic Dixie Travelers, and Nashville Jubilees continue to please a welcoming audience.

Opal Louis Nations, 1998

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