ADDCD3016

label shots – courtesy
Opal Louis Nations

DISC 1

1 SAME OLD STUFF
Jesse Thomas - The Blues Troubadour
Miltone 232 1948 WP 232A

2 D. DOUBLE DUE LOVE YOU
Jesse Thomas - The Blues Troubadour
Miltone 232 1948 WP 232B

3 ZETTER BLUES
Jesse Thomas - The Blues Troubadour
Miltone 233 1948 WP 233A

4 MOUNTAIN KEY BLUES
Jesse Thomas - The Blues Troubadour
Miltone 233 1948 WP 233B

5 WEE BABY BROTHER BLUES (WEE WEE BROTHER)
Effie Smith & The Darby Hicks Selected Trio
Miltone 18 1948 18B

6 SUGAR MAMA BLUES
John Criner & His Orchestra
Miltone 18 (alt B-side) 1947 16-B

7 ANSWER TO R.M. BLUES
Effie Smith w/ Jimmie Grissom & The Blenders & Roy Milton
Miltone 218 1947 A

8 IT'S BEEN SO LONG
Effie Smith w/ Jimmie Grissom & The Blenders & Roy Milton
Miltone 218 1947 B

9 JUST BEFORE DAWN
Jesse Price & Buddy Floyd w/ Maxwell Davis Orch.
Miltone 5250 1948 M 471X

10 CREEPIN' & PEEPIN' (TIPPIN' OUT)
Jesse Price & His Jump Jivers
Miltone 5250 1948 M 472X

11 YOU SURE LOOK GOOD TO ME
The Blenders
Miltone 4001 1948 741

12 SIGNIFYING MONKEY
The Blenders
Miltone 4001 1948 742

13 SUNNY SIDE OF THE STREET
Roy Milton & His Solid Senders
Roy Milton 104B 1946 FC 104B

14 DO AS I SAY
Jimmy Grissom & The Original Solid Senders
Miltone 202 1946 202AA

15 MILTONS BOOGIE
Roy Milton & His Solid Senders
Roy Milton 103 1946 FC 103B

16 MR. FINE
Camille Howard & The Solid Senders
Roy Milton 103 1946 FC 103A

17 MORNING TRAIN BLUES
Peter Warfield
Miltone 5249 1947 HU-141

18 GOOD ROAD BLUES
Wright Holmes
Miltone 5221 1947 HU 206

19 ALLEY SPECIAL
Wright Holmes
Miltone 5221 1947 TV 301 A

20 QUINSELLA
Sonny Boy Johnson
Miltone 301 1947 TV 301 B

21 RAINY WEATHER BLUES
Roy Brown & His Orchestra
Miltone 3198 1948 816 A

22 FORE DAY IN THE MORNING
Roy Brown & His Orchestra
Miltone 3198 1948 815 B

23 WHO'S HAT IS THAT
Roy Brown & His Mighty Mighty Men
Miltone 3154 1947 D-515

24 KEEP YOUR HAND ON YOUR HEART
Little Miss Cornshucks
Miltone 242 1948 TV 242A

25 CORNSHUCKS BLUES
Little Miss Cornshucks
Miltone 243 1948 TV 243A

26 IN THE RAIN
Little Miss Cornshucks
Miltone 243 1948 TV 243B

27 WHY WAS I BORN
Little Miss Cornshucks
Miltone 246 1948 TV 246A

28 TRUE (YOU DON'T LOVE ME)
Little Miss Cornshucks
Miltone 246 1948 TV 246B

DISC 2

1 HIP SHAKIN' MAMA
Chubby "Hip Shakin" Newsome
Miltone 3199 1948 836

2 LONG ABOUT MIDNIGHT
Roy Brown & His Mighty Mighty Men
Miltone 3154 1947 D-618

3 CHUBBY'S CONFESSION
Chubby "Hip Shakin" Newsome
Miltone 3199 1948 837

4 HEY, LITTLE GIRL
Paul Gayten Trio
Miltone 3170 1947 573-13-H

5 ONE SWEET LETTER FROM YOU
Paul Gayten Trio with Annie Laurie
Miltone 3170 1947 567-88-20

6 RED LIGHT
Roy Milton & His Solid Senders
Roy Milton 102 1946 FC 102 I

7 IT NEVER SHOULD HAVE BEEN THIS WAY
Roy Milton & His Solid Senders
Roy Milton 101 1946 FC 103 A

8 THEM THERE EYES
Roy Milton & His Solid Senders
Roy Milton 201 1946 RM 201 A

9 I'LL ALWAYS BE IN LOVE WITH YOU
Roy Milton & His Solid Senders
Roy Milton 104B 1946 FC 104-1

10 LITTLE BOY BLUE
Roy Milton & His Solid Senders
Roy Milton 201 1946 RM 201 B

11 WELCOME HOME BABY
Maxwell Davis
Miltone 225 1947 TV 225 B

12 GET OUT
Maxwell Davis
Miltone 225 1947 WP-250 A

13 COLD BLOODED BLUES
The Great "Gates" & His Wampus Cats
Miltone 5271 1949 M 548

14 COME BACK HOME
The Great "Gates" & His Wampus Cats
Miltone 5271 1949 M 549

15 FRANK BULL'S BOOGIE
Jimmie Grissom & The Blenders
Miltone 212 1946 VR 212 AA

16 NEW R.M. BLUES
Roy Milton & His Solid Senders
Roy Milton 105 1946 D 105 1

17 GROOVY BLUES
Camille Howard w/ Roy Milton & His Solid Senders
Roy Milton 105 1946 D 106-1

18 SINCE I FELL FOR YOU
Paul Gayten and His Trio with Annie Laurie
Miltone 401 A 1948 401-C-88-15

19 RAINEY DAY CONFESSION BLUES, PART 1
Roy Milton
Roy Milton 1-10A 1946 FC-1-10A

20 RAINEY DAY CONFESSION BLUES, PART 2
Roy Milton
Roy Milton 1-10B 1946 FC-1-10B

21 GROOVING WITH JOE
Roy Milton
Roy Milton 1-11-A 1946 FC-1-11-A

22 BLUES IN MY HEART
Roy Milton
Roy Milton 1-11-B 1946 FC-1-11-B

23 G-ING WITH GENE
Gene Morris & His Quintet
Miltone 219-A 1947 FOTO-502

24 PACK YOUR SACK JACK
Roy Milton vocal by Camille Howard
Miltone 219-B 1947 RM-202-B

25 ICE COLD LOVE
The Blenders vocal by Jimmie Grissom
Miltone 230-B 1948 TV-230-B

26 YOU GONNA GET IT IN THE END
Lawrence (Batty) Battiste
Miltone 700-A 1947 LB-700-A

27 BIG FINE BABY
The Blenders vocal by Jimmie Grissom
Miltone 700-B 1947 TV-244-B

28 LOVE'S A GAMBLE
Little T-Bone
Miltone 5223 1947 HU-209

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label shots – courtesy Opal Louis Nations

Gathered here for the first time are priceless 1940s recordings on the Roy Milton / Miltone labels, a diskery co-owned by one of California's R&B innovators – Roy Milton. Not only are the recordings of significance, but many of the hip and handsome labels themselves – designed by New York cartoonist William "Alex" Alexander – are a collector's joy. Feast your eyes and ears on this trove of blues, jump and R&B righteousness.

The Roy Milton/Miltone diskery was proprietored by three major shareholders, the R&B pioneer Roy Milton, local Los Angeles deejay, record store owner and pressing plant chief Forrest "War" Perkins and Roy Milton's manager and booking agent, Ben Waller of Ben Waller Enterprises. To tell our story in simple terms, we shall discuss the great Roy Milton and "War" Perkins separately.

Roy Milton

Roy Bunny Milton was born in Wynnewood, Garvin County, Oklahoma on July 31st, 1907. Part Cherokee, part Afro-American, Roy moved with his family to Tulsa in 1910. At high school he played drums with a marching band and sang in the choir of the local Baptist church. In his childhood he went out to see traveling vaudeville troupes and made a point of catching the larger-than-life female blues warblers like Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey in concert. He also took a liking to big swing bands and ventured out to see Count Basie and Andy Kirk.

In 1931, Milton enrolled in Sam Houston College in Austin with the intention of studying physical education. Some sources state that he entered college on a football scholarship. During college, Milton became increasingly drawn to the music of Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington. In 1929, he had formed his own small combo and played local dates in the Tulsa area. Milton then, in 1931, took his first professional job with the Ernie Fields big band in Tulsa. Milton crooned popular ballads and doubled on drums with the Fields band for two years. Working with a tough but young member territory band was a strong learning experience for Milton.

In 1935, drawn by the glitz and glamour of Southern California, Milton moved to Los Angeles and formed the original Solid Senders. Members included Roy Randall from Tulsa on piano and "Bubba" on trumpet. Later on membership evolved into Betty Hall Jones, piano, Little Joe Walker, alto sax, Fred Mason, trumpet and Milton at the drums. To keep the family in food and clothing, Milton worked during the week for the Works Projects Administration (W.P.A.). On weekends, his band played a scruffy little cellar dive in San Pedro called variously Slim's Place or "Bucket of Blood." Band members were paid two dollars each plus tips. Milton got $2.50.

Moving to upscale downtown, Milton played at Louis' Café on Pico Boulevard. He remained there for four years and acquired the soubriquet "Pico Roy." From here, Milton moved down on First Street to the Cobra Room. Things really got in the groove and in addition Milton found himself playing pop standards to a white crowd during early evening gigs on the Sunset Strip. The First Street gig was where the group boogied and woogied. Milton did so well, he opened his own club called Roy's Night Spot. He was also fortunate enough to appear as an extra in several Hollywood movies plus three soundies with ex-Andy Kirk vocalist, June Richmond. Along the way he picked up the key members of what was to become his famous Solid Senders Band-Camille Howard on piano, Hosea Sapp on trumpet and Dave Robinson on bass.

In September 1945, The Roy Milton Sextet, composed of Milton, Sapp, Howard and Robinson plus Jimmy Nottingham on second trumpet and Lorenzo

Dootsie Williams and Roy Milton (seated) – 1955 – courtesy Ace Records

"Buddy" Floyd on tenor sax, cut four sides for Lionel and Gladys Hampton's Hamp-Tone label based in New York. Because of shellac shortages, Milton's first two singles did not hit the streets until June and July 1946 which put them in direct competition with sides cut later on his own Roy Milton imprint. Anyway, the Hamp-Tone sides did little to strengthen Milton's career.

In September 1949, before taking on other artists, the Hamptons sold Hamp-Tone to Sammy Lane. This was where Art Rupe entered the picture. Here is a brief biography. Rupe was born Arthur Goldburg in Greensburg, Penn. on September 5th, 1917. In 1942, he drove out to Southern California with the idea of becoming a movie scriptwriter. In 1944, fascinated with the business of making race recordings for a burgeoning market, Rupe partnered up with Robert Scherman and founded Atlas Records on 8848 Sunset. A little over one year and approximately forty releases later, the partnership dissolved and Rupe purchased his own company, Juke Box Records, at 2304 West Seventh Street. Co-partners were Eli Oberstein and A.E. Middleman. This gave Rupe a stake in Middleman's Sterling label, a reasonably successful race indie with offices in New York. In November 1945, Rupe encountered Milton at Roy's Night Spot and signed him to a contract. Four songs were recorded in Los Angeles on December 11, 1945 but none were released. This date was probably an audition.

Members of the Solid Senders included Milton, Sapp, Floyd, Howard and Robinson plus Earl Sims on alto sax. On December 22nd, 1945, the same four songs were recorded again. Two songs were issued in January 1946 on Juke Box. The first release was "Milton's Boogie" backed with "Groovy Blues" (sung by Camille Howard), and the second was "R.M. Blues" backed with "Rhythm Cocktail."

"R.M. Blues" certainly put Milton and the label squarely on the map. The tune became a national hit and stuck around at the top of the race record charts for twenty-six weeks. In Rupe's words, "R.M. Blues" became the biggest urban black hit up to that time. Milton had taken the swing riffs usually associated with big band brass arrangements and translated them into small combo rhythmic patterns, giving old swing new bounce and a sound that evolved into rhythm & blues. Milton, along with Joe Liggins and Johnny Otis, were creating hot, frantic riffs, a strong rhythmic drive and a new teenage beat. Rupe was so filled with ambition, he decided then and there to go it alone.

By August 1946, Billboard Magazine announced that Rupe had sold his interest in Juke Box / Sterling to Middleman and Oberstein on the understanding that he could take possession of some of the masters. It must be remembered that through Rupe's efforts, Juke Box had been a success, first with the initial release of "Boogie #1" by the Sepia Tones (Trio) in January 1945, then with Roy Milton's "R.M. Blues". In late 1946, Rupe moved from West Seventh to new offices at 311 Venice Boulevard to set up Specialty Records and Venice Publishing (named after the street, of course).

The first Specialty release of January 1948 became the exceptionally rare "These Old Bones" by the Southern Harmonizers. The label began to take off with the addition of the Pilgrim Travelers.

Forrest "War" (Ward) Perkins

Nothing much is known about the early life of "War" Perkins as he could not be located anywhere in the census. Add this to the tale of his mysterious disappearance and supposed demise in the Philippines in early 1951, and we have an intriguing story, yet to be revealed. Shortly after Juke Box's closure in April, 1947, Perkins, Milton and Ben Waller ventured into the recording business at 3938 ½ Sixth Avenue. They set up the Roy Milton label in mid-1946 to promote Milton's own recordings, and Cleartone, a short-lived subsidiary that lasted just long enough to see Gene Morris' releases. (Cleartone was replaced by the company's Foto imprint in 1948, yet another short-lived subsidiary.)

The trio also had access to Perkins' own pressing plant. By 1947, Perkins was involved with at least four labels. These were Miltone, the label into which the Roy Milton label had evolved beginning in July 1947 (I suspect that Roy Milton himself had given over his share at this point), Special, on which only one Roy Milton release appeared (this was because Perkins had ripped off Art Rupe's original Specialty label design down to the last star and was threatened with a lawsuit), Ace, thought to have been proprietored by Milton, Perkins and Sherman Williams (only two releases ever appeared on Ace), and Sacred, his gospel imprint which ran from July 1947 up to the time Perkins skipped the country. All of Perkins' labels were pressed at his plant at 709 East Twenty-Ninth Street, along with John Dolphin's Recorded-In-Hollywood catalog. Confusion lies in the fact that some Roy Milton sides were later reissued on Miltone.

In May 1948, Perkins added his Metro label to the list. Metro was an urban blues & rhythm label which lasted through the same period of time as Sacred. It is my belief that Perkins (who also served as a local deejay), was being paid to play product in which he held a part share. These were fly-by-night labels he was fortunate enough to press at his plant. Despite Rupe's having re-signed Roy Milton to his new Specialty label in March,1947, Perkins and company continued to cut and release Milton's 1946 product on Miltone throughout

1947 and 1948. Jonas Bernholm believes that Perkins and Milton sold Miltone masters to Specialty as Rupe's reissue of the Miltone songs sounded no different from the Specialty ones. This, of course, refers to Specialty releases 511 through 515, covering early 1947 through late spring of that same year. In July 1948, Perkins set up a deal whereby both Miltone and Jules Braun's New Jersey-based De Luxe Records could share the cost of pressing their artists by jointly sharing their catalogs. This would save long distance calls and freight charges. Perkins also owned Los Angeles' oldest black-proprietored record shop, Mosby & Spikes, at 4011 South Central Avenue. Perkins sold the shop in 1948 to one of his customers, John Dolphin, who transformed the property into his first Dolphin's of Hollywood location.

Perkins then dealt directly with Dolphin who used him as his primary distributor. But things were beginning to unravel for Perkins. Roy Milton had filed charges against Perkins and his partner William Reed as far back as January 1948 for not paying him for radio broadcasts Perkins had recorded onto commercial discs without Milton's permission, off the air. Milton was seeking an injunction that would restrain Perkins from ever pressing and distributing these recordings. Perkins then grabbed all the Roy Milton masters he could find and split for the Philippines to set up a disc pressing plant there.

Two news items appeared in the June 1950 issue of Billboard magazine. One ran that Ivin Ballen of Gotham Records had purchased three hundred Miltone masters. These included some of Prof. J. Earle Hines' Sacred sides, twelve Roy Miltons, including the second version of "R.M. Blues," unissued Clara Ward Singers, plus items by Little Miss Cornshucks, Camille Howard and Jimmy Grissom. This was Ballen's first major master purchase since buying Gotham from Sam Goody. The second item, this time in the R&B Beat column, mentioned Perkins stopping off in Hong Kong before settling for good in Manila.

Billboard's R&B Beat column of November 1950 again mentioned Perkins. It reported that he had settled in Manila and had set up Perkins and Javier Enterprises. His business dealt in everything from recordings of Filipino blues balladeers to kitchen gadgets.

In February 1951, it was announced that Syd Nathan of King Records had purchased the De Luxe catalog from the Braun brothers. Syd was already the label's distributor at the time of purchase. The acquired masters included many of the New Orleans sides that appeared on the Miltone imprint by Roy Brown, Paul Gayten, Chubby Newsome and others plus De Luxe sides by Prof. J. Earle Hines. Perkins had also traded many of his masters to De Luxe during the life of his label. The last we hear of Perkins is from a Billboard column printed in a March 1951 issue. It was rumored that "War" Perkins, a local manufacturer some years back, "passed away a few weeks ago from unknown causes."

* * * * *

Jimmy Grissom

Grissom was born in Leland, Mississippi and was the nephew of Dan Grissom, one-time vocalist and tenor sax man with Jimmy Lunceford. Being drawn to singers with big band vocal qualities, Roy Milton hired "teenage vocalist" Jimmy (or Jimmie) Grissom in 1947 to front the Blenders and Miltones, as well as share solo spots with pianist Camille Howard. For Miltone, he recorded "Do As I Say," "Frank Bull's Boogie," "Big Fine Baby," "Ice Cold Love" (with the Blenders) and "Whispering Grass."

Grissom stayed with Milton into 1948, after which he joined MGM Records and recorded the widely selling "California Blues," released in January 1949. After two poorly received follow-up releases, he joined the Buddy Floyd Orchestra on Modern. Two unimpressive sessions were cut. Grissom switched to John Dolphin's Recorded-in-Hollywood in late 1950 and waxed his one and only hit, "Once There Lived A Fool," penned by Jessie Mae Robinson, which was rumored to have sold more than twenty thousand copies during its first week of release.

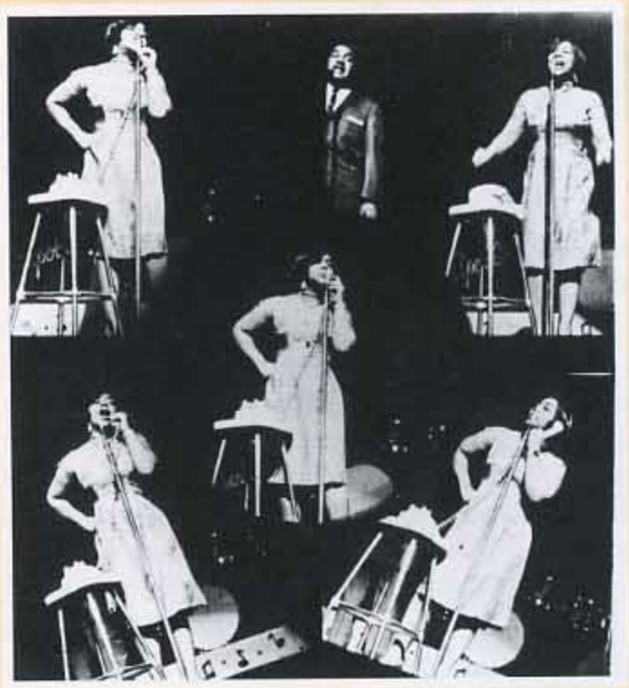
Jimmy Grissom – courtesy Vocal Group Harmony

Grissom joined the Ellington Band in 1952 and was heard on several Columbia and Capitol sides. He was recorded live with the band at Gene Norman's legendary Crescendo nightspot in Pasadena for the 1953 concert. It was here he sang his signature classic "Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me" but he never again repeated the triumph of "Once There Lived A Fool." He later returned to John Dolphin's Cash label in 1955 and cut one record with the Que Martyn Orchestra. In 1963, he enjoyed playing a supporting role at Chicago's Arie Crown Theatre in the world premier of the musical "My People" alongside Joya Sherrill and Lil Greenwood, both ex-Ellington warblers.

Effie Smith

Comedienne, singer/songwriter Effie Smith was born Effie Bly in Oklahoma in 1914. The versatile Smith could switch from jazz balladry and raw R&B into comic narrative with the greatest of skill. Early reports indicate that she worked as a vocalist with the Three Shades of Rhythm and Lionel Hampton's Orchestra before World War II during this time. She married her second husband, singer, comedian, songwriter, producer and talent manager, John Criner, also founder of the Royal Record Company. During World War II, Smith appeared on AFRS "Jubilee" Radio Transcriptions and toured with Benny Carter's Orchestra. In 1945, Smith and Criner founded the G&G / Gem labels on Sunset Boulevard to promote themselves and friends such as Ernie Andrews, pianist Clara Lewis and Derby Hicks (Johnny Otis).

Smith recorded 3 ½ small combo-supported releases on her vanity labels, one of which, "Wee Baby Brother Blues" (Wee Wee Baby), ended up on Miltone. "Wee Baby Brother Blues" was Effie's first departure from "straight" blues & rhythm songs. My copy of this record has John Criner's scat-singing "Getting' Out" on the reverse. Dave Penny points out in his article on Smith that John Criner's "Sugar Mama Blues" (a regional hit), constituted the back of "Wee Baby Brother Blues." This indicates that the B-side was switched later on.

June 1946 saw her one Aladdin session supported by the Buddy Harper All Stars, where she cut six sides. Smith was back on Miltone in 1947 for her one release of "Answer To R.M. Blues" and "It's Been So Long," backed by the Blenders and the

Effie Smith – courtesy Galen Gart

Roy Milton Band. After leaving Miltone, Smith recorded for Modern, Decca, Dynamic, Aladdin, R&B, Vita, Spot, Jubilee, Duo-Disc, Eee Cee and others. Her most substantial hit was "Dial That Telephone," a husband and wife kitchen-sink comedy routine (with Criner), first recorded for Aladdin in August 1953 and reissued on other labels many times. Her son Fred was the famous West Coast 60s soul producer and writer responsible for such classics as Jackie Lee's "The Duck".

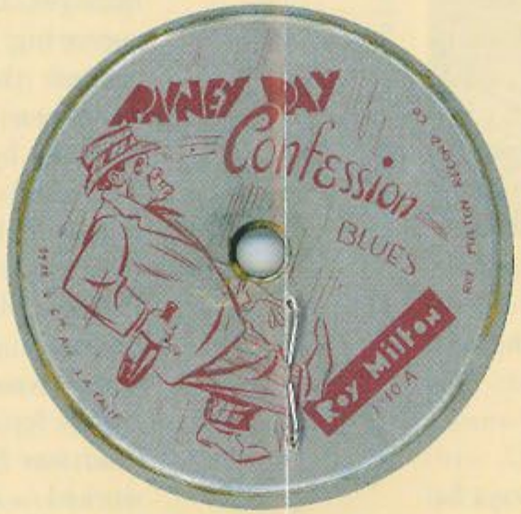
Little Miss Cornshucks

We know much about Little Miss Cornshucks. This is due to Barry Mazor's superb article on her life and times in No Depression Magazine (May-June 2003.) She was born Mildred Cummings in Dayton, Ohio on May 26th, 1923. The youngest and smallest female in the Cummings brood, Mildred sang spirituals around Dayton with the Cummings Sisters. A brother was a working musician also. During the 1930s, Mildred entered amateur talent shows and sang torchy ballads as a single. She adopted a rural country bumpkin image and went out wearing raggedy clothes. Mildred embraced the image of the innocent Little Tramp, performing in barefoot. She was now Little Miss Cornshucks.

A female gospel music promoter took Mildred to Chicago in 1940. By 1941, she was appearing before large crowds at Club De Lisa at 5521 South State, supported by the Red Saunders house band. She married Cornellius Jordan back in Dayton and he quickly became Mildred's manager. By 1943, she was appearing at small clubs around the country. That same year she was recorded privately by Ahmet Ertegun. The results of the session are now sadly lost.

In 1945, Mildred was playing Chicago's posh Rhumboogie Club, owned by heavyweight champ Joe Louis. The house band was Marl Young's who worked behind T-Bone

Little Miss Cornshucks – courtesy Sunbeam Records



Walker and Charlie Parker. Supported by the Marl Young Orchestra, Little Miss Cornshucks, billed as Mildred Cummings, recorded two sessions in September / October 1946 for Young's own Sunbeam label on South Michigan Avenue in Chicago. Although Mildred was essentially a ballad singer, she could also effectively convey raucous jump songs on demand. She waxed "So Long," a Ruth Brown hitter, on her first session. The song became Mildred's signature tune. When Sunbeam was sold off in 1947, Mildred went to Miltone. This followed a string of dates in Los Angeles, culminating in a series of extremely successful live performances at the 2,200-seat Million Dollar Theatre. Mildred came to Miltone through Jimmy Grissom, her boyfriend at the time. Her most successful Miltone side (one of six – two more appeared on De Luxe) was "Cornshucks Blues." Most of the Miltone slices were supported by the Maxwell Davis Orchestra and Roy Milton's Blenders.

After Miltone's demise, Maxwell Davis took Mildred to Aladdin and cut one session with her in August 1949. Six months later, she was recording with the Benny Carter Orchestra for Coral. In 1960, she waxed for Chess with Sonny Thompson's Band back in Chicago. A rather disappointing album resulted. Unnecessary strings cluttered up one side of the album to help sell it in the pop marketplace. But the ploy never worked and the album sank. It remains an extremely rare collectors' item to this day.

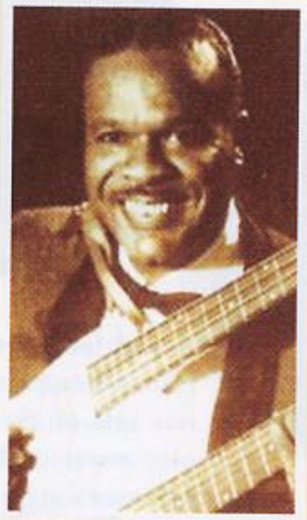
Little Miss Cornshucks died from a fatal stroke on Armistice Day, November 11, 1999.

Jesse Thomas – The Blues Troubadour

Vocalist/guitarist Jesse Thomas was born in Logansport, south-west of Shreveport, Louisiana in 1911. Jesse was the younger brother of slide guitarist Willard "Rambling" Thomas who cut two momentous Paramount sessions in 1928. Jesse, who was greatly inspired by his older brother, was not taken by his guitar style and did not try to emulate him. Instead, Jesse developed a finger-picking method all his own. The Thomas brothers often picked cotton and performed together. They played all types of music for anyone who wanted to listen in the Dallas/Oklahoma City areas. Although he was not

label shots – courtesy Bob Bell

fortunate enough to record for Paramount like his brother, Jesse did manage to wax four sides for Victor in Dallas on Sunday, August 10th, 1929. These sides made little impact.



Jesse Thomas – Internet image

It was not until after World War II and a move to Los Angeles that Jesse recorded again. He was playing in a number of jazz and blues & rhythm outfits, but occasionally went out as a single. Billed as "The Blues Troubadour," Jesse Thomas recorded one session for Miltone in 1948. The tongue-twisting "D. Double Due Love You" probably drew the most coin. Suffering the same ill luck as had befallen his last efforts, Jesse decided to form his own record company. Club Records came into being in 1948 and survived for four known issues, two by Jesse himself and four gospel sides by Evangelist Sister Rosetta Winns & Singers behind whom Jesse sang and played guitar.

Much later, in 1960, Jesse took a second stab at running his own record company, this time, the Red River imprint on Abbie Street back in Shreveport. Four more one-man vanity recordings emerged over a period of five years plus a ten-track cassette. After Club, Jesse recorded for Freedom in Dallas and Modern, Swing Time, Specialty, Elko and Hollywood (as Mule Thomas) in Los Angeles. Willard and Jesse Thomas were uncles to Lafayette Thomas who was much influenced by the older Willard.

Jesse Price

Jesse Price was born in Memphis, Tenn. On May 1st, 1909 and will always be remembered as a pivotal figure on the Kansas City jazz scene. As a child, his first passion was tap dancing, but he soon became fixed on an interest in drumming. He received his first drum set as a gift from his father when he was fourteen years old. Dad also paid Frank Pole to give his lad instructions. Young Price was soon gigging with Ross and Yancey's Beale Street Serenaders. From there he went on to record and tour with the W.C. Handy Orchestra with whom he saw the Southlands. After a stint on the S.S. Capitol in 1929, he joined the pit band of the Palace Theatre. He worked briefly in Bessie Smith's Band and toured with Ida Cox in 1938.

Jesse Price – courtesy Blue Moon Records

Price arrived in Kansas City in 1934. After a couple of bands, he wound up with Count Basie who had just taken over Bennie Moten's Orchestra. Price recorded with the outfit on Decca. With Buster Smith, Price formed his own band. Meanwhile, Price still found time to play drums in other outfits around Kansas City. After the closing of many city clubs, Price joined Harlan Leonard's Rockets who were recording for RCA. A year later, he was with Chick Webb and

Ella Fitzgerald, then recording for Decca. He quit Webb in Los Angeles.

After a brief stay with Walter Fuller in Chicago, he returned to L.A. He worked with Teddy Bunn before going back to Harlan Leonard. After stays with Louis Armstrong and Stan Kenton, he started recording under his own name for Capitol Records. Seven sessions were recorded. As a sessions man for Capitol Records, he enjoyed countless dates behind a long roster of talent. These were interspersed in 1947 with recordings for the A.F.R.S. His best remembered waxing was his vocals on "I Ain't Mad At You" with the Dave Cavanaugh Band on Capitol in 1946. Only one release emerged on Miltone, "Creepin' And Peepin' (Tippin' Out)" (backed by his Jump Jivers) and "Just Before Dawn", supported by Buddy Floyd and The Maxwell Davis Orchestra. He recorded as Little Jessie on Ebb in 1958. He suffered from terminal cancer and died on April 19, 1974.

Camille Howard

Roy Milton's long-serving pianist, Camille Howard, was a significant singer / boogie stylist in her own right. She was born on March 29th, 1914 in Galveston, Texas and took to the piano as a duck takes to water. She became a member of the Cotton Tavern Trio in her early teens. Seeking greater opportunity, she moved out to Los Angeles during World War II. Soon thereafter, Howard auditioned at Roy's Night Spot for Roy Milton's new unit, the Roy Milton Trio with Howard, Milton and trumpeter Hosea Sapp. Her first recording was cut for the Hamp-Tone International label with the Hamptone All Star Orchestra during the summer of 1945. One release resulted from the session. It was issued in 1949. She sang only on the B-side. The song was the smoky "Be Alone."

By September 1945, the Roy Milton Trio had expanded to a sextet and the

Camille Howard– courtesy Opal Louis Nations

outfit, with Howard on piano, recorded four songs for Hamp-Tone, owned by Gladys and Lionel Hampton. On December 11th, 1945, Howard sang and played on "Groovy Blues," a song recorded on a Roy Milton & His Solid Senders session for Art Rupe's Juke Box label. The waxing remained unreleased at the time.

Her next warbling came on a second (this time acceptable) stab at "Groovy Blues" for Juke Box on the Roy Milton / Solid Senders session of December 22nd, 1945. In early 1946, Howard sang and played on a second Pan-American session supported by the James Clifford Jazz Orchestra. Clifford played alto sax. Two releases emerged later that year. In October 1946, Howard sang and played on "Mr. Fine" and a remake of "Groovy Blues" for the Roy Milton label with its beautiful cartoon design drawn by New York artist William "Alex" Alexander who drew fabulous comic sketches for many of the Roy Milton/Miltone releases.

Later on in the session, she sang and played on "Pack Your Sack Jack" (version

#1). The first two songs were issued in 1946. The last surfaced in 1947. All three songs were supported by Roy Milton & His Solid Senders.

Howard's vocals did not show up again until March 8th, 1947 when she re-recorded "Mr. Fine" for Specialty Records with Roy Milton & His Solid Senders. At least one new Solid Sender appeared on each Roy Milton session in place of one that was dropped (especially in the sax department). Howard showed up singing and playing on the next four Roy Milton / Solid Senders Specialty sessions from July 1947 through to December 30th, 1947). Starting December 31st, 1947, the Roy Milton / Solid Senders were replaced by the Dallas Bartley Trio with Howard, Milton and Dallas Bartley himself on stand-up bass.

Six Specialty sessions later, on December 22nd 1949, the Dallas Bartley Trio was replaced by the Camille Howard Trio. It seems at last that Howard had assumed some measure of control. The trio (which in fact was a quartet) was composed of Howard, Milton, Johnny Rogers on guitar, and Winston Williams on bass.

By the next Specialty session of January 26th, 1950, Milton was completely out of the picture. He was replaced by Walter Murden. The March 1st, 1950 session found Johnny Rogers gone. The group was now truly a trio. However, this arrangement did not last very long. For the August 2nd, 1950 Specialty session, Howard was placed with the Geechie Smith Orchestra. The Specialty tape boxes from this session read Camille Howard & Her Boyfriends (all six of them.)

On the February 26th, 1951 Specialty session, Howard had a lot of fresh "boyfriends" who included the return of Roy Milton himself. More or less the same formula was repeated on the September 24th, 1951 Specialty session. Change came, as if a grand finale had been set up, to celebrate Howard's final Specialty session of May 7th, 1952 with the addition of the Maxwell Davis Orchestra's seven pieces with Bill Douglas replacing Milton on drums. As if to spite him, Howard recorded "Old Baldy Boogie" on the session.

By March 1953, Howard was with Federal Records where she cut her most exciting sides with her own Orchestra containing many of the musicians who had recorded with her for years (no Roy Milton though.) In 1956, Howard switched to Vee Jay Records. Some time in 1957, after being turned down by Art Rupe who would not take her back to his label for a second time, she retired from R&B and, turning her back on secular music, became a Jehovah's Witness.

Roy Brown

Roy Brown was born in New Orleans on September 10th, 1925. His mother, True Love Brown, an Algonquin Indian, was a choir director and organist. His father, Yancy Brown, was a plasterer and bricklayer. The family often had to move where Yancy could find work. They temporarily relocated to Eunice where young Roy attended school. He began singing in the church. At age thirteen, Brown formed a spiritual quartet called the Rookie Four and sang and wrote songs for them. After goodly doses of preparatory blackberry wine, the quartet had the gals shouting in the aisles. Although True Love was a gospel singer with a great love for the music, she did not approve of her son's extrovert way of singing quartet.

Brown labored cutting sugar cane in nearby Morgan City, then moved on to the rice plantations when harvesting was needed. The remainder of the time was taken up by picking cotton. All the while Brown wrote lyrics to songs in his head. He attended high school in Houston. After his mother's death in 1939,

Roy Brown – courtesy Jonas Bernholm

Brown moved to Los Angeles and became a professional welter-weight boxer. Sickened by the sight of blood, Brown quit and tried amateur singing contests. He won first prize, crooning Crosby songs at the Million Dollar Theatre on Third and Broadway.

With his winnings, Brown bought suits to wear to other talent contests. He continued to win first, second and third prizes throughout 1945. Moving to Shreveport, he was inducted into the Service but was rejected due to his having flat feet. He found a job working as M.C. and crooner at a ballroom called Billy Riley's at Palace Park. At first he crooned Crosby songs but later added popular blues & rhythm charts. Brown did not like to sing blues but was persuaded to try after being told he could make extra cash. Brown hooked up with a combo of elderly musicians going by the name of the Al Pace & Eddie (Coot) Lewis Combo. He sang Crosby standards as well as blues with them.

After Riley's burned down, Brown moved to Galveston and joined Joe Coleman's Band. With them he sang the hit songs of the day and impersonated the artists that sang them. He then formed his own black combo called Roy Brown & His Mellodeers and played Club Grenada run by vice queen Mary Russell. The group became a success and wound up being the first black combo on the air in the area. Brown's band enjoyed airtime over KGBC. He continued to croon Crosby songs and Ink Spots ballads but had written a blues jumper called "Good Rockin' Tonight. Up to this point, his combo was composed of mostly rhythm instruments. The Mellodeers were Brown, vocals, Clarence Ward, guitar, Rip Sewell, drums, Joel Harris, piano, A.P. Adams, bass, and occasional tenor sax Joe Woods.

After adding trumpet player Wilbert Brown, they prepared to sing "Good Rockin' Tonight" over KGBC with Wilbert singing lead, but at the last moment Wilbert got sick and Brown had to step into his place. After shouting his new song, the board lit up with phone calls. Many of Brown's listeners were Club Grenada patrons so when it came Club time, they wanted to hear Brown shout "Good Rockin' Tonight" live. Brown sang the song and set the house on fire.

While in Galveston, Brown hooked up with Bill Quinn of Gold Star Records in Houston. Quinn got the band over to a local recording studio in Galveston and had them record the blues ballad "Deep Sea Diver" and "By Baby Bye," a jump song by the band as a group. Neither the drummer nor tenor sax player was up to snuff and had to be replaced at the session by R.P. Marshall on drums and Joe Johnson on tenor sax. Bill Quinn's ability to promote his recordings was spotty

at best. Most of his promotion kitty went behind Lightnin' Hopkins, his best-selling artist. As a consequence, "Deep Sea Diver" did not make much of a splash.

Nothing really ignited Brown's career in Galveston so he packed up and moved to New Orleans. He went to see Wynonie Harris at Foster's Rainbow Room and had visions of himself looking as neat and cool as Harris in his pressed suit and glass-like shiny shoes. During intermission, Brown tried to sell "Good Rockin' Tonight" to Harris but was brushed away. As more a joke than a dare, a crowd at the bar tried to get Brown to sing his song on the spot. Brown's performance was met with thunderous applause. A person drew Brown aside and told him where he could find work. The stranger took Brown to the Dew Drop Inn where Cecil Gant was appearing. During the show, Gant had Brown step up to sing "Good Rockin' Tonight." Gant loved the song and called Jules Braun at De Luxe Records. Backed by the Bob Ogden Orchestra, Braun had Brown record "Good Rockin' Tonight" in July 1947 in New Orleans.

Wynonie Harris recorded a cover version of "Good Rockin' Tonight" for King Records in Cincinnati on December 28, 1947, in spite of his earlier lack of interest in the song.

By June 1948, Wynonie Harris' version had leaped into the No.1 spot on the Best Sellers, Juke Box and R&B Billboard charts. It was the first black blues & rhythm record ever to achieve this feat. Both the Brown and Harris versions ran neck and neck for a while, but Brown (who you will remember was slighted when he first offered the song to Harris), came in down at No.13 on Billboard's R&B chart for June 1948. Sales figures proved that Harris was one of the top R&B stars of the time, having cut around twenty-five singles. Brown was just a starter.

Brown stayed with De Luxe Records for five years. When Syd Nathan bought the label in 1949, Brown continued to record for De Luxe but in December 1952 switched to Nathan's King parent company with whom he stayed until mid-1955. After that, he went to Imperial for two and a half years. In a reciprocal deal the Brauns had with "War" Perkins in 1947, some of Brown's masters (including "Good Rockin' Tonight") ended up being released again on Miltone. The great Roy Brown passed away on May 25th, 1981 in Los Angeles.

Goree Carter (Little T-Bone)

Goree Carter (a.k.a. Little T-Bone) was born in Houston December 31st, 1930. His father, an injured-in-combat military service veteran, played mostly blues piano and trumpet in roadhouses. When Goree Carter was a child, his family would host backyard music sessions filled with jamming musician friends of Goree's sisters. These included Arnett Cobb and Cleanhead Vinson. Goree Carter started playing guitar at the age of thirteen. He took lessons from a man across the street. T-Bone Walker was his main inspiration and he would play T-Bone's records until he had mastered all the licks.

Carter's first gig came about through sheer luck. The female proprietor of the Whispering Pines Club at Trinity Gardens just happened to pass the house and heard him playing out on the porch. Carter did not own an electric guitar at the time, so the club staff had to organize a whip 'round to get him one. He also performed at floor shows at the Eldorado with the I.H. Smally Band. He was noticed by talent scout Ann Cullum (Cullen) who ran a booking agency and was connected briefly with Lola Cullum's A.R.C. record label in Houston. Ann Cullum became Carter's unofficial manager. She booked him with Lightnin' Hopkins at a club in Nashville. A couple of Hollywood record labels came looking for him but his mother refused to sign for him to go. Carter returned to

the Eldorado and met up with Samuel (Saul) Kahl of Freedom Records on Oxford Street in Houston. Before signing with Freedom, Carter cut test recordings in Houston to see how well he could be produced and engineered.

Goree Carter was only nineteen years old at the time. Under the soubriquet of Little T-Bone, he cut "Love's A Gamble" and "Christmas Blues," accompanied by pianist Lonnie Lyons who had previously recorded for Bill Quinn's Gold Star Records. Somehow the sides ended up in "War" Perkins' hands and were issued on Miltone. Carter began recording for Freedom only weeks later. Four sessions came about, after which he recorded for a slew of small labels in Houston. He also waxed as Rocky Thompson for Jade in 1950.

Gene Morris

Tenor sax man Gene Morris and the Gene Morris quintet began recording for "War" Perkins' Cleartone label in 1946. His five-piece ensemble included the young Charlie Mingus on bass. After only two releases (one song of which turned up on Miltone) he went with Lionel Hampton's four-piece Hamptones unit and waxed four sides for Chester Lew's tiny Spire label in Fresno. Two tunes were led by big band blues singer Sonny Parker. At that point, he had adopted the soubriquet "King Trotter." As Gene Morris & His King Trotters, he cut one record for Jack Arbuckle & Hite Morgan's Cal-West label in Fresno in 1955.

Edward "Great Gates" White

Edward "Great Gates" White was born in Philadelphia, Pa. in 1918. The White family pulled up stakes and moved to Los Angeles in 1932. He attended Jefferson High and went on to study music at Frank Wiggins College. While working for a dry cleaning business, he entered dance contests and won big prizes. Gates was an excellent jitterbugger. He signed up for a singing talent contest at a night club and impressed the band leader who wound up teaching him singing technique.

His first recordings were cut for Columbia under "The Gates" soubriquet some time in 1948. As The Great Gates, he signed with John Blackburn's Selective label in Van Nuys in May 1949. He cut two records with Marvin Phillips on tenor sax for Selective. Later that year, as Great Gates & The Hollywood All-Stars, he waxed one record for the tiny Kappa label (probably proprietored by Blackburn.) In late 1949, "War" Perkins persuaded Great Gates to record for him as he had a deal going with Ivin Ballen at Gotham to have his records distributed on the East Coast. As "Great" Gates & His Wampus Cats, Gates recorded one release for Miltone before moving on to 4 Star, Rex Hollywood, Modern, Recorded-In-Hollywood and others.

Chubby Newsome – courtesy Giles Petard

Chubby Newsome

The great Chubby "Hip Shakin'" Newsome hailed from Detroit and moved to New Orleans in 1948. Later that year, in November, she signed with the Braun brothers' De Luxe label and waxed along with three other released songs "Hip Shakin' Mama" with Her Hip

Shakers (Paul Gayten's Band) in a deal with De Luxe, "Hip Shakin' Mama" ended up on Miltone. "Hip Shakin' Mama" peaked at the number eight spot on Billboard's R&B chart in February 1949. It stayed on the charts for a month.

Rumor had it that Newsome had to quit Gayten's band because of rivalry with Gayten's regular female thrush, Annie Laurie. She continued with De Luxe, recording with The Dave Bartholomew Band in January 1949 and with The Howard Biggs Orchestra on the Regal subsidiary in 1949 and 1951. She cut sides with Dave "Baby" Cortez on Winley in 1957.

Maxwell Davis

The legendary Maxwell Davis was born in Independence, Kansas on January 14th, 1916, the youngest of five children born to Thomas Maxwell and Birdie Davis. When he was eight, his aunt bought him a violin which he studied for a year before switching to piano. After mastering the piano, he took to the saxophone and could play well after two years. At the age of fifteen he played saxophone in various school bands in Independence.

He formed his first group in 1931. The outfit played parties and dances around the Wichita area. Two years later, he was with the Gene Coy Band traveling throughout the Midwest. He moved to Los Angeles in 1937. Davis worked with Fletcher Henderson at the Follies Theatre with the house band, wrote for the Happy Johnson Band, joined the Jake Porter Combo and labored as a freelance arranger. He arranged for Black & White, 4 Star, Aladdin, Modern, Capitol, Imperial and Miltone where he accompanied Jimmy Grissom and the Blenders and Little Miss Cornshucks. Davis sliced one record under his own name for Miltone a year after making his debut on Bill McCull's 4 Star Records. Maxwell Davis died of a heart attack on September 18th, 1970.

Paul Gayten

Paul Gayten was born in Kentwood, Louisiana on January 29th, 1920. Most of his family was involved in music. Even his great-great grandfather led a Crescent City jazz band. He began playing music in 1932, starting with the baby grand piano. His aunts, uncles and various relatives all fought for time on the baby grand. At age fourteen he went to Jackson, Miss. and played at his godfather's club. From there he worked with the Doc Parmley Band, the Royal American Band and the Silas Green Minstrel Show Band. Forming his own outfit in Jackson, Gayten got a program on W.S.L.I. He was the first black bandleader to get a radio program in Jackson. Davis played Duke Ellington-type music. He was drafted in 1940 and performed in the army band at Biloxi, Miss. He also entertained at USOs.

Paul Gayten – courtesy Billy Vera

Gayten made his first recordings with the Edgar Blanchard Quartet in January 1947. Al Young introduced him to the Braun brothers at De Luxe. Out of the four songs recorded, "True" (You Don't Love Me), became a hit, peaking at number five on the Billboard R&B chart in October 1947. In June 1947, he recorded with Annie Laurie from Miami (she had come from singing in the Snookum Russell Band). Gayten and Laurie struck pay dirt with their rendering of "Since I

Fell For You" which climbed to number three on Billboard's R&B chart in October 1947. Gayten conducted six or seven sessions on De Luxe before showing up on Miltone with Annie Laurie and the Paul Gayten Trio singing "One Sweet Letter From You" and the Gayten-lead "Hey, Little Girl." Again, the Gayten sides were the result of a special marketing deal with the Braun brothers.

Gayten continued to record for De Luxe, Regal, Okeh, Checker, Argo, Anna and Chess up to 1967 when he formed the Pzazz label.

Although our Roy Milton/Miltone collection is far from complete, we have endeavored to bring you the cream of the crop. Artists such as George Washington, Floyd Ray, Peppy Prince, Calvin Jackson and Dorothy Donegan will be the subject of a further Roy Milton/Miltone anthology. Meanwhile, enjoy some of the finest pioneering blues & rhythm sounds ever etched on shellac.

Opal Louis Nations, July 2008

With assistance from Jonas Bernholm, Dave Penny, Rockin' Steve, Eric Le Blanc, Billy Vera, Bob Bell, Paul Ressler, Broadway World, John Broven, Ray Topping, Jeff Hannusch, Prof. Hi Jinx, Barry Mazor, Bo Berglind, Daniel Gugolz and others.

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"Blues & Rhythm "magazine is essential for anyone interested in blues and R&B. For more details on Miltone Records check out their December 2008 edition. Write to Blues & Rhythm at 2 South Edge, Shipley, Bradford BD18 4RA or Email bfoulger@mac.com website www.bluesandrhythm.co.uk

Roy Milton photo on cover – courtesy Bob Bell

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courtesy Victor Pearlin