CAPRICORN RECORDS PRESENTS

The Swing Time Records Story

R&B, Blues & Gospel 1946-1952

Starring:

RAY ★ CHARLES

"Kissa Me Baby"

LOWELL ★ FULSON

"Everyday I Have The Blues"

JIMMY WITHERSPOON

"Ain't Nobody's Business"

also appearing:

BIG JOE TURNER & THE PETE JOHNSON ORCHESTRA
CHARLES BROWN ★ PERCY MAYFIELD ★ LLOYD GLENN
JIMMY McCRACKLIN ★ THE JOHNNY OTIS BAND ★ AND OTHERS

50 Classic & Rare Tracks On 2 CD's

Swing Time

Introduction

Jack Lauderdale

In the late 1940's, jump blues ruled the R&B charts, led by Louis Jordan and his Tympany Five. Jordan's raucous, witty joy rides through the lighter side of hard times, propelled by ardent horns and the good cheer of his delivery, opened musical doors for those interested in laughing about their problems—and dancing on them.

One of the great young entrepreneurs who took advantage of this R&B explosion was Jack Lauderdale, a Los Angeles-based record distributor with vision and ambition. He released top-notch jump blues from esteemed bandleaders Lloyd Glenn and Johnny Otis. He put out the first major recordings by Lowell Fulson and he discovered in Seattle a young Nat King Cole-influenced singer and pianist named Ray Charles. He also ranged far afield from the jump mainstream, taking on tremendous gospel groups like the Nightengale Jubalaires (sic) and an outstanding young vocal quartet, the Hollywood Flames. More than merely capitalizing on a trend (although he surely did that), Lauderdale's Swingtime label presented the whole breadth of late-40's and early-50's African-American music.

The Supreme label, one of several Lauderdale purchased, was the home of the original version of one of Louis Jordan's most recognizable smashes, "Saturday Night Fish Fry," although events conspired to get Jordan's record released first. Despite its status as an independent label, Swingtime and its subsidiaries were at the forefront of an explosion in popular music, and Capricorn Records is proud to present *The Swingtime Records Story*, a definitive collection of a timeless label. If, as Muddy Waters sang, "the blues had a baby and they called it rock 'n' roll," many of the performers here witnessed the birth.

Disc 1

1 **Crying Blues (Street Walking Woman)** - **Lowell Fulson**
(L. Glenn) Boyd Music BMI – Gild Edge 5041/Big Town 1068/Swingtime 110 – Recorded 1946, Oakland

2 **You're Gonna Miss Me (When I'm Gone)** - **Lowell Fulson**
(L. Glenn) Boyd Music BMI – Gild Edge 5041/Big Town 1068/Swingtime 110 – Recorded 1946, Oakland

3 **Mississippi Blues** - **Floyd Dixon**
(F. Dixon) Powerforce Music BMI – Supreme 1542 – Recorded 1947, Los Angeles

4 **Saturday Night Fish Fry** - **Eddie Williams and His Brown Buddies (with Floyd Dixon)**
(E. Walsh/L. Jordan) Cherio Corp. BMI – Supreme 1542 – Recorded 1947 or 1948

5 **In The Evening When The Sun Goes Down** - **Jimmy Witherspoon**
(D. Raye/L. Carr) Leeds Music Corp. ASCAP – Highest chart position: #5 – Supreme 1533 – Recorded October 18, 1947

6 **Wandering Gal** - **Jimmy Witherspoon**
(F. Whyte) * – Recorded October 18, 1947

7 **I Hate To See Christmas Come Around** - **Jimmy Witherspoon**
(A. Patrick/L. Whyte) Swing Time Tunes BMI – Supreme 1508 – Recorded October 18, 1947

8 **Times Gettin' Tougher** - **Jimmy Witherspoon**
(J. Witherspoon) Arvee Music BMI – Recorded November 15, 1947

9 **Ain't Nobody's Business Pt. 1** - **Jimmy Witherspoon**
(J. Witherspoon) Tioga St. Music BMI – Highest chart position: #1 – Supreme 1506 – Recorded November 15, 1947

10 **Alligator Meat** - **Joe Swift with the Johnny Otis Band**
(J. Swift) Swing Time Tunes BMI – Probably recorded December 21, 1947, Los Angeles

11 **B&O Blues** - **Charles Brown**
(C. Brown) Swing Time Tunes BMI – Exclusive 111 – Recorded 1948, Los Angeles

12 **Rough And Rocky Road** - **Nightengale Jubalaires**
(Traditional, arranged by Nightengale Jubalaires) – Downbeat 141 – Recorded 1948

13 **Rocket Boogie 88 Pt. 2** - **Pete Johnson Orchestra**
(J. Turner/P. Johnson) Ricco Music BMI/Dead Government/Tech Nine Music ASCAP
Swingtime 169 – Recorded 1948 or 1949, Los Angeles

14 **Radar Blues** - **Big Joe Turner**
(J. Turner) Tradition Music BMI – Swingtime 151 – Recorded 1948 or 1949, Los Angeles

15 **Wine-O-Baby Boogie** - **Big Joe Turner**
(J. Turner) * – Swingtime 152 – Recorded 1948 or 1949, Los Angeles

16 **Everyday I Have The Blues** - **Lowell Fulson featuring Lloyd Glenn at the "88"**
(P. Chatman) Fort Knox Arc Music Corp./Trio Music Co. BMI – Highest chart position: #3
Swingtime 196 – Recorded 1949, Los Angeles

17 **Blue Shadows** - **Lowell Fulson**
(L. Glenn) Arc/High Society BMI – Highest chart position: #1 – Swingtime 226 – Recorded 1949, Los Angeles

18 **Low Society Blues** - **Lowell Fulson**
(L. Glenn) Arc/High Society BMI – Highest chart position: #8 – Swingtime 226 – Recorded 1949, Los Angeles

19 **I Love You, I Love You (I Will Never Let You Go)** - **The Maxin Trio/Ray Charles**
(J. Lee Lawrence) * – Downbeat 171 – Recorded February 1949, Seattle

20 **Take Out The Squeal (If You Want A Meal)** -
Earl Jackson with the Johnny Otis Band
(E. Jackson) Swing Time Tunes BMI – Supreme 1527 – Recorded April 26, 1949, Los Angeles

21 **A Woman Don't Want A Good Man No More** -
Earl Jackson with the Johnny Otis Band
(E. Jackson) Swing Time Tunes BMI – Supreme 1532 – Recorded April 26, 1949, Los Angeles

22 **Backwater Blues** - **Edgar Hayes and the Stardusters with Lloyd Glenn**
(B. Smith) * – Exclusive – Recorded May 3, 1949

23 **Where Shall I Be** - **Stars of Harmony**
(Traditional, arranged by L. Manley) – Supreme 200 – Recorded May 13, 1949

24 **Broken Hearted** - **Eddie Williams**
(E. Walsh/E. Williams) Swing Time Tunes BMI – Highest chart position: #2 – Supreme 1535 – Recorded July 15, 1949

25 **You'll Never Miss The Water (Until The Well's Gone Dry)** -
The Maxim Trio/Ray Charles
(R. Andre) * – Swingtime 179 – Recorded 1949, Los Angeles

Disc 2

1 **Two Years Of Torture** - **Percy Mayfield with the Monroe Tucker Band**
(P. Mayfield/C. Morris) ATV Music BMI – Supreme 1543 – Recorded September 20, 1949

2 **Baby You're Still A Square** - **Percy Mayfield**
(P. Mayfield) * – Supreme 1543 – Recorded September 20, 1949

3 **Someday** - **Ray Charles**
(Ray Charles) * – Previously unreleased alternate version of Downbeat 229 – Recorded May 26, 1950, Los Angeles

4 **I'll Do Anything But Work** - **Ray Charles**
(B. H. Jones) * – Previously unreleased alternate version of Downbeat 229 – Recorded May 26, 1950, Los Angeles

5 **Korea Blues** - **Clifford "Fat Man" Blivens with the Johnny Otis Band**
(C. Blivens) Swing Time Tunes BMI – Swingtime 236 – Recorded August 20, 1950

6 **Chica Boo** - **Lloyd Glenn's Combo**
(L. Glenn) Trio Music Co./Fort Knox Music, Inc. BMI – Highest chart position: #1
Swingtime 254 – Recorded November 9, 1950, Los Angeles

7 **Old Time Shuffle Blues** - **Lloyd Glenn with Th' Fulson Unit**
(L. Glenn) Trio Music Co./Fort Knox Music, Inc. BMI – Highest chart position: #3
Previously unreleased alternate version of Swingtime 237– Recorded November 9, 1950, Los Angeles

8 **Sinner's Prayer** - **Lowell Fulson**
(L. Fulson) Unichappell Music BMI – Previously unreleased alternate version of Swingtime 237
Recorded 1950, Los Angeles

9 **I Can't Stay Here** - **Jessie Thomas with Lloyd Glenn**
(J. Thomas) Swing Time Tunes BMI – Swingtime 240 – Recorded November 9, 1950

10 **Lonely Boy** - **Ray Charles**
(J. Lauderdale) * – Swingtime 250 – Recorded November 24, 1950, Los Angeles

11 **Rockin' Man** - **Jimmy McCracklin**
(J. McCracklin) Trio Music Co./Fort Knox Music, Inc. BMI – Swingtime 270 – Recorded January 4, 1951

12 **I'm A Night Owl, Pt. 1** - **Lowell Fulson**
(L. Fulson) Fort Knox Music, Inc./Trio Music Co. BMI – Highest chart position: #10
Swingtime 243 – Recorded 1951, Los Angeles

13 **Kissa Me Baby** - **Ray Charles**
(R. Charles) Trio Music Co./Fort Knox Music, Inc. BMI – Highest chart position: #8
Swingtime 274 – Recorded 1951, Los Angeles

14 **The Snow Is Falling** - **Ray Charles**
(R. Charles) * – Swingtime 326 – Recorded 1951, Los Angeles

15 **Let Me Ride In Your Little Automobile** - **Lowell Fulson**
(L. Fulson) * – Swingtime 325 – Recorded 1951, Los Angeles

16 **My Woman** - **Joe Pullum with Lloyd Glenn**
(J. Pullum) Swing Time Tunes BMI – Swingtime 267 – Recorded September 13, 1951

17 **Blues For The People** - **Jimmy McCracklin**
(J. McCracklin) Trio Music Co./Fort Knox Music, Inc. BMI – Previously unreleased alternate version of Swingtime 284
Recorded late 1951

18 **I Love My Baby** - **Lowell Fulson**
(L. Fulson/L. Glenn) Boyd Music BMI – Swingtime 330 – Recorded 1952, Los Angeles

19 **I'm Wondering And Wondering** - **Ray Charles**
(R. Charles) * – Recorded 1952, Los Angeles

20 **It Moves Me** - **Lloyd Glenn**
(L. Glenn) High Society Music BMI – Swingtime 324 – Recorded 1952, Los Angeles

21 **Lovin' A Married Woman** - **Earl Brown with the Red Calendar Combo**
(E. Brown) Swing Time Tunes BMI – Probably recorded 1952, Los Angeles

22 **Guitar Blues** - **Ray Charles**
(R. Charles) * – Recorded 1952, Los Angeles

23 **Love Me Til Your Dying Day** - **Three Muskateers**
* – Swingtime 331 – Recorded 1952

24 **End Of The Road Baby** - **Playboy Thomas**
(A. Thomas) * – Swingtime 344 – Recorded 1952

25 **I Know** - **The Hollywood Flames**
* – Swingtime 345 – Recorded 1952

*Writer and/or publisher information not available at time of booklet preparation

LLoyd Glenn, Franklin Kort, and Jack Lauderdale

Down Beat

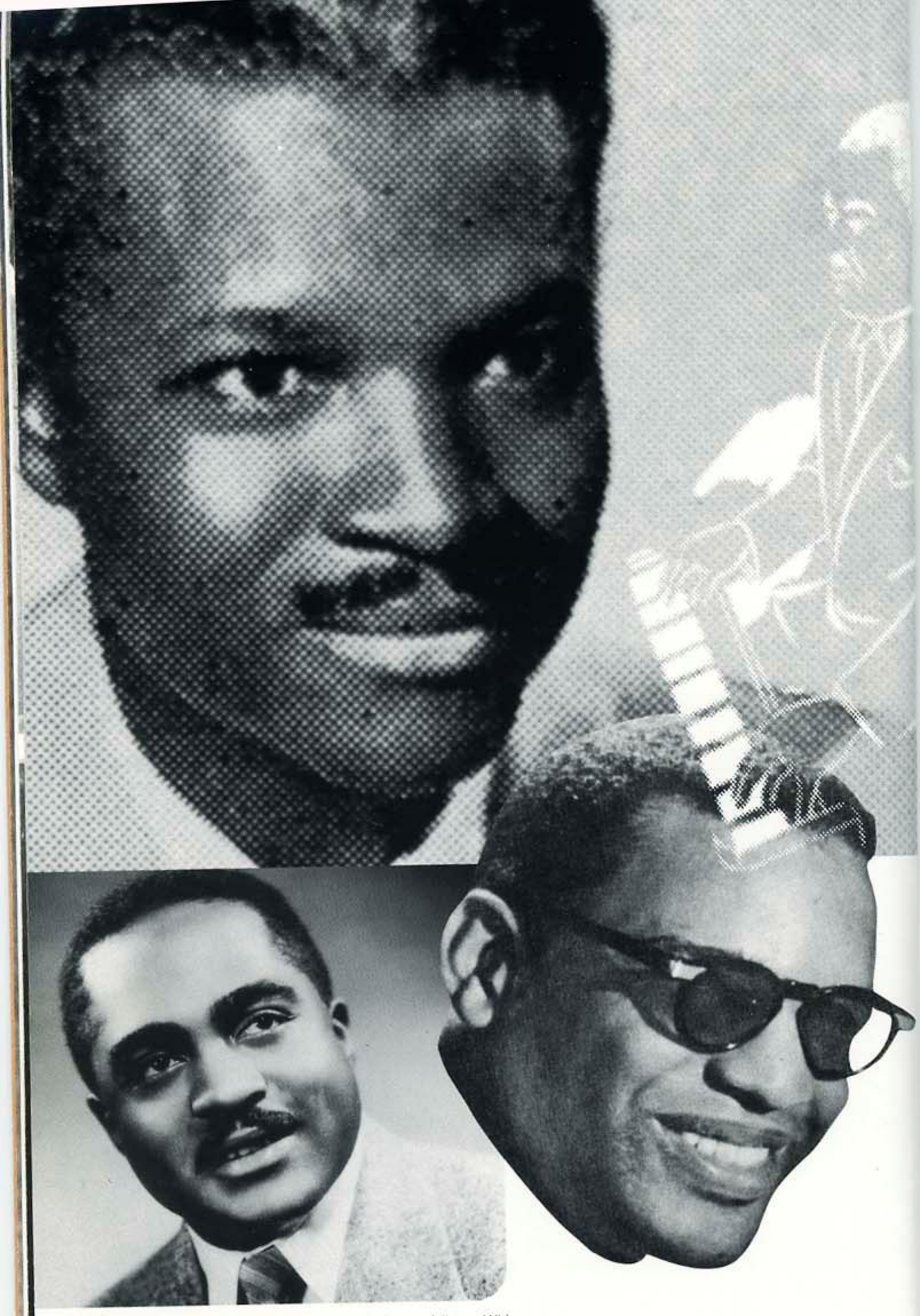
Lowell Fulson

The Swing Time Records Story

Founded by Jack Lauderdale, a sharp African-American businessman, the Downbeat Record Company opened its offices on South San Pedro Street in South Los Angeles in 1947. Shortly after, Lauderdale was joined by executive partner Franklin Kort, a shrewd, imaginative associate who served as sales and promotion manager. A second strike in the recording industry (the first took place during the summer of '42 over the payment of union royalties) paralyzed the record business toward the close of 1947, but the shortage of freshly released shellac from the major companies was seen as a boon by Lauderdale and Kort, who had the wherewithal and willingness to feed a sluggish but hungry market. The strike lasted almost 12 months.

For the first couple of years, Downbeat was beset by legal problems (in particular, its clash with the world-famous jazz magazine of the same name). It ended with a series of name changes, first to Swing (only one release bore this imprint, with the right-hand side of the brown and silver scroll label left completely blank); then to Swing Beat for the Christmas catalog and attendant mailings of 1949. Swing Beat's initial 1947 release was Lucky Thompson's "Dodo's Lament," which gleaned a more-than-modest reception. Permanence came about in October 1950, when the switch was made to Swingtime. (Flame, a flickering subsidiary, made its most impressionable glow in the spring of 1953 with the issuing of sides by Ike Perkins and The Basin Street Boys—the latter best recollected for their rendering of "I Sold My Heart To The Junkman.")

Lauderdale was forever in the habit of trying to save money on studio costs and union payments by purchasing the masters of small, ailing labels which had landed on the chopping block. The first of these to be rescued was tiny Bronze Records, based in Hollywood. In 1943, Bronze had recorded the indomitable Rebert H. Harris & The Five Soul Stirrers out of Trinity, Texas. Masters by this legendary gospel quartet were purchased and subsequently rereleased on Swing Beat in 1947.



Clockwise From Top: Lloyd Glenn, Ray Charles, and Jimmy Witherspoon.

After moving to the San Francisco Bay area during the war to work as a Navy cook, Tulsa-born Lowell Fulson cut several regionally successful records in 1946 for Bob Geddins's Oakland-based Big Town Records. Geddins, who was not too wise with money, could not afford to bankroll a wider distribution of his product (at least not to the extent enjoyed by slicker, independent operations like Swingtime). A leasing deal was arranged and both parties concurrently issued Fulson masters up through 1948, after which time Geddins threatened to sue to gain tighter control of his artist's affairs. But Fulson saw the advantage of staying with a company which could better advance his career and chose to record exclusively for Swingtime. His "Crying Blues (Street Walking Woman)" backed with "You're Gonna Miss Me (When I'm Gone)" was the first of three dozen odd waxings released by the label. The plaintively rendered "You're Gonna Miss Me"—originally Fulson's debut for Geddins—had been cut (as were most) at Geddins's home studio in Oakland. (Both sides were also issued on the Gild Edge label.) The platter demonstrates how well developed Fulson's playing and singing had become in translating a country-rooted style of blues into an urban form. From March 1949 on, Fulson cut at Universal Recorders on Santa Monica Boulevard in Hollywood.

Band-blues shouter Jimmy Witherspoon hailed from Gurdon, Arkansas. After waxing for Al Patrick's Supreme label (1948-49), 'Spoon signed briefly with Swingtime, where, as front man for the Jay McShann band, he belted a handful of sides. Most were unimpressive, and none met with fanfare or broad appeal. McShann, on the other hand, did draw coin with his own etchings, among them the toe-breaker "Buttermilk." On the subject of rug-cutting, Joe Turner, with the deft assistance of Pete Johnson on ivories, engraved a series of killer Kansas City-blessed boogies, blues, and jumps for Lauderdale, among them "Rocket Boogie 88."

Raised in Greenville, Florida, Ray Charles grew up idolizing Charles Brown and Nat King Cole—both of whom indelibly impressioned his earlier work for Swingtime. Ray's first session in February 1949 took place in Seattle, where he had been living and working. Label-copied as The Maxin (McSon) Trio, Ray and his rhythm unit cut "Confession Blues" and "I Love You, I Love You (I Will Never Let You Go)." Cole-like supper-club blues with supple guitar figures fingered by Gosady McKee, the songs were reminiscent of stylings by Cole Trio plucker Oscar Moore (who, strangely enough, sessioned on Ray's November 24, 1950 recording date). Ray cut approximately 41 discs for Lauderdale before recording briefly for Sittin'-In-With and Rockin' Records in 1952. Ray never really abandoned the martini set until 1951, with the release of "Kissa Me Baby"—a rocking duet with an unidentified singer who sounded a lot like Jimmy Liggins. The release sold well enough to encourage this new-found extroversion as later releases caught Ray out of formula.

San Antonio-born Lloyd Glenn spent almost 60 years in the music business. This extremely competent pianist, composer, and arranger moved to the sunshine state in 1942, where he worked for a while at Douglas Aircraft. In early 1949, guitarist Tiny Webb took Glenn to meet Lauderdale, who, noting a music vet with charm and intelligence, appointed Glenn A&R Manager—a post he retained for five years. Subsequently, Glenn hooked up with Webb's occasional employer, Lowell Fulson. Glenn arrived in time to sit in on Fulson's second L.A. session, the one which solidified the unforgettable "Everyday I Have The Blues."

Lloyd Glenn's first Swingtime platter under his own nomenclature was the engaging "Levee Blues" with the formidable Gene Phillips on Hawaiian guitar and the indispensable Billy Hadnott on bass. Glenn continued arranging, supervising and accompanying other Swingtime artists in tandem with his own records, which drew heavy sales figures at times. Glenn's inimitable, rollicking piano style was, for the most part, extremely infectious.

Midwest markets opened up to Swingtime in March of 1950 when Lauderdale signed a pact with George and Ernie Leaner, proprietors of United Record Distributors in Chicago. By October, one of the trailblazing and once exceedingly successful independent record companies—Exclusive—had thrown in the towel. A deal was made with the René Brothers, Exclusive's executives, whereby 111 Exclusive masters were turned over to Jack Lauderdale. The purchase included 85 masters by Charles Brown with Johnny Moore's Three Blazers and a smattering of solo sides by Brown's ex-wife, Mabel Scott, all for the grand sum of $15,000.

To add yet more trophies to Swingtime's holdings, Jack Lauderdale gained control of Supreme Records with the acquisition of another 83 masters, including songs by Jimmy Witherspoon, The Stars of Harmony, Floyd Dixon, and Percy Mayfield. Percy had etched the haunting blues ballad "Two Years Of Torture" and "Leary Blues" at Supreme with arranger, bandleader and tenor saxophonist Maxwell Davis. While both records saw a second go-round on Swingtime, Percy's tenure with Lauderdale was fleeting. He opted to defect to Art Rupe at Specialty, taking Maxwell Davis with him.

Jukeboxes generated much revenue in the race market for Lauderdale and others who catered to minorities so it was important to keep up with ongoing changes in the "coin-op" marketplace. Forty-five-rpm-spinning jukes were proliferating throughout the nation during the formative years of blues and rhythm, and it was Lauderdale's intention to be one of the first to vend to this new market. By the end of January 1951, Swingtime had made plans to put all of its "standards"—as well as 20 percent of its future waxings—on 45 rpm.

St. Louis-raised Jimmy McCracklin first recorded for Globe in 1945. Being only a rudimentary pianist but competent singer at the time, Jimmy had J.D. Nicholson (his mentor) accompany him on piano. Jimmy began recording for Bob Geddins on his tiny Oakland Trilon label in 1948. As with Fulson, Geddins leased McCracklin sides to Jack Lauderdale, who, in return for a percentage, offered a wider distribution. Jimmy's style during that period owed much to such country blues virtuosos as singer/pianist Walter Davis, out of Grenada, Mississippi. Jimmy moved over to Swingtime entirely in 1951, where he continued to record a modest quantity of earthy, down–home blues and loose–rocking jump tunes.

One of Swingtime's first 45-rpm releases was "New Orleans Blues," originally recorded by Charles Brown and Johnny Moore's Three Blazers for the Exclusive label in 1946. This was a typical Brown ballad/lounge blues with its affectations, lyrical phrasing and clever guitar chording. Next came Lowell Fulson's landmark "Blue Shadows" session of 1950. "Blue Shadows" was Lauderdale's most successful race record, hitting No. 1 on both the Billboard best sellers list and the Juke Box charts in October 1950.

Sales soared to a new high. In February 1951, Franklin Kort announced in Billboard Magazine a 200-percent sales increase over the previous 12 months, with a January 1951 sales figure of 103,000 platters moved. By June, things were really jumping for Swingtime: Lloyd Glenn's finger-frenzied instrumental "Chica Boo" had skyrocketed, peaking at the half-million mark and zooming to the No. 2 spot in the Juke Box charts for that month. Franklin Kort, who was now planning on breaking into the overseas market with across-the-pond distribution, had visions of grandeur.

Because Swingtime at this point seemed a little light on the distaff side, talent scouts were actively seek-

ing female artists. Few seemed to please, however, and release sheets continued to reflect a male preponderance of talent.

By early 1952, sales executive Franklin Kort could not abide a post-Christmas slump in sales. In a flash he devised a gimmick that would pay all major distributors a percentage of sales over and above a certain quota. (It worked during his tenure at Exclusive, so why not now?) Business must have risen favorably, for by the end of February, Swingtime let loose in the interest of the record-buying public its first album—*All Time Favorites* by Lloyd Glenn. In March, Flame Records, Swingtime's all-new subsidiary, was launched with plans to release Gladys Bentley's "Easter Mardi Gras" along with oodles of fresh talent and a rekindling of the old Exclusive masters.

Things started to fall apart in July 1952 when Franklin Kort, Jack Lauderdale's business whiz of five years' service, tendered his resignation. Kort moved to fresher pastures, accepting a twin-hat appointment as president and sales manager of John Dolphin's Recorded In Hollywood record company.

The following October, Lauderdale decided to transform his fledgling Flame subsidiary into a country and western label. Initial releases by little-known artists met with poor sales and much skepticism. Seeking desperately to stay solvent, Lauderdale opened a branch office in Chicago. In August 1953, he made his views known by stating that he felt the center of R&B activity had shifted from the West Coast to the Midwest, as indeed Chicago in 1953 was advancing a new form of urban electric blues music played by immigrants from the South.

However, the move east could not compensate for the loss of Swingtime's two cornerstones, Lowell Fulson and Lloyd Glenn, to Aladdin Records. By December, Lloyd and Lowell had signed with Ed Mesner and were gone. A brief glimmer of hope came in February of the following year when "I Know" by The Hollywood Flames took off, but the rights, after having passed through the hands of both Lauderdale and John Dolphin, finally ended up with Decca. Blues sides by Fulson and Playboy Thomas were leased to Al Benson for rerelease on his Parrot label out of Chicago.

It was all over by October 1954. Don F. Pierce of Hollywood Records bought Swingtime's solid sellers and for many years enjoyed the Christmas booty raised through the sales of its ever-popular yuletide blues evergreens.

—Opal Louis Nations, 1993

Left to Right: Charles Brown, Floyd Dixon, and Percy Mayfield