

Scepter Records 1958-1961

The Scepter Records story does not really start with Tiara Records. Lew Conetta created Tiara several years before Scepter, and Tiara continued to release records after Scepter began. However, one person working for Tiara – and by all accounts a co-owner of the company – is the well-known instrument for bringing about the vision for Scepter Records. That was Florence Greenberg.

By early 1958, Greenberg was 44 years old – she would turn 45 in September. Over the past two years, she had learned as much about music publishing and about the managing of a record company as she could. She had approached the revived Tiara with a song for which her son, Stan, had co-written the music. Murry Shaff recorded the song, and Tiara had released it – with little success. After that, she had set up her own publishing company, Scepter Music, in late 1957, to publish the Shirelles' first song, "I Met Him on a Sunday." Throughout 1958, Scepter Music continued to publish Shirelles' songs (when they were on Decca) as well as songs that John Bowden wrote for the Vestelles (also on Decca), plus some songs for which Tiara released the records. In November 1958, Greenberg parted ways with Tiara Records for a new venture.

As Lew Conetta had plans for Tiara, and since Greenberg had enough confidence in the Shirelles to put them out on her own after their contract with Decca expired, on December 1, 1958, Florence Greenberg and Terry Ryan announced the formation of Scepter Records. Ryan was an artists and repertoire person; he would occupy the role that Hy Grill had fulfilled at Tiara, helping to recruit new artists to the label. Greenberg would manage the label's operations. Although their dream was to put out two records every month, for the first two years they averaged about one record every two months. It was a difficult start.

Label Styles:

Label 58: White label with blue print; SCEPTER at top by itself.

Label 58a: White label with blue print; SCEPTER at top with 1674 address

Label 58b: White label; SCEPTER at top with 1674 address and phone number

Label 58c: Pink label; SCEPTER at top with 1674 address and phone number

Label 58d: Pink label; SCEPTER at top with 1650 address and phone number

Label 60: orange label with "Scepter" in a scroll on top

Label 61: red, black, and white label with print in silver

Label 63: red, black, and white label with print in black

Scepter Records Formed

NEW YORK—Scepter Records has been formed, it was announced last week by Mrs. Florence Greenberg and Terry Ryan, owners of the New York-based diskery.

The initial issues on the Scepter label are "Ugly Duckling" b/w "Why, Why, Why" by Don Crawford and the Escorts and "To Make A Long Story Short" b/w "Pretty Little Girl" by Eddie and the Starlites.

Scepter's policy will be to have two releases a month. National distribution will be handled by George Goldner's Gone Records. The label has signed in addition to the above artists, the Roulettes, Castro Giovanni and the Little Girls.

Mrs. Greenberg was formerly associated with Tiara Records and was associated with the Shirelles, who hit about a year back with "I Met Him On A Sunday". Ryan previously functioned as an independent producer and artist rep.

The firm is interested in listening to masters.



DON CRAWFORD & THE ESCORTS
(Scepter 1201)
B+ "UGLY DUCKLING" (1:40)
[Scepter BMI—Crawford, Starr, Smith] The new Scepter label gets off to a fine start with a potent latin-beat, rock-a-ballad telling a delightful "Cinderella" story about an unattractive young girl who blossoms into a beautiful and popular one. Group has a smooth Everly-like flavor and works with a pretty melody. This one could develop into a big money-maker. Teeners should find this side hitting home.
C+ "WHY WHY WHY" (1:50)
[Scepter BMI—Crawford, Starr, Smith] An ok rocker here.

S-1201 Don Crawford & the Escorts

Label 58

First appearance: December 13, 1958

"Ugly Ducking" / "Why Why Why"



EDDIE & THE STARLITES
**** To Make a Long Story Short**
SCEPTER 1202—Eddie and group wall effectively on wistful rockaballad. (Scepter, BMI)
**** Pretty Little Girl**
Lively vocalizing on exuberant rocker. Both sides are dual market items. (Scepter, BMI)

S-1202 Eddie & the Starlites "To Make a Long Story Short" / "Pretty Little Girl"

First appearance: December 13, 1958

Known reissues: Label 61, Label 63



"DEDICATED TO THE ONE I LOVE" (2:03)
[Armo BMI—Pauling, Boss]
"LOOK A HERE BABY" (2:03) [Armo BMI—Owens, Harris, Lee, Coley]
THE SHIRELLES (Scepter 1203)
● The Shirelles, the group that made lots of r&b and pop news awhile back with their delightfully different reading of "I Met Him On A Sunday", now on the Scepter label with another slightly unusual entry that should also encounter loads of dual-market action. The enticing out front voice of the femme crew leads the gals over an enticing rock-a-ballad dubbed "Dedicated To The One I Love". Under end "Look A Here Baby", is an engaging finger-snapper from the "Sunday" school. Watch the top lid take off.



1203 The Shirelles "Dedicated to the One I Love" / "Love"

First appearance: April 4, 1959

Scepter contracted with other pressing plants, including Monarch in LA.

The Monarch job numbers, Δ 29481 and 29482, indicate that the Monarch copies likely came out in late April or early May.

Known reissues: Label 60, Label 61, Label 63



ROULETTES
 ★★ **Wouldn't Be Goin' Steady** — SCEPTER 1204 — Quite a bit of philosophy here, as sung by the fem group. It's a slow rockaballad, and it's sung with feeling by the lead. Has a message for teenagers. (Southern, ASCAP)
 ★★ **Hasten Jason** — An upbeat rock and roll effort which has a rather dated quality. (Scepter, ASCAP)

1204 The Singing Roulettes "Hasten Jason"/ "Wouldn't be Goin' Steady"

Label 58a

First appearance: August 24, 1959

At about this time, Tamla Records in Detroit released Barrett Strong's song, "Money," locally.



THE SHIRELLES
 ★★★ **Doin' the Ronde**—SCEPTER 1205 —The gals do a rocker with breaks about a dance that comes from Jamaica. Then things wind up in a blaze of the blues. Playable wax. (BMI)
 ★★★ **A Teardrop and a Lollipop**—A teardrop and a lollipop is all that's left of her, sings the gal lead with a frantic sort of devotion. Keyed to the teen heart. (BMI)

1205 The Shirelles "A Teardrop and a Lollipop"/ "Doin' the Ronde"

Label 58a

First appearance: September 28, 1959

The Monarch number is not known. Nationally-distributed copies have an additional line.

Known reissues: Label 63



Scepter prexy, Florence Greenberg, quite enthused about eastern seaboard reaction to the Titones, a new group, and their label bow, "The Movies". On hand is a dozen key-city promo trip to launch the deck nationally. . . . Jazz pianist Murial Roberts

1206 The Titones "Symbol of Love"/ "The Movies"

Label 58b

First appearance: October 1959 (based on copyright dates)

Having had little success with the Scepter label, Greenberg initiated the creation of an affiliated label called Wand. If there were DJs who wouldn't play Scepter releases, they might try out this new label. At first, there were few releases from Wand.



Wand 100 **Lynn Sisters** **"Which Way Did My Heart Go"/ "You've Had Your Play"**

Label 59

First appearance: October 1959

At about this time, Barrett Strong released "Money" nationally as Anna 1111.



THE LEEDS
★★★ Mr. Cool—WAND 102—The group essays the Coasters' "Charlie Brown" style on this number about a teen-age hot shot. Interesting material and it's handled in good style. Spinnable. (Scepter, BMI)
★★ Heaven Only Knows—A slow pleader ballad with lots of the meshuga sound. The side is a bit dated in style. Flip would have an edge. (Scepter, BMI)

Wand 102 **The Leeds** **"Mr. Cool"/ "Heaven Only Knows"**

Label 59

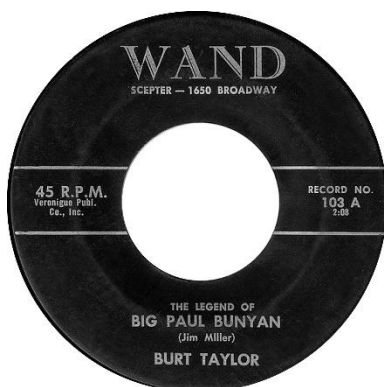
First appearance: December 7, 1959



1207 **Shirelles** **"Please Be My Boyfriend"/ "I Saw a Tear"**

Label 58c

First appearance: January 1960



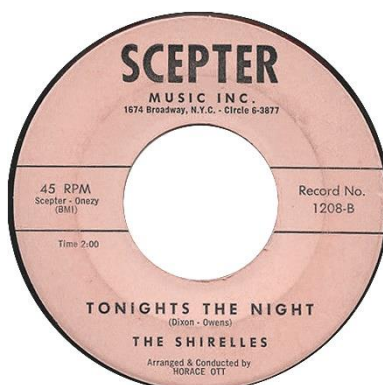
Wand 103 Burt Taylor “Big Paul Bunyan”/ “Sweet Carrie Mac Intie”

Label 59a

First appearance: February 1960

From this point, Scepter/Wand has switched the print on the label to indicate their new address at 1650 Broadway. Tiara Records had shared this famous building with other labels and publishers, but by the start of 1960, Tiara had shut down.

In the chart dated April 17, “Money” peaks at BB #23, making it Motown’s first hit single. So far, Scepter had experienced similar mild success. Meanwhile, Luther Dixon joined Scepter Records.



SHIRELLES
★★★★ THE DANCE IS OVER — SCEPTER 1208 — A pretty ballad is intoned with warmth by the fem group, over strong support by the ork and strings. A good side that has a chance. (Deauville, BMI) ✓
★★★ Tonight's the Night — The girls handle this rockaballad with feeling over a big beat by the ork. It could grab both spins and loot. (Scepter-Onezy, BMI)

1208 The Shirelles “The Dance is Over”/ “Tonight’s the Night”

Label 58d (east)/58c (west, using older labels)

First appearance: April 18, 1960

The Monarch copies, having job number Δ 35557, came out in late May. By the middle of August, the B-side had started to catch on, eventually giving the band their first Top-Forty hit.

Known reissues: Label 60, Label 61, Label 63.



Ro-Cal 1001 Dexter Scott “Tasty Lips”/ “Swinging on a Star”

Released c. September/October 1960

Ro-Cal was a label from club owner Robert “Buddy” Caldwell. Luther Dixon helped with their 2 singles.



1209 Rufus Beacham “I Need Your Love”/ “When You Call My Name”

Label 58c

First appearance: September 17, 1960



Ro-Cal 1002 The Versatiles “Lundee Dundee”/ “Whisper in Your Ear”

First appearance: September 17, 1960

Again with great help from Luther Dixon. The Versatiles became the Majors after this.



Wand 104 Bette Watts “Do Me a Favor”/ “Let it Be”

Label 59a

First appearance: October 1960

This was a reissue of a single on Elgin (1030/1), a Connecticut label. The singer’s first name is given as “Betty” on the Elgin release, and the B-side’s lead singer was Ann Watts. They had also performed with Jimmie Mack on Elgin, but Wand did not re-release that record.



Wand 105 The Titones “Symbol of Love”/ “My Movie Queen”

Label ?

First appearance: c. October 1960

This was a reissue of Scepter 1206, with the B-side title renamed and the publishing credits partly assigned to Luther Dixon’s company. I know of no copies on the original label. The above copy is a reissue from 1961.



1210 Joey Dee & the Starlitters “Face of an Angel”/ “Shimmy Baby”

Label 60

First appearance: October 22, 1960

Most copies wrongly show the group name as the Starlights.

Known reissues: Label 63

| | |
|---|---|
| “FACE OF AN ANGEL” (2:46) [Ludix BMI—Dixon, Towne, Brigati] | “SHIMMY BABY” (2:16) [Ludix BMI—Dixon] |
| JOEY DEE (Scepter 1210) | |
| Newcomer Joey Dee's name should be plastered all over the charts in the near future. Artist appears to have a two-sided chart affair with his very first Scepter release. Leadoff side, “Face Of An Angel,” is a lovely, slow moving ballad with the Starlights providing “sha ba da” interjections—as in the Flamingos’ “I Only Have Eyes For You.” Companion piece is a tremendous “shimmy” that the crew belts out with sock teen appeal. Wate ‘em both. | |

At this point, something amazing happened that altered Scepter’s history. Just as Motown was to become known for the hits written by Holland, Dozier, and Holland, so also the musical talent of Carole King helped establish Scepter Records. Working together with Luther Dixon, King provided arrangements for the music. One astonishing element to this partnership was that in 1960 King was eighteen years old. Her husband, Gerry Goffin, was 21. They had begun to write songs together, with Goffin contributing the lyrics to King’s music. The pair worked for Aldon Music, which was located in the same building as Scepter Records. Don Kirshner (the “Don” of Aldon) was aware of the Shirelles’ success with “Tonight’s the Night,” and he wanted their first huge hit to be an Aldon-published song. King and Goffin prepared a new song of their own creation, for which King created a string arrangement – her first! The Shirelles recorded it along with a B-side co-written by Luther Dixon. The single was a certain success.

It led to Carole King writing arrangements on a steady basis for Scepter/Wand. Luther Dixon developed the Midas touch, as it seemed every one of his records turned to gold. Luther served as Scepter’s backbone for most of its formative years.



1211 The Shirelles "Will You Love Me Tomorrow"/ "Boys"

The Monarch job number, Δ 37367, indicates a pressing from mid-December 1960.

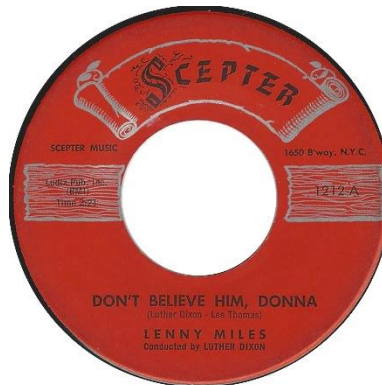
First appearance: November 19, 1960

Known reissues: Label 63

| | |
|---|---|
| "WILL YOU LOVE ME TOMORROW" (2:48) [Aldon BMI—King, Goffin] | "BOYS" (2:08) [Ludix BMI—Dixon, Farrell] |
| THE SHIRELLES (Scepter 1211) | |

The Shirelles, currently enjoying their top money-maker to date, "Tonight's The Night," come thru with what looks like a double-header here. Leadoff side, "Will You Love Me Tomorrow," is a captivating, string-filled romancer from the teen beat cha cha school. The exciting "Boys" portion will have the 'twistin' kids screaming for more. Terrific ork support on both stanzas.

Rock and roll had been a transitional phase since the beginning of 1958. Since then, there had been a folk revival, a surge in popularity of new artists with different sounds, and a rise in the focus on vocal groups. Doo-wop music was hot, too. When "Will You Love Me Tomorrow" appeared on the scene, no female vocal group had hit #1 in two years, and none singing rock-and-roll had ever done it. No group of female African-Americans had ever done it. The Shirelles topped the charts effortlessly, and it did so a month before Motown had their first Top Ten hit (the Miracles' "Shop Around"). Goffin and King went on to write 19 Top-Forty songs together between 1960 and 1967, and in 1971 Carole King released what was then the best-selling album of all time by a woman. Meanwhile, Scepter/Wand continued to work on hit records.

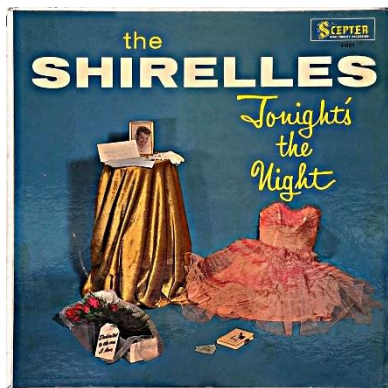


1212 Lenny Miles "Don't Believe Him, Donna"/ "Invisible"

Label 60

First appearance: December 12, 1960

The Monarch job number is not known.



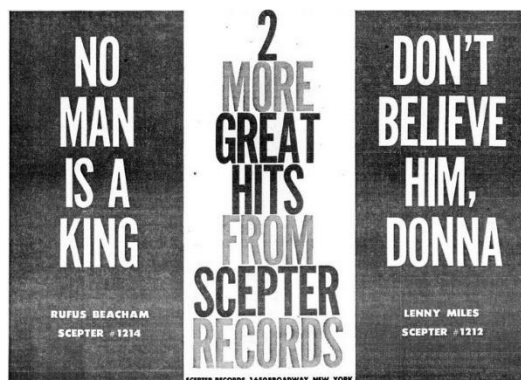
★★★★ TONIGHT'S THE NIGHT
 The Shirelles, currently riding with their singles hit, "Tonight's the Night," follow the traditional pattern with this album release, carrying the identifying title of the hit single disk. Much of the rest of the material is of the same general teen-slanted ballad groove, featuring the gals in their pleasant brand of harmony. They can grab good play with a number of these bands.

S-501 The Shirelles Tonight's the Night

First appearance: December 19, 1960

Known reissues: Label 61, Label 71

The label's first LP featured a hastily-prepared cover, but it did its job.



1213 Unreleased/Unknown



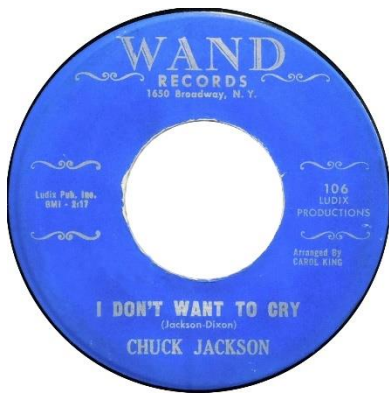
1214 Rufus Beacham

"Take it Easy, Baby" / "No Man is King"

Label 60

First appearance: November 26, 1960

Monarch job number unknown.



CHUCK JACKSON

★★★ **Just Once**—WAND 106—There's an inspirational quality to this love song. Jackson's vocal is backed by an arrangement featuring violins, and a triplet figure gives the theme urgency. (Ludix, BMI) (2:10)

★★ **I Don't Want to Cry** — Jackson brings a touch of church quality to his style here. Song is an unusual one, with dramatic backing. (Ludix, BMI) (2:17)

Wand 106 Chuck Jackson "I Don't Want to Cry"/ "Just Once"

Label 60

First appearance: January 16, 1961

Known reissues: Label 61

This was a success for Jackson, and Wand's first hit.

At this time, "Will You Love Me Tomorrow" (Scepter 1211) peaks at #1.



THE SNEED TRIO

(Tiara 6116)
B+ "SPINNING WHEEL" (1:55) [Shapiro - Bernstein ASCAP—Hill] The Sneeds come up with an extremely commercial ditty as they lend their charming Alpine touch to a lilting rocker. Their vocal blendings are terrific. Kids of all ages could go for this number. Side builds as it progresses. Dee jays interested in something different oughta look in to this one.

B "WHEN" (2:24) [Torch ASCAP—Tishman, Goetschius] This end has the trio cruising thru a pretty rock-a-ballad item with a romantic lyric. Their slight accent adds charm to the number.

1215 Rufus Beacham "Summertime"/ "Just One More Chance"

Label 60

First appearance: February 1961



SALLIE BLAIR

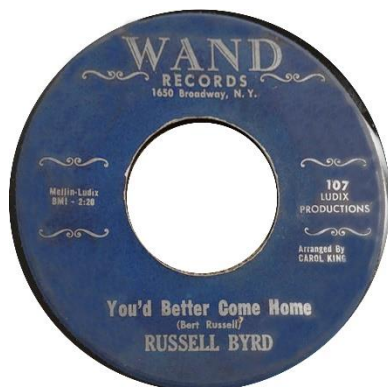
★★★★ **Keep an Eye on Your Man**—SCEPTER 1216—Miss Blair offers some sage advice about holding on to a man. She handles the smart material well, to a classy, gospel styled backing. A good side that's worth a hearing. (Ludlix) (2:04)

★★★ **In the Still of the Night**—The gal thrushes the standard pleasantly, with some interesting vocal effects. Flip is the one to watch, however. (Chappell) (2:46)

1216 Sallie Blair "Keep an Eye on Your Man"/ "In the Still of the Night"

Label 60

First appearance: March 13, 1961

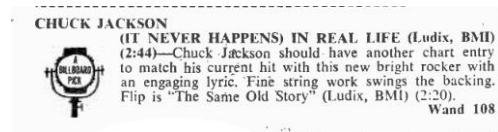
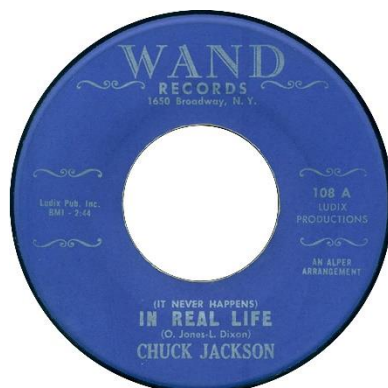


Wand 107 **Russell Byrd** **"You'd Better Come Home"/ "At the Crossroads"**

Label 60

First appearance: March 1961

Known Reissues: Label 61



Wand 108 **Chuck Jackson** **"In Real Life"/ "The Same Old Story"**

Label 60

First appearance: March 27, 1961

Known Reissues: Label 61



1217 **The Shirelles** **"Mama Said"/ "Blue Holiday"**

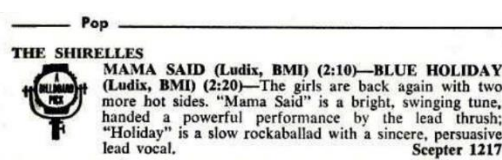
Label 60

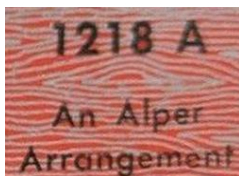
First appearance: April 10, 1961

The Monarch job number, Δ 38670, indicates a pressing for release in early April 1961.

Known Reissues: Label 61; Label 63.

This was the second Top Five hit for the Shirelles.





LENNY MILES



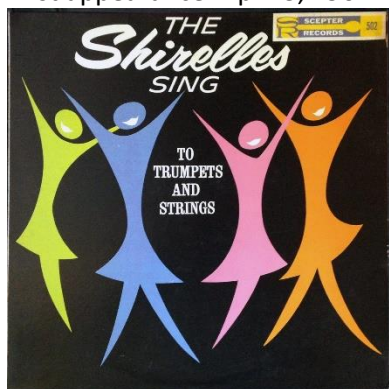
IN BETWEEN TEARS (Ludix, BMI) (2:13) — A sock reading of a powerful ballad by Lenny Miles should prove to be another winner for the chanter. And the arrangement is sock too. Flip is "I Know Love," (Lloyd & Logan-Ludix, BMI) (2:40).

Scepter 1218

1218 Lenny Miles "In Between Tears"/ "I Know Love"

Label 60

First appearance: April 3, 1961



SLP-502 The Shirelles *Swing to Trumpets and Strings*

First appearance: May 20, 1961

Label 60

Monarch job number unknown.

The cover gives the title as "Sing" instead of "Swing."

Photo not available

Scepter Signs 2 Songsters

NEW YORK — Scepter Music has added two songsters to its roster, prexy Florence Greenberg has announced.

They are Tommy Hunt, a former lead with The Flamingos, and newcomer Del Marino. Both were rushed into New York studios, and the results have already been released.

Hunt appears on the Scepter label with "Parade of Broken Hearts" and "Human," his first solo outing. Marino is heard on Wand, Scepter's affiliate, with "I'll Never Be The Same Again" and "A Cupid's Arrow."

Mrs. Greenberg said a "full scale" promo and publicity campaign would introduce the performers.

Shirelles Tie-In With Saks Department Stores

NEW YORK—Though none of its outlets has a record department, Saks department stores have, nevertheless, tied-in with Scepter Music for a special promotion in conjunction with The Shirelles, the Scepter label's teenage stars.

The girls will make special appearances at both Saks Fifth St., and its branch stores in Connack and Massapequa, L.I. One facet of the program, which starts at the L.I. branches on Saturday, May 20, calls for the performers to be introduced to their fans in new Saks' teenage apparel departments called "Pace Setter Shops," where Coke machines and special interest displays of the group's past hit records, albums and photos will be placed in key departments throughout the stores, while newspaper, radio and mail coverage will be initiated by Saks to announce the promotion.

Judith Stern, Scepter's publicity director, said that "although Saks has no record department, both special displays and a sales counter will be set up by the store for the purpose of debuting The Shirelles' new album, "The Shirelles Swing with Trumpets & Strings," being readied for release by Scepter in time for their first appearances at the Long Island stores. . . ."

Miss Stern said that another tie-in was in the completion stages using The Shirelles' name in conjunction with an "established" teenage leather product manufacturer, who would offer a national ad campaign and department store displays.

Wand 109 Del Marino "I'll Never Be the Same Again"/ "A Cupid's Arrow"

Label 60

First appearance: May 1961 (see CB June 17, 1961)

Reissued in August as Scepter 1221.

Del Marino had been on Peer Records, which was a local NY label.

In June 1961, Scepter and Wand began to use colorful new label styles.