NUGGETS of the GOLDEN AGE OF GOSPEL

1945 1953

COMPILED & ANNOTATED by OPAL LOUIS NATIONS

The SOUL STIRRERS • DEEP RIVER BOYS • The CHARIOTEERS • HAZEL CHATMAN

and Many Many More

This box set is of particular significance for two reasons. The first is that no other Post-War gospel box has covered Afro-American gospel and included as many soloists who later went on to make larger reputations in other musical disciplines. Secondly, no other Post-War gospel box covers as many aspects of the music stream. Many are reissued for the first time. Many deserve attention. Many serve as prime examples of several ways to express gospel praise. One would be hard put to find a more expansive picture of golden age gospel singing anyplace else.

The elements of gospel music came together during the early 1930s. This was due in part to several sociological changes within the black community, the most significant of these being attributed to those able to escape the yoke of the sharecropper. The fortunate migrated to urban areas where more bountiful economic opportunities and a greater measure of freedom could be had. Rural migrants from Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana headed north for urban areas like Greenville, Atlanta, Birmingham, Memphis, Shreveport, Nashville and Little Rock, taking their religious musical traditions with them. (Later migrations in the Fifties brought African Americans to the industrialized Midwest and North-east.) They set up church in storefronts, tents and small, ramshackle buildings. These places of worship, be they affiliated with the Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal or Holiness denominations, nurtured the seeds of gospel music without links to presupposed conservative formality. Congregants purely expressed their innermost feelings to God, and their deep emotional involvement was a major part of this expression. It was this deep, personal emotional spontaneity that set gospel apart from other musics for a long while.

The preacher, song leader and congregation shared equally the creative moments of inspiration. The fulfillment of these moments was emphatically transposed into gospel song by Thomas A. Dorsey of Chicago. Formerly Georgia Tom, a blues troubadour, Dorsey took the blues-shaded rhythm, melody and harmony into the church where, with the addition of Arizona Dranes' style of ragtime piano, he created a fresh type of religious joy full of hope and celebration. Dorsey penned several hundred songs including *Old Ship Of Zion*, beautifully conceived on this collection by The Mayflower Singers, and the ethereal *Jesus Remembers* rendered caressingly by Claude Jeter and the Swan Silvertones.

Many of these new songs, or 'Dorseys' as they called them, replaced the more formal hymns as gradually the clergy came around to the fresh colors of praise singing. There were other similarly inspired contemporaries of Dorsey like Lillian Bowles who wrote the chanting *Walk Around* done by the 5 Soul Stirrers with Rebert Harris and *I'm Trampin'* included here in close knit form by the Deep River Boys. Roberta Martin's *He Knows How Much You Can Bear* is performed here peerlessly by Hazel Chatman, an underrated, under-recorded talent. *The Lord's Prayer* set to song by Josephine Forsyth is movingly rendered by the Orioles. The great Herbert Brewster's *How Far Am I From Canaan* is given a close harmony treatment by the Harmonizing Four and the Chapman & Marsh classic *One Day* is shouted memorably by the Dixie Hummingbirds and Angelic Singers.

Fanny Crosby's *Near The Cross* never sounded as sanctified as it does here in the Flowers of Joy arrangement. Shepherd & Allen's *Must Jesus Bear The Cross Alone* is given voltage by the Keys of Heaven while the Prisonaires offer a delicate reading of Kenneth Morris's *My God Is Real*. Robert Lowry's *I Need Thee* is powerfully plundered by the Detroit Harmonettes, and who but Little Johnny Taylor could do justice to Lowell Mason's *There Is A Fountain*, equaled in emotion only by Sam Cooke's finessings of Rev. Durham's *Pilgrim Of Sorrow*.

In addition to the formally composed gospel songs is a "congregational improvisation." This is a call and response modification. When once the congregation followed the leader by "lining out" a song, the congregants now respond to the gospel singing by shouting encouragement and approval. Regional styles of gospel quartet singing sprang up in Birmingham, Atlanta, Houston, Detroit, Pittsburgh, New Jersey, Philadelphia, New York and elsewhere. San Francisco and Los Angeles were a little late to follow.

The Baptist Convention encouraged the songwriter and gospel stylists who were provided opportunities to travel and organize gospel aggregations in churches throughout the United States. The weekly network broadcasts featuring groups such as The Golden Gate Quartet, Charioteers, Jubalaires, Wings Over Jordan and others helped accelerate widespread recognition of the gospel music phenomenon. The Wings Over Jordan sang spirituals and gospels in the conventional college choir format and did not allow as much "falling out" as did members of a congregational setting. The Holiness Church, on the other hand, encouraged the use of musical instruments during its services. It was this, as much as anything, that directed quartet singers into a style that some felt was a show of dramatic extravagance.

One-time jazz singer Sister Rosetta Tharpe was one of the first gospel soloists to add theatricality to a performance. By the early 1940s, this newer "gospel style" had found a national acceptance, leading to the virtual flowering of a gospel renaissance soon after the end of World War II. Now gospel took on a new and exciting lease of life when Afro American people with money in their pockets started buying gospel recordings in impressive numbers. Independent record companies sprang up everywhere and most saw fit to exploit this new gospel music. Bootleg recordings appeared when recording bans were put in place. Gospel waxings were no exception. Such was the clamor for sound recordings.

Rev. Herbert Brewster had now replaced Thomas A. Dorsey as the foremost gospel songwriter. The phenomenal sales of two of his songs, *Move On Up A Little Higher* by Mahalia Jackson and *Surely God Is Able* by Clara Ward, made Brewster a sizeable sum. A total of thirty black gospel artists, most of them widely known, recorded *Move On Up A Little Higher* over a period of twenty-two years. Mdm Ernestine Martin was the first to record the song in 1946, but oddly her version remains in obscurity to this day. *Surely God Is Able* was only covered by six notable gospel acts but was an equally sizeable golden gospel oldie.

Details & dates

Track 1: REBERT HARRIS & THE FIVE SOUL STIRRERS:
Rebert Harris, Ernest Rundless, Mozel Franklin, Senior Roy Crain, Jesse J. Farley - Vocal Group
Los Angeles, c. 1940

Track 2: DEEP RIVER BOYS:
Chicago, 25th Sept 1945

Track 3: FRANK SINATRA & THE CHARIOTEERS:
1947

Track 4: HAXEL CHATMAN with THE GOLDEN HARMONIZERS:
Los Angeles c. June 1948

Track 5: THE GOLDEN MELODEERS:
Coleman Hotel, Court St. Newark, c. October 1948

Track 6: SISTER ETHEL DAVENPORT with BROWNIE McGHEE:
New York, September 1948

Track 7: RICHMOND HARMONIZERS:
Thomas Johnson, Lonnie Smith, Joseph Williams, Vance Joyner, Levi Hansley - Vocal Group
Lonnie Smith - Guitar
Coleman Hotel, Court St. Newark, c. August 1948

Track 8: SISTER EMILY BRAM:
Los Angeles, c. March 1949

Track 9: JOE VAN LOAN & THE CANAANITES:
April 1949

Track 10: Mdm EDNA GALLMON COOKE & THE MOUNT VERNON MEN'S CHOIR:
April/May 1949

Track 11: FIVE BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA:
Rev. Paul Exkano, George Scott, Rev.George W. Warren, Clarence Fountain, Olice Thomas, Johnny Fields - Vocal Group (lead vocalists Scott, Fountain, Warren)
George Scott - Guitar
1950

Track 12: WILLIE MAE FORD SMITH:
Willie Mae Ford Smith - Vocal
Bertha Smith - Piano
Gwendolyn Cooper - Organ
Los Angeles, c. 1950

Track 13: GOLDEN GATE QUARTET:
Clyde Riddick, Alton Bradley, Orville Brooks, Orlandus Wilson - Vocal Group
Conrad Frederick - Piano
New York, January 1950

Track14: SONNY TIL & THE ORIOLES:
Earlington Carl 'Sonny Til' Tilghman, George Nelson, Alexander Sharp, Johnny Redd - Vocal Group
Tommy Gaither - Guitar
19th August 1950

Track 15: REV. C. L. FRANKLIN:
27th October 1950

Track 16: ANGELIC GOSPEL SINGERS & THE DIXIE HUMMINGBIRDS:
Angelics (Margaret Allison, Lucille Shird, Josephine McDowell, Ella Mae Morris, Bernice Cole); Dixies (James Davis, Ira Tucker, Beachey Thompson, William Bobo, Paul Owens) - Vocal Groups (Leads: Bernice Cole, Paul Owen, Ira Tucker)
Margaret Allison - Piano
New York, 27th Dec 1951

Track 17: BABY SHIRLEY (THE 12 YEAR OLD LASS):
Shirley Caesar - Vocal
Durham, North Carolina, 30th November 1951

Track 18: FLOWERS OF JOY:
Bedile Goldsmith, Bedile Goldsmith Jr., Arthur Buckholder, Johnny L. White, James Campbell, Rubin ? - Vocal Group
Los Angeles, c. 1951

Track 19: MARY DELOATCH:
New York, 1st Nov 1951

Track 20: ROYAL SONS QUINTET:
Lowman 'Pete' Pauling - Bass Vocal Jimmy Moore, Otto Jeffries, Obadiah Carter, William Samuels, John L. Tanner - Vocal Group
Royal Abbit - Piano
Lowman 'Pete' Pauling - Guitar
New York, October 1951

Track 21: SISTER WYNONA CARR:
Sister Wynona Carr- Vocal, Piano Charles Brown - Organ
David Bryant - Bass
Oscar Bradley - Drums
Universal Recorders Studio, Hollywood, 8th April 1952

Track 22: REV. ELDER 'GATEMOUTH' MOORE & THE BESSEMER FOUR:
Rev Elder 'Gatemouth' Moore -Vocal Sollie J. Pugh, Robert Moss, Jesse Thompson, Martin Denson - Vocal Group
?Chicago, 3rd July 1952

Track 23: ROSA SHAW:
c. February 1952

Track 24: MORGAN BABB & THE RADIO FOUR:
James Babb, Claude Babb, Morgan Babb, George Babb, Ray Babb - Vocal Group
Morgan Babb - Guitar
Ernie Newton - Bass
Radio Station WBDL, Bowling Green, KY, April 1952

Track 25: CECIL SHAW WITH THE UNION SPIRITUAL HARMONIZERS:
?Houston, Texas, Feb 1952

Track 26: STEWART FAMILY:
Sylvester, Freddie, Rose, Vaetta Stewart - Vocal Group
(Sylvester Stewart later recorded as Sly Stone)
1952

Track 27: SISTER LUCILLE BARBEE:
c. 1952

Track 28: CHUCK CARBO & THE DELTA SOUTHERNAIRES:
Haywood 'Chuck' Carbo, Leonard 'Chick' Carbo, Joseph Maxon, Matthew 'Mac' West, Oliver Howard, Vocal Group
Henry Wicks - Piano
J & M Studios, New Orleans, 11th December 1953

JSP Records PO Box 1584 London N3 3NW England

Cover Art: aitkendesign@mac.com

NUGGETS of the GOLDEN AGE OF GOSPEL

1953 1955

COMPILED & ANNOTATED by OPAL LOUIS NATIONS

MAHALIA JACKSON • The PRISONAIRES • The BELLS of JOY • PHIL PHILLIPS

and Many Many More

B

The late 1940s brought on the age of gospel quartet. Both male and female groups had mass appeal among church brethren. Their performance presentations were generally focused on commercial appeal. Choirs remained more conservative until James Cleveland came along. After all, gospel quartets were starting to move out of the strictly church environment and into the auditorium, concert hall, theatre and ball-park. Flamboyant and sharply attired, the younger more sexually appealing male quartet singer replaced the older, stand-on-a-dime, more rigidly set jubilee practitioner. By the early 1950s, gospel groups or quartets had carved out a sizeable church-going following. The usual make-up averaged five or six males or females or an aggregate of both. The female outfits preferred piano and/or organ accompaniment. The males usually went for percussive string instruments and drums.

Gospel's Leading Lights During the Golden Age

The Clara Ward Singers of Philadelphia were one of the first female singing groups to command national attention. The Wards wrote and published their own songs so as to capitalize on publishing royalties which made more money for them in the long term. The Wards became so popular that they had to hire and pay singers in other localities to fill all their Ward Singers performance commitments. Promoters could levy fines if bookings were not met. Clara was lead soloist and pianist. Gertrude, her mother and founder, was both manager and treasurer which lead to salary problems later on.

Star soloist was Marion Williams, featured here belting out *When I Lay This Body Down*, supported by the Stars of Faith who were all once the Ward Singers before an argument over the percentage split of an evening's take. Gertrude was in the habit of always taking the lion's share. Marion Williams was a spectacular soprano and is the subject of a documentary film currently being finished by black San Francisco film-maker Ashley James. Marion provided a revivalist air to the Wards' style and assured an intense motional impact on the audience. The Wards played in clubs, hotels, theatres and auditoriums all over the world.

The Ward Singers' live barn-storming version of *Didn't It Rain* was recorded at New York's Town Hall in June 1958. The fervor generated on this performance is roof-raising and serves as a perfect closer to our boxed set. We have also included two other outstanding yet completely different arrangements of *Didn't It Rain* recorded the same year - Sister Rosetta Tharpe's stunning live solo with guitar version recorded on a concert at the C.O.G.I.C. in New York with the Sally Jenkins Singers in September 1958, and Evelyn Freeman's best-selling 1958 "pop" version with the Exciting Voices and Tommy Roberts. The success of Freeman's arrangement brought on a slew of work later on for Berry Gordy at Motown Records in Detroit. In addition, Mahalia Jackson recorded her filmed, live version in July 1958 at the Newport Jazz Festival in Rhode Island. Hers was yet another cloud-breaking arrangement and stunning presentation which was also featured in Bert Stern's movie "Jazz on a Summer's Day."

Our second key figure in Post-War gospel's development is Mahalia Jackson. As Jules Schwerin said, Jackson was not only the greatest gospel diva the US (and the world) has known, but almost single-handedly took the Dorsey gospels out of the Baptist Church onto the world stage. In bright organza gowns and with hair in a beehive, she rocked the church. Her monumental voice filled with spiritual bewitchery lifted the souls of those in attendance to an astonishing state of grace.

After moving with an aunt from New Orleans to Chicago shortly before the Great Depression, she accepted an invitation from the Three Johnson Brothers – Robert, Prince and Wilbur - to join their gospel group, one of the first in that city. She met Dorsey who attempted to secure her as his "song demonstrator." Jackson's improvisational singing suited Dorsey's blues-shaded style down to the ground. By 1937, she had built a reputation as a formidable traveling Baptist soloist. She caught the attention of Decca A&R man J. Mayo 'Ink' Williams and in May recorded for him. But her voice had not the distinction of being unique and special in itself. Although outstanding, she was compared with the great Bessie Smith. This unfortunately failed to impress.

At a concert at New York's prestigious Golden Gate Auditorium, she was spotted by Bess Berman of Apollo Records who signed her to a contract. Her first session was on October 3, 1946. Her records drew attention but nothing took off until September 1947 when she recorded the two-part Theodore R. Frye song *Move On Up A Little Higher*, supported by various unheralded members of the Selah Jubilee Singers. The record's sales put Jackson on the map. She moved to Columbia in 1954, which assured her global success. In October 1953 she recorded the sumptuously beautiful *No Matter How You Pray* supported by the Belleville Choir in New York (see CD: B, cut 5.)

Singer/guitar slinger Rosetta Nubin, a.k.a. Sister Rosetta Tharpe, was born in Cotton Plant, Arkansas in 1915. She was possessed with a warm, bright, jazz-colored brassy voice sometime better suited to "Dorseys" than her friend Mahalia Jackson's. Her chord-strumming guitar style influenced many including T. Bone Walker and Mary De Loach (the latter represented here with her version of Dorsey's *Gospel Train*, a.k.a. *The Lord's Gospel Train* or *The Gospel Train's A Comin'*.) Funnily enough, the song was covered by The Sunset Travelers at Tharpe's wedding ceremony to her manager, Russell Morrison, in 1951 by Decca Records at Griffith Stadium in Washington, D.C.

One can only think of Memphis Minnie having any influence over her guitar style which was generally based on the mandolin runs and riffs of her mother, Katie Bell Nubin whose overall talent Rosetta surpassed. Growing up at home, Tharpe played and sang jazz and blues for her friends. In public, she performed only gospel. Around 1935, Tharpe moved to Harlem and joined the Sanctified Church. Always free spirited, Tharpe refused to conform to the conservative standards of the church. She recorded gospel demos at Decca's New York studio beginning 1938. In October that year, she recorded her first Decca session, netting Dorsey's *Hide Me In Thy Bosom* and the jubilant *Rock Me*, Tharpe's own *That's All*, the secular *My Man And I* plus the song based on an old Spiritual, *Lonesome Road*.

Details & dates

Track 1: BESSIE GRIFFIN & THE CARAVANS:
Albertina Walker, Elyse Yancey, Bessie Griffin, Iris Humble - Vocal Group
Charlotte Nelson - Piano,
Unknown - Organ
Chicago 4th December 1953

Track 2: FAIRFIELD FOUR:
Rev. Sam McCrary, Willie Love, Clarence 'Baby' Brooks, Willie Frank Lewis, George McCurn -Vocal Group
January 1953

Track 3: ANN COLE & THE COLEMANAIRES:
Cynthia Coleman, Rev. Joe Walker, Sam Walker, Wesley Johnson - Vocal Group
New York, September 1953
(Cynthia Coleman later recorded secular music as 'Ann Cole')

Track 4: PHIL PHILLIPS & THE GATEWAY QUARTET:
Phil Phillips, Edward Phillips, Anthony Thomas, Mack Robinson Lyles - Vocal Group
1953

Track 5: MAHALIA JACKSON with THE BELLEVILLE CHOIR:
New York, 9th October 1953

Track 6: JONES BROTHERS QUARTET:
Jake McIntosh, Eddie Hollins, John Allen Prye, Charles Jones, William Gresham, James Edward Rayford - Vocal Group Charles Edward Bishop - Guitar
706 Union, Memphis, Dec 1953

Track 7: MAYFLOWER SINGERS:
1953

Track 8: KEYS OF HEAVEN:
Miami, August 1953

Track 9: PRISONAIRES:
Johnny Bragg, Ed Thurman, John Drue, William Stewart, Marcel Saunders - Vocal Group
William Stewart - Guitar
Tennessee State Prison, Nashville, August 1953

Track 10: TONY HARRIS & THE TRAVELING FOUR:
Billy Marshall, Tony Harris, Grover Mincey, Jimmy 'Preacher' Ellis - Vocal Group
Radio Recorders Studio, Los Angeles, 30th April 1953

Track 11: VOILINAIRES (correct issue name):
Arthur Lee 'Bob' Beatty, Calvin Fair, Wilson De Shields, Isaiah Jones, Willie Banks, Providence Thomas - Vocal Group
Detroit, c. 1953

Track 12: SISTER MARIE KNIGHT WITH THE SAM PRICE TRIO:
Sister Marie Knight - Vocal
Sam Price - Piano
Everett Barksdale - Guitar
Hayes Alvis - Bass
Terry Snyder - Drums
New York, 5th August 1954

Track 13: AFRO QUINTETTE:
Willie 'Joe' Charleston, Marcellus Morse, Joe West, Bill Crosby, Harrison Wyman - Vocal Group
22nd November, 1954

Track 14: DETROIT HARMONETTES:
Ruth Scott, ? Slater, ? Dailey, Irly Bailey - Vocal Group
Detroit 13th January 1954

Track 15: BELLS OF JOY:
A. C. Littlefield, Robert Dawkins, James Dawkins, Vernon Maynor, Bob King, Clem Reed - Vocal Group (lead Clem Reed)
Bob King - Guitar
Unknown - Drums
c. August 1954

Track 16: EVER-READY SINGERS:
Chris Tyler, Isiah Robertson, James Knight, Leroy Fontenot, Sam Campbell - Vocal Group
Los Angeles, 16th Feb 1954

Track 17: ISREALITE TRAVELERS (correct name):
Sanders Cooper, John Phillips, Ben Vaughn, Clarence Mills, Gene Allison - Vocal Group
c. April 1954

Track 18: PILGRIM JUBILEE:
Elgie C.B. Graham, Clay Graham, Cleave Graham, Monroe Hatchett, Major Roberson, Kenny Maddon - Vocal Group
Arthur Crume - Guitar
Chicago, 1954

Track 19: SKYLIGHT SINGERS:
Samuel Abraham, Carl Sumpter, James Wilson, Leroy Harper, Jimmy Brown - Vocal Group
Fulton Studios, New York, June 1954

Track 20: BROTHER BILL LOUIS: (Rev. Utah Smith)
1954

Track 21: STARS OF BETHEL:
Willie Jones, Johnny Young, Ollie Jones, Roosevelt Jones - Vocal Group (lead Johnny Young - later recorded secular music as 'Little Johny Taylor'.
c. October 1954

Track 22: SWANEE QUINTET:
Rev. Ruben W. Willingham, Charles Barnwell, James Anderson, William Crawford, Rufus Washington - Vocal Group William Crawford - Guitar

Track 23: MME ERNESTINE WASHINGTON & THE MILLERAIRES:
Ernestine Washington - Vocal with vocal group
Kelly Owens - Piano
Alfred Miller - Organ
Marty Wilson - Drums
Unknown - Tambourines
RCA Studio 1, New York, 10th March 1954

Track 24: ZION TRAVELERS:
Bartha L. Watkins, L.C. Cohen, L. W. Van, Garland Fate Mason, Wesley J. Sherman, Felton Vernon - Vocal Group
Radio Recorders, Los Angeles, 18th March 1954

Track 25: REV. BALLENGER with WILLIE DIXON:
Rev. Ballenger - Vocal, Piano
Willie Dixon - Bass
Odie Payne - Drums
Chicago c. January 1955

Track 26: THE CARAVANS:
Albertina Walker, Cassietta George, Iris Humble, Gloria Griffin, Johneron Davis - Vocal Group
James Cleveland - Vocal, Piano
Unknown - Organ
Chicago, 18th January, 1955

Track 27: REBERT H HARRIS & THE CHRISTLAND SINGERS:
Rebert H. Harris, James Johnson, Rev. Leroy Taylor, Thomas L. Bruster, George Croffet - Vocal Group
1955

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NUGGETS of the GOLDEN AGE OF GOSPEL

1955 1957

COMPILED & ANNOTATED by OPAL LOUIS NATIONS

The GOLDEN KEYS • The GOSPEL SONG BIRDS • MAVIS & The STAPLE SINGERS

and Many Many More

C

On *Rock Me* Sister Rosetta Tharpe is supported by the Lucky Millinder Orchestra with whom she played at the Cotton Club after appearing with Cab Calloway. This was quite a leap from the tent meeting troupes of her childhood when she played with her mother on Evangelist P.W. McGhee's revivalist programs. *Rock Me* became so popular she was asked to record it again with Millinder in 1941 followed by a week's residence at New York's Café Society a year later. Her break from recording popular music came in 1944 when she started cutting sides as a single with the Sammy Price Trio.

That same year she waxed *Strange Things Happening Every Day* and the release became an enormous hit. From here the sky was the limit. Tharpe chalked up thirteen more major selling hits over a period of four years. Her star started to fade in the mid-Fifties but she enjoyed a brief revival in 1957 when she came to England and played at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester with Chris Barber's traditional Jazz Band.

The Golden Gate Quartet was the most influential Jubilee quartet of all time. An endless stream of harmonists lay claim to their creative arrangements and personal style despite the fact the group spent only the first twenty years of their sixty-odd-year recording history in the U.S. Groups such as the Deep River boys, Delta Rhythm Boys, Prisonaires, Orioles and Ravens were all inspired in some way by the Golden Gates whose 1940s radio programs were syndicated across the nation. The Golden Gates enjoyed two major selling records in 1943, both on Okeh Records. These were songs recorded to inspire and give hope to the fighting man during the Second World War - *Stalin Wasn't Stallin'* and *Coming In On A Wing And Prayer*.

Their smooth, silky harmonies were heard all over Europe during the conflict. The Golden Gates continued to crusade for our troops and came up with two more major sellers at the close of the War. These were *The General Jumped At Dawn* and *I Will Be Home Again*. With the dawn of "shout" gospel in the early 1950s, the sweet and close harmonies of the Golden Gate quartet fell out of vogue. The fickle record business in the U.S. was such that if you were out of fashion, you were tossed aside and promptly forgotten. But European fans and collectors are of a different stripe. They fondly remembered and revered the Gates and supported them wherever they crossed the pond to concertize for them. Hence the Golden Gates, at that time composed of Clyde Reddick, first tenor, Clyde Wright, second tenor, Frank Todd, baritone, and Orlandus Wilson, bass, were welcomed with open enthusiasm. The group appreciated the fact that they were admired for their art (by the French in particular) and not for their record sales potential. The French continued to support their

many live appearances for more than thirty years during which time the group became a part of the Parisian culture.

The Golden Gate quartet are represented here with the touching *Same Train* cut in New York not long before their defection to Paris and brief switch back to Columbia/Okeh Records.

Rev. James Cleveland, although accused of plagiarism (sitting in the back pews of a church with a notebook jotting down choral arrangements) was most certainly the most influential and globally recognized minister to lift the choral archetype out of tradition and into modern times. He was one of the first to have small choral groups singing in front of church choir backgrounds. In short, through his work with the annual choir convention and the Gospel Music Workshop of America (organized in 1968), he taught songs and technique to choral singers everywhere.

Cleveland was born in Chicago in 1931 and by the age of eight was a soloist in Dorsey's Jnr Gospel Choir at the Pilgrim Baptist Church. At fifteen, he sang with the Thorne Crusader, a local group, and composed his first song, *Grace Is Sufficient*, which was recorded by the Roberta Martin Singers. After arranging, playing piano and singing harmony with the Gospelaires Trio, Caravans, Meditations and Gospel Chimes, he formed the Gospel All-Stars who evolved into the mixed gender James Cleveland Singers. He is represented on this box set with a scorching version of *Old Time Religion* with the Caravans.

He cut a series of successful recordings with the Angelic Choir of the First Baptist Church in Nutley under the pastorship of Rev. Lawrence Roberts who later served as advisory scout for Savoy Records. His first major seller came in September 1963 with the release of Baker & Palmer's *Peace Be Still*, a rousing gospel ballad built around a classically arranged framework. The song put Cleveland on a firm footing as far as singing and choir directing was concerned. He recorded with the more conservative Walter Arties Chorale of L.A. in 1966, then Rev. Chas Craig's Voices of The Tabernacle in Detroit a year later.

He put together his finest Cleveland Singers group composed of the awesome castrato Roger Roberts and the great Burma Floyd who later joined Cleveland's Gospel Girls along with Bro Joe May's daughter Annette. Back and forth from New Jersey to Detroit to direct two choirs put a lot of strain on Cleveland. In 1969 he moved out to Los Angeles to direct the Southern California Community Choir at the Cornerstone Institutional Baptist. Throughout the 1970s, he used his name to promote a series of choirs and soloists for Savoy Records. Cleveland kept community-based choirs at the forefront of modern day gospel music for well over thirty years.

Details & dates

Track 1: REV. H.B. CRUM & THE GOLDEN KEYS:
June 1955

Track 2: DIXIELAND SINGERS:
May 1955

Track 3: EVENING STAR QUARTET:
Joseph Cook, Sam Bell, Louis Hampton, R. Mines, Jimmy Coleman - Vocal Group
1955

Track 4: GOSPEL SONG BIRDS:
James Phelps, A.J. Durr, Rev. John Dowdy, 1 unknown - Vocal Group
Chicago 1955

Track 5: KELLY BROTHERS:
Offie Reece, Robert Kelly, Curtis Kelly, Andrew Kelly, T.C. Lee - Vocal Group
Offie Reece - Guitar
Chicago c. 1955

Track 6: ROYAL TRAVELERS:
Bell Sound Studios, New York, 2nd June 1955

Track 7: NAPPY BROWN & SELAH JUBILEE SINGERS:
Napoleon Brown, Clyde Wright, Junius Parker, Jimmy Gorham - Vocal Group
New York, 9th Aug 1955

Track 8: SOUL STIRRERS:
Sam Cooke, Senior Roy Crain, Paul Foster, R. B. Robinson, Bob King, Jesse James Farley - Vocal Group
Master Recorders, Hollywood, 17th August 1955

Track 9: SOUTHERN TRAVELERS:
Oralee Crier, Florence Philips, Geneva Redmond, Louella Smith, George Elum - Vocal Group
1955

Track 10: ARGO GOSPEL SINGERS:
Lorenzo Brown, Minnie Colbert, Claudia Jeter; + unknown - Vocal Group (lead is Brown)
William Lambert - Piano
Maceo Woods - Organ
Unknown - Bass
Al Duncan - Drums
Chicago, 9th March 1956

Track 11: JOHNNIE TAYLOR & THE HIGHWAY Q.C.'s:
Sammy Mitchell, Lee Richardson, Johnnie Taylor, Creadell Copeland, Spencer Taylor, Charles Richardson - Vocal Group
Chicago, 6th March 1956

Track 12: CANDI STATON & THE JEWEL GOSPEL TRIO:
Naomi Harrison, Maggie Staton, Canzetta Staton, Sederia Boles, Shirley Boyd - Vocal Group
1956

Track13: MITCHELL AIRES QUINTET:
Doyle Sherman, Elder Neal + unknown - Vocal Group (lead is Elder Neal)
Los Angeles, c. Jan 1956

Track 14: ORIGINAL GOSPEL STARS:
Vocal group incl: Nathaniel Atkins - Lead Vocal
1956

Track15: JULIUS 'JUNE' CHEEKS & THE SENSATIONAL NIGHTINGALES:
Joseph 'Jo Jo' Wallace, Bill Woodruff, Julius 'June' Cheeks, John Jefferson - Vocal Group
Joseph Wallace - Guitar
Unknown - Drums
1956

Track 16: ROSCOE ROBINSON WITH HUEY BROWN & THE SILVER QUINTETTE:
Huey Brown, David Aron, Roscoe Robinson, Joe Henderson, Willis Williams - Vocal Group
Chicago, 11th Sept 1956

Track 17: JOE HINTON & THE SPIRIT OF MEMPHIS:
Joe Hinton, Robert Reed, Jethroe Bledsoe, Bobby Mack, Fred Howard, Earl Malone - Vocal Group
Louis Blair - Guitar
Houston c. 1956

Track 18: MAVIS & THE STAPLE SINGERS:
Roebuck, Mavis, Cleotha, Pervis Staples - Vocal Group
Roebuck Staples - Guitar
Chicago, 11th Sept 1956

Track 19: CLAUDE JETER & THE SWAN SILVERTONES:
Claude Jeter, Paul Owens, Dewey Young, John Henry Myles, Henry Bossard - Vocal Group
Chicago, 28th February 1956

Track 20: JUDY CLAY & THE DRINKARD SINGERS WITH INTRO BY JOE BOSTIC:
Emily 'Cissy' Garland, Judy Guions, Lee Warrick, Marie Epps, Ann Moss, Larry Drinkard - Vocal Group
Larry Drinkard - Piano
Dicky Mitchell - Organ
Newport Jazz Festival, Newport, RI, 7th July 1957
(Guions later recorded secular music as Judy Clay).

Track 21: MORGAN BABB with THE PHILCO SINGERS:
Morgan Babb- Lead Vocal
Billy Hill, James Bradley, John Couch - Vocal Group
c. 1957

Track 22: BESSIE GRIFFIN AND THE CONSOLATORS WITH JOHNNY ADAMS:
Bessie Griffin - Vocal
Johnny Adams, Spencer Jackson, Andrew Cosey, Ed Lewis, Wilbert Barber - Vocal Group
Ernest McLean, guitar
Earl Palmer, drums
Frank Fields, bass
Unknown others
New Orleans, 24th September, 1956

Track 23: ARCHIE BROWNLEE & THE FIVE BLIND BOYS OF MISSISSIPPI:
Archie Brownlee, Lawrence Abrams, Lloyd Woodard, John T. Clinkscales - Vocal Group
Maceo Woods - Organ
Chicago, 12th February 1957

Track 24: LOU RAWLS & THE PILGRIM TRAVELERS:
James W. Alexander, Lou Rawls, Ernest Booker, Jesse Whitaker, George McCurn - Vocal Group (leads are James W. Alexander and Lou Rawls)
Summer 1957

JSP Records PO Box 1584 London N3 3NW England

Cover Art: aitkendesign@mac.com

NUGGETS *of the* GOLDEN AGE OF GOSPEL

1957 1958

COMPILED & ANNOTATED *by* OPAL LOUIS NATIONS

O. V. WRIGHT • The CARAVANS • The CONSOLERS • Sister ROSETTA THARPE

and Many Many More

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Our collection endeavors to cover most aspects of the Post-War gospel genre, starting with the single-mike circle of jubilee, the custom of placing a leading female soloist in front of a male quartet for background, the string or piano-playing female soloist and accompanist, the hard-singing quartet (both male and female) and the brother and sister duet. Although this box set is comprised primarily of artists who devoted their careers to singing gospel, we have also included gospel songs by as many renowned and talented soul singers, R&B divas and celebrities as we can find inside the 1946-1958 parameters. These latter artists started their careers singing gospel.

There is no doubt that Sam Cooke, whose peerless, ethereal vocal style consisting of blues shadings, jazz inflections and a country yodel, was responsible for the complete change in the appreciation and dissemination of gospel quartet. Cooke whose birth-name was Sam Cook, later added an 'e' to his name. Born in Clarksdale in 1931, he grew up in Chicago where his father pastored a church on the South Side. The Cook kids, eight boys and two girls, sang in daddy's church choir. Some sources say the Cook family was comprised of seven children. Four of them, two girls and two boys (including Sam), sang in the family group, The Singing Children, at services in churches on the South Side.

While singing in the glee club at Wendell Phillips High, Sam was invited to sing in the neighborhood Highway Q.C.'s Quartet of the Highway Baptist Church and Q.C. High School. The group was organized by Soul Stirrers' baritone R.B. Robinson who used members (when fully trained) as graduates for the Soul Stirrers. When Soul Stirrer lead Rebert Harris quit the road and the Soul Stirrers in 1950, Sam Cooke filled his shoes. Legend has it that Harris left because of romantic entanglements.

The original Soul Stirrers of Trinity, Texas date back to 1927 when baritone Silas Roy Crain organized them at the Mount Pilgrim Baptist. Rebert H. Harris joined the Soul Stirrers in 1937. (Harris is represented on this collection with *Walk Around* with the Five Soul Stirrers, as well as *Nothing Will Move Me (From The Love Of God)* which he recorded with The Christland Singers, a local group he joined shortly after leaving the Soul Stirrers.)

Horace Boyer describes the power of Harris's voice as "being placed between his head and his chest so he could call on the power of his lower voice and the falsetto, in which he could assay his high range. His was a vocal sound never before heard in gospel."

Sam Cooke, Harris's replacement, brought not only his suave manner and good looks to the group but a voice that was light, smooth and lyrical. He had the skill to improvise but not so much as to overpower the melody. With backing harmonies as sweet as syrup, Cooke mesmerized his audience. The Soul Stirrers' sound floated in the air, gently lifting the soul as if by magic.

Cooke had spent time on the road with Harris standing in back making sure a smooth transition would come before Cooke made his debut on Specialty Records in March 1951 with Dorsey's *Peace In The Valley*. Cooke's cover of this song shows a good deal of restraint with what was to

become his signature "melismas." However, nothing was held back on what must have been one of Cooke's finest moments in March 1954 when he recorded Faidest Wagoner's lilting masterpiece, *Any Day Now* in Hollywood. The refrain seems as if written to suit Cooke's melodic intonations so completely.

In August 1955, Cooke cut the lovely *Pilgrim Of Sorrow*, written by Rev. M.C. Durham. It is included here. Were it not for his fateful death in 1964, Cooke would have lived to create a popular kind of soul music akin to the magic of our great classical composers.

We cannot complete our leading lights list without a word about Rev. C.L. Franklin, perhaps the nation's most influential black preacher. Franklin's recordings sell almost as well today, twenty-five years after his demise, as they did in his heyday during the 1950s. His sermons are remembered as well today as Mahalia Jackson's songbook. Franklin was also the father of Aretha Franklin.

Franklin was born near Indianola, Miss. in 1915 and grew up in Doddsville. He left school in the tenth grade to work, like his stepfather, as a farm laborer following the harvest. He took up preaching at the age of seventeen and was gradually able to give up manual labor. He sermonized in Clarksdale and Greenville and other small parishes. Tagospel to the road, he moved first to Memphis, Buffalo and New York before settling in Detroit. Shortly thereafter, his wife Barbara died and the church took custody of all the children.

During his heyday, Franklin recorded more than sixty sermons for Joe Von Battle's Battle imprint. He was criticized for his harshness to his children, his gambling, womanizing and drinking (he always carried a hip-flask), but there was no doubt about his amazing ability to draw people to him through the power of his voice. Now and then Franklin would sing and record songs. Most were cut as openers or closers to his sermons, but one or two of them, like his own *Wings Of Faith*, were issued by Gotham in New York in 1950. Nick Salvatore describes Franklin as being a man who revolutionized the art of preaching and who called upon his fellow Afro Americans to proclaim both their faith and rights to usher in the Civil Rights movement of which he became an integral part.

Today, gospel is a multi-convoluted hybrid with stream names like AC Pop, Hip Hop Gospel, Gospel Rap, Praise Singing and Gangsta Gospel. The top market is New York with Washington, D.C. and Atlanta close behind. Gospel currently holds more than 5 percent of the total market share. Slickly dressed "anointed" persons offer empowerment through BET, The Word Network, satellite radio and Streaming Faith.com. Awards are given to the top ten quartet powerbrokers, dynamic entrepreneurs with international connections, but a few of the old "soldiers" like the Blind Boys of Alabama, Shirley Caesar, Canton Spirituals, Dorothy Norwood and Mighty Clouds of Joy labor on in an industry beholden to glitz and glamor.

OPAL LOUIS NATIONS May 2009

Details & dates

Track 1: CLEOPHUS ROBINSON w SISTER JOSEPHINE JONES
1957

Track 2: O V WRIGHT & THE SUNSET TRAVELERS:
Sylvester Ward, Tommy Tucker, Overton Vertis Wright, Grover Blake, Elijah 'Junior' Franklin - Vocal Group
McKinney Jones - Guitar
Memphis, 16th May 1957

Track 3: EVELYN FREEMAN & THE EXCITING VOICES CHORUS:
1958

Track 4: INEZ ANDREWS & THE CARAVANS:
Albertina Walker, Delores Washington, Inez Andrews, Shirley Caesar - Vocal Group
Eddie Williams - Vocal, Piano
Unknown others
New York, 9th October 1958

Track 5: HARDIE CLIFTON & THE BROOKLYN ALL STAR SINGERS:
Herbert Robinson, Thomas Spann, Jake Holman - Vocal Group
Eddie Lester - Guitar
Unknown others
c. February 1958

Track 6: CONSOLERS:
Sullivan Pugh - Vocal, Guitar
Iola Pugh - VGocal
Unknown - Piano
21st April 1958

Track 7: LOU RAWLS & THE CHOSEN GOSPEL SINGERS:
Lou Rawls, Edward James Brumfield, Herbert Robinson, 1 unknown - Vocal Group
1958

Track 8: JACKIE VERDELL & THE DAVIS SISTERS:
Ruth Davis, Audrey Davis, Alfreda Davis, Jackie Verdell - Vocal Group
Curtis Dublin - Vocal, Piano
Unknown others
New York, 6th May 1958

Track 9: IRA TUCKER & THE DIXIE HUMMINGBIRDS:
James B. Davis, Beachey Thompson, Ira B. Tucker, James Emerdia Walker, William Bobo - Vocal Group
Howard Carroll - Guitar
1958

Track 10: OLLIE NIGHTINGALE & THE DIXIE NIGHTINGALES:
Ollie Hoskins, Rochester 'Roy' Neal, Willie Neal, Bill Davis - Vocal Group
Willie Horner - Guitar
Unknown - Bass Guitar
Memphis, late 1958

Track 11: DOROTHY LOVE COATES & THE GOSPEL HARMONETTES:
Dorothy Love, Mildred Miller, Odessa Edwards, Willie Mae Newberry Garth, Vera Kolb - Vocal Group
Joe Washington - Piano;
Unknown - Organ
June 1958

Track 12: LEON LUMPKINS & THE GOSPEL CLEFS:
Leon Lumpkins, Rev. Abraham Houston, Enoch Franklin, Louis Johnson, Joe Deloatch, Robert Byrd, Raymond Andrews - Vocal Group
Leon Lumpkins, piano;
Unknown - Organ, Drums
New York, 11th August 1958

Track 13: ROSIE WALLACE & THE IMPERIAL GOSPEL SINGERS:
Anna Smallwood, Rosie Wallace and Others - Vocal Group
New York, 18th March 1958

Track 14: GOSPEL TONES:
New York, 11th August 1958

Track 15: SISTER ROSETTA THARPE:
Church Of God In Christ, New York, 9th September 1958

Track 16: ROBERTA MARTIN & THE ROBERTA MARTIN SINGERS:
Robert Martin, Delores Barrett, Norsalus McKissick, Eugene Smith, Lucy Smith; Gloria Griffin,
Romance Watson - Vocal Group
New York, 23rd July 1958

Track 17: PAUL ARNOLD & THE GOSPELAIRES OF DAYTON, OHIO:
Melvin Boyd, Melvyn Pullen, Robert Washington, Paul Arnold, Frank Peoples, Robert Lattimore - Vocal Group
1958

Track 18: 'LITTLE SUGAR' & THE HIGHTOWER BROTHERS:
Rev. Nick Hightower (Father), Robert Lee 'Little Sugar' Hightower, Willie James Hightower, Johnny Hightower, William Martin Hightower, Reco Hightower (5 sons) - Vocal Group
New York, 13th Oct 1958

Track 19: DELLA REESE AND THE MEDITATION SINGERS:
Della Reese - Vocal
Ernestine Rundless, Laura Lee Rundless, Delillian Price, Marie Waters - Vocal Group (leads are Reese, Ernestine Rundless, Laura Lee Rundless)
Kirk Stuart - Piano;
Emory Radford - Organ
Detroit, Summer 1958

Track 20: BROTHER JOE MAY:
1958

Track 21: WILLIE JOE LIGON AND THE MIGHTY CLOUDS OF JOY:
Willie Joe Ligon, Bedile Goldsmith, Johnny Martin, with prob: Jerome Brown, Freddie Johnson, Jonnie Wesley, Johnnie Gibson - Vocal Group
Bedile Goldsmith - Guitar
- Dubbed audience added
Unident Studio, Inglewood, Los Angeles, c. 1958/59

Track 22: JOHNNIE TAYLOR & THE SOUL STIRRERS:
Johnnie Taylor, Paul Foster, R. B. Robinson, Leroy Crume, Jesse James Farley - Vocal Group
Evelyn Gay - Piano
Leroy Crume - Guitar
Radio Recorders, Hollywood, 4th March 1958

Track 23: MARION WILLIAMS & THE STARS OF FAITH:
Marion Williams, Frances Steadman, Kitty Parham, Henrietta Waddy, Esther Ford - Vocal Group (leads are Marion Williams, Esther Ford)
William Neal - Piano
Robert Banks - Organ
?Shep Sheppard - Drums
Newark, 9th September 1958

Track 24: HOWARD 'SLIM' HUNT & THE SUPREME ANGELS:
1958

Track 25: VICTORY FIVE:
1958

Track 26: CLARA WARD w. THE FAMOUS WARD SINGERS:
Clara Ward - Vocal, Piano
Marion Williams, Frances Steadman, Kitty Parham, Esther Ford - Vocal Group
Herman Stevens - Organ
Sam Whinham - Guitar
Milt Hinton - Bass
Osie Johnson - Drums
Town Hall, New York, 18th June 1958

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