1. LITTLE WILLIE LITTLEFIELD • **Mistreated**
(Brown/Littlefield) I.Q. Music Ltd. Ⓟ 1957 Rhythm 107

2. LITTLE WILLIE LITTLEFIELD • **Baby Shame**
(Littlefield) Blue Ribbon Music Ltd. Ⓟ 1957 Rhythm 107

3. LITTLE WILLIE LITTLEFIELD • **Ruby, Ruby**
(Littlefield) Barksdale-Don Publishing Co. Ⓟ 1957 Rhythm 108

4. LITTLE WILLIE LITTLEFIELD • **Easy Go**
(Littlefield) I.Q. Music Ltd. Ⓟ 1957 Rhythm 108

5. LITTLE WILLIE LITTLEFIELD • **I Need A Pay Day**
(Holmes) Copyright Control Ⓟ 1957 Rhythm 115

6. LITTLE WILLIE LITTLEFIELD • **I Want A Little Girl**
(Littlefield) I.Q. Music Ltd. Ⓟ 1957 Rhythm 115

7. LITTLE WILLIE LITTLEFIELD • **Theresa**
(Littlefield) I.Q. Music Ltd. Ⓟ 1958 Rhythm 124

8. LITTLE WILLIE LITTLEFIELD • **The Day The Rains Came**
(Littlefield) Copyright Control Ⓟ 1958 Rhythm 124

9. LITTLE WILLIE LITTLEFIELD • **I Wanna Love You**
(Littlefield) I.Q. Music Ltd. Ⓟ 1958 Rhythm 130

10. LITTLE WILLIE LITTLEFIELD • **Goodbye Baby**
(Littlefield) I.Q. Music Ltd. Ⓟ 1958 Rhythm 130

11. ROY HAWKINS • **I Hate To Be Alone**
(Parham/Barksdale) I.Q. Music Ltd. Ⓟ 1958 Rhythm 120

12. ROY HAWKINS • **Lonesome Without You**
(Hawkins) I.Q. Music Ltd. Ⓟ 1958 Rhythm 120

13. ROY HAWKINS • **It's Love**
(Hawkins) I.Q. Music Ltd. Ⓟ 1958 Rhythm 122

14. ROY HAWKINS • **Baby Please Don't**
(Hawkins) I.Q. Music Ltd. Ⓟ 1958 Rhythm 122

15. PEE WEE'S ALL STARS (VOCAL BY SUGAR PIE AND PEE WEE) • **A Few Little Words**
(Parham/Campbell/Barksdale) Bug Music Ltd Ⓟ 1957 Rhythm 1001

16. PEE WEE • **Say When**
(Parham/Campbell/Barksdale) Bug Music Ltd Ⓟ 1957 Rhythm 1001

17. SUGAR PIE AND PEE WEE • **Let's Get Together**
(Parham/Barksdale) Bug Music Ltd Ⓟ 1958 Rhythm 104

18. SUGAR PIE AND PEE WEE • **If You Take Away Our Love**
(Parham/Barksdale) Bug Music Ltd Ⓟ 1958 Rhythm 104

19. SUGAR PIE, PEE WEE AND THE ALL STARS • **Beautiful Love**
(Parham/Barksdale) Bug Music Ltd Ⓟ 1958 Rhythm 117

20. SUGAR PIE, PEE WEE AND THE ALL STARS • **Stop Crying**
(Parham/Barksdale) Bug Music Ltd Ⓟ 1958 Rhythm 117

21. PALIYA DeSANTOS • **If I Had A Wishing Well**
(Gunther) Bug Music Ltd Ⓟ 1957 Jody 11

22. PALIYA AND ALVIN • **Darling Be Mine**
(Gunther) Bug Music Ltd Ⓟ 1957 Jody 11

23. CHARLES WALKER AND THE BEATNIKS • **Just Me And You**
(Walker) Copyright Control Ⓟ 1958 Rhythm 116

24. CHARLES WALKER AND THE BEATNIKS • **My Eyes On The World**
(Walker) Hermosa Music Co. Ⓟ 1958 Rhythm 116

25. ROLAND MITCHELL AND BAND • **Irma Special**
(Mitchell) Bug Music Ltd Ⓟ 1955 Jumping 500.
Reissued 1958 as B-Side of Rhythm 110

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Digitally remastered by Denis Blackham at Country Masters, Frimley, Camberley, Surrey, England (Please be aware that the original Rhythm mastertapes were long ago lost or destroyed. We have therefore assembled this package from the best available vinyl sources - some of which fall well below the standards we would have liked. We must thank Victor Pearlin for providing some of the best sources you'll hear, and Walter Devenne for cleaning up and transferring these and many others throughout this set. Extra thanks also go to Denis B. for performing further audio heroics in the remastering of this set and it's companion volume "Rhythm...And Rock! (WESA 814)
Thanks to Marty Arbunich and Rico Tee at Solid Smoke Records.

THE DON BARKSDALE MASTERS • VOL TWO

Rhythm ...AND BLUES!

50s BLUES AND R&B FROM RHYTHM RECORDS OF SAN FRANCISCO

FEATURING

LITTLE WILLIE LITTLEFIELD

ROY HAWKINS

SUGAR PIE DE SANTO

AND MORE

The story of Rhythm Records starts with David Rosenbaum, a.k.a. Rosen. Record collector, dealer, producer and jazz buff Rosenbaum was born in San Francisco in 1915. He was a graduate of Commerce High and the University of California at Berkeley. Rosenbaum's all-consuming passion was the collecting of jazz recordings. Many of the top jazz and blues luminaries played the City's thriving club scene. Artists like Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis and Saunders King (then heading a swing-jazz combo) played clubs such as Jack's Tavern and Café Society. It was during one of these club dates that the eager, club-hopping Rosenbaum approached Saunders King with the intention of recording him for a label he had just set up called Rhythm. The label was then located on Sutter Street, but later moved to offices at 1317 Grove Street. It seems that other Rosenbaum enterprises had sprung up during this time, namely The Melrose Record Shop on Fillmore Street and The Rhythm Record Shop on Sutter, at which Rosenbaum planned to record King.

One interesting fact about The Melrose Record Store was that Maya Angelou was a clerk there between terms at Mission High. Angelou went on to record provocative, exotic albums before venturing into fiction writing. Both Rosenbaum's stores became meccas of jazz and spiritual music, and Saunders King's widely selling Rhythm waxing of " S K Blues" went on to become a model for later recordings by Joe Turner and Jimmy Witherspoon.

In June 1942 Rosenbaum recorded eight songs on Saunders King. The extremely rare Rhythm #1 featured two finger-snapping Swing ditties later reissued in the AFRS Jubilee series. Rosenbaum claims to have served in the Army Air Corps during World War II and to have seen action out in the Pacific. It is hard to believe that Rosenbaum had time to go to War. He issued at least fifteen limited press/run 78rpm recordings on

DON BARKSDALE (L) WITH THE WILL MASTIN TRIO, SAMMY DAVIS JNR.(C)

the honey-voiced ex-Southern Harmony Four, Louisiana-born blues guitarist Saunders King, then almost nothing. The label seems to have undergone a period of dormancy (1950-1954), apart from a smattering of sides by Jack McVea and an obscure release on a different numbering series by Rex Hale.

Enter Bob Geddins, songwriter, promoter, blues singer, comedian, cotton-picker, welder, pipe fitter, photographer, artist, press mechanic, radio, TV and auto radiator repairman, to name just a few of his accomplishments. In spite of all this, Geddins was for the most part self educated. Lacking business skills and trusting those he took to be his friends, Geddins often entered into business arrangements with distributors, artists and label owners, with little more than a cursory handshake. Very few of Geddins' recording deals were set down on paper. We have to make assumptions when it comes to many of his label and artist deals. It seems that Rosenbaum and Geddins cut a deal back in early 1954 whereby Geddins found, set up and recorded the talent at his own hand-built studios, utilizing the Rhythm label logo (its principal colours now changed from navy and white to black and white as it saved money, although some were pressed with red and silver labeling), and that Rosenbaum sold, marketed and bankrolled the project.

In the interim, Rhythm moved to 316 Sixth Street in San Francisco. Posing as the comic Mystery Man, Geddins himself kicked off the revitalized Rhythm label with a limited pressing of "Maria's Blues" and "Blues In Italy." Geddins, who sang in a phony Italian accent and stabbed away at a beat-up old organ, rendered two hilariously funny, tragi-comic blues skit performances dwelling on a lovesick Italian accordion player pining away for his sweetheart. (This writer has managed to find two renditions of "Maria's Blues" with different lyrics on two Rhythm 78rpm issues). The exact number of Geddins-related Rhythm releases has never been accurately assessed. Geddins pressed in "handfuls" and put them out whenever he needed to make a sales deal for cash to support his wife and ever-increasing number of children.

Here follows a brief list of some of Geddins' releases, starting with the eerie "Strangest Blues" (1954) by Jimmy "Tin Pan Alley" Wilson backed by Wild Willie Moore on tenor sax and Johnny Heartsman on bass, "Fool's Paradise" (1954) and the in memorium release of "Johnny Ace's last letter" (1954) by Mississippi-born Johnny Fuller from The Golden Gospel Singers, Louisiana-born female blues belter Willie B. Huff's "I've Been Thinkin'" (1954), ex-Texas troubadour L.C. "Good Rockin" Robinson's "If I Lose You Baby" (1954), Waco-born Mercy Dee Walton's "Trailing My Baby" (1954) backed by fellow-Texan L.C. Robinson, James Reed's

reading of the doom-laden "Tin Pan Alley," retitled "Roughest Place In Town" (1954) with the legendary Lafayette "Thing" Thomas on guitar, and Mississippi-born K C "Mercury Boogie" Douglas and his Lumberjacks on "K C Boogie" (1954). Johnny Fuller enjoyed at least six releases on Rhythm during 1954.

Geddins scoured the Oakland and Richmond clubs for talent and recorded his finds at his makeshift studios. He almost single-handedly invented the Oakland Blues genre which has been described as eerie, haunting, ill-fated and menacing, almost bordering on the morbid. He also claimed to have authored or co-written most of the aforementioned songs. It is thought that Geddins acquired the Rhythm catalogue around this time. My sense is that Rhythm was always Rosenbaum's label on paper, but that he gave Geddins an extraordinary amount of freedom and control over the talent, choice of repertoire and the treatment of it.

The Rhythm label went through a second dormancy period. Geddins, it seems, put the label to rest for two years (1955-56), during which time he focused his musical attention on his Irma subsidiary, a label he had named after his wife. Enter Don Barksdale, former college and NBA basketball star. Barksdale had a lifelong passion for jazz and R & B music and worked a regular deejay shift at KWBR (KDIA). He needed an effective promotional outlet for the talent he often brought to his two Oakland night clubs, The Sportsman on Grove Street and The Showcase on Telegraph Avenue. In an arrangement (details of which still remain unclear) Barksdale secured the rights in early 1957 to the name and logo of Rhythm Records from Bob Geddins, as he felt that the practical and legal difficulties of setting up a new record company would be lessened by assuming the rights to an existing label from a veteran of the business. Barksdale opened an office at 270 Sixth Street in San Francisco.

Some confusion exists over the release of the very first Barksdale single. Ken Clee's (1989) "Stak-O-Wax" label guide lists Rhythm 101, The Four Star Rhythm Makers, as the label's first outing. To my mind, the Four Star Rhythm Makers sound like an act that could possibly be connected with Bill McCall's 4-Star label in Pasadena. Geddins frequently cut "handshake arrangements" with McCall and could have worked out a one-shot deal whereby one of McCall's artists would turn up on one of Geddins' labels. This is pure speculation, however. All other evidence leads to the conclusion that Umpeylia Morsena Balinton, a.k.a. Sugar Pie De Santo, and Alvin Baby "Pee Wee" Parham cut t he first release, Rhythm 1001. Oakland-born guitarist/singer Alvin Parham filled in for Lafayette "Thing" Thomas in the Jimmy McCracklin Band during the mid-Fifties before setting up his own unit.

SUGAR PIE, c 1961-62 . . .

In 1954, using members of McCracklin's outfit, Parham recorded two songs for the Flair label during a talent scouting trip to San Francisco by the Bihari brothers, owners of the label. Parham's guitar style was more akin to Ike Turner than to Thomas, and his vocal abilities left much to be desired. He later played Barksdale's Oakland night clubs with his own

. . . AND 1998!

band, hitched up with Sugar Pie De Santo in Stockton (which was fortunate, as he needed a good singer), and the two fell in love.

De Santo describes the initial encounter as follows. "I had my own (pick up band) and Pee Wee had his. he had me come and see his band play and I had him come see mine. It was then we decided we'd both do better as a team, so we hooked up." Principal members in the Pee Wee Parham band included "Wild" Willie Moore or Melvin Davis, tenor sax, Ray Cotton (Jimmy McCracklin's drummer), drums, Wakefield Taylor, piano, and Gentry Baker, bass.

De Santo was born and raised in San Francisco, according to her own admission, and not in Brooklyn, New York, as otherwise stated, on October 16, 1935. She grew up despising her sanctimonious, narrow-minded Philippines-born father but worshipped her African American mother, Alice Balinton, an accomplished concert pianist and vocalist. "Mama taught me how to play piano and sing, even though she couldn't read music," says De Santo. "I loved music and just had to get out there and do my thing." De Santo was out singing and shaking her booty in the clubs at age ten. "My father would come storming into my act, grab my ear, and haul me off," says De Santo who has perfected an imitation of her father's enraged behavior in his broken English. "No no sing, no shake your butt," was the oft repeated refrain.

Her mother, Alice, always gave the young Umpeylia the support and encouragement she sorely needed. Her manager James Moore states that De Santo perfected a brazen, outgoing, sexy, siren-type persona, in defiance of her father's harsh, sometimes cruel, ways. "Underneath that tough exterior is a sweet, soft cream puff," he says.

In 1951, the sixteen-year-old De Santo was noticed by Johnny Otis at a talent contest at The Ellis Theatre in San Francisco. She won the contest, and Otis dubbed the 4'll" teenager "Little Miss Sugar Pie," and later brought her into his Omaha buddy Preston Love's Orchestra, then signed with Sid Nathan's Federal, King subsidiary out of Cincinnati. With her mother's blessing, De Santo was allowed to hit the road with the band. Love paired her up with Henry "Hank" Houston (just a no-name guy who happened to be around, says De Santo), and the duo recorded "Boom Diddy Wa Wa Baby," billed as The Lovebugs, a Shirley & Lee clone. The song, little more than a throw-away novelty item, went nowhere.

In 1957, Sugar Pie and Pee Wee recorded the beautiful "If I Had A Wishing Well," backed with "Darling Be Mine" in San Francisco under Bob Geddins' supervision. The record surfaced early in 1958 when Barksdale issued it as Jody #11. Jody was created in honor of Barksdale's secretary. "Darling Be Mine" is a reworking of Wini Brown's popular 1952 Mercury recording of "Be Anything But Be Mine." Dr. David Antrell asserts that Barksdale's first Rhythm release (listed as Pee Wee & His All Stars) was Sugar Pie and Pee Wee singing "A Few Lil Words" coupled with the instrumental "Say When." "The way we got our material together was that Pee Wee and I, and sometimes I'd work without him, would sit around the piano and work things out. The songs would always reflect the moods and feelings inherent in our roller coaster relationship. "A Few Lil Words" conveyed how much I wanted him to say he loved me. "Darling Be Mine," how much I desired him, "Let's Get Together' reflected how much I really wanted to be with him, "If You Take Away Your Love" caught my fear of losing him, "Beautiful Love" conveyed all the love I felt for him, and "Stop Crying" came about after a rough spot when I caught him fooling around with another woman," says De Santo (The marriage lasted four years.)

The couple's recordings did well and rode the crest of a wave created by Mickey & Sylvia, after whom Sugar Pie asserts Barksdale had them tagged. The sides would have sold better had Barksdale the wherewithal to distribute them

nationally. He did, however, lease "One, Two, Let's Rock" to the Mesner brothers at Aladdin Records (backed by "A Few Li'l Words") and surprisingly enough, it did very well. "Beautiful Love" differed from the other Rhythm releases in respect to it coming about as a result of a deal made with Bay Area deejay "Bug" Scruggs. But nothing beats the tender "If I Had A Wishing Well," written by De Santo as a prayer in the hope her relationship would continue. "I'm really a ballad singer," she insists. "I do the rough stuff 'cause I have to."

The couple cut all their songs at Sierra Sound on Alcatraz Avenue in Berkeley. When Barksdale called it quits in 1959, Sugar Pie cut one record

for Ray Dobard at Music City in Berkeley, then returned to Bob Geddins. Sugar Pie's life is still filled with good and bad times. After splitting with Pee Wee, she married Dwight Young. Two more marriages followed. then she met and married Jesse Davis, and a stormy relationship ensued. De Santo and Davis divorced but were recently remarried. In November 1998, De Santo's sister, Alice Balinton Tennyson, was kidnapped by a gang of three young criminal types in San Francisco. She was forcefully taken in the back of her own car to Southern California where she was left after t hree days, tied with duct tape to a park bench. It seems that the gang's only motive for all this was to gain access to her credit cards. On the bright side, De Santo was recently nominated for a Bammy. She has currently hired a lawyer to fight MCA for her Chess royalties, monies which were never paid.

Tenor sax blower, Roland Mitchell, is best known around the Bay Area for his rollicking stomper on Bay Tone entitled "Chuck Wagon" with Lafayette Thomas on guitar. He was a member of the Baby Calloway Band for many years and did a lot of sideman recordings for Bob Geddins who leased the instrumental "Irma Special" to Barksdale after it had previously appeared on Geddins' own Jumpin label. The reverse, Bob Jeffries' interpretation of Johnny Ace's "Never Let Me Go", appears on Westside CD, WESA 814.

El Campo, Texas-born singer/pianist Little Willie Littlefield first recorded in Houston for Eddie Henry's Eddie's label in 1948. He moved out to California in 1948 and recorded extensively for Modern Records before waxing for Federal, where, in 1952, he recorded his monster hit, "K C Loving," a.k.a. "Kansas City." He moved to the Bay Area in the summer of 1957 and made his debut on Rhythm with the anguished "Mistreated," sliced with "Baby Shame". Both songs met with little success. Faring much better was his follow-up, "Ruby, Ruby" with excellent vocal backgrounding by The Mondellos. "Ruby, Ruby" sufficiently impressed Woody Hinderling at Bullseye Records in New York that Barksdale made a leasing agreement with them. "Ruby, Ruby" also appeared on Argyle Records in Los Angeles.

Some time around the close of 1957 Barksdale cut a bunch of masters with a chipped stylus. Two of these unfortunate mishaps were Littlefield songs, "I Need A Pay Day" and "I Want A Little Girl." The only way to bearably play the original single was with a 78 RPM stylus. (The record was never remastered). Littlefield also took a stab at "The Day The Rains Came" coupled with "Theresa,' supported by an unidentified female chorus (probably The Jets). Littlefield's last outing sandwiched the gloomy eulogy "Goodbye Baby" with the blues

opus "I Wanna Love You." Little was done to promote and circulate the release as Barksdale at this point was determined to get out of the music business. Littlefield packed his bags and headed for San Jose.

Cocktail blues singer/pianist Roy Hawkins is of unknown origin. he cut for Bob Geddins in Oakland and the Bihari brothers in Los Angeles before signing with Barksdale in 1958. His strongest selling releases were "Why Do Everything Happen To Me" and "The Thrill Is Gone," cut in 1950 and 1951 for Modern in Culver City. By the time Hawkins came aboard, Barksdale had moved offices to 138 Grand Avenue. "I Hate To Be Alone" and "Lonesome Without You" were strong sides but nothing clicked. From the same session

came "It's Love" backed with "Baby, Please Don't" with George Hurst on guitar. This second release fared even worse than the first. Hawkins faded into obscurity after moving back to L.A.

All of Barksdale's blues recordings are worthwhile collectable items, but few are easy to find in the original. One of the rarest, Charles Walker's odd-sounding blues rocker "Just Me And You," supported by The Beatniks and Johnny Heartsman's band, features one of the grooviest tenor sax breaks on Bay Area R&B wax.

Barksdale got out of the record business in 1959. It was just about the time Warner Brothers put KWBR up for sale. Barksdale and a local furniture store owner attempted to buy the station. They offered $50,000 more than WDIA owner Egmont Sonderling. Irony has it that the station went to Sonderling because Barksdale was black. All thought on how well the man had done for his country just flew out the window. After selling his night clubs in the late 1970s, Barksdale returned to professional basketball as a college scout and consultant for the Golden State Warriors. In 1982, he was diagnosed with cancer. He spent the final years of his life engaged in philanthropic work in the Bay Area's public school system.

David Rosenbaum died of heart failure in Manteca on December 31, 1997. Bob Geddins Snr. died of liver cancer on February 16, 1991. In 1997, a young Berkeley college student by the name of Doug Harris wrote a thesis on Don Barksdale. As luck would have it, Harris met up with Albany film maker Jacques Bronson. Bronson took Harris's manuscript and made it into a movie entitled "Bounce" (due for release in March 1999). Harris now plans to use his research as the basis for a book on the life and times of Don Barksdale, a Bay Area legend.

Opal Louis Nations, January 1999

With special thanks to the late Dr. David Antrell, Sugar Pie De Santo, James Moore, Jacques Bronson and Doug Harris