Recording details:

Track1: PILGRIM SINGERS:
Bronze 103
1957

Track 2: SILVERTONE QUINTET:
Hi-Hat Test Pressing
1958

Track 3: SPIRITUALAIRES OF COLUMBIA:
Bowman 801
1956

Track 4: SOUL SATISFIERS OF PHILADELPHIA:
Apollo 303
1955

Track 5: KANSAS CITY SOUL REVIVERS:
Dooto 395
1956

Track 6: SISTER ROSA SHAW:
Dot 1134
1952

Track 7: DEACON TOM FOGER & THE CAMP MEETING CHOIR:
Diamond 2027
1946

Track 8: JACKSON GOSPEL SINGERS:
Atlantic 3005
1953

Track 9: DOUG WILLIAMS & THE MELLO-TONES:
Hy Tone 125
1959

Track 10: LITTLE JOE COOK & THE EVENING STAR QUARTET:
Gotham 769
1955

Track 11: UNIDENTIFIED QUARTET

Track 12: SISTER ELIZABETH PHILLIPS & THE PILGRIM SINGERS:
International 1004
1955

Track 13: BLAIR GOSPEL SINGERS:
Nashboro 555
1954

Track 14: HARMONY FOUR SINGERS:
Test Pressing
1955

Track 15: EVANGELIST ROSETTA WINN & HER TORNADOES:
Jesse Thomas - Guitar
Club 301
1948

Track 16: REV. H.B. CRUM & THE MIGHTY GOLDEN KEYS:
Gospel 1019
1959

Track 17: FLYING CLOUDS OF DETROIT:
J-V-B 80
1957

Track 18: SKYLIGHT SINGERS:
Vee Jay 848
1957

Track 19: TOMMIETTES GOSPEL SINGERS:
S.S. Copeland 682-2291
1959

Track 20: NORFLEET BROTHERS:
J.O.B. 1115
1957

Track 21: SPIRITUAL KINGS:
Score 5039
1953

Track 22: HIGHTOWER BROTHERS:
Gospel 1022
1958

Track 23: SPIRITUAL WONDERS:
J-V-B 27
1958

Track 24: TRENTON SINGERS:
Republic 7056
1952

Track 25: SISTER BESSIE GRIFFIN:
Brownie McGhee - Guitar
Sittin' In With 2010
1948

Track 26: NATIONAL CLOUDS OF JOY:
Gotham 615
1949

Track 27: SPIRITUAL FIVE:
Nashboro 579
1956

JSP Records PO Box 1584 London N3 3NW England

Sleeve Art: aitkendesign@mac.com Cover pic: The Hightower Brothers

1946-1959

POWERHOUSE GOSPEL

ON INDEPENDENT LABELS

CD A

The Pilgrim Singers • Silvertone Quintet • The Spiritualaires of Columbia
The Evening Star Quartet • The Soul Satisfiers of Philadephia
The Flying Clouds of Detoit • The Hightower Brothers & Many More

COMPILED & ANNOTATED BY OPAL LOUIS NATIONS

Powerhouse Gospel on Indie Labels, 1946-1959

by Opal Louis Nations

Major indies (independents) built sizeable gospel catalogs during the fifteen years following World War II. This period has been established as gospel's "Golden Age." Dozens of indies sprang up at the close of the War to meet the needs of the record buyer who could not find music during the two recording bans because of unmet union demands. All the majors hired union musicians. The enterprising indies jumped in and record sales rose from $109 million in 1945 to $218 million in 1946, a 100% increase in just twelve months. One of the tricks to avoid union trouble was to record at night.

The focus of this collection is on great, unheralded talent on little known and forgotten labels, such as the nevertheless important Hi-Hat, Glory and Tuxedo imprints. The set also includes wider recognized recording establishments. Even though we have included a handful of jubilee gospel examples, the collection for the most part dwells on the development of the "shout" gospel style.

Jubilee gospel, the predominant form of gospel music in the 1940s, was a pretty formal expression with group members huddled around one mike as if standing on a dime. Emphasis was placed solely on the closeness of harmony. "Shout" gospel, with its swing-lead and sanctified demonstrations, evolved in the early 1950s when gospel quartet competition came along and groups needed an "edge" to compete. Try to imagine all of the antics that James Brown started to use in the 1960s. These were all dramatically enacted by the gospel groups of the 1950s, i.e. knee-drops, mike tossing and "creeping" through the audience, shouting the sisters down.

The Indies

The capo of gospel indies was Herman Lubinsky, president and treasurer of the Savoy, Gospel, Sharp and Regent enterprises in Newark, founded in 1942. Lubinsky, with the help of A&R man Fred Mendelsohn, built a gospel empire that ruled over most of the country's North Eastern markets. The fiercely independent Lubinsky rarely paid his gospel talent and was said to be so miserly he designed his many childlike and surreal album covers himself under the soubriquet René. His albums were generally without liner notes, sessions details or artists photos and were widely sold at ridiculously low prices throughout the Woolworth chain. This "gospel in the handcart" approach plus his large slice of gospel on the distaff side (The Wards, Caravans and Davis Sisters) kept him solvent for many years.

The Savoy label material is the subject of a future box set and has been largely excluded from this set. Lubinsky's major competitors were first and foremost Bess and Ike Berman's Apollo label on New York's 125th Street. Berman's labels, affiliates and distributorships did reasonably well throughout the entire Golden Age period from 1944 to 1959. Mahalia Jackson's gospel output kept the Bermans afloat for a while, but whatever promising talent came along was lost to bigger fish with larger wallets. Apollo is represented with two selections from the underrated Soul Satisfiers. Much of Apollo's gospel catalog has seen reissue in recent years.

The second major competitor was Sam Goode's Gotham / Apex labels on New York's Ninth Avenue, founded in 1946 (purchased by Ivin Ballen in 1949.) Ballen put out some of the finest "shout" gospel during the Golden Age. Some of this exceptional artistry is showcased here with the work of the Evening Star Quartet, National Clouds of Joy, Mello-Aires, Heavenly Gates and legendary Ethel Davenport. Many of the greats passed through Gotham, such as the Ward Singers, Harmonizing Four and Angelic Gospel Singers who have all seen their work in reissue elsewhere over the years. Sadly, Ballen's Gotham went out of operation in 1956.

Philadelphia's own Gospel label was a pain in the side for Lubinsky whose own Gospel imprint product was often confused with the Miller family label of the same name. The Millers founded their Gospel label in 1950, eight years after Lubinsky founded his. The Miller family put up fierce competition with strong sides by the Blind Boys of Alabama, something that must have irked Lubinsky until he managed to sign the group for himself in 1959. Lubinsky's Gospel imprint was very plain, with straight forward script. The Miller's Gospel label had a cross running through the center of the script and was usually dark green. As the Millers' catalog constituted mainly reissued Blind Boys of Alabama sides and Edna Gallmon Cooke, it has been excluded from the box set.

Nashboro/Excello were the dominant players in gospel in the Heartland of country music. Founded by Ernest L. Young in 1951 in Nashville, the label stuck principally to country, gospel and R&B. Young held to a broad international approach. He bought time on Nashville's powerful 50,000 watt WLAC and sold product globally through his own Ernie's Record Mart operation. Most of Nashboro's top-selling talent, such as the Swanee Quintet, Brother Joe May and Angelic Gospel Singers, among others, have seen generous reissue over the years. We have concentrated here on the great artists who for one reason or another slipped through the cracks. Impressive singers such as the Spiritual Five, Blair Gospel Singers, Kindly Shepherds, Lucile Barbee and Southern Echoes are just a sample of the great work found on this label which survived into the early 1980s. Nashboro's successful Supreme Angels were one of the few to survive into the digital age.

Recording details:

Track 1: OLLIE NIGHTINGALE & THE DIXIE NIGHTINGALES:
W.D.I.A. Test Pressing
1955

Track 2: SPIRITUAL FIVE:
Nashboro 602
1956

Track 3: SILVERTONE QUINTET:
Hi-Hat 127
1958

Track 4: McCAULEY SPIRITUAL SINGERS:
Atomic-H 95
1959

Track 5: NOVATONES:
Tru-Blue 202
1948

Track 6: KINDLY SHEPHERDS:
Nashboro 597
1957

Track 7: KANSAS CITY SOUL REVIVERS:
Dooto 395
1956

Track 8: SOUL SATISFIERS OF PHILADELPHIA:
Apollo 306
1955

Track 9: HARMONY FOUR SINGERS:
Test Pressing
1955

Track 10: GOSPEL SILHOUETTES:
Songs Of The Cross 107
1951

Track 11: MIGHTY GOSPEL GIANTS:
Gospel 1020
1957

Track 12: McCAULEY SPIRITUAL SINGERS:
Atomic-H 95
1959

Track 13: BLIND WONDERS OF WASHINGTON, D.C.:
Red Robin 118
1953

Track 14: SPIRITUAL HARMONIZERS:
Glory 4012
1953

Track 15: REV. H.B. CRUM & THE MIGHTY GOLDEN KEYS:
Gospel 1019
1959

Track 16: MELLO-AIRES OF ROCHESTER:
Gotham 722
1952

Track 17: HAZEL CHAPMAN & THE GOLDEN HARMONIZERS:
Sacred 127
1948

Track 18: SAINTS OF GLORY:
Hi-Hat Test Pressing
1958

Track 19: SPIRITUAL FIVE:
Nashboro 552
1955

Track 20: SPIRITUAL FOUR:
M.H.F.U. 101
1958

Track 21: VERSATILE ACAPELLA (sic.) CHORAL GROUP OF CHICAGO:
Missouri 101
1956

Track 22: NORFLEET BROS:
Bandera 1319
1957

Track 23: SPIRITUALAIRES OF COLUMBIA:
Bowman 801
1956

Track 24: SILVERTONE QUINTET:
Hi-Hat 127
1958

Track 25: DREXALL SINGERS:
Rev 113
1959

Track 26: SPIRITUAL HARMONIZERS:
Glory 4012
1953

Track 27: Southwinds
Fury 1017
1958

JSP Records PO Box 1584 London N3 3NW England

Sleeve Art: aitkendesign@mac.com Cover pic: The Spiritual Five

1948-1959

POWERHOUSE GOSPEL

ON INDEPENDENT LABELS

CD B

The Spiritual Five • Silvertone Quintet • McCauley Spiritual Singers

The Blind Wonders of Washington DC & Many More

COMPILED & ANNOTATED BY OPAL LOUIS NATIONS

Both the Chess brothers' Chess Records and James and Vivian (Carter) Bracken's Vee Jay invested in gospel during the 1950s, although both Chicago disceries are generally known as secular labels. Vee Jay created an unmistakable "clean" sound with the talents of both Blind Boys groups, the Staple Singers, Swan Silvertones, Highway Q.C.'s, and others. Most of these artists have enjoyed repeated reissue over the years, although awesome talents like the Friendly Brothers and Skylight Singers are exceptions. Other neglected Vee Jay talents include the Rasberry Singers, Spiritualaires and Mighty Skylarks - all candidates for a further box.

Both Chess and Vee Jay product found distributorship overseas. The Chess brothers' contribution to gospel music includes premier 1950s sides by the Evangelist Singers and Spiritual Stars, excluded on this set because Chess did not become a significant player on the gospel scene until the 1960s.

Syd Nathan's King/Federal complex in Cincinnati played an important role in the dissemination of gospel, more than anything else through Nathan's efficient distribution network. The 1950s King gospel catalog was disproportionately small but includes major talent like the Spirit of Memphis, the Swan Silvertones and (Sensational) Nightingales. Most of this has seen reissue over the years. The label's most impressive artists such as the Mighty Faith Increasers and Kelly Brothers were waxed in the 1960s.

Up there in the first league with Savoy is Don Robey's Duke/Peacock undertaking out of Houston, Texas. Peacock was first established as a blues label in 1949 and moved into gospel on the Peacock imprint in October 1950. Unlike Savoy whose gospel recordings were laden with organs and pianos, Peacock put emphasis on heavy drum and rhythmic guitar backing, thus creating a primitive form of "shout" gospel that pleased the church flocks of the Southlands. It was not long before Robey had the Southern market locked up. Robey helped create a gospel sound that was straightforwardly down home and irresistible. His 1950s catalog included the Blind Boys of Mississippi, Dixie Hummingbirds, Sensational Nightingales and many others. Most of Robey's 1950s gospel singles have been recently reissued on Peacock label collections.

Art Rupe's Specialty label out of Hollywood, California was Robey's only serious competition. Rupe opened Specialty around January 1948. Forty-four of his first three hundred singles series were gospel. Rupe was unusual. He not only enjoyed gospel, he loved it and nurtured it in the studio. Rupe's first successful vocal group was the Pilgrim Travelers. The Soul Stirrers followed and sales of gospel increased for Rupe. Fortunately for collectors, a copious amount of Specialty gospel is commercially available at this time. More is on the way.

Rupe inspired other California indies - notably Lew Chudd's Imperial corporation on L.A.'s North Western Avenue, which started around the same time Rupe started his label. One of Chudd's first gospel artists was Ethel Davenport whom he first recorded in New Orleans in May, 1951. But Chudd, like Randy Wood (who moved Dot Records to L.A. in 1956) and the Mesner brothers at Aladdin Records on West Fifth Street, were not as vested as Rupe in fostering the developing gospel's potential.

Only Joe Bihari's Modern Records on South Vermont showed enough interest to create the short-lived Modern Spirituals label in 1951. In all fairness, Modern did release some fine gospel by the Echoes of Zion and the dapper Smith Jubilees. We have included only Rev. C.C. Chapman's "On my way" sermon on Modern. There have been many gospel labels with few releases. Glory, Bowman, Missouri and Songs of The Cross are just a few included here.

Many aspiring gospel units went in for custom or vanity pressings, making dates with wanna-be engineers at small, makeshift, backroom studios to cut just enough copies to sell at upcoming gospel programs.

Yet another affiliate connected to Bob Shad who established the label in 1949. Shad put out many important sides on this label, including work by Bessie Griffin, Ethel Davenport, the Dixieaires and the Skylights.

Life on the "Gospel Highway"

Life on the road (the "Gospel Highway") during the 1950s was hard. If you traveled the land of Jim Crow, it could also be an extremely dangerous one. You had to be fully prepared for anything unforeseen. Most likely you drove a station wagon or large limousine big enough to seat five or six fully grown men, depending on whether you had a driver. Of course, straws were drawn to determine who would sit in the middle on the next leg of the trip. You would tie down as many tires to the roof of the car as you could. Traveling hundreds of miles between engagements translated into frequent popped tires. Being unable to stop just anyplace in the South meant that you packed plenty of canned food and potted meats, and never forgot that extra can of gasoline. Relief came at the side of the road when you quickly darted in the bushes.

Taking turns driving did not always work out. Wrong turns would be taken at night, and often when you got to where you were going the program would be cancelled or the sponsor would fail to advertise the concert adequately, using only a few telegraph placards and forgetting to inform local record stores or local gospel deejays at surrounding radio stations. Sometimes a mishap along the highway lead to being late and a cancelled date. Quite often the sponsor would quietly disappear after the show, leaving you without money or gas to get out of town. Sometimes a concert turned into a riot and shooting would break out and someone would lay dying while the singing drowned out the commotion.

Recording details:

Track 1: HEAVENLY GATES:
Gotham 764
1954

Track 2: SISTER BERNICE DOBSON & THE CAMP MEETING CHOIR:
Diamond 202
1946

Track 3: EVENING STAR QUARTET:
Apex 1120
1949

Track 4: UNIDENTIFIED QUARTET:

Track 5: REV. H.B. CRUM & THE MIGHTY GOLDEN KEYS:
Gospel 1019
1959

Track 6: IDA HAYES & THE MELLO-TONES:
Hy Tone 103
1957

Track 7: SUPREME ANGELS:
Nashboro 636
1959

Track 8: ETHEL DAVENPORT & THE ETHEL DAVENPORT SINGERS:
Gotham 727
1952

Track 9: PILGRIM SINGERS:
Bronze 103
1957

Track 10: SISTER LUCILE BARBEE & MORGAN BABB:
Nashboro 591
1956

Track 11: KINDLY SHEPHERDS:
Nashboro 597
1957

Track 12: SAINTS OF GLORY:
Hi-Hat Test Pressing
1958

Track 13: JOYFUL TRAVELERS:
Avant 853
1958

Track 14: MARGARET BARNES & GROUP:
Bullet 314
1949

Track 15: UNIDENTIFIED QUARTET:

Track 16: SKYLIGHT SINGERS:
Lamp 9002
1954

Track 17: NELLIE LYNN & THE SONS OF HARMONY:
Lee 503
1947

Track 18: SOUTHERN ECHOES:
Nashboro 612
1957

Track 19: FRIENDLY BROS:
Vee Jay 890
1959

Track 20: BESSIE GRIFFIN & THE SOUTHERN REVIVALISTS:
Sittin' In With 2002
1948

Track 21: RISING SUN GOSPEL SINGERS:
Spirituals 5003
1951

Track 22: GOSPEL TRAVELERS:
Chariot 30
1955

Track 23: GOSPEL SILHOUETTES:
Songs Of The Cross 107
1951

Track 24: REV. R.A. DANIELS & CHORUS:
Capitol 1277
1950

Track 25: ETHEL DAVENPORT & THE ETHEL DAVENPORT SINGERS:
Gotham 727
1952

Track 26: MACEDONIANS:
Octive 21-20-14
1951

Track 27: SEVEN MELODY MEN:
Aristocrat 902
1947

JSP Records PO Box 1584 London N3 3NW England

Sleeve Art: aitkendesign@mac.com Cover pic: The Supreme Angels

1946-1959

POWERHOUSE GOSPEL

ON INDEPENDENT LABELS

CD C

The Supreme Angels • Sister Bernice Dobson & The Camp Meeting Choir

The Evening Star Quartet & Many More

COMPILED & ANNOTATED BY OPAL LOUIS NATIONS

Hitch-hiking home was common. Sometimes singers were lucky enough to put-up at the minister's house or at the home of a congregant as hotel accommodations in the South were often limited to a single hotel. Often times the one room you rented had only one bed and somehow you all had to share it. You always made good friends with the dry cleaner. You only owned one artificial silk suit and it got soaked in sweat every night. You needed it the next day or you "sat out," and man, you could not afford to sit out.

You avoided driving a new limousine in the South. The Highway Patrol (who were often good chums with the KKK) would regularly pull colored folk like you over for a little interrogation, a beating, shooting, lynching or just a night in a cold cell.

Many singers were church-sponsored. They were sent out to raise money for the welfare of the church. Affiliated churches often traded choirs and quartets. If you were a group who traveled more than just away from home for a weekend, you made sure you had singers in reserve to replace those who could not spend more than a couple of days on the road. They had wives, families and other commitments. Quite often there would be two groups of the same name. One made recordings and the other plugged the songs out on the road. The one road group would be made up of different soldiers every time it headed out on a tour.

Inadequate care would lead to sickness which often meant a soldier had to go out and sing propped up at the shoulder on both sides. Worse than this, some singers made a habit of singing themselves ragged to win audience approval. This lead to inadequately dressed singers running outside to cool off on very icy nights wringing with perspiration. Some singers caught pneumonia, others died.

Some junior male singers often looked good and sharp in their tailored suits. They would play to the younger females in the choir, trying to lure them to come around back after the show. Older singers played to the church mothers, getting them worked into a swoon and having them "fall-out." After all, the group needed to be top dog to get asked to return. Quartet battles were common during the mid-Fifties. You had to be better than the competition to build your reputation. To be competitive you played all kinds of tricks on your adversaries to curry favor, even trying to "cut them" in mid performance.

I often think about all those inspirational quartets and soloists who were once a part of the Post-War gospel fabric and whose histories are lost for one reason or another, and all those who for some reason the commercial prospect of being on wax would in some way conflict with their spiritual beliefs.

— OPAL LOUIS NATIONS, May 2010

25 selected Post-War indies issuing gospel music:

1. Fortune Records, Trianon Pub., 11839 12th Street, Detroit, Michigan
Established by Jack and Devora Brown in 1946, Fortune / Hi Q concentrated on local country, doo-wop, R&B and jazz with occasional crossing into gospel territory. Of their limited gospel output, they excelled with their recorded sermons as demonstrated by the excellent included sides by Rev. Arthur Caruthers.

2. Dootone/Dooto Record Corp., 9514 South Central Avenue, Los Angeles
Set up by bandleader Walter "Dootsie" Williams in 1951, the Dootone discery was situated in the heart of jazz, R&B, doo-wop and gospel activity. They also took on pop and endless Red Foxx comedy recordings which for the most part kept the ship afloat. Their few Zion Travelers and K.C. Soul Revivers releases were exceptional and help form the cornerstones of postwar Los Angeles quartet recordings.

3. Recorded-In-Hollywood, 1055 East Vernon Avenue, Los Angeles
Dating back to 1950, president John Dolphin took over War Perkins' record store and building a deejay booth in his window, promoted the R&B, doo-wop, jazz and gospel he produced on his labels. The Hollywood Rising Stars were one of Dolphin's noted gospel acts.

4. The Bronze Company, 628 East Vernon Avenue, Los Angeles
Formed by Leroy Hurte in 1945, Bronze issued every type of popular music, including gospel. Their most significant sides were on the Soul Stirrers and Pilgrim Singers, the latter being included here.

5. Avant Records
A tiny label, set up in 1956 in Dallas, Texas by Jimmie and Dora Avant. They put out few records. Most were gospel, and most were outstanding. Their complete catalog remains unknown.

6. Bullet Recording & Transcription Corp., 424 Broad Street, Nashville
Established in 1946 and running for five years, Bullet was Nashboro's serious competition during the time they recorded the Fairfield four, the label's premier quartet. Margaret Barnes, sadly, was a minor player with the label.

7. Sittin' In With/Castle Records, 438 Tenth Avenue, New York, N.Y.
Multi-label proprietor, Mercury A&R man Bob Shad's flagship from where he issued R&B, gospel, blues and jazz beginning in 1948. His most important gospel signees were the Dixieaires, Bessie Griffin, Golden Gate Quartet plus a legion of lesser mortals.

8. Lamp Records, 451 North Canon Drive, Beverly Hills, Calif.
Lamp was the Mesner brothers' subsidiary set up in 1954 to focus on the burgeoning R&B talent. The Skylight Singers were the label's only and extremely worthwhile venture into gospel.

9. Lee Records, 733 Eleventh Avenue, New York, N.Y.
Ed Levy's tiny indie was devoted mainly to blues, with a brief dabble into gospel around 1949. Sister Nellie Lynn was Levy's major gospel talent.

Recording details:

Tracks 1, 2: REV. ARTHUR CARUTHERS of New St. Paul Baptist Church, Detroit:
Fortune 1348

Tracks 3 - 5: REV. GEORGE W. KILLENS & THE MT. CALVARY CONGREGATION:
3: Olliet 1305
4: Recorded In Hollywood 196
5: Olliet 622
Recorded live at The Oakland Auditorium by Ollie Hunt. 1947

Track 6: REV. H.R. JELKS of The Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church in Chicago:
6: J-V-B 11
7: Von 711
6: 1954 7: 1955

Track 8: REV. M. LARRY FRANKLIN at Greater St. Paul Baptist Church, Detroit:
Fortune 1001
1951

Track 9: DEACON LEROY SHINAULT:
- with congregation in Chicago
Ping 1005
1957

Tracks 10 - 12: ELDER BENJAMIN H. BRODIE OF N.Y.
10, 12: Lenox 507
11: Lenox 533
1948

Track 13: REV. C.C. CHAPMAN, ("THE TRAVELIN' MAN") & THE FAITH TEMPLE CHOIR OF LOS ANGELES:
Modern 843
1951

Tracks 14, 15: REV. C.L. FRANKLIN at The New Bethel Baptist Church in Detroit:
14: J-V-B. 2005
15: J-V-B. 61/63, Sermon #2
1955

Tracks 16, 17: REV. ROBERT CRENSHAW of The New Brown's Chapel in Memphis:
16: Unissued
17: Atlantic LP 1351
16: 1955 17: 1959

Track 18: ELDER CHARLES D. BECK of the Way of The Cross Church of God in Christ in Buffalo, NY:
Chart 624
1956

Track 19: REV. WILLIAM M. RIMSON & Congregation in Detroit
Religious Recordings 621
1949

JSP Records PO Box 1584 London N3 3NW England

Sleeve Art: aitkendesign@mac.com Cover pic: The Rev. C. L. Franklin

1947-1959

POWERHOUSE GOSPEL

ON INDEPENDENT LABELS

CD D

Rev. C. L. Franklin • Rev. George Killens & The Mt. Clavary Congregation

Rev Robert Crenshaw & Many More

COMPILED & ANNOTATED BY OPAL LOUIS NATIONS

Selected postwar indies (continued)

10. Spirituals Records of New York

Yet another affiliate connected to Bob Shad who established the label in 1949. Shad put out many important sides on this label, including work by Bessie Griffin, Ethel Davenport, the Dixieaires and the Skylights.

11. Chariot of Memphis

This label put out two releases in 1955, one by the Gospel Travelers and one by the Baltimore Echoes. Both are exceptional.

12. Songs Of The Cross

This tiny label out of Los Angeles, established during the early 1950s, is just now being fully documented as the complete number of releases is not yet known. The Gospel Silhouettes were thought by some to be a pseudonym for the Gospel Harmonettes who were under contract to Specialty at the time. This fact has not been substantiated, however.

13. Octive Records, 3919 Ocean View, San Diego, Calif.

Octive Records is thought to have been owned by Ollie Hunt, a "journeyman" sound engineer who once worked at Modern Records. Most of his scant gospel acts came from around the San Francisco Bay Area. The label operated between 1951 and 1953. The Macedonians and Flowers of Joy were Hunt's outstanding gospel talents. The Octive label put out all kinds of popular music.

14. Aristocrat, 7508 Phillips Avenue, Chicago (1947); 5249 South Cottage Grove Avenue, Chicago (1949)

Aristocrat was set up by Charles and Evelyn Aron in 1947 and was acquired by Phil and Leonard Chess in 1949. The Seven Melody Men included in our collection represented the first gospel artist release on the label in 1947 (probably recorded by the Arons.) The Chess brothers' first and last venture into gospel on Aristocrat was with the Famous Blue Jay Singers in 1949.

15. Diamond Records, Inc., 1650 Broadway, New York, N.Y.

Irving R. Gwirtz set up Diamond in 1946 and shortly thereafter issued four glorious singles by the Camp Meeting Choir, two sides of which are included here. Gwirtz issued three more Camp Meeting Choir releases in 1947 (these were reissued on Mercury in 1948.)

16.Tru-Blue, 1619 Broadway, New York, N.Y.

This label was set up in 1948 to deal with the work of Guitar Slim. That same year they ventured into gospel music and released three records on the Brown's Inspirational Singers. The Novatones' single release followed shortly thereafter.

17. Red Robin, 301 West 125th Street, New York, N.Y.

Set up by Bobby Robinson in 1952 at his record store address close to the Apollo Theatre, the discery promoted blues, R&B, doo-wop and had one gospel release by the Blind Wonders in 1953.

18. Bandera Records, 2437 West 34th Place, Chicago, Illinois

Bandera came up in 1958 and was proprietored by Vi Muszynski who first recorded Jerry Butler and the Impressions. She recorded the "gospel mascot group" of T.V.'s Jubilee Showcase – the Norfleets – in 1957 and issued "Draw me nearer" in 1958 after their release from J.O.B.

19. J.O.B./Fury, 4008 South Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois

Joe Brown founded J.O.B. to primarily promote Chicago blues in 1949. His blues sides are legendary while his scant gospel output, the one Heavenly Kings' 1957 release, is all he had to show for the genre. His one (but fine) gospel release by the Southwinds on Fury is extremely rare.

20. Bowman/Derrick Records, P.O. Box 565, Columbia, S.C.

Bowman was set up by well-heeled black businessman Charles Derrick in the mid-Fifties to promote the talent he managed on both the Bowman and Derrick labels. The Spiritualaires were Derrick's one gospel talent.

21. Score/Aladdin Records, 4918 Santa Monica Boulevard, Hollywood, Calif.

Score was set up by Eddie and Leo Mesner in 1947 and survived for three years. The label's three main gospel quartets were the Trumpeteers, Zion Travelers and Traveling Four. The Score / Aladdin Records catalog (most of it out of reissue) deserve a collection all of its own. There are enough great gospel sides for a 4-CD set.

22. J-V-B/Battle Recording Company, 3330 Hastings Street, Detroit, Michigan

J.-V-B was founded in 1948 by Joe Von Battle to foster local Detroit blues. In 1953 he ventured into gospel and recorded Rev. H.R. Jelks. In 1955 he began recording his legendary Rev. C.L. Franklin sermons which have remained in print in some shape for form up to this day. In 1957 (J-V-B's last year of operation), Von Battle recorded the Flying Clouds of Detroit (included here.)

23. Republic/Tennessee Records, 535 Fourth Street, Nashville, Tennessee

Republic was founded by Bill Beasley and the Bubis brothers Alan and Reynold in 1952. They moved into gospel music the same year by recording Madam Edna Gallmon Cooke as well as the Radio four and the Trenton Singers. Almost all the many Republic releases are fine examples of 1950s gospel.

24. Sacred Records, 217 West Pico Boulevard, Los Angeles, Calif.

Earle Williams started up Sacred in 1947. His most significant artist was Prof. James Earle Hines of whom he put out fifteen releases. Apart from the marvelous Hazel Chapman, Williams also released sides by the Sons of Harmony and the Soul Stirrers.

25.John W. Gilbert's Religious Recordings/Staff on East Vernor Highway, Detroit

Founded in 1947, this company had a catalog of only a dozen gospel releases, yet every one of them is outstanding in some regard. His roster included the Richmond Harmonizers (Harmonizing Four), the Flying Clouds of Detroit, Roberta Martin and Rev. William M. Rimson who is featured at the close of our Preachers & Congregations CD.