DISCOGRAPHY

Tracks 1, 2: BACK HOME CHOIR OF NEWARK, NJ:
Joe Deloatch - Soloist
July 7, 1957 (afternoon session), Newport, R.I.
Verve LP 8425

Track 3: SWAN SILVERTONES:
Claude Jeter, Louis Johnson - Soloists
with Paul Owens, John Henry Myles, William 'Pete' Connor
Linwood Hargrove - Guitar
Al Duncan - Drums
May 12, 1959, Universal Studio, Chicago
Vee Jay 879

Tracks 4 - 6: SWAN SILVERTONES:
Claude Jeter, Paul Owens - Soloists
with Dewey Young, John Henry Myles, Henry Bossard
Unknown location, 1954
Specialty (unreleased)

Track 7:
Sister Rosetta Tharpe - Vocal, Guitar
September 9, 1958, COGIC, New York
Mercury LP 20412 (1958)

Track 8: MIGHTY CLOUDS OF JOY:
Willie Joe Ligon - Soloist
with Bedile Goldsmith, Johnny Martin, Jerome Brown, Freddie Johnson, Jonnie Wesley, Johnnie Gibson
Bedile Goldsmith - Guitar
1958, Rev. Wesley's Church, 88th & Bandera, Watts
Proverb 100

Track 9: MIGHTY CLOUDS OF JOY:
Bedile Goldsmith, Johnny Martin, Jerome Brown, Freddie Johnson, Jonnie Wesley, Johnnie Gibson
Bedile Goldsmith - Guitar
Watts, 1959, Will Rogers Park
Proverb LP #? / Hob LP 288

Track 10: MITCHELL'S CHRISTIAN SINGERS:
William Brown - Lead
Julius 'Juke' Davis, Louis Panella Davis & Sam Bryant
Friday 23, December, 1938, Carnegie Hall, NYC
Vanguard VRS 8524

Tracks 11 - 13: WILLIAMS SINGERS OF ST. LOUIS:
Unknown personnel and Location
Unreleased, 1959

Tracks 14, 15: MORNING ECHOES OF DETROIT:
Unknown personnel and Location
Unreleased, 1959

Tracks 16, 17: GOLDEN KEYS:
Personnel unknown
September 29th, 1951, Los Angeles
Unreleased

Tracks 18, 19: PILGRIM TRAVELERS:
Kylo Turner - Lead
Jesse Whitaker - 2nd Lead
with James W. Alexander, Keith Barber, George 'Oopie' McCurn
1955, unknown location, possibly Shrine Auditorium, Los Angeles
Specialty (unreleased)

JSP Records PO Box 1584 London N3 3NW England

Cover Art: aitkendesign@mac.com Cover: Sister Rosetta Tharpe

SACRED RECORDINGS MADE IN THE FIELD

GOSPEL ALIVE

Compiled & Annotated by OPAL LOUIS NATIONS

Featuring:

- Joe Deloatch
- Claude Jeter
- Sister Rosetta Tharpe
- Little Joe Willie Ligon
- Williams Singers of St Louis
- Golden Keys
- Pilgrim Travelers

& More

CD:A

This collection offers for the first time an overview of black, sacred recordings made in the field. They demonstrate a wide variety of the many exciting styles of Afro-American gospel music covering for the most part the Post-War era. We have drawn in-the-front-seat clips from the tent, concert hall, church, park, festival grounds, stadium, ballroom, studio and auditorium and have included international gospel stars such as Mahalia Jackson and Sister Rosetta Tharpe alongside lesser celebrated but equally talented artists like the Morning Echoes and Golden Keys.

Hearing in-the-spirit-gospel live performances before an enthralled audience makes for a full and true experience. The recordings may not always convey the cleanness and controlled environment of the studio and may sometimes include a soloist, caught by the spirit, wandering off-mike, but this emotional music is the closest you will ever get to the essence of black gospel music. If this doesn't have you off your feet and into the air, nothing will.

Between 1926 and 1941, the Library of Congress sent 'field recordists' into the South to gather recorded music from African American peoples practicing many, if not all, folk idioms. From Washington DC, they headed down through Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. Swinging west they traversed through Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana, taking forays north along the way into Tennessee and Arkansas, winding up in Texas. The Library of Congress recorded convict groups in all eleven states, ex-slaves and Methodist Church singers in Virginia, ditch diggers in South Carolina, preachers in Georgia, Menhaden fishermen in Florida, prayer meetings and church services in Alabama, Tennessee and Mississippi, train callers in Mississippi, plantation workers in Louisiana, teachers, lumberjacks and timberjacks in Texas and school kids, male and female groups and quartets in half a dozen states. The Library of Congress holds the largest collection of Afro-American work and worship place recordings in the world.

It was not until the early 1940s that easily affordable and reliable portable recording equipment became widely available to the general public, thus allowing them (with the use of two fixed microphones) to record at home or abroad. The Dinwiddie Colored Quartet was the first recorded male gospel quartet and would have quite possibly become the first recorded live aggregation back in 1902 had equipment been available. The Dinwiddies went out to concertize at various venues to raise money for their school, the John A. Dix Industrial School in Dinwiddie, Virginia.

The Fisk University Jubilee Singers, who first recorded in 1909, did get the chance to 'go out live' over Nashville's WSM in 1935. This was four years before the Golden Gate Quartet was recorded on Sunday December 24, 1939 during the celebrated 'From Spirituals to Swing' concert at Carnegie Hall in New York. Right after the 'Swinging Christian' Josh White sessioned with his group the Carolinians, he joined the Golden Gate Quartet to broadcast a CBS Forecast radio program centered around the black folk traditions of the spiritual for the white listeners' palate. Woody Guthrie and Burl Ives appeared on the same show with them.

The Back Home Choir was put together by singers/composers Jeff and Charles Banks in the mid-Fifties out of members of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Newark, pastored at one time by activist Adam Clayton Powell. They were also featured on the air by Joe Bostic, music director for WEVD, New York. The choir went on to play Hunter College and Carnegie Hall.

The Swan Silvertones were at their peak in 1954. The group often caught ablaze with the amazing chops of Dewey Young who only stayed with the outfit for four years having replaced the fiery second lead, Solomon Womack. The ethereal Claude Jeter never sounded better. The 1959 selection was recorded at Universal Studios on Ontario Street in Chicago with Vivian Carter and her friends in attendance. This was a repeat of a successful ploy created before for the 5 Blind Boys of Mississippi on February 12, 1957. The Swan Silvertones and West Coast Jubilee Singers recordings come from unreleased Specialty remotes taped in 1954. It is likely but uncertain that both were recorded at The Elks Auditorium in Hollywood.

The original Mighty Clouds of Joy were a teenage quartet put together by Bedile Goldsmith at the Unident Church in Los Angeles in 1955. This group split up and a new lineup came together around shout lead Joe Ligon in 1960. Members were drawn from the Stars of Bethlehem and Gospel Wonders. It was this second group that rose to become gospel superstars.

The Golden Keys were a Los Angeles quartet who also recorded unsuccessfully for the Hollywood label. The San Francisco Bay Area's Golden Keys are a different group. The LA group was recorded by the celebrated disc jockey Hunter Hancock.

Nothing is known about the excellent Williams Singers of St. Louis or the Morning Echoes of Detroit as both seem dissimilar from known groups of that name.

Other artists included on the 1955 unreleased live Specialty sessions include the Pilgrim Travelers, a stomping rhythm quartet of enormous power and harmonic grace who almost single-handedly kept the Specialty gospel catalog alive during the late 1940s-early 1950s.

DISCOGRAPHY

Track 1: PILGRIM TRAVELERS:
Kylo Turner - Lead
Jesse Whitaker - 2nd Lead
with James W. Alexander, Keith Barber, George 'Oopie' McCurn
1955, poss Shrine Auditorium, Los Angeles
Specialty (unreleased)

Tracks 2 - 5; 8:
Mahalia Jackson - Vocal
Mildred Falls - Piano
'Big' Crawford -Bass (4, 5, 8)
the Celestial Trio - Backing Vocals (5)
2, 3: 1951, Unknown location
4, 5, 8: 1955, Unknown locations
Unreleased

Track 6, 7: CELESTIAL TRIO:
The Celestial Trio (names unknown) - Vocals
Thomas A. Dorsey - Piano
'Big' Crawford - Bass
Unreleased, 1955
Unknown location

Track 9: GOLDEN GATE QUARTET w. JOSH WHITE:
Willie Johnson, Henry Owens, Clyde Riddick
Orlandus 'Dad' Wilson - Bass, Speech
Josh White - Guitar
August 19, 1940, CBS Forecast Radio Program,NY
Radiola LP MR1133

Track 10: HARMONIZING FOUR of RICHMOND, VA:
Thomas Johnson, Lonnie Smith
Joseph Williams - Lead
Vance Joyner, Lonnie Smith - Guitaruitar
Wedding Ceremony of Sister Rosetta Tharpe to Russell Morrison, July 3, 1951, Griffith Stadium, Washington DC.
Decca 48272

Track 11, 12: SISTER ROSETTA THARPE & THE ROSETTES:
Sister Rosetta Tharpe - Vocal, Guitar
Rosettes: Lottie Henry - Lead
Sarah Brooks, Oreen Johnson, Barbara Johnson, Erma Wallace
Wedding Ceremony of Sister Rosetta Tharpe to Russell Morrison, July 3, 1951, Griffith Stadium, Washington, DC.
Decca 48265/66

Track 13:
Sister Ernestine B. Washington - Vocal
with Prof. Alfred Miller & The Congregation of the Washington Temple
1958, COGIC, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Westminister LP 6089

Track 14: BROTHER JOE MAY & The SALLIE MARTIN SINGERS:
Bro Joe May - Vocal
Sallie Martin Singers:
Sallie & Cora Martin, Theresa Childs, Fred Martin
Theresa Childs - Piano
Charles Brown - Organ
June 27, 1952, Elks Auditorium, Los Angeles
Specialty (unreleased)

Track 15:
Elder Charles Beck - Vocal, Trumpet
with The Way of the Cross COGIC Choir
December 1956, WKBW Radio Program, Buffalo, NY.
447 Genesee Street, Buffalo

Track 16: SPIRIT OF MEMPHIS QUARTET:
Jet Bledsoe - Lead
Willmer M. Broadnax, Robert Reed, Silas Steele, Fred Howard & Earl Malone
October 7, 1952, Mason Temple, Memphis, TN.
King 4576

JSP Records PO Box 1584 London N3 3NW England

Cover Art: aitkendesign@mac.com Cover: Mahalia Jackson

SACRED RECORDINGS MADE IN THE FIELD

GOSPEL ALIVE

Compiled & Annotated by OPAL LOUIS NATIONS

Featuring:

- Mahalia Jackson
- Sister Ernestine B Washington
- Sister Rosetta Tharpe
- Golden Gate Quartet
- Thomas A Dorsey
- Brother Joe May

& More

CD:B

The Pilgrim Travelers

GOSPEL ALIVE

SACRED FIELD RECORDINGS

No collection is complete without the great Mahalia Jackson who is represented here with sparse accompaniment. Her finest work was conveyed simply with Mildred Falls, accompanied sometimes by Thomas A. Dorsey and his Celestial Trio who also served to promote Dorsey's gospel songs out on the gospel highways and byways. The 1951 session is from a 'teach-in' program recorded in upstate New York. The second session is part of a similar idea presented in 1955, but differs by the fact that both Chicago gospel and blues were represented at one time. Here Jackson is supported by 'Big' Crawford, better known for playing behind blues folks like Big Maceo, John Brim and Washboard Sam, among others.

Sister Rosetta Tharpe was a guest on the first 'From Spirituals to Swing' concert at Carnegie Hall on Friday, December 23, 1938 where she recorded the unreleased *I'm Going Back To Jesus*. The Mitchell's Christian Singers were also on the bill. The liner notes to the 'Spirituals to Swing' boxed set state that "What an event it is to have this fine group on long-play records for the first time. Using simple scalar structure, their subtle tonality and restrained but forceful, dynamic rhythm vitalize everything they do." The Mitchells were one of North Carolina's finest. They recorded extensively during the 1930s.

For Sister Rosetta Tharpe, we have drawn from three distinctly different sessions. The first is from her 1951 marriage ceremony to her manager, Russell Morrison, at Washington DC's Griffith Stadium sponsored and financed by Decca Records who paid for large cardboard cut-outs of the bride and provided the celebratory fireworks. The actual nuptials were conducted by DC's own Rev. Samuel Kelsey followed by a full slate of stellar gospel appearances by Richmond, Virginia's Harmonizing Four, DC's Sunset Harmonizers, Rosetta's group, the Rosettes, and New York's Vivian Cooper (an operatic-sounding diva not included on this collection.)

The second Tharpe session is a solo performance from September 1958 at the COGIC in New York. The Sally Jenkins Singers, who recorded off and on for Herman Lubinsky's Savoy label during the 1960s without too much success, were also part of this concert but do not perform on this cut.

Our third Sister Rosetta session is taken from an AFRS Jubilee Transcription cut in 1943, supported by the Lucky Millinder Orchestra at the Savoy Ballroom in New York. The Orchestra at that time included Tab Smith and Sam 'The Man' Taylor on tenor sax and Panama Francis on drums.

The Spirit of Memphis recorded the awesome *Lord Jesus* at the Memphis Mason Temple, flagship of the Church of God in Christ founded by Bishop C.H. Mason in 1895. Mason, a Pentecostalist born in Lexington MS, built up the largest independent black church denomination in the world. One of the leading lights of the Pentecostal church was Elder Charles D. Beck at 447 Genesee Street in Buffalo, New York. Beck regularly broadcast thirty-minute revival programs over Buffalo's WKBW, often with guests like the Heavenly Gospel Singers, Elder Nat Hollis and Sister Goldie Haynes.

DISCOGRAPHY

Track 1:
Ruth Black-Castille - Vocal
w. The St. Paul's Baptist Church Choir of Los Angeles - Rev. John L. Branham - Choir leader
June 12, 1947
Capitol 40033

Track 2: SUNSET HARMONIZERS of WASHINGTON, DC:
Group led by Carl Coates, others unidentified
Wedding Ceremony of Sister Rosetta Tharpe to Russell Morrison
July 3, 1951, Griffith Stadium, Washington, D.C.
Decca 48268

Track 3:
Gene Martin & the Gene Martin Singers with members of the Amelia Anderson & the Haynes Singers
1959, Miracle Valley Revival Tent, Hereford, Arizona
Miracle Valley LP 129

Track 4:
Goldia Haynes - Vocal
1959, Miracle Valley Revival Tent, Hereford, Arizona
Miracle Valley LP 129

Track 5:
A.A. Allen Revival Big Top Choir
1959, Miracle Valley Revival Tent, Hereford, Arizona
Miracle Valley LP 127

Track 6: THE ANDREWS SISTERS:
Sylvia Lois Andrews - Lead
Ola Jean Andrews, Paula Marie Andrews, Flora & Donna Daggao, Norma J. King
1959, Miracle Valley Revival Tent, Hereford, Arizona
Miracle Valley LP 131

Track 7: W. COAST JUBILEES
Vocal Group - Presley Thomas, Lead, Richard Wilike Richardson, Ace H. Franklin, A.C. Franklin, Freeman Jingles
1954, Elks Auditorium, LA
Specialty (unreleased)

Track 8:
Edna Bowdry & the New Brighter Day Missionary Baptist Church Choir of LA
1959
Danderli LP 2004

Track 9:
Emma Bowdry & the New Brighter Day Missionary Baptist Church Choir of LA
1959
Danderli LP 2004

Tracks 10, 11:
Rev. E.C. Bowdry & the New Brighter Day Missionary Baptist Church Choir of LA
1959
Danderli LP 2004

Tracks 12, 13: PROF. ALFRED MILLER & The SALLIE MARTIN SINGERS:
Group - Sallie & Cora Martin, Theresa Childs, Fred Miller Teresa Childs - Piano
Chas Brown - Organ
poss Elks Auditorium, Sept. 1955
Specialty (unissued)

Track 14: SIS. ROSETTA THARPE & THE LUCKY MILLINDER ORCH.
Sister Rosetta Tharpe - Vocal
Milton Fletcher, Joe Guy, Ludwig Jordan, Fran Humpheries - Trumpet
George Stevenson, Gene Simon, Joe Britton-Trombones
Tab Smith, Bill Bowen, Sam 'The Man' Taylor, Mike Hedley, Ernest Purce - Saxes
Ray Tunia - Piano
Trevor Bacon - Guitar
George Duvivier - Bass
Panama Francis - Drums
1943, The Savoy Ballroom, NY
AFRS Jubilee Transcription 36

Track 15: ALBERTINA WALKER & THE CARAVANS:
Albertina Walker - Lead, Cassietta George, Johneron Davis, Louise McDowell
James Cleveland - 2nd lead, Piano
July 22, 1955, Shrine Auditorium, Los Angeles, CA.
Specialty (unreleased)

Track 16:
Brother Joe May
with Bob King - Guitar
Henry Woods - Piano
July 22, 1955, Shrine Auditorium, Los Angeles, CA.
Specialty (unreleased)

Track 17: DOROTHY LOVE COATES & THE GOSPEL HARMONETTES:
Group: Dorothy Love Coates-Lead, Mildred Miller, Odessa Edwards, Willie Mae Newberry, Garth & Vera Kolb
Evelyn Starks Hardy - Piano
July 22, 1955, Shrine Auditorium, Los Angeles, CA.
Specialty (unissued)

JSP Records PO Box 1584 London N3 3NW England

Cover Art: aitkendesign@mac.com The Caravans (Albertina Walker 3rd left)

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Featuring • Ruth Black-Castille • Sunset Harmonizers • Goldie Haynes • Albertina Walker • Rev E C Bowdry • Sallie Martin Singers • Dorothy Love Coates & More

CD:C

GOSPEL ALIVE SACRED FIELD RECORDINGS

Ruth Black-Castille's beautiful rendition of Horatio Palmer's *Yield Not To Temptation* drew much attention around California in 1947. She is supported by Rev. John Branham's St. Paul's Baptist Choir with whom (the unrecorded) Prof. Earle Hines and his Goodwill Singers were affiliated. Black-Castille also sang in the Goodwill singers. St. Paul's was one of the first black Los Angeles churches to enjoy both weekly radio exposure over KFWB and a four-year recording contract with Capitol Records. In 1948, the Sallie Martin Singers also became a regular feature on the church's music programs.

Goldia Haynes began recording for Capitol Records in 1950, supported by the likes of rhythm & blues stars Joe Liggins and Gene Phillips. A native of East St. Louis, Haynes formed the Haynes Gospel Trio during the 1950s. Haynes and her trio were guests under the big white tent at Miracle Valley, Arizona during the late 1950s. Her fierce, forceful vocal style was still very much intact at this time. Other guests under the vinyl tent included California-born Gene Martin and his Singers and the wonderful Andrews Sisters from Berkeley, again artists who later appeared on Capitol Records. The Miracle Valley Revivals were the brainchild of A.A. Allen, a white, spiritually converted, self-proclaimed 'healer' who fought the evils of alcoholism all of his life. A.A. Allen claimed to make well the sufferers of terminal illnesses, even restoring those at death's door, simply with the use of his hands and prayers.

The West Coast Jubilees were managed by Presley Thomas who founded the quartet in the late 1940s. They also played the Elks earlier with both the famous Kings of Harmony and Zion Travelers on the bill.

Prof. Alfred Miller is a behind-the-scenes gospel composer, arranger, singer and keyboardist who played in support of many fine gospel performers in the 1950s and on TV Gospel Time during the early 1960s. He sang and recorded with 'The Milleraires' and 'The Three Professors.' His contribution to mid-century gospel music is extensive but poorly documented.

Sister Ernestine Washington's recording career started out in 1943 when Prof. Alfred Miller first attended as her pianist. She recorded with the Dixie Hummingbirds a year later, then with Bunk Johnson for Moses Asch. Recordings behind the Heavenly Gospel Singers and Southern Sons followed before coming to prominence as a threat to Mahalia's queenly throne. She established herself as principal diva of the Washington Temple COGIC in Brooklyn with old friend Prof. Alfred Miller as her musical director.

Songs by Rev. E.C. Bowdry and relatives Edna and Emma come from an extremely rare and obscure album that never saw distribution outside of the Los Angeles area. This was quite a common phenomenon during the 1950s and 1960s when a church sponsored and financed its own recordings for the enjoyment of their own immediate brethren. Rev. E.C. Bowdry conducted his services in the traditional manner, preaching and singing in the spirit.

The Gospel Harmonettes formed as a trio at Parker High School in Birmingham, Alabama in 1940. After taking on Willie Mae Newberry-Garth and Vera Kolb, they recorded for RCA in June 1949. The great soloist/songwriter Dorothy Love Coates came aboard in 1950 after pianist Evelyn Starks had been taken by her powerful, emotional singing on a Birmingham radio station.

Others include Albertina Walker and the Chicago-based Caravans who were between recording contracts when they appeared at the Shrine Auditorium. Needless to say, Albertina Walker and Rev. James Cleveland tore up the place with their four-song segment. Cleveland stayed with the Caravans singing, playing and arranging for three years.

Brother Joe May, 'The Thunderbolt of the Middle West,' was an earth-shaking talent who was able to shade his powerful singing with the most soulfully rendered tones. May is supported by talented guitarist Bob King who played behind the Soul Stirrers and Bells of Joy on their most significant recordings.

I have tried to convey a rounded picture of 'live gospel' as it was being performed in churches and concert halls after World War II. Much of it has never seen commercial release before and only a sprinkle of cuts may be familiar to the collector. Let us remember that numerous attempts at live spiritual recordings did not come about until the more commercially available growth of portable equipment. It was not until the January 1963 recording of James Brown's 'Live at the Apollo' album and its surprising sales success that major record companies took any serious notice of live recordings. It was a wake-up call.

Opal Louis Nations
April 2011