GOSPEL
CELEBRITIES & CELESTIAL LIGHTS

Surprisingly many top-drawer and one-time wannabe celebs took a stab at waxing Gospel music at one time or another. It seemed almost like a rite of passage to cut something for the church folk. Louis Armstrong (a sinner if ever there was one) gave inspiration to The Five Blind Boys of Alabama who recorded 'The Sermon' in 1953, based on Louis's hilarious 'Elder Eatmore's Sermon On Generosity' from August 1938. Bing Crosby cut 'Old Man River' and a slew of others. Frank Sinatra recorded the beautiful 'Home In That Rock' with The Charioteers. Frankie Laine made a swinging, finger-snapping Gospel album with The Four Lads in 1956. A year on Jane Russell and Connie Haines got together and formed a heavenly thrush-sounding quartet for upbeat readings of 'Do Lord' and 'I'm Really Livin'' for Coral (plus other songs). 1959 marked the issue of Woolworth's heiress **Betty Hutton**'s amazing release of Saints And Sinners from which we have culled the uplifting '**Search Me Lord**'.

PILGRIM TRAVELERS WITH GEORGE McCURN

Roy Hamilton gave us an extra bonus inside his Gospel album collection - a poster copy of one of his biblical paintings. Earl Grant recorded with the distinguished Bro Joe May's daughter Annette. **LaVern** Baker sessioned with the illustrious Prof. Alex Bradford, and even Dave Bartholomew and Fats Domino cut separate versions of 'The Saints'. The list is endless.

In the 1950s, swinger Ella Mae Morse, The Four Tunes, Jimmy Witherspoon and Arthur Prysock, among others, all recorded Gospel sides. On this collection, we have included the otherwise secular **Orioles** who sang jubilee style on Jubilee Records. The 1960s gave us Gospel collections by Big Maybelle, Ketty Lester, Dee Dee Sharpe, Linda Hopkins and a host of others, too many to call.

STAPLE SINGERS

This collection dwells on the best of the best from what we now consider Gospel's Golden Era, 1949-1959. We have included the not-so-celebrated as well as household names. We hear **Sam Cooke** stretching his honeyed pipes around an unissued take of '**Jesus Wash Away My Troubles**' and '**Last Mile Of The Way**'. **The Staple Singers** give us pre-Vee Jay embryonic versions of '**Low Is The Way**' and '**This May Be The Last Time**'. On these, as with the other two inclusions, '**Since He Lightened My Heavy Load**' and '**This Same Jesus**', the presence of family friend and one-time promoter/pianist **Evelyn Gay** accompanies in principal support.

MAHALIA JACKSON AT NEWPORT 1958

Members of the sanctified Sensational Wonders along with soldiers from The Stars of Bethlehem morphed into the second and more widely recognized **Mighty Clouds of Joy**. The previously unreleased songs by **Mahalia Jackson** are from small live recitals. As usual, she is supported by her pianist, **Mildred Falls**. Her renderings of '**When He Spoke**' and Wynona Carr's '**Each Day**' give a clear voiceprint of her mighty pipes.

Gospel diva **Marie Knight**, although crossing back and forth between Gospel and R&B many times, never abandoned her connections with the church. She made her recording debut in April 1946 with 'Lift Every Voice And Sing', the Negro National Anthem.

DIXIE NIGHTINGALES

The **Sensational Nightingales** rose to professional eminence during the 1950s lead by the great **Julius Cheeks**. They survive today by giving the occasional performances in the Carolinas and surrounding area. **The Dixie Nightingales** hailed from Memphis. The group switched to Soul in the mid-1960s and recorded for Stax under the soubriquet of Ollie Hoskins, a.k.a. Ollie & the Nightingales.

ETHEL DAVENPORT

Ethel Davenport enjoyed considerable notoriety on Imperial Records in the early 1950s supported by Eddie "Guitar Slim" Jones of 'The Things That I Used To Do' fame in 1953. Ex-Clara Ward Singers alum **Marion Williams** is today considered the contemporary of the great Mahalia Jackson with her neo-operatic voice and striking countenance. **The Dixie Hummingbirds** are represented here with '**I'll Live Again**' and a chart shared with The Angelic Gospel Singers who occasionally tour Europe where they have many fans.

The Five Blind Boys of Alabama need no introduction as after sixty-five years on the grueling 'Gospel Highway' they tour the world performing with artists from every popular music discipline. **Goldia Haynes** recorded with Joe Liggins in 1950 and fifteen years later hosted a handful of episodes of TV Gospel Time, appearing beside The Selah Jubilees and The Harmonizing Four.

Cynthia a.k.a. **Ann Cole** was an awesome Gospel songstress who regularly wrecked the church with her **Colemanaires**. The Three Kings replaced The Colemanaires in 1954 and Cole went out singing R&B. She recorded extensively for Baton in New York through to the late 1950s, scoring a

minor success with 'Got My Mo-Jo Working' in 1957. **Judy Clay**'s recording history starts in 1954 when she was recorded by Savoy with her family and relatives, **The Drinkard Singers**. Her first impressive recorded performance came in July 1957 when with The Drinkards she lead on the fiery 'That's Enough' at the Newport Jazz Festival. She declined singing lead with The Drinkards in the early 1960s and by 1964 was singing Soul music for Scepter.

Little Joe Cooke of **The Evening Star Gospel Singers** emulated his namesake, Sam Cooke, which may explain why his fine Gospel singles met with modest success. In 1957 with his Pop group The Thrillers, he enjoyed some chart success with his novelty opus 'Peanuts' which charted a second time in 1961 when Rick & The Keens covered it.

WOMACK BROS

The Sims Twins, Bobby and Ken, started out in The Sims Brothers Sextet on Dootone in 1952. Like their friends The Womack Brothers on Sam Cooke's Sar Records, the Sims quickly moved over to the greener pastures of Soul music, scoring with 'Soothe Me' on Karate in 1961. Sam Cooke bought the song-rights the same year. **Bobby & The Womack Brothers** are represented here by their extremely rare 1954 childhood recording of **'The Bible Tells Me So'**.

Most of **Little Richard**'s Gospel records were over-produced and lacked the same sanctified feel that his secular sides exhibited. Richard, the most notoriously fickle and undoubtedly the most talented Rhythm & Blues soloist of the Golden Age, could have become the most glorious Gospel shouter of the post-War era but his examples only served to make a sloppy sham of the music. His early **'Talking About My Mother'** is the closest we got to some form of spiritual integrity.

SOUL STIRRERS 1955

Lou Rawls, on the other hand, left us some fine Gospel sides, firstly his work with **The Chosen Gospel Singers** (1954-1957) from which we have chosen the spine-tingling **'Won't Be Back'**, then on to The Pilgrim Travelers (1957-1962). Both Rawls and Sam Cooke were childhood buddies and in their professional singing lives shared Gospel music with each other. Rawls had switched to supper-club music in 1960 before quitting Gospel for good in 1962. Rawls' popular sides never came close in feeling to his Gospel output.

Sister Dorothy Willett hardly qualifies as a celebrity having only made six singles over a stretch of seven years, but her accompanist, pianist **Bill Doggett**, does. When Doggett recorded for Apollo in 1947 he supported other up-and-coming talent on the label. Here he backs Willett on a cover of Sister Rosetta Tharpe's '**Strange Things Happening Every Day**'.

SISTER ROSETTA THARPE WITH RUSSELL MORRISON

Jesse "The Lone Cat" **Fuller** sang, played harp, kazoo, fotdella (an ingenious foot-operated percussive bass of his own invention) and drum practically all at once. When he came to the San Francisco Bay Area's East Bay from Los Angeles in the mid-1940s, he recorded the self-produced World Song album in El Cerrito. The cover on this now extremely rare album was designed by Fuller himself. Fuller went on to record for San Francisco's Cavalier, Good Time Jazz, Folk Lyric, Folk Lore and Prestige labels.

Premier back-up Country-spiritual quartet **The Jordanaires** debuted at the Grand Ole Opry only weeks before the inspired '**Just A Little Talk With Jesus**' (the track included here) was released. Members included **Bob Hubbard, Bill Matthews, Monty Matthews** and **Culley Holt**. The group who supported Presley and others during the 1950s was a second, broader-ranging group based around Nashville.

JEWEL GOSPEL SINGERS

The Golden Gate Quartet was first formed in 1934 from youngsters attending Booker T. Washington High School in Norfolk, Virginia. Their first big break came in 1938 when Jazz critic John Hammond presented them at Carnegie Hall. By 1947, the date of our inclusion of '**I'm A Pilgrim**' and '**Have Thine Own Way**', the quartet consisted of **Orville Brooks**; baritone, **Clyde Riddick**; tenor, **Alton Bradley**; tenor, and **Orlandus Wilson**; basso. The Gates inspired an endless number of aspiring quartet singers for over two decades.

JOE HINTON

Joe Hinton sang with Lou Rawls during the mid-50s in the Chosen Gospel Singers. He switched to the Spirit of Memphis in 1956. He crossed to R&B in the early 1960s and cut four charted hits for Back Beat. **Candi Staton** started out as a child singing with her sister Maggie in **The Jewel Gospel Singers** of Nashville during the early 1950s. In 1958 Staton and the group waxed the wonderfully harmonic '**Too Late**'. Staton switched to Soul in 1968 and over the following twenty years notched up over twenty-seven charted hits. She returned to Gospel in the late 1980s but crossed back over for an impressive comeback in 2006.

We have included two sensational, previously unreleased live performances by **Dewey Young & The Swan Silvertones** and **George McCurn & The Pilgrim Travelers** from around 1954. These presentations show just how sanctified a Gospel concert could get during a period when quartets battled each other in competition to see who could swoon-out the most sisters.

The belting **Nappy Brown** enjoyed a long history of being in and out of Gospel quartets including **The Selah Singers**. In between all this mostly Gospel activity Brown sang R&B. During the mid-to-late 1950s he racked up four R&B hits for Savoy Records.

On the celestial lights side of our collection we feature four quartets who should have moved into the upper realms of spiritual celebrity but suffered along the way from ill luck and unforeseen misfortune. First we have **Rev. Morgan Babb & The Philco Singers**. Songwriter, singer, preacher, promoter Morgan Babb was born in Logan County, Kentucky in 1929. The youngest of seven Babb brothers, Morgan sang and arranged for the family quartet, The Radio Four, for more than twenty years. His soulfully spiritual way of singing was influenced by his father, Deacon Giles Davis Babb. The Radio Four recorded for Tennessee, Republic and Nashboro over a period of thirteen years. In 1957 Babb formed his own Philco Singers with whom he recorded for five years before going solo. He became minister of the King Solomon Baptist Church in Nashville in the mid-1960s. The two songs selected here are from his exquisite early work with The Philcos.

PHILCO SINGERS WITH REV. MORGAN BABB

The Gospel Clefs, who modelled themselves after the Bradford and Charles Taylor Singers, were great talents. They were lead by the formidable **Leon Lumpkins**. Lumpkins hooked up with Joe Deloatch who sang and arranged for Newark's Back Home Choir. The result of the pairing produced some of the most significant "faux-female" group singing of the 1950s. By this I mean the seven male member groups, not unlike Bradford's and Taylor's, imitated the high register vocal patterns of some of the better known distaff quartets like The Wards and The Caravans. Three fine examples show us some of their best work.

GOSPEL CLEFS

SOUL SEEKERS OF NEW ORLEANS

The Soul Seekers of New Orleans have a long history. They were founded by **Ernest Irvin** in 1939. Irvin had previously sung with other quartets and with one performed at St. Paul's Cathedral in London. In 1959, when the group first recorded for Cub, members included **Carnell Underwood**, **Marion Hannah** (male), **Arthur Blake**, **Alex Bolton**, **Ernest Irvin** and **Wallace Meyers**. After the three (of twelve) joyous Cub label selections chosen here, The Soul Seekers moved to the Mormax, Beverly, Harrison, Choice and Gospel (Newark) labels, where they kept their sanctification more or less intact.

ZION TRAVELERS WITH L.C. COHEN

Last but not least we have **The Zion Travelers**, Los Angeles' finest post-War quartet founded in 1944-1945. This six or sometimes seven-member group featured two principal soloists, the ethereal **L. C. Cohen** and **Bartha L. Watkins** (who recently passed). They first recorded in the jubilee style for Atlas in 1947-1948 and Ruby in 1951-1952. In January 1953 they waxed for Aladdin and their subsidiary Score where they generated some action with their release of 'Where Is My Wandering Child' in 1954. They switched to Dootone in 1956, then briefly to Ebb in 1957. They grew extremely popular on the West Coast during the late 1950s and could come across with strong and powerful conviction.

MARIE KNIGHT

In 1961 they returned to Dootone where they enjoyed their greatest success with songs like 'The Blood' and 'I Dreamed Of A City', both classic West Coast Gospel standouts. Our three selections capture the pitch-perfect, soulful sounds of the quartet in all its glory. The group continued recording into the 1980s and 1990s and should have enjoyed far more success than they did. Bartha L. Watkins had some measure of achievement as a soul soloist later on.

This double collection attempts to cover all aspects of Gospel music during its Golden Era. We have tried to include the most stunning and joyous aspects of the music. One would be hard put to find a more impressive roster of talented souls in one package.

Opal Louis Nations

CD1

01 **THE SOUL SEEKERS**
MOTHER TAKE YOUR REST
(Max Harrison, Frank Wolf) Smart Music Inc (BMI) ℗ 1959

02 **SAM COOKE & THE SOUL STIRRERS**
JESUS, WASH AWAY MY TROUBLES
(Sam Cooke) Abkco Music Ltd ℗ 1956

03 **REV. MORGAN BABB & THE PHILCO SINGERS**
DEDICATION TO MOTHER
(Unidentified) Copyright Control ℗ 1957

04 **THE STAPLE SINGERS**
LOW IS THE WAY (ORIGINAL VERSION)
(Alex Bradford Jr) Tristan Music Ltd ℗ 1959

05 **THE SENSATIONAL WONDERS (A.K.A. THE MIGHTY CLOUDS OF JOY)**
WALK AROUND ME (MY) LORD
(Rebert H. Harris) Copyright Control ℗ 1959

06 **MAHALIA JACKSON**
WHEN HE SPOKE (LIVE)
(E. Douglas) Copyright Control ℗ 2010, recorded 1951

07 **MARIE KNIGHT & THE SENSATIONAL NIGHTINGALES**
ON REVIVAL DAY
(Marie Knight) Regent Music Corp (BMI) ℗ 1951

08 **OLLIE NIGHTINGALE & THE DIXIE NIGHTINGALES**
I'VE GOT A NEW HOME
(Jesse Whittaker) Sony/ATV Music Publishing (UK) Ltd ℗ 1959

09 **ETHEL DAVENPORT WITH BROWNIE McGHEE**
I'M TIRED
(Traditional) Public Domain ℗ 1948

10 **THE FIVE BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA**
COMING UP THRU THE YEARS
(Clarence Fountain, George Scott) Copyright Control ℗ 1958

11 **MARION WILLIAMS**
WHEN HE CALLS ME
(Marion Williams) Pru Music (BMI) ℗ 1959

12 **THE ORIOLES**
ROBE OF CALVARY
(Elaine Rivers, Robert St Clair, Kathleen Twomey, Fred Wise) Carlin Music Corp, Warner/Chappell North America Ltd ℗ 1954

13 **JESSE FULLER**
AMAZING GRACE (INSTRUMENTAL)
(Traditional arr. Jesse Fuller) Bug Music Ltd (GB) ℗ 1955

14 **JOE HINTON**
LADDER OF PRAYER
(Bill Smith) EMI United Partnership Ltd ℗ 1958

15 **CANDI STATON & THE JEWEL GOSPEL TRIO**
TOO LATE
(Rev. Harrison) Excellorec Music (BMI) ℗ 1958

16 **THE DIXIE HUMMINGBIRDS**
I'LL LIVE AGAIN
(James Davis Sr) Peermusic (UK) Ltd ℗ 1952

17 **THE STAPLE SINGERS**
THIS SAME JESUS
(E. Ford) Copyright Control ℗ 1959

18 **GEORGE MCCURN & THE PILGRIM TRAVELERS**
GOD HAS PROMISED (FRAGMENTS, LIVE)
(Jesse Whittaker, George McCurn) Copyright Control ℗ 2010, recorded circa 1955

19 **NAPPY BROWN WITH THE SELAH SINGERS**
I WANT TO GO TO HEAVEN AND REST
(Wynona Carr) Prestige Music Ltd ℗ 1950

20 **SISTER ROSETTA THARPE & THE HARMONIZING FOUR**
I CAN HEAR THE ANGELS
(Rosette Tharpe) Copyright Control ℗ 1957

21 **THE ZION TRAVELERS**
I MAY NEVER PASS THIS WAY AGAIN
(Unidentified) Copyright Control ℗ 1954

22 **THE GOLDEN GATE QUARTET**
I'M A PILGRIM
(Traditional, Orlandus Wilson) Cavendish Music Co Ltd. Recorded 1949

23 **THE GOSPEL CLEFS**
BIG WHEEL
(Unidentified) Copyright Control ℗ 1958

24 **THE JORDANAIRES**
JUST A LITTLE TALK WITH JESUS
(Cleavant Derricks) Daybreak Music Ltd ℗ 1950

25 **BETTY HUTTON PRESENTS ODESSA MCCASTLE & CATHERINE BURKES WITH THE ANTIOCH EVANGELIST TEMPLE CHOIR**
SEARCH ME LORD
(Thomas A. Dorsey) Carlin Music Corp ℗ 1959

26 **THE GOSPEL CLEFS**
STEAL AWAY TO JESUS
(Traditional) Public Domain ℗ 1958

CD2

01 **THE SOUL SEEKERS**
ON THE ROCK
(Unidentified) Copyright Control ℗ 1959

02 **REV. MORGAN BABB & THE PHILCO SINGERS**
COLD COLD GROUND
(Morgan Babb) Embassy Music Corp (BMI) ℗ 1959

03 **OLLIE NIGHTINGALE & THE DIXIE NIGHTINGALES**
LIVING FOR MY JESUS
(Samuel Lewis) Sony/ATV Music Publishing (UK) Ltd ℗ 2010, recorded 1953-54

04 **THE STAPLE SINGERS**
SINCE HE LIGHTENED MY HEAVY LOAD
(Roberta Martin) Copyright Control ℗ 1959

05 **THE ZION TRAVELERS**
BEAUTIFUL CITY
(Felton Vernon, Wesley Sherman) Prestige Music Ltd ℗ 1957

06 **MAHALIA JACKSON**
EACH DAY (LIVE)
(L. King) Carlin Music Corp ℗ 2010, recorded 1951

07 **THE GOSPEL CLEFS**
BOOK OF REVELATIONS
(Unidentified) Copyright Control ℗ 1958

08 **LAVERN BAKER & THE ALEX BRADFORD SINGERS**
IN THE UPPER ROOM
(Lucie Campbell) Screen Gems-EMI Music Ltd ℗ 1959

09 **THE SOUL SEEKERS**
I'M SERVING THE LORD
(Frank Wolf) Smart Music Inc (BMI) ℗ 1959

10 **GOLDIA HAYNES WITH JOE LIGGINS**
THIS OLD WORLD (THAT GREAT JUDGMENT DAY)
(W. Thomas) Copyright Control ℗ 1950

11 **THE GOLDEN GATE QUARTET**
HAVE THINE OWN WAY
(Traditional, Orlandus Wilson) Cavendish Music Co Ltd. Recorded 1949

12 **MARIE KNIGHT & THE SENSATIONAL NIGHTINGALES**
SATISFIED WITH JESUS
(Cornelius Keur) Warner/Chappell Music Inc (ASCAP) ℗ 1951

13 **JESSE FULLER**
HARK FROM THE TOMB
(Traditional, Jesse Fuller) Bug Music Ltd (GB) ℗ 1955

14 **SAM COOKE, PAUL FOSTER & THE SOUL STIRRERS**
LAST MILE OF THE WAY (TAKE 2)
(Charles Tindley arr. Sam Cooke) Abkco Music Ltd ℗ 1959

15 **ANN COLE & THE COLEMANAIRES**
BE READY WHEN HE COMES
(Tradtional arr. Cynthia Coleman) Copyright Control ℗ 1954

16 **JUDY GUIONS & THE DRINKARD SINGERS**
SOMEBODY TOUCHED ME
(Traditional arr. W. Kramer) Copyright Control ℗ 1958

17 **LITTLE JOE COOK & THE EVENING STAR QUARTET**
SAY A PRAYER FOR THE BOYS IN KOREA
(Joe Cook) Copyright Control ℗ 1953

18 **THE SIMS BROTHERS (A.K.A. THE SIMS TWINS)**
OCEAN OF PRAYER
(Odessa Cropper) Rockin Music ℗ 1952

19 **THE ZION TRAVELERS**
BELIEVE IN ME
(Felton Vernon, Wesley Sherman) Prestige Music Ltd ℗ 1957

20 **THE DIXIE HUMMINGBIRDS & THE ANGELIC GOSPEL SINGERS**
TODAY (EVENING SONG)
(Thomas A. Dorsey) Carlin Music Corp ℗ 1952

21 **LITTLE RICHARD**
TALKING ABOUT MY MOTHER (ALT. TAKE)
(Richard Penniman) Richard Penniman ℗ 1952

22 **BILL DOGGETT QUINTET WITH SISTER DOROTHY WILLETT**
STRANGE THINGS HAPPENING EVERY DAY
(Rosetta Tharpe) Rosetta Tharpe ℗ 1947

23 **THE 10-YEAR-OLD BOBBY WOMACK & THE WOMACK BROTHERS**
THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO
(Dale Evans) Sony/ATV Music Publishing (UK) Ltd ℗ 1954

24 **LOU RAWLS & THE CHOSEN GOSPEL SINGERS**
WON'T BE BACK
(James Herndon) Copyright Control ℗ 1957

25 **THE STAPLE SINGERS**
THIS MAY BE THE LAST TIME (ORIGINAL)
(Roebuck Staples) Tristan Music Ltd ℗ 1959

26 **DEWEY YOUNG & THE SWAN SILVERTONES**
JESUS BROUGHT ME / I FOUND JOY (FRAGMENTS, LIVE)
(Jet Bledsoe, Silas Steele, Dewey Young) Copyright Control ℗ 2010, recorded circa 1955